

**Reimagining Muslim Masculinity: Alternative
Narratives in Select Magazines for Muslim Children
in Kerala**

**A Thesis Submitted During 2023 to the University of Hyderabad
in Partial Fulfilment of the Award of a Ph.D. Degree**

in
Gender Studies

by
**Noorunnida M
14CWPG02**

Centre for Women's Studies

**School of Social Sciences
University of Hyderabad
(P.O) Central University, Gachibowli,
Hyderabad – 500046, Telangana
India**

May 2023



Certificate

This is certify that the thesis entitled **“Reimagining Muslim Masculinity: Alternative Narratives in Select Magazines for Muslim Children in Kerala”** submitted by **Noorunnida M** bearing Registration Number **14CWPG02** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of Doctor of Philosophy in **Gender Studies** from Centre for Women’s Studies, School of Social Sciences is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

This thesis is free from Plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for award of any degree or diploma.

Further, the student has the following publication(s) before submission of the thesis/monograph for adjudication and has produced evidence for the same in the form of acceptance letter or the reprint in the relevant area of her research

1. “Gender and Childhood: A Critical Study of Primary Schools Textbooks”
Bhavaveena, 6(2), June 2022. (ISSN No.: 2456-4702)

and

has made presentations in the following conferences:

1. Presented a paper at “Theorising Space: Three-day National Conference on Intersection of Space and Culture” organised by Department of Humanities Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram, on 14th to 16th December 2017.
2. Presented a paper at National Conference on “Language, Culture and Minorities: Issues and Challenges” organised by Department of Sociology, Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), Hyderabad, on 22nd and 23rd March 2018.

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of coursework requirement for Ph.D.

Course Code	Name	Credits	Pass/Fail
GS 827	Theories of Culture and Pedagogy	4	Pass
GS 884	Society and Sexuality	4	Pass
SL 839	Sociology of Education	4	Pass
CELS 821	Critical Applied Linguistic	4	Pass

Deepa Sreenivas
19/5/2023

Prof. Deepa Sreenivas

Research Supervisor

Centre for Women's Studies

पथविश्लेषक / Supervisor

महिला अध्ययन केन्द्र / Centre for Women's Studies
समाजिक विज्ञान संकाय / School of Social Sciences
हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय / University of Hyderabad
हैदराबाद-४६ / Hyderabad-46., T.S.

K. Suneetha Rani
19/5/23

Prof. K. Suneetha Rani

Head

Centre for Women's Studies

अध्यक्ष / Head

महिला अध्ययन केन्द्र / Centre for Women's Studies
समाजिक विज्ञान संकाय / School of Social Sciences
हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय / University of Hyderabad
हैदराबाद-४६ / Hyderabad-46., T.S.

Y. A. Sudhakar Reddy
19/5/23

Prof. Y. A. Sudhakar Reddy

Dean

School of Social Sciences

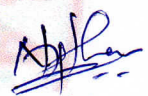
अध्यक्ष / DEAN
समाजिक विज्ञान संकाय
School of Social Sciences
हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय
University of Hyderabad
हैदराबाद-500 046., भारत
Hyderabad-500 046. INDIA.



Declaration

I, **Noorunnida M**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled "**Reimagining Muslim Masculinity: Alternative Narratives in Select Magazines for Muslim Children in Kerala**" submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Deepa Sreenivas is a bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Name: Noorunnida M


Signature of the Student

Date: 19.5.2023

Regd. No: 14CWPG02

Contents

Acknowledgements	x
Chapter one Introduction	1
Present Study	2
Popular Children's Magazines in Malayalam	4
<i>Eureka</i> - Children's Science Magazine: The Making of a "Rational Childhood"	10
Muslim Children's Magazines	12
<i>Malarvadi</i> and <i>Kurunnukal</i> : Ideological differences	15
Literature Review	17
Conceptualising Children's Literature	17
The Muslim "Other" in Popular Discourses	19
Hegemonic Masculinity	21
Mappila Muslims and Counter-Public Sphere	26
A Note on Methodology	28
Chapter Outline	31
Chapter Two Popular Children's Magazines in Kerala and the Construction of Hindu Masculinity	35
<i>Balarama</i> and <i>Poombatta</i> as Companions of <i>Amar Chitra Katha</i>	37
Hegemonic masculinity	40
Hegemonic Hindu Masculinity in <i>Balarama</i> and <i>Poombatta</i>	43
Masculinity, Mythology and Nationalism	47
The Authority of Hindu Cultural Practices: Constructing a Hindu <i>Malayali</i> Identity	52
Muslims as the "Other" in <i>Balarama</i> and <i>Poombatta</i>	56
Language as a Tool for Constructing the "Other"	61

Hindu Modernity versus the Muslims	66
Alternative Narratives	70
<i>Parishad</i> and “Rational Childhood”	74
<i>Eureka</i> and Hindu Mythology	77
Conclusion	81
Chapter Three Muslim Masculinity and the Formation of a Counter-Public Sphere: A Reading of Select Magazines for Muslim Children	83
The Background of Magazines for Muslim Children	86
Locating the Muslim in National History	87
Construction of an Ideal Muslim Masculinity	91
The Idea of a Muslim Counter-Public Sphere	105
The Counter-Public Sphere and the Ideal Citizen in <i>Kurunnukal</i> and <i>Malarvadi</i>	108
Can Madrasa be a Site of Citizen-Making?	109
<i>Jantustan</i> , an Utopia in <i>Malarvadi</i>	111
Khadarka: A Contemporary Muslim Man in <i>Jantustan</i>	112
<i>Poocha Police</i> - an Ideal Policeman in <i>Jantustan</i> .	117
A Global Muslim Brotherhood	122
Conclusion	125
Chapter Four Women and Childhood in <i>Malarvadi</i> and <i>Kurunnukal</i>	128
Ideological Heterogeneity: The Reformist and Traditional Sects of Kerala	131
Reading the Reformist Ideas of <i>Malarvadi</i>	133
Constructing a Rational God	135
The Assertion of Language in JIH	142
<i>Malarvadi</i> and “Standard” Malayalam	143

Social Activism and JIK	146
Social Activism in <i>Malarvadi</i>	148
Critiques of Capitalism	151
Mawdudi and women	153
<i>Malarvadi</i> and Women	157
<i>Kurunnukal</i> and the Traditional Islam	162
Re-presenting Arabic-Malayalam (<i>Arabi Malayalam</i>) and Mappila Muslims	162
Traditional Islam and Women	168
Women in <i>Kurunnukal</i>	169
Mysticism: Perspectives of the Traditional and Reformist Sects	174
Mysticism and <i>Nercca</i> Practices in <i>Kurunnukal</i>	178
<i>Nercca</i> , Gender, Masculinity	180
Conclusion	183
Chapter five Conclusion	185
Findings of the Study	186
Limitations and Future Directions	190
Bibliography	193
Appendix	

Table of Images

Image 1. The comic series <i>Mayavi</i> , <i>Balarama</i> , February, 1984.	6
Image 2. <i>Poombatta-Amar Chitra Katha</i> , November, 1986.	7
Image 3. List of <i>Balarama-Amar Chitra Katha</i> , <i>Balarama</i> , May, 1992.	38
Image 4. Karna and Krishna, <i>Poombatta</i> , October, 1986.	43
Image 5. Veluthambi Dalawa and an old woman, <i>Poombatta</i> , August 1979.	45
Image 6 Nachikethas and Yama, <i>Poombatta</i> , March, 1979.	50
Image 7. <i>Sammanam</i> (The Gift), <i>Balarama</i> , September, 1979.	58
Image 8. The sad adolescent Muslim girl, <i>Balarama</i> , March, 1976.	60
Image 9. <i>Vidyarambham</i> ceremony of a child, <i>Balarama</i> , September, 1977.	67
Image 10. Aysha, father and Damu Master, <i>Balarama</i> , September 1977.	69
Image 11. Illustration of Ali Musliyar and followers, <i>Kurunnukal</i> , March, 2009.	95
Image 12. Visual representation of Ali Musliyar, <i>Kurunnukal</i> , April 2010.	96
Image 13. Variyam Kunnathu Kunjammad Haji, <i>Malarvadi</i> , August, 2018.	100
Image 14. Kunjalavi and Lavakutty, <i>Malarvadi</i> , August 2018.	103
Image 15. Abdul Kalam Azad, <i>Malarvadi</i> , August, 2018.	104
Image 16. Khadarka, Pattalam Paili and Kuttappan, <i>Malarvadi</i> , December 2017.	112
Image 17. Cat pole and crew, <i>Malarvadi</i> , January 2016.	118
Image 18. Muslim and non-Muslim children, <i>Malarvadi</i> , September 2017.	140
Image 19: Begum Hazrat Mahal, <i>Malarvadi</i> August 2017.	159
Image 20: Biumma <i>Malarvadi</i> August 2017.	160
Image 21: Women in <i>Kurunnukal</i> , August 2008.	171
Image 22 Visuals of Tirurangadi <i>Nercca</i> , <i>Kurunnukal</i> October 2010.	181

*For all young mothers pursuing academic research while juggling the demands of
motherhood.*

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Deepa Sreenivas, for her unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement throughout my PhD journey. Her expertise, patience, and dedication have been invaluable in helping me navigate the challenges of the research work and in bringing this thesis to completion.

I am also grateful to the members of my doctoral committee, Prof Sunita Misra and Dr. Salah Punathil, for their valuable feedback and insights, which have greatly improved the quality of this work.

I express my gratitude to Prof. K. Suneetha Rani, H.O.D. Centre for Women's Studies for her support and encouragement.

I would like to extend my thanks to the office staffs, especially Prasad and students of the Centre for Women's Studies at University of Hyderabad for creating a stimulating and supportive environment for the research work.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to *Malarvadi* editor T.K. Ubaid, Nazimudheen P.A. and *Kurunnukal* editor Mahboob and their office staffs for their invaluable support during my Ph.D. research. Their generosity in providing access to their office and archives was essential in my ability to complete this thesis.

I am indebted to Thahir Jamal, Kavya, Vasil, Jiyad Hussain, Sibathulla, Raniya, Manasi, Asha, Ragasree, Simi Salim, Ramziya, Afnan K.T, Malay, Anees, Salaman K.H, Muhsina, Arun, Simi, Sha Muhammad, Sadik P.K, Muneer Illath, Mubashir, Haritha, Muhsina, Shafla, Dahiya, Thufail, Vishal, Ali P.K, Pranoo, and Shraddha for all their help and support at the time of need.

I would like to thank all my friends and colleagues at Cadence Institute for Excellence and Social Empowerment for all their love and care at the time of difficulties.

I am truly blessed to have such a loving and supportive family, especially my siblings. I could not have accomplished this without their love and support. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I am immensely grateful to my husband Muhammad Ali for his unwavering love and support during my Ph.D. journey. His consistent encouragement and understanding have been a vital source of strength, and I owe much of my success to him. Without his help, I could not have achieved what I have.

I would like to express my gratitude to my beloved daughters, Dhaya Thabassum, for her patience and understanding, and Dana Malika, for her joyful presence.

I am indebted to my parents for their constant believes and support, without their support, this work would not have been completed.

Lastly, I must thank the Almighty for everything!

Chapter one

Introduction

As a Muslim child born in the late 1980s, my childhood was filled with fantasies from different Malayalam magazines for children that were circulated during the period. *Balarama*, *Poombatta*, *Amar Chitra Katha*, *Balabhoomi*, *Eureka*, etc. were the most circulated magazines in the 1980s. Though I was not a regular subscriber of any of these magazines, I got old and new copies of them from my neighbours and cousins. They often served as supplementary reading for me and filled the gaps in my knowledge about Hindu myths and Indian history that I had to learn in school textbooks. As a Muslim child, I was not exposed to such stories at my home. And these children's magazines helped me fill those gaps. For instance, in my sixth standard Malayalam textbook, there was a poem titled *Kaliyamardhanam* from the literary work *Krishna Gadha* written by Cherussery Nambuthiri who lived in the 15th century. *Krishna Gadha* talks about the life of Krishna. I had no clue about *Krishna Gadha*, and the poem seemed foreign to me. But gradually, by reading the popular children's magazines, I too became an expert in Hindu mythology like my classmates.

Similarly, the historical facts that I learned from history textbooks seamlessly corresponded to the historical fiction in children's magazines and led me to believe that this was the only historical "truth." However, all these historical fictions and history presented in children's magazines and school textbooks depicted all Muslim rulers, with the exception of Akbar, as cruel. It created a sense of inferiority in my mind and gave me a feeling Muslims were either evil or weak. And thus, I was

conditioned by the historical “facts” that I got from secular school textbooks and popular children's magazines.

My school textbooks taught me about the ancient Indian civilization, Muslim intrusions into *Bharath Samskara*, the cruelty of Muslim rulers towards their subjects- especially Hindus, etc. In such classes, as a Muslim, I felt shame and low confidence. These narratives created a sense of being an “outsider” in my mind. They led me to believe that Muslims came from Arabia and partition was a sin initiated by Muslims. So, I imagined an un-partitioned India and prayed for the unification of India. Later, when I started reading the magazines for Muslim children, I found many stories, fictional images, cartoons, etc., which talked about the day-to-day life of Muslims. When I saw a girl with a headscarf in these magazines, I saw my own reflection in a children's magazine for the first time. These magazines also included stories of Islamic civilization, Muslim cultural heritage and ritual practices which were totally underrepresented in popular children's magazines.

Present Study

This study juxtaposes popular children's magazines and magazines for Muslim children in Malayalam to examine how these two streams of magazines present childhood and gender in different ways. It draws on popular children's magazines and children's science magazine published in Kerala in the 1970s, and Muslim children's magazines published after the 1980s, in order to understand notions of childhood and gendering in these magazines. This will also help us to understand the ways in which Muslim children's magazines engage with widely available notions of childhood. I argue that the imageries of popular children's magazines in Kerala have been rooted in the Hindu ideal- wherein dominant caste/class masculine characters and a glorified

Hindu cultural past and symbols are foregrounded. This is further emphasized by presenting Muslim men as agents of patriarchy and Muslim women as subjugated and pre-modern. I also argue that Muslim children's magazines adopt various strategies to counter these misrepresentations of Muslims as well as the idealization of brahmin masculinity. An important strategy is to shape a counter-Muslim masculinity. This production/formulation of counter-Muslim masculinity takes place in different realms. One of the ways in which this is achieved is through re-representing and disseminating the history of the Mappila Rebellion and Muslim anti-colonial movements. Through these narrations, Muslim children's magazines represent their leaders as heroes and role models for young readers of the community. These alternative historical narrations are aimed at helping young Muslim readers to live with confidence and resist mainstream Islamophobic narratives. This counter-masculinity also generates a critique of mainstream history that is centred on the hegemonic upper caste self and way of living, circulated in secular public schools via textbooks.

Presenting day-to-day life via narratives of Muslim men is another form of producing the above said counter-masculinity. This production of the everyday narratives of the Muslim man, for instance, involves depicting his everyday engagement with society and social issues, and his position in, and services to, his family. I argue that magazines for Muslim children challenge the notion of the ideal citizen projected in popular children's magazines by depicting Muslims as ideal citizens, without disavowing their religious identity and faith.

In this chapter, I map the different children's magazines that I explore in this study, and look at these magazines through the perspectives of gender and cultural

studies. The chapter is divided into two sections. First section introduces popular children's magazines, Science children's magazine, *Eureka* and Muslim Children's magazines. Second section maps different literatures on children's literature, Muslim "Other," hegemonic masculinity, and creation of counter public sphere by Mappila Muslims, a note on methodology and chapter outline of the thesis.

SECTION I

Popular Children's Magazines in Malayalam

Poombatta and *Balarama* are the two popular children's magazines I am using in this study. *Poombatta* (Butterfly) is the first Malayalam children's magazine.¹ It was founded by P.A Achutha Warriar- a writer and translator, and started publication in 1964. In 1973, Achutha Warriar stopped the publication of *Poombatta* because of low profit. It was bought by Sithara Publications, owned by P Madhu, who continued to publish the magazine for another year. After a hibernation period of four years, in 1978, Pai and Company² took up the ownership of *Poombatta* and restarted its publication for another seven years until 1985. During that time, an editorial of the magazine states:

Pai-Co, who has understood children's unquenchable thirst for knowledge and entertainment better than anyone else, is launching a publication for them – "*Poombatta*". *Poombatta* is not really a new publication. This butterfly that

¹ Noorunnida M, "Children's Magazines and Different Childhoods in Kerala," open, sahapedia, July 24, 2019, <https://www.sahapedia.org/childrens-magazines-and-different-childhoods-kerala>.

² Pai and Company was famous in the field of print culture in Kerala. It was owned by S Vasudeva Pai, also known as S.V Pai.

fluttered over the Malayalam coast was in hibernation for some time. Now, it is waking up through Pai-Co and coming back more colourful than before.³

During that time, *Poombatta* was a bi-monthly magazine along with other magazines like *Poombatta-Amar Chitra Katha*⁴ and *Pai-Co Classic*. *Kapeesh*, *Pankathanthram* etc. were the major stories in *Poombatta*. *Kapeesh* is the Malayalam translation of *Kishku*, written by Anant Pai⁵ in Hindi and English. *Kishku* is the story of a clever and kind-hearted monkey with magical powers, named Kishku. Kishku can enlarge and shorten his tail at will; he saves inmates of the forest in difficult situations through this extraordinary power. The story tells of his bonding with fellow animals and rivalry with a fox named Singal. The story develops in an imaginary forest named Kadu, inspired by a forest near Anant Pai's hometown, Karkala. In 1984, the Tamil version of the magazine, *Poothalir* (Budding flower), was launched. In 1985, Pai-Co Company got authorship from Pendulum Press to translate and publish English Classics into Indian languages. Hence, *Pai-Co Classic* was born, which published English classics in Indian regional languages. In 1992, Manorajyam Press⁶ took over the publication rights of *Poombatta* from Pai-Co until 2002, after which publication was stopped due to low circulation. From 2002 to 2008, *Poombatta* was published by Soorya Prabha publications, Thrissur.

³ "Editorial," *Poombatta*, 1978, 2.

⁴ *Amar Chitra Katha* was started by Anant Pai in 1967. The magazine contains Indian myths, history, classics, and folk tales. The friendship between S.V Pai and Ananth Pai led to publication of *Poombatta -Amar Chitra Kadha* in Malayalam. It published various *Amar Chitra Katha* stories translated into Malayalam.

⁵ Anant Pai (1929-2011), popularly known as Uncle Pai, was a pioneer in Indian comics and the master storyteller of *Amar Chitra Katha*. He got many awards and recognition for his literary contribution. He is also known as Walt Disney of India.

⁶ During the period R. Venkittaraman was the owner of Manorajyam Press. He and Pradeep Menon took the editorial charge of *Poombatta*.



Image 1. The comic series *Mayavi, Balarama*, February, 1984.

Balarama is a Malayalam illustrated magazine published by M.M Publication of Malayala Manorama⁷ group, Kottayam.⁸ *Balarama* started as a monthly in 1972 and became weekly in 1999. The magazine had a long-term partnership with *Amar Chitra Katha*. Therefore, major characters like *Kapeesh*, *Kalulu* of *Poombatta* etc. began to appear in *Balarama*. A breakthrough for the magazine was its syndication with American comics including Disney and in the 2000s, the adoption of comic

⁷ Malayala Manorama Company is owned by Kandathil Family. It is founded by Kandathil Varghese Mappilai on 1888. The company publish different magazines like, *Balarama*, *Vanitha*, *Arogyam*, *Thozhhiilveedhi*, *Balarama Digest*, *The Week*, *Kalikudukka*, etc and a daily newspaper namely *Malayala Manorama*

⁸ Noorunnida, "Children's Magazines and Different Childhoods in Kerala."

stories such as *Spiderman*, *Phantom*, and *Alice in Wonderland* etc.⁹ Along with such content, the comic series *Mayavi* also became the highlight of the magazine. *Mayavi* first appeared in August 1984 and was created by Pradeep Sathe and N.M. Mohan.¹⁰



Image 2. *Poombatta-Amar Chitra Katha*, November, 1986.

The comic is named after *Mayavi*, the central character of the series. The series *Mayavi* became iconic and its publication in *Balarama* continues till today. *Mayavi* is a good imp, who safeguards the forest he lives in from villains like Dagini, Kuttussan, Luttappi, Vikraman and Muthu. Mayavi was a slave of Dagini, a witch who was very cruel to him. Raju and Radha are two kids who helped him escape from Dagini. As a

⁹ Noorunnida.

¹⁰ Amaresh Datta, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature*. vol. 1 (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1987).

gesture of gratitude, Mayavi helps the kids whenever they are in trouble. When the kids utter *Om Hreem Kuttichatha*¹¹, Mayavi appears to save them. Mayavi has the power of being invisible, and the red wand he carries possesses magical powers. Almost all episodes of Mayavi follow the same narrative in different contexts. The comic is all about the intimate bond that Mayavi and the kids share, and Dagini's and Kuttussan's rivalry with them.

Balarama and *Poombatta* had a long-term partnership with Pai-Co. Along with regular copies of *Balarama* and *Poombatta*; various tales from *Amar Chitra Katha* were circulated in Malayalam under the title of *Balarama-Amar Chitra Katha* and *Poombatta-Amar Chitra Katha*. Also, regular copies of *Poombatta* included Malayalam versions of *Amar Chitra Katha* stories. Stories titled *Angulimal*, *Rana Kumba*, *Dhara* and *Aurengzib*, *Tulasi Das*, *Rani Durgavadhi*, etc., are a few among them.

This study looks at how Malayalam popular children's magazines construct a dominant notion of childhood underpinned by Hindu masculinity; how *Balarama* and *Poombatta*, for instance, present a perfect and successful man who succeeds based on his caste and merit. The study foregrounds the links between “desirable” masculine qualities such as bravery, sacrifice, dedication, knowledge, and the social/community location of the hero. I explore how, instead of directly referring to the caste and social status of the protagonists, the magazines constitute an upper-caste Hindu universe through references to their childhood and family. Furthermore, caste and social identity become visible through dress, education, cultural practices, taste etc. The

¹¹*Kuttichathan* is a colloquial word for a naughty devil, and this is a form of chanting mantra. The word *Om* is derived from Sanskrit which has a complex meaning. It connotes the metaphysical concept of Brahman. It is chanted either independently or before a mantra.

study also looks at how these magazines present upper-caste rituals and ways of life like *tapas*¹² as effective ways to attain success.

The study also looks at how popular Malayalam children's magazines construct a Muslim “Other” through historical narratives visuals etc. and how language plays a vital role in presenting certain characters as desirable or undesirable. Stuart Hall argues, “Language is one of the ‘mediums’ through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in a culture. And language works through representation.”¹³ He further argues that different forms of language, such as spoken language, written language, and musical language, used to express or communicate a thought, feeling or concept are symbolic practices which give meaning or expression to the idea of belonging to a national culture or identification with one's local community. It is part of the language of national identity, a discourse of national belongingness.¹⁴ In light of this, it is significant that in Malayalam films and literary works, Muslims are represented as the ones who do not speak “standard” Malayalam; their speech becoming a marker of their illiteracy and backwardness.

Though different communities and regions follow different registers of Malayalam in Kerala, the spoken register of Malappuram Muslims is used to symbolise extreme backwardness and illiteracy. Notably, there are two kinds of characters in these films and novels, the Muslims who speak the local, spoken idiom of Malayalam and the non-Muslims who speak standardised Malayalam.¹⁵ The study

¹² Sanskrit word *tapas* literally mean heat. It is a kind of yogic practice and its main objective is burning the impurities of a man

¹³ Stuart Hall, ed., “The Work of Representation,” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997), 6.

¹⁴ Hall, “The Work of Representation.”

¹⁵ Jameel Ahmad, *Malayala Muslim- Basha, Samskaram, Charithram (Malayala Muslims- Language, Culture and History)*, 2018.

probes if similar representation exists in popular children's magazines and how language functions in these magazines to construct desirable and undesirable masculinities and femininities.

***Eureka* - Children's Science Magazine: The Making of a "Rational Childhood"**

In the 1960s, *Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad* (KSSP, henceforth *Parishad*) was started as an organisation to develop scientific temper among ordinary people. *Parishad* was formally inaugurated on the 10th of September 1962 in Calicut. Initially, the group's activities were focused on conducting seminars, symposiums, and talks related to science. The motto "Science for Social Revolution" was adopted by the organisation in 1973. *Parishad's* workers' manifesto, published in 1982, discusses the characteristics of the organisation. It reads as follows:

Parishad is not a political party though its projects and works can help political parties. It is not a welfare and educational organisation though it conducts many welfare and educational programs. It is not a research organisation, even though it conducts various studies on different issues. Finally, it is not an anarchist organisation, but it develops a scientific temper among the public.¹⁶

Parishad considered children's literature as an important pedagogical tool for propagating their ideology. In 1970, the *Parishad* started a magazine named *Eureka* for school students. Its first copy of the magazine made available to the public in June 1970. The position of the editor was held by Dr. K N Pisharadi, while T.R Shankunni served as the managing editor.¹⁷ The magazine is widely used as an alternative science

¹⁶ *Parishad Pinnitta Nalpath Varsham (Fourty Years of Parishad)* (Kozhikode: Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, 2003), 4.

¹⁷ Noorunnida, "Children's Magazines and Different Childhoods in Kerala."

book for children in Kerala, and it aims to create scientific temper among ordinary children. *Eureka* includes science stories, short novels, picture stories, astronomy lectures etc., aimed at inculcating scientific attitude in the readers. *Eureka* also includes guidelines for scientific experiments and encourages readers to try them at home or in schools. The magazine, through the column *Eureka Uncle*, addresses the readers as “friends.” It also discusses different social and environmental issues and encourages readers to be part of different environmental protection movements.

Eureka conducts *Eureka Vigyanolsavam* (*Eureka Knowledge Festival*), a science quiz competition, in different schools across the state. The magazine clarifies readers’ doubts on science through letters, editor's column, etc. and encourages readers to make such engagements. Unlike popular children's magazines, *Eureka* avoids characters and stories of superheroes like *Spider-Man*, *Superman*, *Mayavi* etc, as *Parishad* believes that such stories and characters would spread superstition and irrationality among children. The magazine includes biographies of different scientists and short notes on new innovations in science and technology.

Along with creating scientific temper among readers, the magazine also counters popular children's magazines and argues that popular children's magazines create irrationality and superstition among children. Children’s science magazines are always keen to maintain this difference and pose as a better alternative to popular magazines. In contrast to *Eureka’s* and *Parishad’s* claims, I argue that although *Eureka* considers science to be a means to liberate people from religious and irrational beliefs, and bring social revolution- the discourse of the magazine is embedded within the very religious form that it seeks to be liberated from. Thus, even though *Eureka* was initiated as an important medium for educating little readers about science, it in

fact ends up constructing a modern rational childhood that is closely allied to an upper caste Hindu ethos and world view.

In the study, I explore how *Eureka* creates a group of rational readers, and how the magazine simultaneously injects a sense of Hindu nationalism and mythology among them. Through creating scientific temper, *Eureka* focuses to uplift the material self of common people. At the same time, the magazine perpetuates a world view steeped in the vedic spiritual discourses. It is not a new phenomenon in the Hindu intellectual discourse. Meera Nanda discusses how neo-Hindu intellectuals like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru promoted neo-Hinduism in India through finding homologies between the new worldview of science, liberalism, and even Christian ideas of monotheism, and brahmanical vedic literature.¹⁸ Thus, they ended up retrofitting western ideas of reason and liberalism that they admired into the mystical elements of the Hindu tradition that the west admired.¹⁹ She calls it “reactionary modernity.” Taking a cue from this, I look at how *Eureka* falls in the category of neo-Hinduism and maps the Hindu spiritual self onto the material scientific self. It will help the reader to understand how *Eureka* propagates a “reactionary modernity” in Kerala.

Muslim Children's Magazines

In the 1980s, few Muslim organisations started their own children’s magazines as a response to mainstream children’s magazines *Malarvadi*²⁰ and *Kurunnukal*²¹ are

¹⁸ Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India*. (London: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

¹⁹ Nanda.

²⁰ *Malarvadi* is published under the patronage of *Jamaat-e Islami Kerala* (henceforth JIK). JIK is the regional unit of *Jamaat-e Islami Hind* (henceforth JIH). *Jamaat-e Islami* was founded in 1941 by Syed Abul Ala Mawdudi with the aim of spreading Islamic values in the Indian subcontinent. The organisation was reorganised after

the two magazines that come under this category. *Malarvadi* (Garden), which started in the early 1980s, is the first Malayalam Muslim children's magazine. *Malarvadi* includes fictional and non-fictional stories, Islamic histories, short novels, cartoons etc. Early issues of *Malarvadi* consisted of works of eminent writers in Malayalam: Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, M.T. Vasudevan Nair and Poet Kunjunni are a few among them. A column by late poet Kujunni, titled *Kunjunni Mashum*²² *Kuttikalum* (Kunjunni Master and Children), was one of the most popular columns in the early issues of *Malarvadi*.²³ The column was in the form of an interaction. Child readers write to Kunjunni about their various doubts about Malayalam literary usage, poetry etc. Kunjunni clarifies their doubts and encourages readers to write and speak in “standard” Malayalam.

Comics titled *Poocha Police* (The Police Cat) and *Pattalam Paili* (Soldier Paili) are the other attractions of *Malarvadi*. These stories take place in a land called *Jantustan*, an imaginary land which is a parody of Hindustan. The magazine allegorically presents different issues of contemporary India. Animals are the inhabitants of the land and appear in a hybrid form combining features of human beings and animals. The head part has animal features and the body is that of human beings. The magazine also discusses different social and political issues of Muslims around the world. It critiques capitalism, privatisation, globalisation, colonialism etc. The publishers of the magazine also formed readers' collectives at local levels across

Independence in 1948 as *Jamaat-e Islami Hind*, and has been actively implementing its policies and programs in India.

²¹*Kurunnukal* is published by *Samastha Kerala Jam-Jyyathul Muallimeen Central Council*, the Madrasa teacher's organisation of *Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Vidhyabyasa Board* (hence forth *Samastha*). *Samastha* is ideologically connected to traditional Islam.

²²*Mash* is a Malayalam colloquial word for teacher. People address someone as *mash* to show respect and admiration.

²³ Noorunnida, “Children's Magazines and Different Childhoods in Kerala.”

the state. The collectives are termed *Malarvadi Balasangam* (*Malarvadi Children's Collective*). These collectives conduct various programs like *Changathikoru Veedu* (Home for a Friend), *Mannariyam Vitheriyam* (Know the Land, Sow Seeds), *Oru Kai Oru Thai* (One Hand, One Plant), painting and drama competitions, cinema workshops for children, children's audio cassettes, children's art parades, anti-war rallies, *Balanidhi* (Children's Treasury), various environmental campaigns like anti-plastic campaign, environmental oath etc across Kerala. *Changathikoru Veedu* (Home for a Friend) is a student initiative program. Students from different schools across Kerala collect money to build homes for homeless children. *Mannariyam Vitheriyam* (Know the Land, Sow Seeds), *Oru Kai Oru Thai* (One Hand, One Plant) are environmental campaigns aimed to promote a symbiotic relationship between children and nature.²⁴

The magazine *Kurunnukal*, is the second Malayalam children's magazine published by the Muslim community, was first published in January 1999. The Malayalam word *Kurunnukal* literally translates into "kids." The word connotes love and affection towards children in Malayalam literature. The word *Kurunnukal* is very common in Malayalam lullabies, while its Sanskrit counterparts, such as *santati*, *bala*, *balya*, *zizu*, *putra* etc, are more common in standard Malayalam. The magazine includes short novels, cartoons, historical narratives, etc. The magazine has published historical novels on Tippu Sultan, Aurangzeb, and Ali Musliyar, with both pictures and dialogues. The magazine also introduced local religious scholars and Muslim literary figures through a column titled *Nammude Sahithyakaranmar* (Our Literary Figures). The magazine encourages its readers to respond to injustice and inequality, and discusses different social issues.

²⁴ Noorunnida.

Malarvadi and Kurunnukal: Ideological differences

In the study, I also look at how, as children's magazines from traditional and reformist sects, that is *Jamaat-e Islami* (henceforth JIK) *Kerala* and *Samastha Kerala Jam'iyathul Ulama* (henceforth *Samastha*), both *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* present ideological differences of their parental organisations in a reader-friendly manner. The study argues that though Muslim children's magazines have common purposes and goals, like countering the narratives of popular children's magazines, they construct different childhoods according to the ideologies of their parent organisations, and create internal differences among readers.

Arshad Alam, who works extensively on Indian Islam, calls this process of “crafting internal differences” based on two schools of thought in the Muslim community, as the creation of internal enemies within the community. He argues that more than resisting external responses against the madrasa system, madrasas run by different schools of thought or sects are primarily concerned with their own *maslaki* or denomination. More than making a unified Muslim identity, each *maslaki* (denomination) tries to create their own Islam. He focuses on two madrasas at Mubarakpur in U.P, named Madrasa Ashrafiya and Madrasa Ihya-ul Ulum.²⁵ Both the madrasas had a common origin from a single *maktab*, or a small madrasa called Misbahul Ulum founded in 1899. Later, the madrasa split into two: Madrasa Ashrafiya and Madrasa Ihya-ul-ulum, reflecting two different attitudes towards Islam. After the split, these two madrasas followed different schools of law called Bareilvi²⁶ and

²⁵ Arshad Alam, *Inside a Madrasa* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011).

²⁶ Bareilvi school of thought follows traditional Islamic viewpoint. The movement declare itself as the most authentic Islam and they also follow mystical elements of Islam.

Deoband,²⁷ respectively. Their ideological and theological differences are reflected in their textbooks and teaching practices.

The constitution of each madrasa is to be strictly followed by the staff and students and what is laid down as un-Islamic practices by it is completely unacceptable. Each madrasa ensures that its students oppose the other School of Law and their Islam. According to him, there is a contentious discussion surrounding Islam, and madrasas aim to impart their specific interpretation of Islam based on their denomination. Madrasas focus more on perpetuating *maslaki* identities, which are then embraced by their followers and students as "Islamic", rather than promoting a Muslim identity that is in opposition to other faiths.²⁸ The followers of each denominational group consider the other madrasa as a larger, dangerous existential threat to "true" Islam, much more than the threat constituted by non-Muslims. In both these streams of madrasas, the textbooks and preaching inside the madrasa act as a major tool to produce their "identity" vis a vis the other, in the process creating an "us" and "them" feeling.²⁹

Drawing from these, I argue that, within the contested space of identity creation, different Muslim children's magazines in Kerala also create different "gender identities" and different ideas of Islam/Muslim identity through different narratives. In short, the study looks at how childhood is imagined differently by these two magazines though they are published by the same religious community and during the same period. To substantiate my argument, I will be looking at a few stories, narratives, and biographies etc., which discuss internal debates like Arabic-

²⁷ Deoband school of thought follows reformist ideas of Islam forwarded by wahabism.

²⁸ Alam, *Inside a Madrasa*.

²⁹ Arshad Alam, *Inside a Madrasa* (New Delhi: Rutledge, 2011).

Malayalam³⁰ controversy, depiction of men and women, and presentation of traditional rituals like *istighaza*,³¹ *tawassul*³², and *nercca*³³ in these magazines.

SECTION II

Literature Review

In this section, I map certain works that have helped me to engage with my area of research. These texts deal with children's literature, the process of the "otherization" of Muslims in Indian historiography, hegemonic masculinity, nationalism, the constructions of counter masculinity and counter public sphere by Mappila Muslims.

Conceptualising Children's Literature

I consider children's literature as an important pedagogical tool and medium for dissemination of ideology. Children's literature plays a significant role in imbuing a national identity in child readers. Stories help children make sense of the world and contribute to their sense of identity- an identity that is simultaneously personal and social. Children's literature has a powerful effect in shaping children's identity through the cultural imagination constructed through the images we supply and the stories we

³⁰ Arabic-Malayalam is a language which is a mixture of Arabic and Malayalam. Script is in Arabic and sound is in Malayalam. Madrasa textbooks of traditional Muslims are still published in Arabic-Malayalam.

³¹ *Istighaza* means to pray or seek help or protection from the saints/prophets, either dead or alive

³² In *Tawassul* believers make great saints and pious believers as mediators between them and God, and use these exemplary mediators in seeking the blessings of God.

³³ *Nercca* is a local festival among traditional Muslims, observed by believers during the death anniversary of martyrs and sufis of different localities.

tell of the land in which we live.³⁴ One of the unique features of children's texts, as compared to mainstream literature, is the presence of a double code system--the children's code and the adult code. Adults write stories for children in the children's code. These adult codes and children's codes are dynamic, changing and overlapping throughout history.³⁵ Maria Nikolajeva says:

The history of children's literature can be seen as a succession of changing cultural codes. The notion of the cultural code implies in this case that children's literature presents a code, or a system of codes (a "semiosphere"), different from those in adult or mainstream literature. The unique feature of children's texts, as compared to mainstream literature, is the presence of *double* code systems, which may be called the children's code and the adult code. The most important aspect of semiosphere is its dynamic character. In other words, the children's code and the adult code change throughout history, converging, diverging, and overlapping at various points.³⁶

Here the author draws our attention to how children's literature is different from other streams of literature and how literature for minors is an important medium for the transmission of the ideologies of the adults. In Indian context, many scholars underscore how *Amar Chitra Katha*, one of the popular children's magazines in India, constructs an upper-caste Hindu self as ideal. Deepa Sreenivas examines how *Amar Chitra Katha* moulds the self-image of middle-class children growing up in the 70s and 80s, and trains future citizens of the nation through its narratives of indomitable and preserving masculinity. Moreover, *Amar Chitra Katha* stories teach values of self-

³⁴ Tony Watkins, "Reconstructing the Homeland: Loss and Hope in the English Landscape," in *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature*, ed. Maria Nikolajeva (London: Greenwood Press, 1995), 165–70.

³⁵ Maria Nikolajeva, "Children's Literature as a Cultural Code: A Semiotic Approach to History," in *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature*, ed. Maria Nikolajeva (London: Greenwood Press, 1995), 39–48.

³⁶ Nikolajeva.

confidence, success, and achievement to upper-caste Hindu children.³⁷ She also argues that the magazine's villainizing and demonizing narratives about Muslim characters reveal the Hindu majoritarian discourse's anxieties in postcolonial India.³⁸

Nandini Chandra brings out how the *Amar Chitra Katha* constructs Hindu superheroes as those who fought against foreign oppression; the "foreigners" clearly marked as the "*asura*," the Muslim or the British. These superheroes fight for either the Hindu faith or for those who are being protected by Hindu rulers.³⁹ These studies show how *Amar Chitra Katha* aims to construct an ideal childhood embedded in upper caste/class values. Simultaneously, these narratives project Hindu male characters as superheroes and role models. These processes take place through underrepresenting and misrepresenting Muslims and other minority communities as villains and outsiders. In the world of *Amar Chitra Katha*, Hindu gods and heroes are embodiments of ideal manhood, while the *rakshasas*, tribes and Muslims stand for a subordinated, subhuman masculinity.⁴⁰

The Muslim “Other” in Popular Discourses

Representing Muslims as criminals and against the law in India is rooted in colonial and Indian nationalist historiography. Santhosh Abraham explores the European encounter with Muslims, especially British colonial legal encounters, and processes, where they are identified and categorised as criminals and offenders. The British, in an attempt to declare the sovereign authority of the colonial state, and to

³⁷ Deepa Sreenivas, *Sculpting the Middle Class: History, Masculinity and the Amar Chitra Katha* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010).

³⁸ Deepa Sreenivas, “The Muslim ‘Other’: Figures of Evil and Charisma from Popular Visual Culture in India,” *Tasveer Ghar*, 2020, 1–39.

³⁹ Nandini Chandra, *The Classic Popular Amar Chitra Katha 1967-2007* (New Delhi: Yoda Press., 2008).

⁴⁰ Sreenivas, “The Muslim ‘Other’: Figures of Evil and Charisma from Popular Visual Culture in India.”

control the “rebels” of Malabar Rebellion, constructed stereotypical images of Mappila Muslims as “jungle Mappila Bandits” and “criminal brigands.”⁴¹ British colonialism in India repeatedly represented the “native” either as the primitive “Other” and violent, or its exact opposite, completely passive/childlike.⁴² Indian nationalism, in its turn, represented certain kinds of violence and most kinds of mass violence, as the work of “backward” people who were unfortunately ill-educated and insufficiently enlightened.⁴³ Barbara D. Metcalf observes that, in colonial history, India was a bounded entity inhabited by two religious communities. The Hindus are imagined as the original inhabitants and Muslims as foreigners—like the British. In the Indian nationalist movement, the same equations were reproduced. Nationalists look upon Indian nationalism as being founded upon cultural Hinduism, generating its symbols of unity.⁴⁴

Faisal Devji interprets the history of Indian nationalism as a history of differences- the differences that nationalism simultaneously creates and excludes, and the differences that make nationalism possible in the first place. He points out how the Muslim community in India becomes a category without history and is reduced to a communal group.⁴⁵ Indian nationalism serves to underpin the conceptual split between the Indian and the foreigner. The category “Indian” includes Hindus and simultaneously marks Muslims as “foreigners.” The event of the partition of the Indian subcontinent forever places Muslims under scrutiny. Muslims bear the burden

⁴¹ Santhosh Abraham, “Constructing the ‘Extraordinary Criminals’: Mappila Muslims and Legal Encounters in Early British Colonial Malabar,” *Journal of World History* 25, no. 2 (2014): 373–95.

⁴² Gyanendra Pandey, “The Prose of Otherness,” in *Subaltern Studies VIII*, ed. David Arnold and David Hardiman (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁴³ Pandey.

⁴⁴ D Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴⁵ Faisal Devji, “Hindu/Muslim/Indian,” *Public Culture* 5, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 1–18.

to prove their loyalty to the Indian nation at each moment, while Hindus belong seamlessly. They do not carry a similar burden to prove their loyalty.⁴⁶ Pandey points out that the nationalist accounts of popular violence in the subcontinent share certain foundational tropes with colonial accounts. In the nationalist narratives, “backward” sections of the population, the lower classes/castes and marginal groups are represented as agents of violence. Charu Gupta notes that the *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movements organised by *Arya Samaj* and the *Hindu Mahasabha* (All India Hindu Body) in the 1920s constructs a muscular, well-built Hindu man in opposition to past images of an emasculated/effeminate Hindu male during reconversion movements. It serves as a powerful tool to build unity among the Hindu community. At the same time, these movements present the Muslim male as the quintessential rapist and abductor. They also reveal an obsession with Hindu female chastity and purity; the masculinity of the Hindu male is invoked to safeguard the honour of the Hindu women, under threat from the “Other.”⁴⁷

Hegemonic Masculinity

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is used in different fields. In education studies, it is used to understand the dynamics of classroom life, including forms of resistance and intimidation among boys.⁴⁸ Connell and Messerschmidt argue that hegemonic masculinity is different from subordinated masculinity. Even though it

⁴⁶ Pandey, “The Prose of Otherness.”

⁴⁷ Charu Gupta, “Anxious Hindu Masculinities in Colonial North India ‘Shuddhi’ and ‘Sangathan’ Movements,” *CrossCurrents* 61, no. 4 (December 2011): 441–54.

⁴⁸ W Martino, “Boys and Literacy: Exploring the Construction of Hegemonic Masculinities and the Formation of Literate Capacities for Boys in the English Classroom,” *English in Australia*, 1995, 11–24.

could be supported by force, it does not always mean violence. Dominance is achieved through culture, institution and persuasion.⁴⁹ They say:

Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men.⁵⁰

Demetriou identifies two types of hegemonic masculinity- internal and external. External hegemonic masculinity refers to the institutionalization of men's ascendancy over women. Internal hegemonic masculinity refers to the social dominance of one group of men over all other men.⁵¹

Osella and Osella state:

Hegemonic masculinity is an idea, a style, a set of practices of dominance, which coalesce around an idealized type of masculinity as the desirable goal. Those few who manage to achieve the goal will become the dominant men—the hegemonic males—and others will emulate them; the values embodied and espoused by hegemonic males (e.g., autonomy, rationality) will become values by which others will measure themselves—and fail.⁵²

⁴⁹ R W Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19, no. (6) (2005): 829–59.

⁵⁰ Connell and W. Messerschmidt, 832.

⁵¹ D.Z Demetriou, "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique," *Theory and Society*, 2001.

⁵² Caroline Osella and Filippo Osella, *Men and Masculinities in South India* (London: Anthem, 2006), 49.

In all cultures, one kind of masculinity is assigned dominant status or, in other words, attains hegemony. It not only works as a role model to other locations, but is also vehemently used to denigrate and emasculate other men. Hegemonic masculinity not only serves the purpose of patriarchy but is used to propagate the ideology of race, and in cultures like that of India/Kerala, it is used to maintain the hegemony of caste.⁵³ Osella and Osella observe how brahminical masculinity is constituted as ideal in South India, especially in Kerala. In South India, the brahmins, who claim to be “twice born,”⁵⁴ are considered as “true” men. Osella and Osella observe:

Turning to south Asia, certainly the local presentation of Brahminical initiation is explained by senior men in exactly these terms: as a second birth to a male parent, which removes young Brahmin males from women in general and specifically from the taint of birth pollution passed on by the biological mother. Among south Asian Hindus, only ‘twice-born’ castes are entitled to practice these rites of initiation; in Kerala, with its near absence of twice-born castes and preponderance of lower (*sudra* and *avarana*) castes, this effectively means that initiations are an exotic rite confined to an elite minority group—Brahmins.⁵⁵

Osella and Osella bring out the social and cultural implications of the “twice born” status as follows:

And what is particular to the Brahminical model of ‘true men’ is that it conflates a more widely shared cultural ethos of masculinity that stresses power, autonomy, and control with specific Brahminical practices. Brahmins

⁵³ Jenny Rowena P, “Reading Laughter: The Popular Malayalam ‘Comedy-Films’ of the Late 80s and Early 90s.” (Hyderabad, English and Foreign Language University, 2002).

⁵⁴ In Hindu mythology, the three varnas except *shudra* that is, brahmins, kshatriyas, and vaishyas are considered twice born or *dvija*. It is believed that, first they were born physically for father and mother. Second, they are born to a father, who is considered a spiritual master. Twice born ceremonies are also known as *upanayana*.

⁵⁵ Osella and Osella, *Men and Masculinities in South India*, 31.

attempt to represent themselves as the only true and perfect men, because they have not only undergone rites to remove the taint of feminized birth pollution but because they claim that they alone can achieve the highly masculinized goal of total mastery and control of raw power (*shakti*) and the self.⁵⁶

Here, Osella and Osella discuss how brahmins preserve purity and how they maintain hegemonic masculine status through rituals. Their twice-born ceremony is considered as a rebirth from the male parent. It cuts off young brahmin males from women and any pollution associated with birth. Brahmins strive to present themselves as the exclusive and flawless group of males by emphasizing that they have not only undergone rituals to eliminate the impurity of being born from a female, but also asserting that only they are capable of attaining the highly masculine objective of complete dominance and regulation of raw power (*shakti*) and the self.⁵⁷ The goal of an adult male brahmin is not to gain material wealth or produce progeny. Rather it is focused on attaining his own *moksha* or *mukthi* through ritual practices. Brahmins achieve the “true man” status through the initiation ceremonies. The emotional detachment from all material aspects, including women, children and family makes them stronger and highly masculine.

According to Osella and Osella, in Kerala, there are alternative forms of masculinity that oppose the dominant brahmin masculinity. These counter-masculinities are not weak counter-discourses, but rather a prevalent way of being among the *Malayali*. They are characterized by a rejection of brahmin values such as vegetarianism, asceticism, and religiosity.⁵⁸ They also point out that non-brahmin

⁵⁶ Osella and Osella, 31.

⁵⁷ Osella and Osella, *Men and Masculinities in South India*.

⁵⁸ Osella and Osella.

masculinity and culture function as counter-hegemonic to brahmin masculinity. While an ideal man in the brahmin community concentrates on puja practices, a non-brahmin man who provides cash for his family and offers labour in producing paddy is considered an ideal man. They say:

In non-Brahmin styles, we find the opposite of detachment entanglement in the world at the centre of what it means to be a good man: work and providing for the family stand strongly as positive characteristics of adult men. However, because a labourer's work is casual manual labour and his family not a property and prestige group, the endeavours of the labouring man are derided by the higher communities and by those lucky enough to have an udyogam/joli (salaried employment) rather than just pani (labour). Unlike the Brahmin teenager, who is accorded mature male status by all, the lower-status teenager is recognized as a man only within his own group... This brings us back to asking whether the Brahmanic style refers to a hegemonic style. And here we find quite clearly that there exists a counter-discourse to Brahmanic masculinity, which is not simply a compensatory counter-discourse of the weak, but is actually the dominant *Malayali* style of being and is set right against such Brahminical values as vegetarianism/asceticism and religiosity.⁵⁹

In this thesis, drawing on discussions of hegemonic masculinity and counter-masculinity, I argue that the Kerala Muslim community is also engaged in a similar countering of the idealization of brahmin masculinity. The construction of an alternative Muslim masculinity in Muslim children's magazines is such a process. This construction of a counter-Muslim masculinity takes place through re-narrations and re-presentations of mainstream histories and events. Re-presenting the history of Mappila rebellion is prominent among them. These alternative historical narrations are aimed at helping the young Muslim reader to develop confidence in the face of

⁵⁹ Osella and Osella, 51.

mainstream Islamophobic narratives. It also actively constructs a critique of the mainstream history which is disseminated in secular public schools through textbooks.

I find it important to engage with these initiatives in children's literature from a minority location, through the perspectives drawn from the Subaltern Studies initiative led by historians such as Ranajit Guha. Guha has argued that the historiography of Indian nationalism has been dominated by two kinds of elitism for a long period: colonial and nationalist. Both elitisms share the prejudice that Indian nationalist consciousness resulted from elite intervention in the nation-building process. These narratives gloss over the histories of the subaltern movements and interventions in this process. Guha argues that parallel to the domain of elite politics, another domain of politics existed. The principal actors of this second domain, subjugated in dominant historiography, were the subaltern classes and groups. He calls it the "politics of the people." Foregrounding the involvement of subaltern communities in the Indian nation-building process and anti-colonial movements, many scholars have retrieved struggles and interventions of different subaltern communities, drawing them into mainstream academia.⁶⁰ In this thesis, I explore the subaltern/minority contestations for an Indian identity in Muslim children's magazines.

Mappila Muslims and Counter-Public Sphere

Salah Punathil explores how Kerala Muslims, a subaltern group, participate in the public sphere without disavowing their religious identity and faith. Colonial records as he points out, have constructed the religious assertion and engagements in

⁶⁰ Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in *Subaltern Studies II*, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

the public sphere of the Muslims of Kerala during the colonial period as acts of fanaticism.⁶¹ He states:

In the context of colonial Malabar, for Mappila Muslims religion was certainly not something separable from public life. When they engaged in the public in the form of resistance and conflict, religion was intrinsically tied up with their thoughts and actions. The religious character of the Mappilas was depicted as something dangerous by colonizers, as their religion had always been a perceived threat to the colonial power. Hence the colonizers constantly and in all possible ways tried to relegate the Mapillas' religion to the private sphere.⁶²

M.T Ansari examines the Malabar Rebellion that took place in the colonial era and asserts that colonial writings portrayed Mappila Muslims solely in the context of religion. Despite their identities as peasants, working class individuals, or lower caste members, these categories were disregarded and overshadowed by their religious affiliation.⁶³ In post-independence India, we find that the same notions are reflected in popular Malayalam films, classical poetry and other hegemonic as well as popular texts and children's literature in Malayalam.

As children's magazines from subaltern and minority communities, *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* create a public sphere where Muslims are active members, and bring Muslims from the margins to the centre of civic life and society. Depiction of madrasa teachers and students as ideal citizens in *Kurunnukal* is an example. Constructing a global Muslim or creating a sense of *ummah* (community), is another

⁶¹ Salah Punathil, "Kerala Muslims and Shifting Notions of Religion in the Public Sphere," *South Asia Research* 33, no. 1 (2013): 54–69.

⁶² Punathil, 8.

⁶³ M.T Ansari, "Refiguring the Fanatic: Malabar, 1836-1922," in *In Subaltern Studies, No 12*, ed. Shail Mayaram, M.S.S Pandian, and Ajay Skaria (New Delhi: Permanent Black and Ravi Dayal Publisher, 2005).

critical feature of this counter-public sphere in *Malarvadi*. This shared identity or feeling of the *ummah* is constructed through discussions of issues of Muslims across the world.

Significantly, even though these two magazines construct a counter-public sphere, internally they are in a relationship of contestation with each other. In *Kurunnukal*, the counter-public sphere is imagined and constructed through re-narrating the stories of the engagement of traditional Muslims with colonialism, nationalism and the legacy of Arabic-Malayalam and so on. In *Malarvadi*, this counter-public is constructed by re-telling contributions of the reformist organisations to the past and present life of Mappila Muslims.

A Note on Methodology

Initially, I intended to conduct a comparative study between popular and Muslim children's magazines. The project aimed at a thorough analysis of the content, themes, and messaging of these magazines to examine the ways in which they represent childhood and the experiences of children within Muslim communities. The goal was to identify similarities and differences between the two types of publications, with the aim of shedding light on the ways in which minority communities construct and interpret the idea of childhood.

To collect data, I visited the offices of *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* in Calicut, and obtained the necessary permissions to access the archives of these magazines. During these visits, I also spoke extensively with editors of these magazines. During these conversations, I realized that, these magazines were engaged in the task of not only responding to popular mainstream children's magazines such as *Balarama* and *Poombatta*, but were also actively responding to and contesting the concept of

rational childhood put forward by *Eureka* and *Parishad*. During this juncture, I understood the importance of including *Eureka* in the study even though *Eureka* had not been a part of my research purview initially. The inclusion of *Eureka* led to a third category of children's magazine in the domain of this project—science magazines for children. Following this decision, I visited the *Parishad* office located in Calicut to access the archives of *Eureka* and to interact with the editor. I also reached out to the head office of *Balarama* and *Poombatta* for permission to access their archives, but unfortunately, their responses were not welcoming. Therefore, I had to search for libraries that have collections of back copies of these popular children's magazines. I accessed many of the issues for this research from the archives of Appan Thamburan Library, Trissur. I stayed there for a while with my child and partner to access and photocopy these issues.

This study draws from my interviews and interactions with the editors of *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* as well as a critical analysis of the discourse of these magazines against the backdrop of historical/contemporary contexts. While I look at the textual content, the points of view of the editors and other ideologues involved in the magazines, allow me to situate this content in the larger social and historical context of Kerala and the nation. For this purpose, the editorial voice, whether in conversation with me or as published in the issues of the magazines, is an important tool of analysis for me. For instance, as the reader would notice, I demonstrate how the editors and other figures associated with the magazines, carefully imagine a magazine for Muslim children—one that would be simple, attractive and entertaining even while disseminating knowledge about Islamic identity and cultural past. I also look at the ideologies of the parental organisations of *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*—

JIK and *Samastha* respectively to explore how the perspectives and narratives of these magazines fit in with the former.

I have drawn on the conceptual framework of cultural studies as well as the idea of “masculinity” in gender/masculinity studies to carry out my analysis. Cultural studies looks at popular culture and cultural texts as a dynamic site, actively engaged in organising “hegemony” and “consent” for dominant class-caste-community position. However, there is always scope for counter-intervention by subaltern groups in this site. Myths, histories and symbols may be deployed in a range of ways in the site of culture by different groups. As I hope to demonstrate, while the mainstream children’s magazines in Kerala draw from a hegemonic Hindu imagination to shape an ideal *Malayali* identity, the magazines for Muslim children deploy a counter reading of history and cultural symbols to construct an ideal Muslim *Malayali*/citizen.

As many scholars have pointed out, children’s literature is a major site for shaping the minds of children. As Sreenivas⁶⁴ points out, while childhood has been hegemonically represented as a period of innocence and hence, children’s literature must be light-hearted and fun-filled, standard reading materials are addressed to an urban, middle class and upper caste Hindu child reflect her/his worldview. Perry Nodelman⁶⁵ points out that the producers of children’s literature judge what to produce not based on what would appeal to children but what would appeal to parents, teachers, librarians etc. He claims that the homogeneity of childhood is hegemonically produced. Such reframing of children’s literature has helped me to look at the

⁶⁴ Deepa Sreenivas, “Telling Different Tales: Possible Childhoods in Children’s Literature,” *Childhood* 18, no. 3 (2011): 316–22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568211407531>.

⁶⁵ Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children’s Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

ideological implications of popular children's magazines in Malayalam, and understand how they train children to accept and reproduce normative ideologies. The producers of children's magazines from within Muslim communities, on the other hand, deploy children's literature to nurture Muslim children to adopt their cultural identity and past with a sense of confidence and deal with the complexities of being Muslim in the national/global context.

In this thesis, I explore the subaltern/ minority contestations for an Indian identity in Muslim children's magazines and the study also looks at how popular Malayalam children's magazines construct a Muslim "Other" through representations of history, visuals etc. The analysis of these magazines involve examining various features such as images, stories, reader's letters, editorials, contents, and serialized novels. I also analyze souvenirs, speeches of pamphlets, etc. published by different Muslim organisation in Kerala to frame my arguments.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction and maps the argument and structure of the thesis. The second chapter of this study looks at popular children's magazines in Malayalam. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with how *Balarama* and *Poombatta* represent the cultural worlds of the upper class/caste Hindu and fashion an ideal role model for the child readers. The second section focuses on the representation of Muslims as the "Other" in the same popular Malayalam children's magazines. The last section deals with *Eureka*, the first children's science magazine in India, and the ways in which it teaches science through Hindu myths. I argue that the popular children's magazines of Kerala, *Balarama* and *Poombatta*, imagine dominant caste/class

masculine characters as ideal by glorifying a Hindu cultural past and symbols. It is further emphasized by presenting Muslim men as agents of patriarchy and Muslim women as subjugated and pre-modern. Also, *Parishad*, the publisher of *Eureka*, considers science as a means of liberation of human beings from religion and irrational beliefs. This can be done by bringing about social revolution, and *Eureka* claims to critique “irrational” stories which are published in other Malayalam children's magazines. However, I argue that the discourse of *Eureka* is embedded in the very religious ideology from which it is seeking liberation. Thus, even though *Parishad* considers *Eureka* as an important medium for providing science education to young readers, and thereby popularizing scientific temper, it only recreates a modern Hindu childhood, which is rational and superior.

The third chapter focuses on representations of a counter-Muslim masculinity and the construction of a counter-public sphere in *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*. Along with that, the chapter also discusses how these magazines deal with the issues of Muslims across the world. Further, I will also map how *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* construct counter-narratives for Muslim children by using different strategies like re-imagination of Mappila Muslim history, countering the dominant representations of the madrasa as a breeding ground for terrorists after 9/11 etc. The chapter also focuses on how Muslim children's magazines endeavour to shape an ideal citizen not in exclusion of the Muslim identity. They highlight the role that madrasas play in building such a “citizen.” The chapter also deals with how this creates a counter-public sphere where Muslims are actively participating in society. I analyse different fictional stories which allegorically construct contemporary India as “*Jantustan*”-the land of animals-an utopian land that satirically and allegorically represents contemporary problems.

The fourth chapter focuses on how *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* construct different childhoods and womanhood in consonance with the ideologies of their respective parental organisations. In this chapter, I look at how *Malarvadi*, as a children's magazine, introduces its parental organisation's concept of Islam, belief, ritual practices, society, and nation to its child readers, and the ways in which *Kurunnukal* presents traditional Muslim rituals and practices through a set of different narratives. I also look at how language becomes a tool for assertion in *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*. I explore how *Kurunnukal* presents traditional ritual practices like *nercca*, *mouleed*⁶⁶ etc. for readers and how the magazine presents Arabic-Malayalam as a symbol of the cultural past of the Muslim community. The chapter also look at the representation of womanhood in both magazines. Here I argue, though one of the common goals of both these magazines is to contest the dominant representations of Islam/Muslims in popular Malayalam children's magazines, they re-imagine different childhoods as embedded in their ideological and cultural paradigms. Even though both magazines are published from within the same region and religious community, the concept of childhood and strategy to introduce this concept to child readers is different in keeping with the ideological affiliation of each magazine.

To substantiate my argument, I will select examples of narratives and representative strategies from both magazines and will critically analyse these narratives against the backdrop of the range of positions propagated by various JIH scholars and traditional Sunni scholars. I will be referring to works of Abul Ala Mawdudi, founder of JIH, T. K Ubaid, chief editor of *Malarvadi*, the different write-ups published in *Probodhanam*- mouthpiece of JIK, and works and speeches of

⁶⁶ *Mouleed* is a traditional ritual performance, celebrated during the birthday of Prophet Muhammad

scholars like A.P Aboobacker Kanthapuram, Shamsul Ulama etc, to analyse stories and narratives of *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*, respectively. The fifth and final chapter is the conclusion to the dissertation. It summarizes the main themes and argument of my thesis and indicates the limitations and future scope of the study.

Chapter Two

Popular Children's Magazines in Kerala and the Construction of Hindu Masculinity

The chapter is a critical reading of popular children's magazines in Malayalam namely *Poombatta* and *Balarama*, and *Eureka*, a science magazine for children, which were in circulation during the 1970s and 1980s. During this period, the arenas of Malayalam children's publications were dominated by these magazines. As a response to this, multiple periodicals for Muslim children were initiated during the 1980s. During my field work, T.K. Ubaid -editor of *Malarvadi*, the first Muslim children's magazine in Kerala stated:

In 1970s and 1980s, there was an absence of children's magazines which dealt with Muslim culture, beliefs, and history. Existing children's magazines of the time presented Islam and Islamic practices in an imprecise manner and popularized superstitious practices among the readers.⁶⁷

He also pointed out that the late 70s and 80s witnessed a progressive trend among the Muslim community constituted through a rejection of superstitious beliefs and an attempt to embrace rationality. Children's magazines, according to T.K. Ubaid, served as a powerful medium to this end. I received similar responses from editors of other Muslim children's magazines as well. This chapter examines the dominant Hindu imaginations in popular children's magazines of Kerala and how this generated the kind of anxiety expressed above by Ubaid, among the ideologues and scholars of the Muslim community.

⁶⁷ T.K Ubaid interview by Noorunnida.M Calicut, December 15, 2016.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section deals with how *Balarama* and *Poombatta* represent and validate the cultural hegemony of the upper class/caste Hindu through constructions of ideal Hindu masculine role models. The second section focuses on the representation of Muslims as the “Other” in popular children’s magazines in Malayalam. The last section deals with *Eureka*, the first science magazine for children in India, and the ways in which Hindu myths are percolated and reinforced within a discourse that publicly presents itself as oriented towards teaching science.

I argue that the imagery of popular children’s magazines of Kerala, *Balarama* and *Poombatta*, is rooted in the Hindu ideal-wherein dominant caste/class masculine characters and a glorified Hindu cultural past and symbols are foregrounded. And this is further emphasized by presenting Muslim men as agents of patriarchy and Muslim women as subjugated and pre-modern. Also, *Parishad*, the publisher of *Eureka*, views science as a means for the liberation of human beings from religion and irrational beliefs. *Parishad* and *Eureka* aim to bring about social revolution through science. This is done by critiquing “irrational” stories which are published in popular Malayalam children’s magazines. But a close examination of the discourse of *Eureka* would reveal that it is embedded in the very religious ideologies from which it is seeking liberation. Even though *Parishad* considers *Eureka* as an important medium for providing science education to young readers and thereby popularizing scientific temper, it eventually ends up constructing a “modern rational Hindu child.”

SECTION I

Balarama and Poombatta as Companions of Amar Chitra Katha

As companions of *Amar Chitra Katha*, both *Balarama* and *Poombatta* translate different *Amar Chitra Katha* tales into Malayalam, and represent the hegemonic Hindu masculinity as desirable and ideal through pictures and mythological stories. Many scholars have critically analysed the way *Amar Chitra Katha* constructs history and myths by signalling a direction towards a hegemonic Hindu worldview that constitutes our present. Chandra presents a case about how *Amar Chitra Katha* portrays Hindu super heroes' fights against foreign oppressors, such as the *asuras*, Muslims, or British. These heroes fought either to protect Hindus or were supported by Hindu rulers. Chandra investigates how *Amar Chitra Katha* constructs these stories, images, and myths to seem authentic and Indian, so that the shift from "Hindu" to "national" is made to seem simple and effortless.⁶⁸

Sreenivas observes that *Amar Chitra Katha*'s imagination of an "Indian" constitutes a culturally empowered Hindu with a global vision which replaces the subject of the welfare state. The stories in the magazine are filled with values of self-confidence, success and achievement of upper caste Hindu men.⁶⁹ She also argues that *Amar Chitra Katha*'s demonizing narratives about Muslim characters reveal the anxieties underlying the Hindu majoritarian discourse in postcolonial India. These representations induce disturbing memories of the "weak Hindu male" who is

⁶⁸ Chandra, *The Classic Popular Amar Chitra Katha* 1967-2007.

⁶⁹ Sreenivas, *Sculpting the Middle Class: History, Masculinity and the Amar Chitra Katha*.

responsible for the loss of the nation, succumbing to the aggression and deception of the Muslim/colonial “outsider,” in Hindutva historiography.⁷⁰ She says:

The representation of the Muslim male in literature, cinema, and other popular cultural genres in post-partition India has been marked by love, tragedy, grandeur, betrayal, or risk, and often a combination of these. It has never quite been free from an underlying anxiety of belonging/non-belonging to the idea of the nation, but at certain moments it has foregrounded a strong, persevering masculinity, especially in cinema.⁷¹

ബാലരമ അമർച്ചിത്രകഥാ ഇതവരെ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ച കഥകൾ			
1. ദുഷ്ടാചാര്യൻ	67. നല്ല വിശ്വാസം	132. കാളിദാസൻ	197. ബാലനീയ്യൻ
2. അനുകൂലം	68. സൗധ	133. ചന്ദ്രൻ	198. കാളാമുഖം
3. ചന്ദ്രൻ	69. വിദ്യാലയം	134. ദുഷ്ടാചാര്യൻ പങ്കാളി	199. കൃഷ്ണൻ
4. ചന്ദ്രൻ	70. കർമ്മശാസ്ത്രം	135. സത്യൻ	200. അപ്പൻ
5. ചന്ദ്രൻ	71. വിദ്യാലയം	136. അമർച്ചിത്രകഥാ	201. ബാലനീയ്യൻ
6. ചന്ദ്രൻ	72. അനുകൂലം	137. ബാലനീയ്യൻ	202. ദുഷ്ടാചാര്യൻ
7. ചന്ദ്രൻ	73. നല്ല വിശ്വാസം	138. അപ്പൻ	203. അപ്പൻ
8. ചന്ദ്രൻ	74. ദുഷ്ടാചാര്യൻ	139. ചന്ദ്രൻ	204. അപ്പൻ
9. ചന്ദ്രൻ	75. ബാലനീയ്യൻ	140. അമർച്ചിത്രകഥാ	205. അപ്പൻ
10. ചന്ദ്രൻ	76. ദുഷ്ടാചാര്യൻ	141. അപ്പൻ	206. അപ്പൻ
11. ചന്ദ്രൻ	77. അനുകൂലം	142. അപ്പൻ	207. അപ്പൻ
12. ചന്ദ്രൻ	78. കർമ്മശാസ്ത്രം	143. അപ്പൻ	208. അപ്പൻ
13. ചന്ദ്രൻ	79. ദുഷ്ടാചാര്യൻ	144. അപ്പൻ	209. അപ്പൻ
14. ചന്ദ്രൻ	80. ചന്ദ്രൻ	145. അപ്പൻ	210. അപ്പൻ
15. ചന്ദ്രൻ	81. ചന്ദ്രൻ	146. അപ്പൻ	211. അപ്പൻ
16. ചന്ദ്രൻ	82. ചന്ദ്രൻ	147. അപ്പൻ	212. അപ്പൻ
17. ചന്ദ്രൻ	83. ചന്ദ്രൻ	148. അപ്പൻ	213. അപ്പൻ
18. ചന്ദ്രൻ	84. ചന്ദ്രൻ	149. അപ്പൻ	214. അപ്പൻ
19. ചന്ദ്രൻ	85. ചന്ദ്രൻ	150. അപ്പൻ	215. അപ്പൻ
20. ചന്ദ്രൻ	86. ചന്ദ്രൻ	151. അപ്പൻ	216. അപ്പൻ
21. ചന്ദ്രൻ	87. ചന്ദ്രൻ	152. അപ്പൻ	217. അപ്പൻ
22. ചന്ദ്രൻ	88. ചന്ദ്രൻ	153. അപ്പൻ	218. അപ്പൻ
23. ചന്ദ്രൻ	89. ചന്ദ്രൻ	154. അപ്പൻ	219. അപ്പൻ
24. ചന്ദ്രൻ	90. ചന്ദ്രൻ	155. അപ്പൻ	220. അപ്പൻ
25. ചന്ദ്രൻ	91. ചന്ദ്രൻ	156. അപ്പൻ	221. അപ്പൻ
26. ചന്ദ്രൻ	92. ചന്ദ്രൻ	157. അപ്പൻ	222. അപ്പൻ
27. ചന്ദ്രൻ	93. ചന്ദ്രൻ	158. അപ്പൻ	223. അപ്പൻ
28. ചന്ദ്രൻ	94. ചന്ദ്രൻ	159. അപ്പൻ	224. അപ്പൻ
29. ചന്ദ്രൻ	95. ചന്ദ്രൻ	160. അപ്പൻ	225. അപ്പൻ
30. ചന്ദ്രൻ	96. ചന്ദ്രൻ	161. അപ്പൻ	226. അപ്പൻ
31. ചന്ദ്രൻ	97. ചന്ദ്രൻ	162. അപ്പൻ	227. അപ്പൻ
32. ചന്ദ്രൻ	98. ചന്ദ്രൻ	163. അപ്പൻ	228. അപ്പൻ
33. ചന്ദ്രൻ	99. ചന്ദ്രൻ	164. അപ്പൻ	229. അപ്പൻ
34. ചന്ദ്രൻ	100. ചന്ദ്രൻ	165. അപ്പൻ	230. അപ്പൻ
35. ചന്ദ്രൻ		166. അപ്പൻ	231. അപ്പൻ
36. ചന്ദ്രൻ		167. അപ്പൻ	232. അപ്പൻ
37. ചന്ദ്രൻ		168. അപ്പൻ	233. അപ്പൻ
38. ചന്ദ്രൻ		169. അപ്പൻ	234. അപ്പൻ
39. ചന്ദ്രൻ		170. അപ്പൻ	235. അപ്പൻ
40. ചന്ദ്രൻ		171. അപ്പൻ	236. അപ്പൻ
41. ചന്ദ്രൻ		172. അപ്പൻ	237. അപ്പൻ
42. ചന്ദ്രൻ		173. അപ്പൻ	238. അപ്പൻ
43. ചന്ദ്രൻ		174. അപ്പൻ	239. അപ്പൻ
44. ചന്ദ്രൻ		175. അപ്പൻ	240. അപ്പൻ
45. ചന്ദ്രൻ		176. അപ്പൻ	241. അപ്പൻ
46. ചന്ദ്രൻ		177. അപ്പൻ	242. അപ്പൻ
47. ചന്ദ്രൻ		178. അപ്പൻ	243. അപ്പൻ
48. ചന്ദ്രൻ		179. അപ്പൻ	244. അപ്പൻ
49. ചന്ദ്രൻ		180. അപ്പൻ	245. അപ്പൻ
50. ചന്ദ്രൻ		181. അപ്പൻ	246. അപ്പൻ
51. ചന്ദ്രൻ		182. അപ്പൻ	247. അപ്പൻ
52. ചന്ദ്രൻ		183. അപ്പൻ	248. അപ്പൻ
53. ചന്ദ്രൻ		184. അപ്പൻ	249. അപ്പൻ
54. ചന്ദ്രൻ		185. അപ്പൻ	250. അപ്പൻ
55. ചന്ദ്രൻ		186. അപ്പൻ	251. അപ്പൻ
56. ചന്ദ്രൻ		187. അപ്പൻ	252. അപ്പൻ
57. ചന്ദ്രൻ		188. അപ്പൻ	253. അപ്പൻ
58. ചന്ദ്രൻ		189. അപ്പൻ	254. അപ്പൻ
59. ചന്ദ്രൻ		190. അപ്പൻ	255. അപ്പൻ
60. ചന്ദ്രൻ		191. അപ്പൻ	256. അപ്പൻ
61. ചന്ദ്രൻ		192. അപ്പൻ	257. അപ്പൻ
62. ചന്ദ്രൻ		193. അപ്പൻ	258. അപ്പൻ
63. ചന്ദ്രൻ		194. അപ്പൻ	259. അപ്പൻ
64. ചന്ദ്രൻ		195. അപ്പൻ	260. അപ്പൻ
65. ചന്ദ്രൻ		196. അപ്പൻ	261. അപ്പൻ
66. ചന്ദ്രൻ		197. അപ്പൻ	262. അപ്പൻ

Image 3. List of *Balarama-Amar Chitra Katha*, *Balarama*, May, 1992.

⁷⁰ Sreenivas, “The Muslim ‘Other’: Figures of Evil and Charisma from Popular Visual Culture in India.”

⁷¹ Sreenivas, 1.

Though *Amar Chitra Katha* and popular Malayalam children's magazines complement each other, we can see some disparities between these magazines. These disparities unravel the cultural differences between these magazines. Fine visuals and drawings are one of the major attractions of *Amar Chitra Katha*. The comics are filled with images of slim and curvaceous women and muscular/well-built men. Most of the stories in these magazines are set in some parts of north India like Varanasi, Mithila, Dwaraka etc. But in *Poombatta* and *Balarama*, most of the stories take place in parts of Kerala like Ananthapuri, Thiruvithamkoor etc. In these magazines, women appear in cotton saree with fewer ornaments, and men appear in *mundu* and shirt, or in the attire of the *yodhavu* (warrior). While *Amar Chitra Katha* narrates stories mostly through comics, *Balarama* and *Poombatta* consist of a range of narratives- stories, comics, articles, biography, cartoons, serialized stories etc.

Directly influenced by the *Amar Chitra Katha*, *Balarama* and *Poombatta* also share the notion of Hindu masculinity and cultural practices as "ideal." They also represent Muslims as "backward" and as the social and cultural "Other." In *Amar Chitra Katha*, this process of otherization is made possible by presenting Muslim rulers like Alauddin Kilji, Aurangzeb etc as perpetrators of violence and inhuman practices. Compared to *Amar Chitra Katha*, in *Balarama* and *Poombatta*, the othering of Muslim characters take place in a more subtle manner. *Balarama* and *Poombatta* focus less on representing Muslim men as unambiguously villainous.

These magazines present them as less progressive, incapable of acquiring "modern standards" in areas such as parenting, hygiene, education etc. They often appear as the ones who are always in need of mediation and scaffolding to acquire such standards. This opens up the scope for the Hindu to emerge as a saviour and

reformer, and help the “less modern” Muslim men to “acquire modernity.” Within the private sphere, Muslim men are portrayed as hyper-masculine and patriarchal. They are depicted as enslaving their women and denying basic rights to them such as maintenance, education etc. Subsequent sections of this chapter deal with how *Balarama* and *Poombatta* represent the Hindu way of life, myths, heroes, and values as desirable and the foundation of modern India, and Muslims and their way of life as undesirable and pre-modern. In both magazines, upper-caste/class Hindu masculinity is the major tool which is envisioned to re/create a modern Hindu childhood.

Hegemonic masculinity

Let me begin with a brief engagement with the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is used in different fields, and within education research, it is employed to comprehend the dynamics of power relations in classrooms, including forms of defiance and intimidation among male students.⁷² Connell and Messerschmidt argue that hegemonic masculinity is different from subordinated masculinity. Even though it could be supported by force, it does not always mean violence. Dominance is achieved through culture, institution and persuasion.⁷³ They note:

Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honoured way of

⁷² Martino, “Boys and Literacy: Exploring the Construction of Hegemonic Masculinities and the Formation of Literate Capacities for Boys in the English Classroom.”

⁷³ R W Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender & Society* 19, no. (6) (2005): 829–59.

being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men.⁷⁴

Demetriou identifies two types of hegemonic masculinity- internal and external. External hegemonic masculinity refers to the institutionalization of men's ascendancy over women. Internal hegemonic masculinity refers to the social dominance of one group of men over all other men.⁷⁵ Osella and Osella state:

Hegemonic masculinity is an idea, a style, a set of practices of dominance, which coalesce around an idealized type of masculinity as the desirable goal. Those few who manage to achieve the goal will become the dominant men—the hegemonic males—and others will emulate them; the values embodied and espoused by hegemonic males (e.g., autonomy, rationality) will become values by which others will measure themselves—and fail.⁷⁶

In all cultures, one kind of masculinity is assigned dominant status or, in other words, attains hegemony. It not only works as a role model to other locations, but is also vehemently used to denigrate and emasculate other men. Hegemonic masculinity not only serves the purpose of patriarchy but is used to propagate the ideology of race, and in cultures like that of India/Kerala, it is used to maintain the hegemony of caste.⁷⁷ Osella and Osella observe how brahminical masculinity is constituted as ideal in

⁷⁴ Connell and W. Messerschmidt, 832.

⁷⁵ Demetriou, “Connell’s Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique.”

⁷⁶ Osella and Osella, *Men and Masculinities in South India*, 49.

⁷⁷ Rowena P, “Reading Laughter: The Popular Malayalam ‘Comedy-Films’ of the Late 80s and Early 90s.”

South India, especially in Kerala. In South India, the brahmins, who claim to be “twice born,”⁷⁸ are considered as “true” men. Osella and Osella further observe:

Turning to south Asia, certainly the local presentation of Brahminical initiation is explained by senior men in exactly these terms: as a second birth to a male parent, which removes young Brahmin males from women in general and specifically from the taint of birth pollution passed on by the biological mother. Among south Asian Hindus, only ‘twice-born’ castes are entitled to practice these rites of initiation; in Kerala, with its near absence of twice-born castes and preponderance of lower (*sudra* and *avarana*) castes, this effectively means that initiations are an exotic rite confined to an elite minority group—Brahmins. And what is particular to the Brahminical model of ‘true men’ is that it conflates a more widely shared cultural ethos of masculinity that stresses power, autonomy, and control with specific Brahminical practices. Brahmins attempt to represent themselves as the only true and perfect men, because they have not only undergone rites to remove the taint of feminized birth pollution but because they claim that they alone can achieve the highly masculinized goal of total mastery and control of raw power (*shakti*) and the self.⁷⁹

Here Osella and Osella discuss how brahmins preserve purity and how they maintain hegemonic masculine status through rituals. Their twice-born ceremony is considered as a rebirth from the male parent. It cuts off young brahmin males from women and any pollution associated with birth. Brahmins strive to present themselves as the exclusive and flawless group of males by emphasizing that they have not only undergone rituals to eliminate the impurity of being born from a female, but also asserting that only they are capable of attaining the highly masculine objective of

⁷⁸ In Hindu mythology, the three varnas except *shudra* that is, brahmins, kshatriyas, and vaishyas are considered twice born or *dvija*. It is believed that, first they were born physically for father and mother. Second, they are born to a father, who is considered a spiritual master. Twice born ceremonies are also known as *upanayana*.

⁷⁹ Osella and Osella, *Men and Masculinities in South India*, 31.

complete dominance and regulation of raw power (*shakti*) and the self. Goal of an adult male brahmin is not to gain material wealth or produce progeny. Rather it is focused on attaining his own *moksha* or *mukthi* through different ritual practices. Brahmins achieve the “true man” status through the initiation ceremonies. The emotional detachment from all material aspects, including women, children and family makes them stronger and highly masculine.

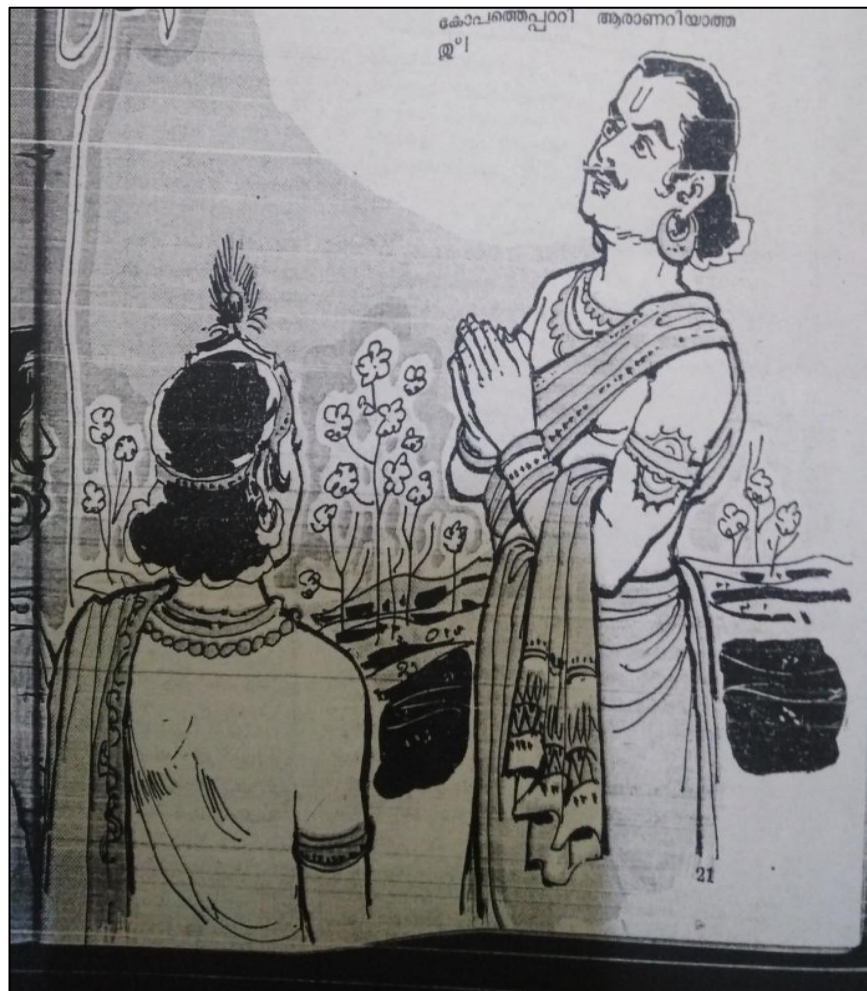


Image 4. Karna and Krishna, *Poombatta*, October, 1986.

Hegemonic Hindu Masculinity in *Balarama* and *Poombatta*

In *Balarama* and *Poombatta*, we see that the upper caste/class male, who fights for his kingdom and performs all the ritualistic duties, is considered as an ideal

man. Such idealization is achieved by constructing Hindu mythological and historical masculine characters as perfect role models for readers. These magazines abound in visual representations of the fair, tall and well-built Hindu male as the embodiment of the desirable human body (see image 4).

In *Poombatta*, in the 1970s, there is an important series titled *Mahanmaaraya Baratheeyar* (The Great Indians). The series portrays personalities like Velu Thambi Dalawa,⁸⁰ Raja Ravi Varma,⁸¹ Mokshithan,⁸² etc as great Indians. Under this title, the magazine deploys both mythological and historical characters to introduce children to “Indian” culture. In *Poombatta*, rarely do we see any representation of “great Indian women.” Through the choice of the title, *Mahanmaraya Baratheeyar* (The Great Indians), and masculine characters as role models, *Poombatta* draws an analogy between nation and manliness. One can discern the similarity with Bankim Chandra’s idea of *anushilon*. Bankim Chandra uses the term to indicate “culture.” His idea of perfectibility is embodied in the *adarsa purush* or “the ideal man.”⁸³

In *The Small Voice of History*, Ranajit Guha observes that the practice of *anushilon* “meant the cultivation of innate human faculties, harmonization of their respective moments.”⁸⁴ Guha observes that by presenting the perfection in humanity as *adarsa purush*, Bankim Chandra foregrounds a perfect man as a model for everyone to imitate. For him, Krishna is the exemplary *adarsa purush*, the perfect

⁸⁰ Thambi Chempakaraman Velayudhan, also known as Velu Thambi, was the Dalawa of Travancore Kingdom. He led insurrection against British East Indian Company in the early 18th century.

⁸¹ Raja Ravi varma (1848-1906) was an Indian painter and artist.

⁸² A Hindu mythical character

⁸³ Veena Das, “Subaltern as Perspective,” in *Subaltern Studies. Writings on South Asian History and Society* No. 6, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 310–24.

⁸⁴ Ranajit Guha, “The Small Voice of History,” in *Subaltern Studies IX*, ed. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

combination of physical and mental faculties, fit for emulation by other men. He was a paradigm of human perfection. Guha also argues that, through constructing human perfectibility as embodied in *adarsa purush*, Bankim Chandra imagines humanity through a masculine perspective.



Image 5. Veluthambi Dalawa and an old woman, *Poombatta*, August 1979

To understand how the idea of “perfectibility” plays out in *Poombatta*, let us look at an issue published in June 1979 that talks about Veluthambi Dalawa. He was the Minister, or *Dalawa*, of the Indian kingdom of Travancore (1802-1809) during the regime of Maharaja Bala Rama Varma Kulashekhara Perumal. *Poombatta* describes him as follows: “He was courageous, strong, and possessed clemency, country

devotion, sacrifice and desire for truth and duty.”⁸⁵ The visual representation of Veluthambi Dalawa as fair skinned and tall demonstrates the imagination of an ideal ruler in *Poombatta* (see image 5).

In the image, an old woman is making an appeal to Veluthambi Dalawa. And he empathetically listens to her plea. The woman is sitting in front of him. The image strains against the rules of hierarchy by placing the subject seated in front of a ruler in close proximity. This shows his kindness and respect towards the old woman irrespective of her social status. In the picture, we do not see any of his assistants or bodyguards. This signals his bravery and empathy for subjects that make him venture out as a lonely wanderer, forever ready to reach his subjects in need. His gold ornaments and garments signal his social status. And his garments and body posture are closer to those of a Kshatriya warrior and *Kalaripayattu yodhavu*⁸⁶ in Kerala.

Another issue of the magazine represents Raja Ravi Varma as a great Indian. The magazine highlights his “hard work, self-pride, patriotism and fervent art worship.”⁸⁷ There is also a mention that these virtues are a result of his knowledge of the *puranas* that he learned from his mother. The themes he selects for his paintings also arise from the *puranas*.⁸⁸ Muthu Swami Dhikshithar is another person in this series of great personalities. He is represented as an ideal character who did long *tapas*⁸⁹ for his success. He did seven long years of *upasana* and chanted *sreevidhya*

⁸⁵ Bharatheeyan, “Mahanmaraya Bharatheeyar- Veluthambi Dalawa (Great Indians-Veluthambi Dalawa),” *Poombatta*, August 1979, 34.

⁸⁶ *Kalaripayattu* is an Indian martial art originated in Kerala. One who masters in *Kalaripayattu* is commonly known as *Yodhavu*.

⁸⁷ Bharatheeyan, “Mahanmaraya Bharatheeyan-Raja Ravi Varma (Great Indians -Raja Ravi Varma),” *Poombatta*, July 1979, 27.

⁸⁸ Bharatheeyan, “Mahanmaraya Bharatheeyan-Raja Ravi Varma (Great Indians -Raja Ravi Varma).”

⁸⁹ *Tapas* is an ascetic practice voluntarily carried out to achieve spiritual power.

mantra for achieving the blessing of Goddess Vidhya. Finally, the Goddess blessed him and granted him the artistic gift of music.⁹⁰

The above narratives also show *Poombatta*'s admiration for "merit." Instead of directly referring to the protagonist's caste and social status, the magazine gives us some hints about their childhood and family. Their caste and social identity are signalled through the forms of dressing, education, cultural practices, taste etc. For example, Raja Ravi Varma's taste and admiration of art come from the *puranas* and Hindu mythological stories that he learned in his childhood. Similarly, Muthu Swami Deekshithar did long *tapas* for attaining skills in music. Their merit and skills arise from their caste privilege, experience, and taste. Thus, their cultural practices paved the way for their success and quality. While foregrounding persons like Raja Ravi Varma, Dheekisthar, Veluthambi Dalawa etc as symbols of success and greatness, these magazines simultaneously invisibilize the success and talents of people from other social locations.

Masculinity, Mythology and Nationalism

Balarama and *Poombatta* also deploy "the vedic Aryan past" to create nationalist sentiments among readers. Chatterjee argues that the idea of "Indian nationalism," synonymous with "Hindu nationalism" is not the vestige of some pre-modern religious conception. It is an entirely modern, rationalist and historicist idea.⁹¹ He also points out that the "Hindu-ness" in this historical conception is constituted through hegemonic and appropriating strategies: anti-vedic and anti-brhaminical

⁹⁰ Bharatheeyan, "Mahanmaraya Bharatheeyar- Dheekshithar (Great Indians - Dheekshithar)," *Poombatta*, April 1980.

⁹¹ Partha Chatterjee, "Claims on the Past: The Genealogy of Modern Historiography in Bengal," in *Subaltern Studies. Writings on South Asian History and Society No. 8*, ed. David Arnold and David Hardiman (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

religion such as Buddhism and Jainism are re-imagined as “Hindu.” Simultaneously, it is exclusionary: it excludes religions like Christianity and Islam.⁹² He exemplifies this process in the context of Bengal, where the Bengali upper caste/ middle class identity is re-imagined through historical narratives. These narratives, such as novels of Bankim Chandra, emerge from an urge to re-write the history of Bengal because he is not able to find a “true” history of Bengal in school history textbooks.

Bankim Chandra objects to these textbooks because they do not trace the true history of Bengal to a glorious vedic history. Chatterjee points out that this re-written history excludes Dalits, Muslims and other subaltern groups. Through upper caste-middle class historical narratives, it foregrounds a Hindu nationalism which talks about the glorious past of Hinduism, the Dark Ages of Muslim rulers, and envisions the unification of modern Indian state, when its glorious *puranic* past would be restored.⁹³ Charu Gupta says that:

In colonial India, manhood emerged as a national preoccupation. Colonialism justified itself through masculine images, and nationalism worked out its own versions of it, expressing individual concerns to collective anxieties over the nation's manliness and femaleness. Masculinity was expressed in various ways: from Vivekananda to Gandhi, from Sanatan Dharmists to Arya Samajists, from notions of brahmacharya (celibacy) to the images of a warrior Krishna.⁹⁴

She notes that *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movements during 1920s, organised by Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha (An All-India Hindu Body), construed a full-

⁹² Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁹³ Chatterjee.

⁹⁴ Gupta, “Anxious Hindu Masculinities in Colonial North India ‘Shuddhi’ and ‘Sangathan’ Movements,” 315.

bodied Hindu masculine man in opposition to past images of an emasculated/effeminate Hindu male during reconversion movements. It served as a power tool to build unity amongst the Hindu community. Concomitantly Muslim masculinity was constructed as lascivious, degenerate and a threat to the “honour” of Hindu women. They also emphasized Hindu female chastity and purity; women were to be protected from the "Other" by invoking Hindu masculinity.⁹⁵ Taking a cue from Gupta⁹⁶ and Chatterjee,⁹⁷ I argue that *Balarama* and *Poombatta* present modern India through a Hindu masculinist lens.

For example, an issue of *Balarama* published in November 1976 includes an article about the famous poet Kalidasa's *Kumara Sambavam*.⁹⁸ The article narrates the poetic beauty of *Kumara Sambavam* and stories of famous kings in Raghu dynasty,⁹⁹ namely Dileepa, Raghu, Aja, Dasharatha, Sree Rama, Kusha and Adhithi. It presents them as ideal rulers and mentions that their prime concern was the well-being of their subjects. King Rama is presented as a perfect ruler. The article mentions that he abandoned his wife, Sita, in the forest for the satisfaction of his subjects and that he lived alone after their separation. The concluding part of the article poses a question as to whether we can find a better king than Rama in history and literature.¹⁰⁰

For *Balarama*, a perfect man is one who places the well-being of his subjects and kingdom above his personal relationships. The magazine portrays King Rama as

⁹⁵ Gupta, “Anxious Hindu Masculinities in Colonial North India ‘Shuddhi’ and ‘Sangathan’ Movements.”

⁹⁶ Gupta.

⁹⁷ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories*.

⁹⁸ *Kumara Sambavam* is an epic poem by Kalidasa. It is considered as the finest work of Kalidasa. The poem basically talks about the birth of Kumara, the son of Shiva and Parvati.

⁹⁹ According to Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsha*, Raghu was the ruler of the Ikshvaku dynasty.

¹⁰⁰ “Kumara Sambvam,” *Balarama*, November 1976.

having qualities like, “sacrifice,” “courage,” “hard work” and “dedication.”¹⁰¹ In this manner, the magazine tries to create a reader who is ready to work hard for the nation without personal sentiments. King Rama is an ideal man/ruler despite having abandoned his wife in the deep forest because he does this for the sake of the wellbeing of his subjects and nation. This demonstrates how acts of aggressive and oppressive masculine power are turned into “ideal conduct.”



Image 6 Nachikethas and Yama, *Poombatta*, March, 1979

Mahanaya Bharatheeyar in the March 1979 edition of *Poombatta* is about a brahmin boy Nachikethas, a mythological character. The story of Nachikethas goes like this, one day Nachikethas sees his father Uddalakan donating old cows instead of

¹⁰¹ “Kumara Sambvam,” 12.

young ones to brahmins. The child feels gloomy that his father's donations are of little value. Unhappy Nachikethas questions his father. Eventually the father gets angry and yells, "I will give you a way to Yama; the Lord of death,"¹⁰² After the incident, the boy, Nachikethas feel disturbed by his father's "unjust" rage. To correct this behaviour, the boy decides to report himself to Yama. In front of the palace of Yama, Nachikethas waits for Yama for three days without revealing his brahmin identity. Eventually when Yama recognizes him, he offers three boons to the boy. The first boon the boy asks for is, "May my father's rage settle and may he welcome me lovingly when I return home." This wish is granted by Yama. The concluding part of the article says, "Do not ask Nachikethas about his home, address, and place. He is a boy from *Bharatham*. He showed the rightful path to his deviant father. He is an ideal character who everyone can imitate."¹⁰³

Here, the mythological characters Nachikethas and Rama are imagined as ideal role models for young readers who need to be trained to be ideal citizens. Through such narratives, *Poombatta* attempts to teach its readers about the responsibilities and values a good citizen should hold on to. It is not surprising that these values are derived from the brahminic way of life, also known as *dharma*.¹⁰⁴ Through the representation of Nachiketas, the narrative posits the brahminic way of life as worthy of emulation by the young readers, preparing them to grow up as model citizens of the nation.

¹⁰² Bharatheeyan, "Mahanmaraya Bharatheeyar- Nachikethass (Great Indians-Nachikethass)," *Poombatta*, March 1979, 53.

¹⁰³ Bharatheeyan, 55.

¹⁰⁴ In Hinduism, *dharma* means "duty", "morality." It is believed that the concept originated from the vedas. Though the concept is universal, different people have different duties and obligations according to their age and circumstances.

The Authority of Hindu Cultural Practices: Constructing a Hindu *Malayali* Identity

Aside from these representations, *Balarama* and *Poombatta* present the cultural capital of upper-caste/class Hindu as the standard, and glorify the art, music and culture of this group as “great” while excluding the cultural practices and arts of other communities. One may draw on Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital to understand this phenomenon. He argues that cultural capital is the compilation of symbolic elements like skills, mannerisms, taste etc. that one acquires by being a part of a particular social location. Sharing this cultural capital with others creates a shared identity and feeling of belongingness.¹⁰⁵ In *Balarama*, a shared sense of *Malayali* identity, the “we-feeling,” and belongingness is constructed through presenting different Hindu festivals and celebrations as national festivals of Kerala. What I am arguing is, as a children’s magazine from a majority community, *Balarama* represents certain hegemonic festivals of Kerala as symbols of inclusion, and the magazine claims that these hegemonic festivals can integrate Keralites across the world. However, underlying this integration is the exclusion of many lower caste/class, tribal, and other religious festivals in Kerala.

For example, the issue of *Balarama* in September 1977 includes a writeup with the title *Hari Sree*. The write-up contains an image that depicts a young male child seated on an elder teacher's lap, inscribes something onto a plate. A woman, in the background, eagerly watching the boy’s attempt to write. There is a *nilavilakku*¹⁰⁶ beside them. The picture is in the context of the *vidyarambham*¹⁰⁷ ceremony of a little

¹⁰⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (London: Routledge, 1984).

¹⁰⁶ *Nilavilakku* is a traditional lamp commonly used for Hindu ceremonies in Kerala.

¹⁰⁷ In Hindu households of Kerala, celebrating *vidhyarambam* ceremony is quite common. It is observed on Vijayadasami day.

boy. At the ceremony, an elderly man called *ashan*, (a cleric/tutor), takes the hand of a young child and guides them to write the initial letters of the Malayalam language in a plate of rice.¹⁰⁸ In the article, The author recalls his *vidyarambham* and expresses exclaims that children nowadays are taught the letter "ra"¹⁰⁹ first, which is considered the easiest letter in Malayalam, instead of the more complex letter "aa" which he had learned first. Then he explains purpose of the opening prayer of *vidyarambham*, "*harisree ganapatheya nama.*"¹¹⁰

Here, the magazine presents an "ideal" way of starting formal schooling. It assures that a student who prays to Lord *Ganapathi* during the initial ceremony would attain success. In Hindu households, *vidhyarabham* day is celebrated in connection with Lord Durga's victory against Mahishasura, who is popularly known as the Buffalo demon. The myth itself shows upper caste dominance over lower castes. Thus, *Balarama* connects the concept of schooling and ideal parenting with beliefs and rituals of upper caste Hindu households.

Similarly, *Balarama* considers the festivals and celebrations of Hindu households as the national festivals of Kerala. It says:

Onam is the national festival of Kerala, irrespective of caste and religion. Keralites celebrate and enjoy delicious food during the days of *Onam*. On these days, children collect flowers from fields and wander around with joy like butterflies. And the festival is a golden thread that connects all Keralites.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Noorunnida, "Children's Magazines and Different Childhoods in Kerala."

¹⁰⁹ Malayalam alphabets have 56 letters. In which the letter "ra" is considered an easier one to write. And the sound 'aa' in the Malayalam alphabet is considered the most difficult one to write.

¹¹⁰ "Hari Sree," *Balarama*, September 1977.

¹¹¹ "Editorial," *Balarama*, April 1974, 2.

Editorial of another issue of *Balarama* talks about three Hindu festivals of Kerala, *Vishu*¹¹², *Onam*¹¹³ and *Thiruvathira*.¹¹⁴ The editorial says:

These three (*Vishu*, *Onam*, and *Thiruvathira*) are the indigenous festivals of Kerala. *Onam* is a symbol of prosperity; *Thiruvathira* is the celebration of women and *Vishu* is the annual festival of cultivation. It is believed that the impact of *vishukkani* yields throughout the year. Folks arrange *vishukkani* on the previous night of *Vishu* with cucumber, jackfruit, coconut, mango, rice etc in front of Krishna. On the day of *Vishu*, everyone gets up at *saraswathi yamam* and takes a glance of *vishukkani* as soon as they wake up. After this practice, an elder member of the family gives *kaineettam*, or gifts, to all family members, and later *vishu kanji*, a delicious food is served. The idea and message of *Vishu* will encourage youth and children to take part in the nation building process.¹¹⁵

The above two editorials portray different Hindu celebrations as indigenous festivals of Kerala, and encourage readers to be a part of this celebration. By presenting the festivals as accommodative despite caste and religious differences, the

¹¹² *Vishu* celebrates at first day of Malayalam month of *Medam*. The festival is associated with two myths: one is assassination of Ravana and second is assassination of Narakasura

¹¹³ The celebration of *Onam* is common among Hindu households of Kerala. It is observed on *Thiruvonam* day. In Hindu mythology, King Mahabali is one of the *asura* kings who ruled Kerala, and during his reign, his subjects lived in prosperity. The king defeats the *devas* (Gods). The jealous and furious *devas* approach Lord Vishnu to help them defeat Mahabali. Vishnu takes the form of a dwarf, popularly known as Vamana. He approaches Mahabali and asks for three paces of land. The king agrees. Suddenly, Vamana grows, becoming a gigantic figure and with two paces, covers everything Mahabali ruled over. For the third pace the king offers his own head for Vamana to step on. His devotion pleases the lord, and he is offered a boon that he could annually visit his subjects and kingdom. Hindus of Kerala believe that during *Onam* Mahabali visits their households.

¹¹⁴ The festival *Thiruvathira* celebrates the birthday of Lord Shiva. This has been observed by the Namabuthiri, Nair, Kshathriya women, and they observe fasting on these days expecting a good husband. Married women observe the fast for the well-being of their husbands and their families.

¹¹⁵ "Editorial," *Balarama*, April 1977, 2.

magazine gives a secular facade to these celebrations. The narrative depicts Hindu lifestyle as a model for the readers.

Sreenivas observes how the violence perpetrated by Hindu male Gods or heroes is refigured as justice in *Amar Chitra Katha*.¹¹⁶ One can see the same pattern in *Balarama* also. For example, when lord Vishnu transforms to the form of Vamana to trap Mahabali, it is heeded as a heroic and brave act. *Balarama* also represents King Rama's abandonment of Sita as a heroic act carried out at great personal and emotional cost, for the satisfaction of his subjects. *Balarama* never encourages its readers to question the notion of injustice in the well celebrated myth of *Onam*. Rather, it presented this injustice as a heroic act of Hindu Gods. This is not a unique feature of *Balarama*; rather it reinforces and validates popular narratives of *Onam* in Kerala.

Kerala, which claims to be one of the most "secular, progressive" states, considers *Onam* as the national festival of Kerala even though it is a Hindu festival. K.K. Kochu analysed that, in 1961, when Pattan Thanu Pilla was the chief minister of the state, *Onam*- a celebration connected with *Vaishnava* tradition- was declared as the national festival.¹¹⁷ Here, *Balarama* also claims that irrespective of religion and caste, everyone celebrates *Onam*. One can say that *Balarama* imagines/constructs a group of readers who share a consensus about the superiority of the Hindu cultural past and myths. By claiming that "*Onam* is a golden thread that connects all Keralites,"¹¹⁸ the magazine assumes or imagines that a *Malayali* is one who celebrates *Onam*, and

¹¹⁶ Sreenivas, "The Muslim 'Other': Figures of Evil and Charisma from Popular Visual Culture in India."

¹¹⁷ K.K Kochu, "Onam, Charithrathilum Samudayathilum (Onam in History and Community)," Portal, Utharakalam, September 7, 2014, <http://utharakalam.com/2014/09/07/11604.html>.

¹¹⁸ "Editorial," April 1974, 2.

believes in the widely circulated Hindu myth around it. Thus, this *Malayali* identity arises through the exclusion/othering of lower caste Hindu and other religious identities and an “imagined community” is created. Many subaltern scholars like Kochu,¹¹⁹ Ajith Kumar¹²⁰ from Kerala have critiqued the role of upper caste discourse in constructing a homogeneous *Malayali* identity through films, school textbooks, T.V shows and even the consumerist market.

SECTION II

Muslims as the “Other” in *Balarama* and *Poombatta*

Balarama draws upon the orientalist stereotype of the deprived and subjugated subject in the depiction of Muslim women protagonists who are often depicted as uneducated, ill-treated beings. It presents Muslims as less modern, incapable of acquiring modern standards of life such as parenting, hygiene, education etc. Muslims often appear as the ones who always need help and scaffolding to acquire such standards. On such occasions, a Hindu arises as a saviour/reformer and helps the less modern Muslim man to acquire modernity. In the private life, Muslim men are depicted as hyper-masculine and patriarchal. They are depicted as enslaving their wives and denying them their rights to maintenance, education etc. I also argue that in these magazines, the spoken language of Muslim characters acts as a major tool in the process of othering. Through different stories, *Balarama* creates an image of the Muslim woman as pre-modern and occupying a lower status within the family.

¹¹⁹ Kochu, “Onam, Charithrathilum Samudayathilum (Onam in History and Community).”

¹²⁰ A.S Ajithkumar, “Onagalum Keralangalum (Onam and Kerala),” Portal, Utharakalam, December 8, 2012.

This notion of a pre-modern womanhood is also visible within multiple feminist discourses around the world. Joseph Massad reviews the process of universalizing the U.S and west European liberal feminism on a global scale, and the methods and tools by which they come to dominate the discourses and policies of emancipating Muslim women from gender-based discrimination in their societies and countries. He also examines how western liberalism links and delinks the latter to “Islam.” He says that the image of the enslaved Muslim woman has been a significant theme of early French literature. In foundational texts of western liberal feminism, Mary Wollstonecraft brings in the metaphor of enslaved Muslim women to strengthen her argument that Christian European men must treat their women differently, as appropriate in a civilized society.¹²¹

To substantiate my above arguments and observations, I would like to provide a couple of instances from *Balarama* and *Poombatta* which depict Muslim lives. A story published in *Balarama* in its August 1979 issue is titled *Sammanam*, (The Gift). A nameless Muslim boy is the central protagonist of the story. The story goes like this: every evening, the boy’s father comes with some sweets for him. One day, the father stops coming and his mother tell the boy that he will no longer be there. Gradually, the boy understands that his father divorced his mother after the birth of his brother Kunjalu. His mother does not give him a proper reason for their separation. Even after the incident the boy keeps meeting his father. One day, the boy’s teacher informs him about an excursion, and he wishes to be a part of it. When he shares his wish to his father, he shouts at the boy, “I don’t want to make you a great person, go and ask your mother.”¹²² Finally, his mother, who has a coolie job, arranges money for

¹²¹ Joseph Massad, *Islam in Liberalism* (University of Chicago Press, 2015).

¹²² Subaida Nileswarem, “Sammanam (The Gift),” *Balarama*, September 1979, 29.

him. During the tour, he buys oranges and *halwa* for his brother and mother. But mother asks him to share it with his father as well. While he agrees and walks away to town, he notices the gloom in his mother's face.¹²³ The story ends there.

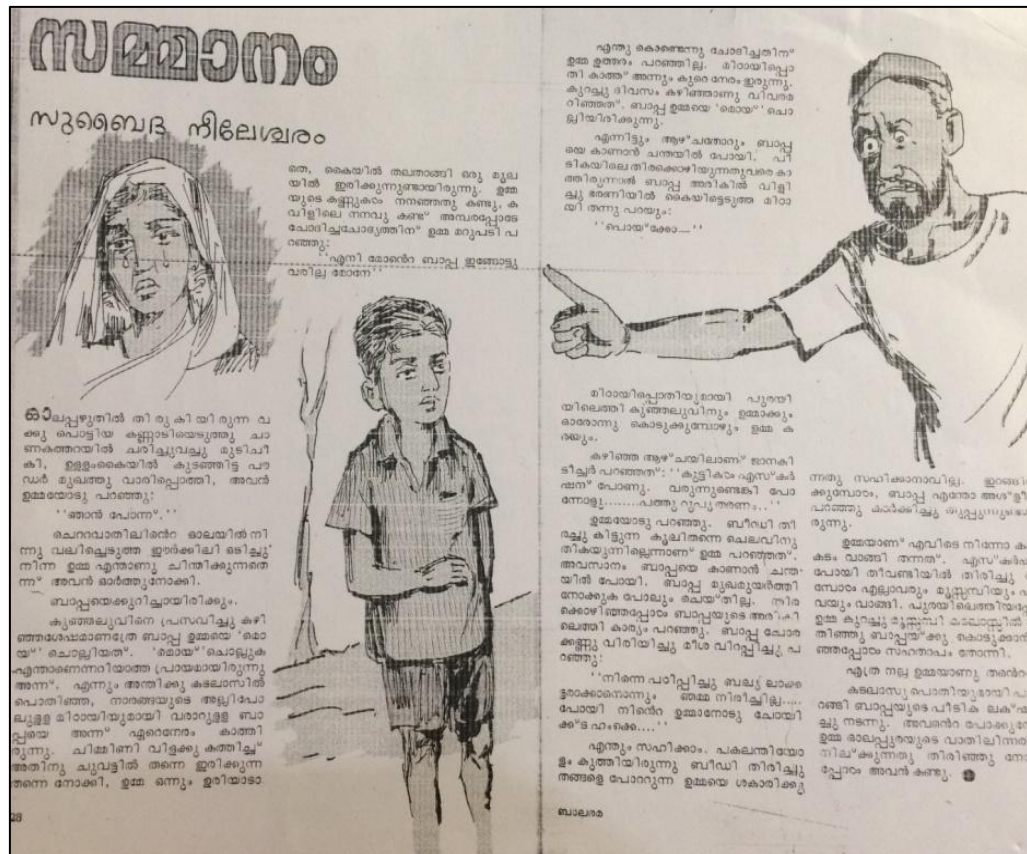


Image 7. *Sammanam* (The Gift), *Balarama*, September, 1979.

The above story portrays a wretched Muslim boy from a broken family. His mother is a victim of patriarchy who does not receive proper love, respect, and support from her husband. The story also includes a visual representation of the sad mother and angry father with the wretched boy torn between them (see image 7). The story portrays the father as a person who does not protect his own children after the divorce. His wide, angry eyes, un-groomed brows, dark beard, white inner dress, and cap reinforce the stereotypical cultural representation of a Muslim man. His angry

¹²³ Nileswaram, "Sammanam (The Gift)."

expression and pointed finger towards his son shows how merciless and cruel he is—unlike the loving Hindu father. The boy is portrayed as thin, sad and under-nourished. The mother is pictured with wet eyes with tears running down her eyes. It shows the lower status of women in a Muslim family. The author never reveals the reason for the divorce. This indicates the notion that Muslim divorces are never based upon valid reasons. Thus, the story presents Muslim family as a ruthlessly patriarchal institution, and the father as irresponsible and not a noble father/patriarch, like the ones found in Hindu stories.

The same narrative of Muslim women as holding a lower and degraded status is present in multiple other narratives. An issue of *Balarama* includes a story titled *Dukham* (The Sorrow). The story is a monologue of a nameless Muslim adolescent girl. The girl (the central protagonist) sits in a closed room and remembers the words of her mother, “Let’s stop her schooling; we should give more education to Sathar.”¹²⁴ She imagines a grown up, educated Sathar, and realizes that she is denied further education because she is a girl. She feels upset seeing her neighbours Patmavathi and Sathyabama enjoying their school days even though they are elder to her. Her father instructs her to sit at home, and be a disciplined and compassionate girl. When she hears this instruction, she searches for the meaning of “disciplined and compassionate.”¹²⁵ The girl turns out to be an embodiment of sadness who lacks the joys and ambitions that are allowed to Hindu girls.

The story represents a desperate Muslim girl who is a victim of oppression as contrasted to her neighbours from other religions, who are enjoying their school days. The story has a picture of a teenage Muslim girl sitting in an enclosed space. A small

¹²⁴ Abdul Shukoor, “Dukham (The Sorrow),” *Balarama*, March 1976, 85.

¹²⁵ Shukoor, 86.

window at her back indicates the restrictive spatiality within which she is located. She has no name in the story. By presenting her as a nameless girl, the story suggests that it could be the fate of any Muslim girl, thus universalizing the plot.



Image 8. The sad adolescent Muslim girl, *Balarama*, March, 1976.

In the above story, the Muslim girl is represented as nameless, and she is silenced and denied her educational rights and freedom by her father. There is an urge from the magazine to save her from the patriarchal family. Lila Abu-Lughod in her book *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* discusses how the west portrays Afghan women as repressed by Taliban and in need of saving. Instead of engaging with the historical contexts of Afghan women's life choices, especially burqa and veil, the west represents them as victims of Taliban and religious patriarchy. She argues that to

seriously engage with the cultural practices of burqa and veil, the west should adopt cultural relativism, and locate the differences in historical circumstances.¹²⁶

We can see the same notion of representation in Kerala also. Two dominant modes of representation are adopted to speak about Muslim women. First, a Muslim woman silenced and repressed by Muslim men, and the second, a lonely Muslim woman who is protesting against her community and male counterparts. In the above story, *Dukham* (The Sorrow) *Balarama* juxtaposes two categories of women, one is a non-Muslim who enjoys freedom, and second is a Muslim woman who is denied her rights by Muslim men. The nameless Muslim woman learns of her educational rights and freedom by looking at the lives of her non-Muslim friends. This way, *Balarama* attempts to reform and save Muslim women from the atrocities of Muslim men. As Lughod points out in a different context, the west never addresses the larger political reasons of Afghan Muslim women's backwardness, like the U.S presence in Afghan, genocide etc. Similarly, the magazine never addresses the conditions of poverty, lack of educational infrastructure, unemployment etc. which lead to the socio-economic backwardness of the Muslim community, and in particular, Muslim women.

Language as a Tool for Constructing the "Other"

In *Balarama*, the Muslim characters speak non-standardized Malayalam. Even though there is no reference about these characters' place and location, their spoken and written language indicates that they belong to the Malabar region. These stories generally have two kinds of characters, Muslims who speak in spoken Malayalam, and

¹²⁶ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

non-Muslims who speak in standardized Malayalam. Jameel Ahmed argues¹²⁷ that there is a historical reason for the representation of Kerala Muslims as being anti-Malayalam which could be related to the origin of Arabic-Malayalam¹²⁸ script. He observes that during the initial stage of Islam, or even before it, Arabs arrived in Kerala for different commercial purposes. During this time, many people converted to Islam and most of them had no idea about Arabic language and the basic religious textbooks. Islamic learning concentrated only on jurisprudence then which was controlled by trained teachers. Malayalam did not have its own script then. Arabs learned spoken Malayalam and wrote in Arabic scripts. This is the historical context of Arabic-Malayalam; before the development of Malayalam script, it acted as a medium of communication between the natives and the Arab traders. But later, the historical narratives gave a religious texture to Arabic-Malayalam and propagated that Arabic-Malayalam was the outcome of the hatred for Malayalam by Muslims.

Speeches by few Muslim religious leaders against Malayalam and English validated this argument. Meanwhile, a writing script for Malayalam was developed and non-Muslims started acquiring written scripts of Malayalam.¹²⁹ Ahmed argues that, in this context, Kerala Muslims started getting alienated from the mainstream linguistic space, and it took them fifty more years to overcome this gap. He mentions Makthi Thangal, a religious scholar of the 19th century, who encouraged Mappilas to learn and write in Malayalam. He was contemporaneous with Hermann Gundert, a German missionary who developed the basic Malayalam grammar and script. He also

¹²⁷ Ahmad, *Malayala Muslim- Basha, Samskaram, Charithram (Malayala Muslims- Language, Culture and History)*.

¹²⁸ Arabic-Malayalam is a language which is a mixture of Arabic and Malayalam. Script is in Arabic and sound is in Malayalam. Madrasa textbooks of traditional Muslims are still published in Arabic-Malayalam.

¹²⁹ Ahmad, *Malayala Muslim- Basha, Samskaram, Charithram (Malayala Muslims- Language, Culture and History)*.

noted that Kerala public consciousness perceives Malappuram, a Muslim populated district in Malabar, as a Muslim nation like Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. He argues that this similarity gives rise to prejudiced attitude towards Malappuram as a place which breeds terrorism, hyper-sexuality, fundamentalism and idiotism. The vocal language of Malappuram acts as the provocation for this stereotypical attitude.¹³⁰

Arunima G examined the questions about ethnicity, territoriality, and history of Kerala through two themes: the emergence of print culture and its uses, and the problems of language. She investigates certain religious proses which were written in the nineteenth and twentieth century. She argues that even though the development of print media standardizes the Malayalam prose, the internal differences, and nuances within religious prose writing points towards different directions. It creates differences within the notion of a “*Malayali*.”¹³¹ Here, I am bringing a few examples which show how *Balarama* represents Muslims as “Other” primarily because of their language.

A story titled *Motta Pokar* (The Zero Pokar) is replete with these representations.¹³² In the story, Pokar and Katheeshu are the protagonists. Pokar is portrayed as the most backward student of the class. Both Pokar and Katheeshu are neighbors and best friends. Katheeshu is one of the brightest students in the class, and Pokar depends on Katheeshu for academic help. Their Maths teacher Ali Master once gives Pokar zero marks, and thereafter he is called as *motta* Pokar. *Motta* is the local word for *mutta*, or egg, and resembles zero. Finally, Pokar's father Alavi Musliyar requests Nanu master to help Pokar in his studies. He says, "Please put some

¹³⁰ Ahmad.

¹³¹ G Arunima, “Imagining Communities Differently. Print, Language and Public Sphere in Colonial Kerala,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43, no. 1 (2006): 63–76.

¹³² Sreeni Balussery, “Motta Poker (The Zero Poker),” *Balarama*, February 1980.

knowledge into that mischievous head.”¹³³ To indicate the words mischievous and head, the father uses colloquial words like *kurutham kettavan* (one who lacks blessings of masters) and *manda* (head) respectively. Nanu Master decides to help Pokar become a good student and asks Katheeshu to not speak to Pokar until he scores good marks. She obeys and Pokar becomes sad. He puts all his effort to gain good marks in all subjects and thereby becomes a good student.¹³⁴

Another issue of *Balarama* published in September 1977 contains a story titled *Claasukayattam* (Class Upgrading).¹³⁵ The story is about a Muslim girl, Aysha. The story portrays Aysha as a naive character and the most backward student in the class. She is not hygienic and does not change her clothes for days. When she enters the classroom, others move away as she smells bad. In the morning, she simply stands in front of hotels or tea shops on her way to school and eats whatever she gets, even if the classes have begun. She is the eldest one in her family and has eight siblings. All the teachers are disturbed by her wayward behaviour. Finally, other teachers request Damu Master, a Gandhian and lovable person to take care of her but he finds it difficult to manage her.

When Aysha fails in third class, her father comes and asks Damu master to upgrade her to fourth grade. But Damu Master informs the father of the lazy, careless attitude and behaviour that led to Aysha’s failure. The concerned father reveals that this is because of Aysha’s mother does not give proper attention to her. The father adds that he is planning her wedding. Then Damu Master asks little Aysha if she is ready to be a good student, and reminds her that her father works hard for her. Aysha

¹³³ Balussery, 24.

¹³⁴ Balussery, “Motta Poker (The Zero Poker).”

¹³⁵ Radha, “Classukayattam (Class Upgrading),” *Balarama*, September 1977.

silently nods her head. He then asks the father to let her sit for one more year in his class. He also promises that he will turn her into a good student. The father gladly agrees. The story concludes like this, “It might be the start of Aysha’s good school life, and Damu Master felt satisfied.”¹³⁶

In these two stories, we see how language acts as an agent for the othering of the Muslim character. In the story *Motta Pokar*, all Muslim characters use colloquial Mappila language. It is interesting to note that even though Nanu Master and Maths teacher Ali master are equally educated and work at the same school, Nanu Master is portrayed as a reformist who transforms Pokar. At the same time, Ali Master only contributes a sarcastic name for Pokar like *motta* Pokar to mock the boy. Ali Master is represented stereotypically notwithstanding his educational qualification and status as a teacher. Ali Master’s educational qualification and teaching experience do not equip him to help a “backward student” from his community to achieve success. In contrast, Nanu Master is an ideal teacher and speaks fluent standardized Malayalam.

It is interesting to note that Alavi Musliyar, Pokar’s father, does not approach Ali master, even though they are from the same community. When Pokar says *sardichu* instead of *shraddichu* (carefully), Nanu Master corrects him several times. In the story, Pokar is addressed as a *kurutham kettavan* (the one who lacks the blessing of masters) and *haram pirannavan* (one whose birth is illegitimate) by other Muslim characters. They do not put any effort into correcting each other. In Aysha’s story also, she and her father speak in non- structured Malayalam that is similar to Malappuram spoken Malayalam. The father in the story uses words like ‘*clash*’

¹³⁶ Radha, 50.

instead of class, *njayam* instead of *nyayam*,¹³⁷ *bedakk* instead of *cheetha*¹³⁸ etc. These are all very common words in spoken Malayalam. Here, these words are used to highlight father's illiteracy and backwardness. At the same time, non-Muslim characters in the story speak standardized Malayalam and are portrayed as educated. Though these two streams of characters live in the same locality and context, the dialect they use act as a tool for showcasing their differences.

Hindu Modernity versus the Muslims

Many of the stories that I analyzed above show the way *Balarama* presents the Hindu norms and gender roles as “modern.” An ideal woman for *Balarama* is one who is ritualistic, modest, and well mannered. Such women characters in *Balarama* are invariably upper caste and Hindu (see image 9). The image is in the context of the *vidyarambham* ceremony of a child. In the picture, there is a woman who stands behind the child and the *ashan* (the tutor). She is in *saree*, is slim and fair skinned. She is shy and deferential- and in accordance with “proper norms” does not sit near the *ashan* as he is an outsider and older than her. Moreover, she is very ritualistic, clean and tidy. Her appearance is vividly contrasted with the representation of Muslim women in *Balarama*.

If we compare the woman in *vidyarambham* ceremony and the image of Aysha in *Classu Kayattam* we observe how *Balarama* constructs the binary of the modest modern Hindu woman versus the immodest/pre-modern Muslim woman. Aysha and her mother do not fall in the ideal category of women because Aysha roams around the market, is not tidy and clean, and her mother does not bother about her schooling because she is busy bearing multiple children. The boy's mother in *vidyarambham*

¹³⁷ Argument

¹³⁸ Bad

ceremony is emblematic of the ideal woman because she is ritualistic, concerned about her child's education and does not stand or sit in front of men.



Image 9. Vidyarambham ceremony of a child, *Balarama*, September, 1977.

As Partha Chatterjee observes, if one extends the inner/outer or material/spiritual¹³⁹ distinction to day-to-day life, it separates the social space into the home and the world. The outside world is the material space and the domain of men. The home is spiritual and the domain of women.¹⁴⁰ If we extend this dichotomy into *Balarama*, we can see the boy's mother represents the modest and spiritual women

¹³⁹ Partha Chatterjee argued that there are two dichotomous divisions in nationalist discourse- the material and spiritual. According to nationalist writers, the material domain lies outside us – a mere external thong that controls and conditions us. The spiritual domain lies within us, and is our true self (Chatterjee 1993)

¹⁴⁰ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post Colonial Histories*.

who inhabit the inner domain of the house and are embodiments of ideal womanhood. At the same time, Aysha breaks the spatial confines, roams around the market, is untidy, thus eluding the notion of ideal/desirable womanhood.

There are many narratives in *Balarama* where Muslim and Hindu males are the central characters. In such narratives, Muslim male comes in as an inefficient person who is unable to take care of his own family, compared to his Hindu counterpart. In such situations, the Hindu male comes in as a mediator to restore “normality” of the former's family. In other words, in *Balarama*, Hindu males are efficient, energetic, practical, and respectable men. Damu Master in Aisha's story and Nanu Master in *Motta Pokar* fall in this category. Aysha's father is depicted as a person who is unable to realize the value of education. The Muslim father chews *paan* and spits in the school courtyard. Damu Master feels uncomfortable with that. The master is portrayed as a reformist Gandhian who has not used a *paan* or a cigarette in his entire life. He opposes the father's decision to get Aysha married at such a young age. In the same way, Pokar's father requests Nanu Master to help him become and hardworking an efficient and hardworking boy. Damu Master and Nanu Master act as mediators between the vulnerable Muslim kids and their inefficient parents. Interestingly, we cannot see any counter instance of a Muslim male reforming the Hindu child in *Balarama* during this period.

In the image (see image 10), Aysha and her father embody their religious symbols like headscarf, beard, and *topi*. But one cannot identify Damu Master's identity based on physical religious markers unless one is aware of his name-- “Damu.” *Balarama* regards Hindu norms, values, symbols, and way of living as “modern” and casteless. The Hindu male/female is the agent of modernity. Muslim

characters are the objects of this modernization process. Jenny Rowena observes how Malayalam cinema constructs hegemonic masculinity around the figures of the “Others,” who are most often drawn from non-hegemonic caste and religion.¹⁴¹

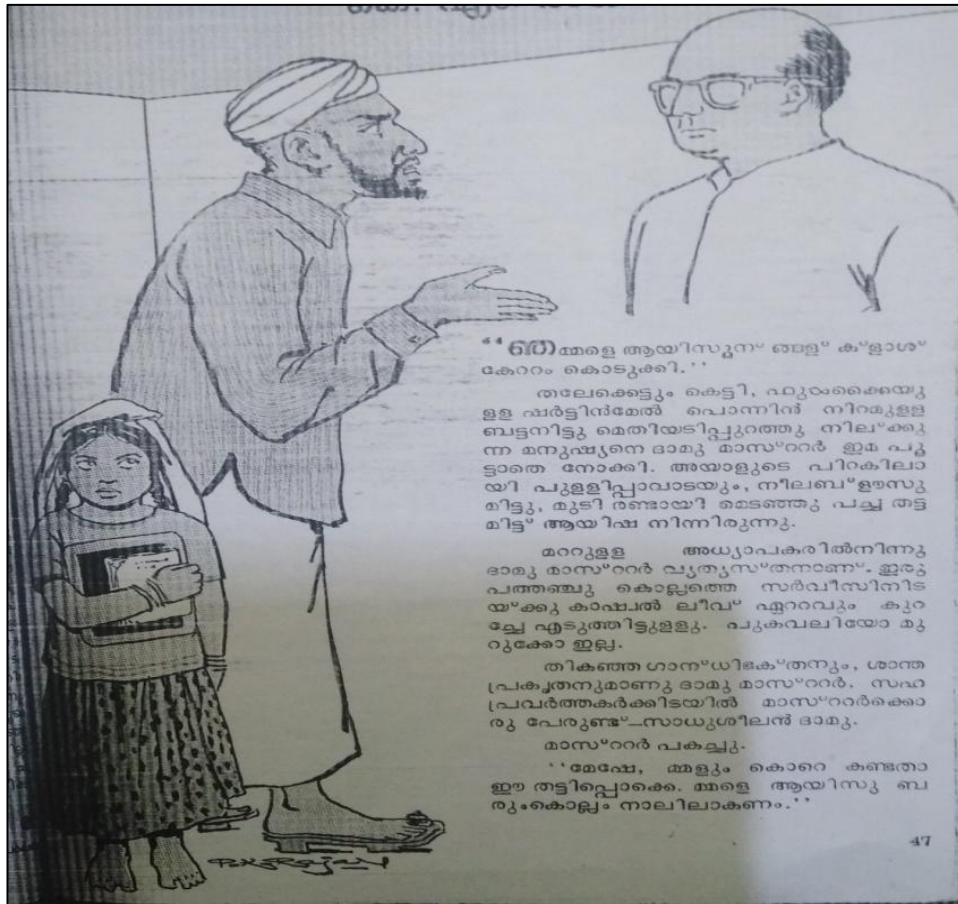


Image 10. Aysha, father and Damu Master, *Balarama*, September 1977

We observe the same tendency in popular children’s magazines during the same period. As a magazine started in the Nehruvian secular era, one can argue that *Balarama* sadly lacks the politically informed language and imagery with which to represent Muslim lives. This “lack” is not new in secularism. As Amir Mufti has argued, secularism has often lacked the imagination to understand Muslim politics and existence. He speaks of the secular crisis of representing Muslim lives in the context

¹⁴¹ Rowena P, “Reading Laughter: The Popular Malayalam ‘Comedy-Films’ of the Late 80s and Early 90s.”

of Indian nationalism. For instance, he points out, for Nehru, Jinna's claim for a separate nation could only be understood as his "historical backwardness" and fundamentalism despite his western education. At the same time, Abdul Kalam Azad notwithstanding his religious markers and visibility is considered a nationalist Muslim within the secular discourse. His "choice" to stay in India following the partition grants him the status of "good Muslim." Here Mufti is asking the crucial question, *who represents Indian Muslims?* And what makes a Muslim identity desirable/undesirable?¹⁴²

Alternative Narratives

Muslim writers are comparatively very few in *Balarama* and *Poombatta*. V.P Muhammad, U.A Khader, N.P Muhammad, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, etc. are a few Muslim writers contributing to these magazines. Most of their stories in the magazine deal with the Islamic faith, Muslim social and cultural life etc. The 1975 February edition of *Balarama* contains a story written by U.A Khader, titled *Mukthi* (Salvation).¹⁴³ It is about a pious Muslim woman. The story goes like this. One day Prophet Muhammad narrated the story of a pious woman to his followers. The woman did many good deeds in her life. She was respected and honoured by others. When she died, everybody grieved, and she had a grand cremation. A thief decides to dig the woman's grave. He does it expecting to steal all the valuable things that he assumes to have been showered into the grave by her followers. When he opens the grave, he sees a snake biting her cheek. He feels shocked seeing this. The dead woman speaks out, recalling how she had once plucked a tiny fruit/branch from someone's tree but never regretted that. The snake biting her is a punishment for this. After hearing this, the

¹⁴² Aamir R Mufti, "Secularism and Minority: Elements of a Critique," *Social Text* 45 (Winter 1995): 75–96.

¹⁴³ U.A Khader, "Mukthi," *Balarama*, February 1975.

thief feels disturbed, and on his way back, recollects all the thefts he did in his entire life. To apologize to God, he decides to visit the Jerusalem Mosque. He walks fast but eventually dies on the way. At the end of the story, the Prophet asks his followers, “Do you have any idea about the man's future in his afterlife?”¹⁴⁴ The followers gave different answers. The Prophet said, “He will enter heaven because he died during his journey to Jerusalem Mosque. He had already expressed regret and apologized to Allah during his journey.”¹⁴⁵

The above story deals with the spiritual aspect of Muslim life which is invisible in the stories written by non-Muslim writers. Apart from this, there are other stories written by Muslim writers which deal with the cultural and social life of Kerala Muslims. V.P Muhammad's stories come under this category. His stories are written in spoken Malayalam. For example, one of his stories titled *Oru Kaviyude Jananam* (The Birth of a Poet)¹⁴⁶ shows the life of Kunjayan, a follower of Zainudheen Makhdoom.¹⁴⁷ The story goes like this: One day Kunjayan visits the sick Zainudheen Makhdoom at Ponnani. He stays there for a few days. While returning, he visits his old friend, Khader Kutty. It is common talk that Khader Kutty does not get enough time to spend with his family because he works on a ship. His wife Thithiyumma complains about it to Kunjayan. As a solution, he advises her to make a chant every night before going to sleep. She obeys. The chant Kunjayan prescribed is a song sung by ship workers before each voyage. Without knowing this, the woman chants the song before bed every day. Her husband Khader Kutty became angry because he

¹⁴⁴ Khader, 18.

¹⁴⁵ Khader, 18.

¹⁴⁶ V.P Muhammad, “Oru Kaviyude Jananam (Birth of A poet),” *Balarama*, September 1974.

¹⁴⁷ Zainudheen Makhdoom (1531-1583) was an Islamic scholar, writer, and jurispudent

thought that the woman was trying to insult him. When he realises that Kunjayan is behind it, he decides to complain to Zainudheen Makhdoom. Zainudheen asks Kunjayan, “*Nee manushyane kappal aakuka aano?*”¹⁴⁸ The question disturbs Kunjayan, and he ponders over the similarities between ship and human life. Kunjayan scripted his provoking thoughts in a poetic manner, which came to be later known as *Kappa Paattu* (The Ship Song).¹⁴⁹

Here, V.P Muhammad attempts to represent the cultural practices and lives of Muslims in Ponnani. Ponnani is one of the famous Muslim-populated areas in Malabar. Zainudheen Makhdoom and Kunjayan are famous historical figures in Malabar Muslim history. Thus, the author tries to illustrate and articulate those Muslim lives and their narratives matter. Another interesting factor in this stream of stories is the representation of women. As I have mentioned earlier, the status of Muslim women in the stories written by non-Muslim writers is pre-modern. They are portrayed as living within the shells of patriarchy. Misery is the rampant tone of their life. Opposed to these narratives, the stories by Muslim writers portray vibrant and active Muslim women.

Yet another story of V.P Muhammed, *Penninodu Thottu* (Lost to a Woman)¹⁵⁰ is an example of this representation. In this story, Kunjayan's wife is presented as a brave woman who fought for post-delivery maintenance from her husband. The story goes like this: Kunjayan is the secretary of Kottayam local king. Kunjayan's wife feels

¹⁴⁸ It is literally translated to ‘Are you trying to make the man into a ship?’ It is a satiric and philosophical question by Makhdoom to Kunjayan. Here, Makhdoom made an analogy between human life and ship. On the basis of this, Kunjayan Musliyar wrote *Kappa Paattu*, which consisted of 600 lines in a single tune. It satirically describes human lives as a voyage through the seas.

¹⁴⁹ Muhammad, “Oru Kaviyude Jananam (Birth of A poet).”

¹⁵⁰ V.P Muhammad, “Penninod Thottu (Lost to a Woman),” *Balarama*, July 1974.

proud whenever she is recognized as the wife of secretary Kunjayan. But after the birth of their second baby, Kunjayan stops giving maintenance to her. Maintenance is the right of Muslim women, and people who fail to pay are considered dishonourable. Kunjayan's wife feels sad. One day, she takes her children to Kunjayan's house. Kunjayan and his family welcome her warmly. She stays there for a while and at one point, enquires about the maintenance. Kunjayan replies, "Babies are the result of our mutual partnership. I gave maintenance for the first baby, so it is your family's turn to give maintenance for the second one." To this, she responds, "I brought up the first baby; therefore, it is your duty to take care of the second one." She gives the younger baby to him and leaves the place. Surprised, Kunjayan runs behind her with the crying baby and murmurs, "I failed for the first time in my entire life and that too, to a woman."¹⁵¹

The story depicts a strong woman who questions her husband and fights for her rights. Kunjayan is a respected man, yet his wife is not afraid to question him. In these stories, most of the characters speak Mappila Malayalam. Muslim writers use Mappila Malayalam to showcase the cultural and geographical diversity of Muslim life. For non-Muslim writers, Mappila Malayalam dialect is a tool for othering, a symbol of backwardness and illiteracy. Stories written by Muslim writers try to counter these misrepresentations. For them, Mappila Malayalam and traditional practices are part of their ethnicity and pride.

¹⁵¹ Muhammad, 22.

SECTION III

***Parishad* and “Rational Childhood”**

In the previous part of the chapter, I have already discussed how popular children’s magazines construct dominant notions of childhood. In this part, I am looking at how *Eureka*, the children’s science magazine published by *Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad* (*Parishad*) constructs a Hindu rational childhood. As a children’s science magazine, *Eureka* is keen to maintain this difference, and poses itself as a better alternative to popular magazines. For instance, in an interview with Shinoj, the editor of *Eureka*, I asked about the rationale behind a new children’s magazine while many are already available in the market. According to him:

Malayalam children’s magazines like *Balarama* and *Poombatta* are spreading superstitious beliefs and irrationality among kids through myths and ghost stories. Look for characters like Mayavi, Kapeesh, Dinkan, etc. in such magazines. They create a faulty understanding about life and the world among children. The mission of *Eureka* is to challenge such ideas, and to create a society with scientific temper and rationality.¹⁵²

Thus, according to him, popular children’s magazines propagate irrational beliefs and superstitions among readers through stories of ghosts, jinn, devil etc. *Balarama*’s iconic comic series *Mayavi* is one among them.

In the 1960s, *Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad* (KSSP, henceforth *Parishad*) was started as an organisation to develop scientific temper among ordinary people. *Parishad* was formally inaugurated on the 10th of September 1962 in Calicut. Initially,

¹⁵²Shinaj Raj interview by Noorunnida.M, Calicut, December 11, 2017.

the group's activities were concentrated on conducting seminars, symposiums, and talks related to science.¹⁵³ *Parishad's* workers' manifesto, published in 1982, discusses the characteristics of the organisation. It reads as follows:

Parishad is not a political party though the projects and works of *Parishad* can help political parties; *Parishad* is not a welfare and educational organisation though it conducts many welfare and educational programs. It is not a research organisation, even though it conducts various studies on different issues. Finally, it is not an anarchist organisation, but it develops a scientific temper among readers.¹⁵⁴

In 1973, the organisation adopted the motto “Science for Social Revolution.”¹⁵⁵ *Parishad* considered children’s literature as an important pedagogical tool for propagating their ideology. In 1970, the *Parishad* started a magazine named *Eureka* for school students. Its first copy of the magazine made available to the public in June 1970. The position of the editor was held by Dr. K N Pisharadi, while T.R Shankunni served as the managing editor.¹⁵⁶ In 1960s, *Parishad* started the “People’s Science Movement” (PSM) across the nation. An important motive of PSM was enhancing people's capacity to comprehend and evaluate social issues in a scientific framework. Mainly four areas were recognized as a basis for initiating a PSM in the country and for future programs of action. These were: (i) health, (ii) education, (iii) environment, and (iv) the use of art as a medium of communication with the people.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ *Parishad Pinnitta Nalpath Varsham (Fourty Years of Parishad)*.

¹⁵⁴ *Parishad Pinnitta Nalpath Varsham (Fourty Years of Parishad)*, 41.

¹⁵⁵ *Parishad Pinnitta Nalpath Varsham (Fourty Years of Parishad)*.

¹⁵⁶ *Parishad Pinnitta Nalpath Varsham (Fourty Years of Parishad)*.

¹⁵⁷ Anwar Jaffry et al., “Towards a People’s Science Movement,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 18, no. 11 (March 12, 1983): 372–76.

Kannan¹⁵⁸ discusses the way *Parishad* questions the role of religion in maintaining socio-economic status quo and how it promotes secularism. He argues that even though there is no specific reference to it, secularism is a major goal of PSM. The spirit of secularism is infused in the ideology and activity of PSM. In Kerala, *Parishad* faced much opposition from different religious groups, who alleged that KSSP promotes atheism among the public. Kannan says, “When science is used for social activism to critically examine contemporary social and economic problems, those representing religious orthodoxy and different religions have not hesitated to oppose it by all available means.”¹⁵⁹

In contrast to *Eureka* and *Parishad*’s claim, I argue that though *Parishad* considers science to be a means to liberate people from religion and irrational beliefs, and bring social revolution, the discourse of *Parishad* is embedded in the very religious ideology from which it seeks liberation. Even though *Parishad* initiated the magazine *Eureka* as a medium for educating young readers about science and popularizing science among them, it maps the modern rational childhood on to a Hindu upper caste childhood. Along with scientific narratives, the magazine talks about vedic values, myths, and icons through different strategies. Though *Eureka* claims it challenges *Balarama* and *Poombatta*’s representations of Hindu mythological characters and values, it also deploys the same values and mythology as important for creating a rational childhood.

¹⁵⁸ K.P Kannan, “Secularism and People’s Science Movement in India,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 6 (February 10, 1990): 311–13.

¹⁵⁹ Kannan, 313.

***Eureka* and Hindu Mythology**

In this section, I explore at how Hindu mythology and rationalism go hand in hand in *Eureka*. Here, I argue that, though the magazine believes and claims that it stands for secularism and rationalism, it implicitly advocates Hindu codes and cultural practices to its readers. Many scholars have underscored the dual nature of Indian modernization. The nationalist discourse during the nineteenth century propounded this dualism where the western material self was adopted to ensure modernisation, while the superiority of the Indian spiritual self was still foregrounded¹⁶⁰ As Chatterjee writes:

The discourse of nationalism shows that the material/spiritual distinction was condensed into an analogous, but ideologically far more powerful, dichotomy: that between the outer and the inner. The material domain, argued nationalist writers, lies outside us—a mere external, which influences us, conditions us, and to which we are forced to adjust. But ultimately it is unimportant. It is the spiritual, which lies within that is our true self; it is that which is genuinely essential. It followed that as long as India took care to retain the spiritual distinctiveness of its culture, it could make all the compromises and adjustments necessary to adapt itself to the requirements of a modern material world without losing its true identity. This was the key that nationalism supplied for resolving the ticklish problems posed by issues of social reform in the 19th century.¹⁶¹

Reform-minded Indian intellectuals like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, Swami Vivekananda, M.K Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru

¹⁶⁰ Partha Chatterjee, “Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India,” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 622–33.

¹⁶¹ Chatterjee, 624.

promoted neo-Hinduism in India.¹⁶² These neo-Hindu intellectuals sought homologies between the new worldview of science, liberalism, Christian ideas of monotheism, and the highly brahmanic vedic literature. And these intellectuals ended up retrofitting western ideas of reason and liberalism that they admired into the mystical elements of Hindu tradition which the West admired.¹⁶³ Nanda calls it “reactionary modernity.”¹⁶⁴ Here, I look at how *Eureka* falls into neo-Hinduism and promotes the Hindu spiritual self-alongside the materialist scientific self. It will help the reader to understand how *Eureka* too propagated a (Hindu) modernity in Kerala.

An issue of *Eureka* contains an article titled, *Amritam Moshtichavar* (The Thieves who Stole *Amritam*).¹⁶⁵ The purpose of the article is to teach about butterflies, their life cycle, and the importance of honey in their life cycle. In the narrative, there is a reference to the *palazhi* churning and importance of *amritam*. It goes like this: during *palazhi* churning, when *amritam* appears, the *asuras* (demons) and *devas* (gods) fight for it. The *asuras* take the *amritam* without the permission of *devas*. Later, *devas* regain the *amritam* from the *asuras*, but some species like butterflies take over the *amritam* from *devas*. If *amritam* gives eternal youth to *devas*, it gives long childhood to butterflies, and helps them to control and maintain their life cycle according to the environment.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India*.

¹⁶³ Nanda.

¹⁶⁴ Reactionary modernism is a term first coined by Jeffery Herf in 1984.

¹⁶⁵ “Amritham Moshtichavr (The Thieves who Stole Amritam),” *Eureka* 3, no. 4 (July 1973).

¹⁶⁶ “Amritham Moshtichavr (The Thieves who Stole Amritam).”

Another issue of *Eureka* includes an article titled *Saraswati puja*.¹⁶⁷ The article goes like this: One day a group of students come to meet the scientist Meghanad Saha to raise funds for *Saraswati puja*. They introduce the goddess *Saraswati* and explain the importance of the festival. The scientist enquires about how they are conducting the *puja*. The children narrate about the specific ritual practices relating to the *puja*. The scientist then tells them, “Come with me. I will explain how I am doing *Saraswati puja*.”¹⁶⁸ The children follow him. They enter a big reading room. The room contains shelves full of books in Sanskrit, German, and science. He tells them, “This is my *Saraswati* temple. And as students, you should all study well. That is the highest form of *Saraswati* worship.”¹⁶⁹ In another issue of *Eureka*, it is declared, “*Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Maheswaran* are the trinity¹⁷⁰ of India.” The narrative is a part of a lecture series about astronomy published in multiple issues of *Eureka*. The astronomy column of *Eureka* titled as *Nakshatrngale Ariiyuka* (Lets Learn about the Stars). The column discusses about stars, planets etc. For example, in the June, 1975 issue of *Eureka*, *Nakshatrngale Ariiyuka* explains, "There are 27 birth stars based on the movements of the moon. As the moon changes its position every day, it appears to be near each of these stars at different times. These stars are collectively known as birth stars or "*nalukal*." ¹⁷¹

The magazine never questions the authenticity or hegemony of Hindu myths such as *palazhi* churning and the concept of *Saraswati puja*. Rather, it incorporates scientific information into these well-established myths. Likewise, the contents of the

¹⁶⁷ “*Saraswati Puja*,” *Eureka*, June 1973.

¹⁶⁸ “*Saraswati Puja*,” 21.

¹⁶⁹ “*Saraswati Puja*,” 21.

¹⁷⁰ In Hinduism, *Brahma* (the creator), *Vishnu* (the preserver) and *Shiva* (the absorber) are considered three deities popularly known as *Trimurti*.

¹⁷¹ Nalini, “*Thrimoorthikal* (The Trinity),” *Eureka*, March 1975, 30.

magazine have explicit connection with vedic knowledge and science. Through endorsing Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswaran as the trinity of *Bharath*;¹⁷² *Eureka* unequivocally expresses its admiration of Hindu beliefs and ritual codes. The term *Bharath* itself cannot be seen outside of its connection to Hindu mythology. According to dominant Hindu beliefs, king Bharathan, father of King Rama, ruled ancient India. The term *Bharath* is derived from this myth. By reiterating the identification of *Bharath* with India, these magazines validate the above myth, and reinforce the idea that the nation is the land of Hindus. In short, *Eureka* never tries to disrupt hegemonic Hindu myths and beliefs; it serves to re-affirm the Hindu worldviews in a scientific language.

At the same time, the magazine rejects religion when it talks about religion in general. For example, *Eureka* says:

In Kerala, we have never endorsed to scientific education. Instead of developing scientific temper among kids, our educational system injects irrational beliefs and attitudes among them. It is not sensible to teach science without challenging superstitious beliefs. It is a clear sign of cowardice, not rejecting religions even after realising religious beliefs are unscientific cowardice.¹⁷³

While *Eureka* advocates a non-religious and rational perspective in education and society, its imagery and narratives as we have seen are suffused with hegemonic Hindu worldview. Here, I argue that the magazine is trying to “privatize” and “remove” religion from its discourse in order to consolidate a national state which is rooted in Hindu values and myths. This consolidation of a Hindu national state is

¹⁷² “Nakshatrangale Ariyuka-Thri Moorthikal (Know the Stars- TheTrinity),” *Eureka* 3, no. 2 (February 1973).

¹⁷³ “Letters,” *Eureka*, February 1973, 28.

formed through a subtle invisibilisation and exclusion of the cultural and religious practices of other religions. As Talal Asad argues, the standard notion of "religion", connoted by the category of the "secular," pre-empts the recognition of the particularities of cultural differences under the label "religious;" and the secular state does not, in fact, promise toleration of difference.¹⁷⁴

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed how different children's magazines in Kerala, which were popular and "secular" in 1970s, present an ideal Hindu way of life by centring Hindu mythology and Hindu rationality. I also examined how these magazines present Muslims as the "Other" and backward. Unlike the villainous and cruel Muslim representations in other popular children's magazines like *Amar Chitra Katha*, Malayalam popular children's magazines represent Muslim characters as poor, backward, illiterate etc. Concomitantly, these magazines consider dominant Hindu norms, values, symbols and ways of living as "modern" and Hindu men and women as the agents of modernity. Muslim characters are the objects of the modernization process, often represented as specimens of the pre-modern.

In short, in this chapter, I have attempted to explore how "secular" Malayalam children's magazines like *Balarama* and *Poombatta* lack a political-cultural language and imagination to engage with Muslim lives and cultural practices. The "undesirable" Muslim identity is constructed through depicting Hindu mythology and cultural practices as foundational in the making of an "ideal" child and citizen. To conclude, these magazines, whether associated with leftist/right-wing political ideology, have

¹⁷⁴ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, and Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

deployed Hindu mythology to conceptualize their notion of a rational Hindu Indian childhood.

Chapter Three

Muslim Masculinity and the Formation of a Counter-Public Sphere: A Reading of Select Magazines for Muslim Children

This chapter focuses on how Muslim children's magazines, *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*, counter the narratives about Muslim lives and create the image of an ideal Muslim masculinity, via stories, pictures, historical novels, and editorials. Osella and Osella observe that, in Kerala, counter-masculinities have emerged as opposed to hegemonic brahmin masculinity. These counter-masculinities are not weak counter-discourses, but rather a prevalent way of being among the *Malayali* people. They are characterized by a rejection of brahmin values such as vegetarianism, asceticism, and religiosity.¹⁷⁵ They also point out how non-brahmin masculinity and culture function as a counterhegemonic force, disrupting the narrative of brahmin masculinity. For instance, while an ideal brahmin male may concentrate on *puja* practices, a non-brahmin man considers his ability to provide financial aid for his family, and his labour in the paddy field, as that which makes him worthy. Osella and Osella observe:

In non-Brahmin styles, we find the opposite of detachment—entanglement in the world—at the center of what it means to be a good man: work and providing for the family stand strongly as positive characteristics of adult men. However, because a laborer's work is casual manual labor and his family not a property and prestige group, the endeavors of the laboring man are derided by the higher communities and by those lucky enough to have an *udyogam/joli* (salaried employment) rather than just *pani* (labour). Unlike the Brahmin teenager, who is accorded mature male status by all, the lower-status teenager is recognized as a man only within his own group... This brings us back to

¹⁷⁵ Osella and Osella, *Men and Masculinities in South India*.

asking whether the Brahmanic style refers to a hegemonic style. And here we find quite clearly that there exists a counter-discourse to Brahmanic masculinity, which is not simply a compensatory counter-discourse of the weak, but is actually the dominant *Malayali* style of being and is set right against such Brahminical values as vegetarianism/asceticism and religiosity.¹⁷⁶

Here, I argue that, not only non-brahmin community, but Kerala Muslim community also, through various strategies and mediums, questions the idealization of brahmin masculinity. Magazines for Muslim children are a critical site where this contestation happens and a counter-Muslim masculinity is shaped. Re-presenting and disseminating the history of Mappila rebellion and Muslim anti-colonial movements is a significant strategy towards the shaping of this discourse. Several scholars and historians from the Muslim community have investigated and revisited mainstream narratives about the Malabar revolt of 1920. Ansari maps how the movement, which is presented as a fanatic movement in colonial records, is a peasant revolt lead by Malabar Muslims.¹⁷⁷ Re-narrating Mappila Revolt is one of the reoccurring discourses in magazines for Muslim children as well. Through this, these children's magazines present leaders of this revolt as heroes and role models for young readers. These alternative historical narrations are aimed at helping the Muslim reader to grow up with confidence and resist mainstream Islamophobic narratives. These narratives of counter-masculinity also generate a critique of mainstream history centred on brahmanical idealism and ways of living widely circulated in "secular" public schools via textbooks.

¹⁷⁶ Osella and Osella, 50.

¹⁷⁷ Ansari, "Refiguring the Fanatic: Malabar, 1836-1922."

I also argue that Muslim children's magazines challenge the notion of the ideal citizen projected in *Balarama* and *Poombatta*, by positing an alternative ideal for Muslims—one who can still be a model citizen while keeping his faith and identity intact. Presenting day to day life via narratives of Muslim men is another form of producing the above said counter masculinity. This production of everyday narratives of a Muslim man, for instance, involves a depiction of his everyday engagement with society and social issues, and his position in and services to his family.

In these processes, *Kurunnukal* and *Malarvadi* attempt to contest and displace the image of a “bad Muslim” which had appeared recurrently in *Balarama* and similar magazines. In *Balarama*, a Muslim male with religious marks including, beard, skull cap etc. is the symbol of backwardness and irrationality. Such representation of Muslim masculinity is repeatedly deployed to indicate the “deviant” and “irresponsible” behaviour of Muslim men. Aysha's father in *Classukayattam* (Class Upgrading),¹⁷⁸ Kunjalu's father in *Sammanam* (The Gift),¹⁷⁹ Ali Master in *Motta Poker* (The Zero Poker)¹⁸⁰ – the short stories I discussed in the previous chapter-- serve as examples. *Kurunnukal* and *Malarvadi* use the same visual markers which are deployed in *Balarama* to represent the Muslim male. The representation of the Muslim woman as subjugated/victim of religious and cultural norms and the Muslim man as patriarchal and uncivilized is subverted by Muslim children's magazines by portraying Muslims as part and parcel of the centre of a civic “everyday” normal life.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section introduces the themes and backgrounds of *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*; the second section locates the

¹⁷⁸ Radha, “Classukayattam (Class Upgrading).”

¹⁷⁹ Nileswaram, “Sammanam (The Gift).”

¹⁸⁰ Balussery, “Motta Poker (The Zero Poker).”

depiction of Muslims within the national historiography, and how *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* construct counter-historical narratives and it also map the role of Mappila Muslims in anti-colonial and national movements. The last section deals with the notion of counter- public spheres and masculinities formulated via these magazines.

SECTION I

The Background of Magazines for Muslim Children

Malarvadi, the first magazine in Malayalam for Muslim children, started its publication in the 1980s. *Malarvadi* is published under the patronage of JIK. JIK is the regional unit of JIH. The magazine includes fictional and non-fictional stories including *Poocha Police* (The Police Cat) and *Pattalam Paili* (The Soldier Paili) as the name shows, *Poocha Police* is the story of an enthusiastic, energetic police cat named Cat Pole. The story tells of his achievements and fights against corruption and robbery. *Pattalam Paili* is yet another attraction of the magazine. Ex-service men named Paili, Khadarka, and Kuttappan are the major characters in this story.

Both *Poocha Police* and *PattalamPaili* allegorically represent different animals including cats, bears, goats, and foxes. They appear in a hybrid form of animals and human beings. For instance, Cat Pole- the central character of *Poocha Police* appears in the hybrid form of cat and human- the head is of a cat and the body looks is that of a human being. Apart from these stories, early issues of the magazine discuss the works of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer and M.T. Vasudevan Nair, and include letters and exchanges between readers and the famous children's writer

Kunjunni Mash.¹⁸¹ Such strategies contribute to a secular representation of the magazine. At the same time, the magazine provides a space for Muslim religiosity with religious stories and snippets from Islamic history.

Kurunnukal, a Malayalam magazine catering to Muslim children, was launched in January 1999 with the support of the Sunni sects of Kerala, making it the second publication of its kind. The Malayalam word *Kurunnukal* literally translates into “kids.” The word connotes love and affection towards children in Malayalam language. For instance, *Kurunnukal* is very common in Malayalam lullabies. The word *Kurunnukal* is different from its Sanskrit counterparts such as *santati*, *bala*, *balaya*, *zizu*, *putra* etc, which are also common in standard Malayalam. The title itself thus poses a counterpoint to *Balarama*. The magazine *Kurunnukal* includes short novels, cartoons, historical narratives, and historical illustrations. *Kurunnukal* is published by *Samastha Kerala Jam'iyathul Muallimeen Central Council*, the madrasa teachers' organisation of *Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Vidhyabyasa Board* (SKIMVB). These two organisations are associated with *Samastha* and *Samastha* belongs to the traditional sects of Muslims, popularly known as Sunni Muslims.¹⁸²

SECTION II

Locating the Muslim in National History

There are many scholars who have underscored the problem of national historiography and how the Muslims have been routinely represented as “deviant” in

¹⁸¹ Kunjunni was an Indian poet of Malayalam literature. He is known for his short poems with philosophical overtone. He was popularly known as Kunjunni Mash. The Malayalam word *mash* literally means master or teacher.

¹⁸² In broader sense Kerala Muslims are belongs to Sunni category of Muslims. In Kerala context, Muslims are belonging to two different sects; reformist and traditional. Traditional sects of Muslims are known as Sunni Muslims.

nationalist history. Guha, the founder of the Subaltern Studies,¹⁸³ discusses the history of Indian nationalism which is dominated by upper caste elites. He refers to them as neo-colonialist and neo-nationalist elites. He writes:

Both these varieties of elitisms share the prejudice that the making of the Indian nation and development of the consciousness-nationalism-which informed this process were exclusively or predominantly an elite achievement. In the colonialist and neo-colonialist historiographies these achievements are credited to British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions and cultures. In the nationalist and neo nationalist writings- to Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas.¹⁸⁴

In the context of Bengal, Chatterjee points out that when Bankim Chandra calls for rewriting the history of Bengal, this history of the Bengali is often mapped onto the history of the “Indian”-each identity overlapping the other. In both cases, the foreign ruler and aggressor are portrayed to be Muslim. Chatterjee brings out how historians in Bengal reclaim their past through stories of Hindu mythology and the representation of the Muslim “Other”.¹⁸⁵ Pandey explores the process by which nationalism and its core were established- invisibly and naturally. He reflects:

Many elaborations of the “us” and “them” of Indian nationalism during the late 1940s served to reinforce the conceptual split between the Hindu/Indian on the one hand, and the Muslim/foreigner on the other. Occasionally, this was presented as a division between the “majority” and the “minorities,” as in numerous Constituent Assembly speeches on the “generosity” of the majority

¹⁸³ Subaltern Studies: Writings on Indian History and society are a series of debates on modern Indian history. The debate is started by Ranajit Guha in 1982. The term refers to the study of social groups they are marginalised from mainstream power structure.

¹⁸⁴ Ranajit Guha, “Dominance without Hegemony and Its Historiography,” in *Subaltern Studies. Writings on South Asian History and Society No. 6* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press., 1989), 1.

¹⁸⁵ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments : Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories*.

towards the minorities. The easy, almost invisible, construction of the Hindus as the real Indians, and the others—especially the Muslims, who, as we have seen, stood particularly under the sign of a question mark—as communities on trial, is to be found in other kinds of nationalist statement as well.¹⁸⁶

The Indian Independence Movement and the subsequent event of partition are represented such that Hindus appear as the “real” and “natural” Indians, and Muslims are forever under the sign of suspicion. Muslims have the burden to prove their loyalty and belonging to India, while the loyalty of Hindus is a given.¹⁸⁷ Devji interprets the history of Indian nationalism as a history of differences, the differences that nationalism simultaneously creates and excludes, and the differences which make nationalism possible in the first place. He points out how the Muslim community in India became a category without history, and was reduced to a mere communal group.¹⁸⁸ Metcalf observes that, in colonial history, India is a bounded entity inhabited by two religious’ communities. It imagines Hindus as the original inhabitants, and Muslims much like the British imagined themselves: as foreign, imperial rulers who arrived and became successful conquerors. During the Indian nationalist movements, these equations are further reproduced. They identified Indian nationalism as having cultural Hinduism at its base for symbols of unity.¹⁸⁹ She observes:

In India, as everywhere, the extent to which the writing of history since the nineteenth century has been intimately tied to the project of the nation state. Today’s public narratives, we now realize, while new in its emphases and its use, has roots that can be clearly identified as part of colonial practice that forged a powerful outline of the history of India, a history that simultaneously contributed to the construction of Britain’s own history of

¹⁸⁶ Gyanendra Pandey, “Can a Muslim Be an Indian?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 4 (1999): 621.

¹⁸⁷ Pandey, “Can a Muslim Be an Indian?”

¹⁸⁸ Devji, “Hindu/Muslim/Indian.”

¹⁸⁹ Metcalf, *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan*.

itself. In that colonial history, India was already a bounded entity inhabited by two religiously defined communities. And in that India, British historians imagined Hindus as the original inhabitants and Muslims rather as they, the British, imagined themselves; as foreign rulers, as imperial rulers, who arrived as successful conquerors.¹⁹⁰

Abraham explores the European encounter with Muslims in South Asia within a non-western discourse, especially British colonial legal encounters and processes which identified and categorized Muslims as criminals and offenders.¹⁹¹ He focuses on the rivalry between upper caste landlords and the Mappila cultivators. During Tippu Sultan's regime, the Mappila cultivators attained more authority on land than the landlords through the new land revenue system imposed by Tippu. Later, with the help of colonial administration, upper caste landlords restored their power on the land. As a response to this, Mappila entrepreneurs began to challenge the British. He says "as a part of declaring the sovereign authority of colonial state, and controlling the 'rebels,' the British constructed the stereotypical images of Mappila Muslim as 'jungle Mappila Bandits' and 'criminal brigands.'"¹⁹²

Pandey argues that, British colonialism in India regularly represented the "native" as primitive and violent and, at other times, its exact opposite, as completely passive. Indian nationalism, in its turn, represented certain kinds of violence, and most kinds of mass violence, as committed by the "backward" people who were unfortunately ill-educated and insufficiently enlightened.¹⁹³ Pandey points out that the nationalist accounts on popular violence in the subcontinent share common ideas with

¹⁹⁰ Metcalf, 68.

¹⁹¹ Abraham, "Constructing the 'Extraordinary Criminals': Mappila Muslims and Legal Encounters in Early British Colonial Malabar."

¹⁹² Abraham, 5.

¹⁹³ Pandey, "The Prose of Otherness."

the colonists. In the nationalist narratives, “backward” sections of the population- the lower classes and marginal groups- are addressed as agents of violence.¹⁹⁴ These narratives demonstrate how the idea of the nation state is foregrounded as Hindu, with the Muslim as the “Other” – the agent of violence who disrupts the order of the nation state.

Construction of an Ideal Muslim Masculinity

Guha has pointed out that what is left out in this “un-historical historiography” (whether nationalist or colonialist) is the politics of the common people. However, this history existed parallel to elite politics throughout the colonial period. Guha points out:

What clearly is left out of this un-historical historiography is the politics of the people. For parallel to the domain of elite politics, there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society or the colonial authorities, but the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country- that is the people.¹⁹⁵

Guha urges subaltern communities to write their own history to claim their space in the history of the making of the nation. As Veena Das points out, the first emancipatory act that the Subaltern Studies project performs in our understanding of tribes, caste or other such groups, is to restore to them their historical beings.¹⁹⁶ I argue that as children’s magazines from a marginalized community, *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* re-present the role of Mappila Muslims in national formation. They map

¹⁹⁴ Pandey.

¹⁹⁵ Guha, “Dominance without Hegemony and Its Historiography,” 190.

¹⁹⁶ Das, “Subaltern as Perspective,” 314.

the history of Mappila Muslims as parallel to elite historiography. Muslim children's magazines place Mappila Muslim freedom fighters alongside popular national leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Tilak, and Azad. In these magazines, both historical narratives have the task of representing and justifying a counter-Muslim masculinity. It is in this context that the series of narratives about Ali Musliyar, Tipu Sultan, and Aurangzeb gain significance. Through these alternative narrations, *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* attempt to generate self-respect in their intended (Muslim) readers.

These historical narratives appearing in Muslim children's magazines work towards creating self confidence in the Muslim child such that s/he can resist mainstream Islamophobic/racist narratives. They also generate a critique of the mainstream history that circulates in schools via textbooks. In school textbooks, especially within the Nehruvian framework, King Akbar is considered as an ideal Muslim. Akbar is well known for his *Din-e-ilahi*, a syncretic religion derived mainly from Islam and Hinduism. Curiously, we do not find any incidents from Akbar's life or the popular Akbar-Birbal tales in *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*. For *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*, a freedom fighter does not necessarily have to underplay or "render acceptable" his faith, and his "belonging" to the nation can coexist and in fact, be rooted in religiosity - Islam. Below, I present a few examples from *Kurunnukal* and *Malarvadi* to substantiate my argument.

1. Ali Musliyar: A Brave leader of Mappila Revolt

Ali Musliyar's (1861-1922) story is an important historical narrative of counter-masculinity in *Kurunnukal*. The twentieth century was a very critical period in the history of Muslims across the globe. It was the period when the Ottoman Empire

declined. Ali Musliyar was the leader of the Kerala Khilafat Movement.¹⁹⁷ O.P.

Mayan Kutty points out that there were several reasons for Ali Musaliyar's hostility towards the British. He had lost his elder brother Mammad Kutty Musaliyar and many relatives in the struggle against the British in Mannarkkad in 1891. The author further says:

Ali Musliyar by virtue of his fourteen years of service as Mudarris of Kizhakke Palli from 1907-1921, was popular among, and held in great respect, by a large number of his disciples at Tirurangadi and in neighbouring areas. Variyan Kunnath Kunhahmed Haji, one of the strong leaders of the Revolt of 1921 was his relative and friend, Kunhi Koya Tangal was his friend, and Lavakkutty and Kunhalavi were his trustful lieutenants. Kunhi Kadar of Tanur, Vadakkeveettil Mohammed of Pookottoor, Karadan Moideen Kutty, Parayeri Kunhahmed Kutty, and Thettayil Kunhahmed Haji of Tirurangadi were his closest disciples. It was through these friends and disciples that the Musliyar controlled the whole movement. Thus, Ali Musliyar held the reins of the Khilafat agitations and the Revolt of 1921 till his arrest.¹⁹⁸

This shows the leadership role of Ali Musliyar in the Khilafat Movement, also known as Mappila Rebellion in colonial records. In colonial historical narratives, the incident was marked as a revolt triggered by the religious fanaticism of Muslims. And the wider nationalist movement overlooked the significance of the Malabar uprising in the Indian freedom struggle movement. M.T. Ansari problematizes them historical representation by William Logan which portrays the Mappila Muslim community in Malabar as "fanatic." He argues, the Orientalist/colonialist perspective of the British

¹⁹⁷ The Khilafat movement was aimed to unite the Muslim community allied with Indian nationalists, to preserve the supremacy of the Ottoman Sultan as Caliph of Islam after the First World War by pressuring the British government.

¹⁹⁸ O.P. Mayan Kutty, "Ali Musaliar: A Khilafat Martyr of South India," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 71 71 (2010): 620.

government represents the Mapilla community in historical records as intractable and fanatical". He further argues that the same tendency recurs in Indian nationalist discourse. Gandhi describes the Malabar revolt not as a part of Indian national struggle, but as a mere "*lahala*" (riot) instead of a revolt.¹⁹⁹

In *Kurunnukal*, the narrative of Ali Musliyar starts with a brief introduction to his life set in 19th century British Malabar. It goes like this:

Ali Musliyar was born as the son of Kunju Moidheen, who lived in Manjeri (currently a part of Malappuram district). During his childhood, he joined the Ponnani mosque *dars*²⁰⁰ for his religious primary education. After completing his primary education at the *dars*, Musliyar went to Mecca for higher studies, following which he started a madrasa at the Kavaratti Island where he worked for nine years. He was one among the religious and reformist leaders of the Kavaratti Island in Lakshadweep. When his brother was assassinated by the British, he came back to Kerala. He also founded many religious institutions in different parts of Malabar. During the Khilafat Movement,²⁰¹ Muslims staged multiple public protests against the British rule across Kerala, under the leadership of Ali Musliyar.²⁰²

In the *Kurunnukal* series, Ali Musliyar appears as a pious Muslim man in traditional attire (see images 11 and 12). In these visuals, he is seen with a long beard without moustache and in white *mundu*, shirt and cap, the attire of traditional Muslim men in Kerala. Muslim men consider keeping beard without moustache is *sunnah*²⁰³ and part of the "ideal" and "Islamic" way of life. Ali Musliyar's facial expression and

¹⁹⁹ Ansari, "Refiguring the Fanatic: Malabar, 1836-1922."

²⁰⁰ *Dars* is a religious institution under a Mosque.

²⁰¹ Khilafat movement is a pan Islamic movement to restore the caliph of the Ottoman Caliphate, who was the leader of Sunni Muslims. In India, the movement led by Shaikat Ali and Mulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar who popularly known as Ali brothers.

²⁰² "Ali Musliyar," *Kurunnukal*, November 2010, 21.

²⁰³ *Sunnah* is words and deeds of Prophet Muhammad.

physical gesture reflect his confidence, piety, and his stature among his followers. He is surrounded by his followers. As the speech in the dialogue box shows, the local people are narrating to him the cruelty of British army towards the Muslims of the region.



Image 11. Illustration of Ali Musliyar and followers, *Kurunnukal*, March, 2009.

The image depicts Ali Musliyar and his companions discussing resistance strategies against the British army. Ali Musliyar advises his followers to avoid violence. He says: “To win against British, we do not have enough weapons. So, the only solution we have is *ahimsa* as preached by Gandhi.” Then he collects the knife from his follower and gives it to the police. In the picture, we can see the policeman whispering “Surely, he is a brave, honest and national leader.”²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ “Ali Musliyar,” *Kurunnukal*, March 2009, 17.

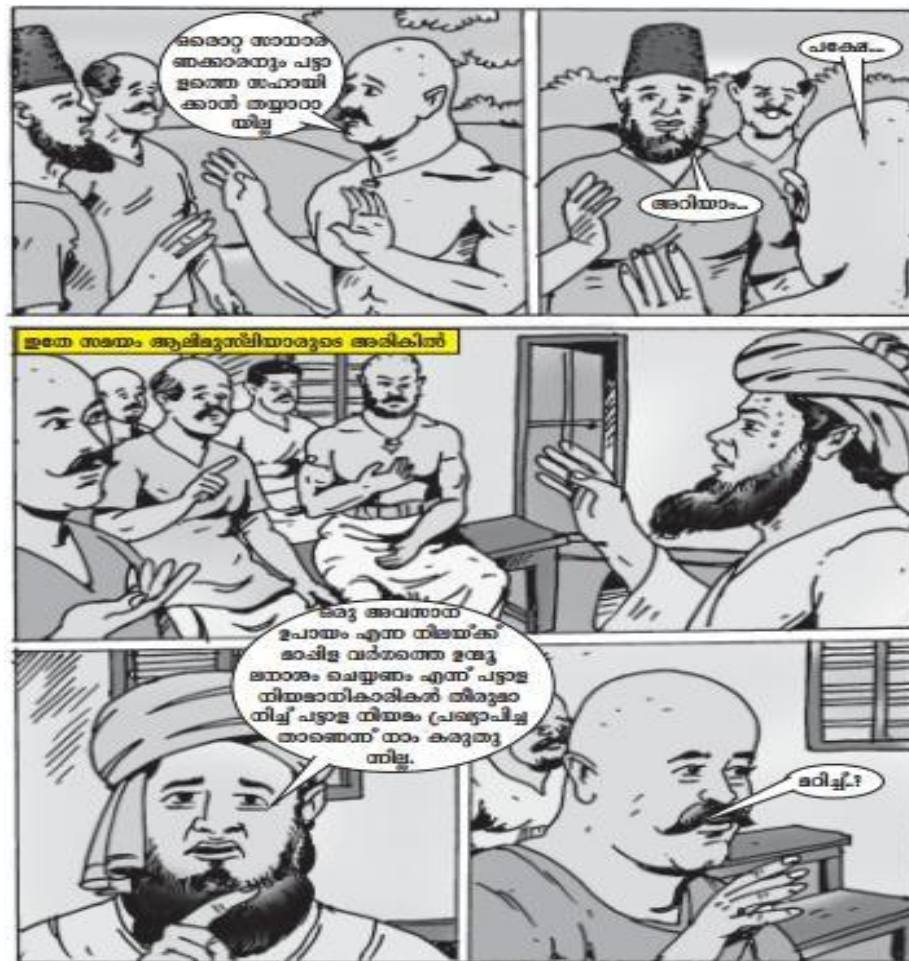


Image 12. Visual representation of Ali Musliyar, *Kurunnukal*, April 2010.

Visual representation of Ali Musliyar in *Kurunnukal* deploys many of the gestures and markers of the prototypical Muslim male that appear in *Balarama* and *Kurunnukal*. However, the same visual signs are used here to counter popular imagination about Muslim men. In *Kurunnukal*, symbols of the “bad” Muslim in *Balarama* are subverted to depict the qualities of an “ideal” Muslim like Ali Musliyar. Here, Ali Musliyar is represented simultaneously as a religious leader and a freedom fighter, thus countering the normative imagination of a “National Muslim.” Ali Musliyar, a reputed religious scholar, with all the markers of a practicing Muslim is represented as the “national Muslim” here.

In the above picture (See image 12), we can see the long-bearded Ali Musliyar with his followers. Some of them appear semi-naked, partially clothed and are physically strong and well built. These visual signs locate them as agrarian workers belonging to the lower working class, and points to their role in the uprising. The amulets worn by them indicate the presence of traditional Sunni Muslims in the movement.²⁰⁵ As a children's magazine from a traditional sect, *Kurunnukal* re-locates the movement and the protesters within Kerala Sunnism. The wooden benches on which the followers of Ali Musliyar are seated indicate that the conversation is happening in a madrasa. This foregrounds the role of the mechanisms and resources within the community, including religious leadership and educational institutions, in the resistance movement. Thus, it signals the resistance to colonial authority arising from within the religious and community life of Muslims.

There has been recurrent criticism that a large number of non-Muslims were forcefully converted to Islam during the Khilafat movement and Malabar uprising. *Kurunnukal* challenges such narratives through the Ali Musliyar series. One of the episodes of the novel notes a group of non-Muslim women approaching a Muslim Haji²⁰⁶ and telling him that a man told them to convert to Islam. The Haji replies, "Do not convert to Islam without your consent. Non-consensual conversion is not permitted in Islam."²⁰⁷ Here, the narrative addresses and critiques the popular narratives about mass conversion to Islam and the forceful conversion of non-Muslims. The magazine deliberately chooses a Haji, who is considered as a pious and respected figure, to speak on behalf of the community. In the narrative, the Haji gives

²⁰⁵ Among Kerala Muslims, traditional Muslim sects follow and believe that certain amulets. Available in different shrines and offered by religious leaders, can protect them from evil force, illness etc.

²⁰⁶ A person who performed Hajj

²⁰⁷ "Ali Musliyar," November 2010.21

an informal answer about conversion to Islam. One can say that the narrative moves beyond its immediate context and engages in dialogue with the Kerala public consciousness, which abounds with stories of forceful conversions into Islam. The non-Muslim women in the novel represent the public who are worried about forceful conversion. The Haji represents the ideal Muslim, who has the wisdom and authority to speak of the jurisprudential approach to conversion. The leaders of the Malabar revolt are popularly accused of forceful conversion of Hindus to Islam. Many Malayalam novels and poems during this time articulate this tension.

Ahmad discusses how one of the great poets, Vallathol Narayana Menon's (1878- 1958) poem *Bharatha Sthreekalthaan Bhavashudhi* published during Malabar revolt portrays a cruel Mappila who forcefully kidnaps a Hindu woman. Another novel titled *Sundharnmarum Sundharikalum* (Beautiful men and women) by Parutholi Chalappurathu Kuttikrishnan (1915-1979) popularly known as Uroob, also reflects the anxiety of the Hindu community during the Khilafat movement.²⁰⁸ We can clearly see how *Kurunnukal* works to challenge these narratives and construct a counter-narrative of the pious Muslim who does not believe in forceful conversion. By representing the Haji as the just authority on conversion- "Do not convert to Islam without your consent"²⁰⁹ *Kurunnukal* unequivocally asserts that in Islam, conversion is not valid without pure consent and consciousness of the individual involved.

2. Variyam Kunnathu Kunjammad Haji

Like Ali Musliyar, Variyam Kunnathu Kunjammad Haji (1883-1922) was yet another iconic and charismatic Muslim figure in the Malabar uprising. He was known

²⁰⁸ Ahmad, *Malayala Muslim- Basha, Samskaram, Charithram (Malayala Muslims- Language, Culture and History)*.

²⁰⁹ "Ali Musliyar," November 2010, 21.

as Sulthan Kunjammad Haji. A long resistance against the British finally lead to his persecution. In January 20, 1922, he surrendered to the British army and they hanged him. Variyam Kunnathu Kunjammad Haji's family had a history of colonial resistance; his father was deported to Andaman Island for his participation in the Mannarkadu Rebellion in 1864.²¹⁰

After this incident, Variyam Kunnathu took a firm decision to fight against colonialism. He wrote letters to different Muslim religious scholars regarding this. When the authorities came to know about his anti-colonial acts, a look-out notice was released to find him. During this period, he escaped to Mecca and returned after three years. When the Khilafat movement started, he led a group of people and ran a parallel government system for six months. He strictly prohibited his followers from attacking and looting non-Muslims. For successful governance, he divided his territory among different people, who strictly followed his instructions. He held several courts to attend to the petitions of his subjects and the prisoners who were arrested in different revolts. A just ruler, he is said to have declared the death penalty for three of his followers for on charges of raping Hindu women. This is held up as an example of the justice and unbiased legal procedure which was prevalent in his court. He mimicked the power hierarchy of the British governance system, and appointed his people in positions akin to collector, governor or viceroy within his territory of governance.²¹¹

In the 1920s, Kunjammad Haji wrote a letter to *The Hindu* newspaper. A part of the letter is cited below:

According to the press reports from Malabar which you will have got, Hindu-Muslim unity in Malabar has thoroughly ceased to exist. It appears that the

²¹⁰ Kutty, "Ali Musaliar: A Khilafat Martyr of South India."

²¹¹ Kutty.

report that Hindus are forcibly converted is entirely untrue. Such conversions were done by the government party and reserve police men in mufti mingling themselves with the rebels (masquerading as rebels).²¹²



Image 13. Variyam Kunnathu Kunjamad Haji, *Malarvadi*, August, 2018.

Kurunnukal includes an article about Variyam Kunnathu Kunjamad Haji²¹³ and his resistance against the British rule. It narrates how during the Khilafat movement, Kunjamad Haji established a parallel state system in Eranad, where he declared a separate tax and passport system. He emerged as a threat for the British army. To capture him, the British army formed a special operation team named as

²¹²<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/reports-of-hindu-muslim-strife-in-malabar-baseless/article31918716.ece>

²¹³ “Variyam Kunnathu Kunjamad Haji,” *Kurunnukal*, January 2010.

“Variyan Kunnathu Operation Cell.” Kunjammad Haji established a parallel state system, and he declared the rules and regulations of this governance system through his Manjeri proclamation. The proclamation included diktats not to attack and rob Hindus, punishment for forceful conversion, and denial of any kind of aid for the British army and their supporters. “Migration to my state is not allowed without a clear pass. In this state, all properties belong to those who are working on the land. There is no tax in the current year, and in the subsequent year everyone will pay tax as mentioned.”²¹⁴ These narratives foreground the charismatic and humane leadership of Kunjammad Haji.

3. Veliyankode Omar Qazi

Veliyankode Omar Qazi (1757-1856) is another freedom fighter celebrated in *Kurunnukal*.²¹⁵ Omar Qazi was the follower of Mampuram Alawi Thanagal (1749-1843), also known as Mampuram Thangal.²¹⁶ They both influenced the Mappila Muslims of their time. In prison, Omar Qazi wrote: “We should not allow such oppression to continue. It is better for the Muslim to fight against oppressive rulers and die.”²¹⁷ This is how he is described in *Kurunnukal*:

Veliyankode Omar Qazi was a poet, scholar, and freedom fighter. He completed his education from Thanoor Dars. From there, he learned classic Islamic texts. He was appointed as supreme judge in Veliyankode Juma Masjid. He led a political and religious life. He considered all Indians to be one, irrespective of religion, and the British as the common enemy. He was an

²¹⁴ “Variyam Kunnathu Kunjammad Haji,” 14.

²¹⁵ “Veliyankode Omar Qazi,” *Kurunnukal*, January 2011.

²¹⁶ Sayyid Alawi Mouladaveel Thangal, also known as Mamaburam Thangal, was an Islamic scholar who settled in Mamburam in Kerala. His tomb is located near the Mamburam mosque. It is one of the greatest pilgrimage centres in Kerala.

²¹⁷ A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, “Tuhfat Ul-Mujahidin, a Historiographical Study,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 41 (1980): 40.

ideal promoter of communal harmony and brotherhood. In the late 19th century, he introduced the Non-Taxation Movement. Before that, such a movement was unheard of in the history of the freedom struggle. He openly disobeyed the British, and refused to pay tax. When the officers asked him for the tax, he declared: ‘I will not pay tax for Allah’s land.’ He had to bear a lot of consequences for that. He was imprisoned for a long time. He wrote many poems regarding communal harmony and historical events.²¹⁸

The above discussed Muslim men including Ali Musliyar, Kunjammad Haji and Omar Qazi illustrate the influence and role of *ulamas*²¹⁹ in the anti-colonial movement. These religious scholars created awareness about religion as well as colonialism through their writings, speeches, and *fatwa*.²²⁰ Alongside such dissemination of anticolonial consciousness, religious institutions of Muslims including the mosque, *dars* and other religious ceremonies also had the presence of large numbers of *ulama* belonging to the peasant classes, who played a significant role in inciting the spirit of fight among the Mappila peasantry of the 19th century. Through such anti-colonial Mappila Muslim narratives, *Kurunnukal* draws on the influence and contributions of traditional *ulamas* in anti-colonial movements, and reclaims a “Muslim space” in national history.

²¹⁸ “Veliyankode Omar Qazi,” 16.

²¹⁹ *Ulamas* are scholars who are recognized as having specialist knowledge of Islamic texts.

²²⁰ Ahammad, “Padakalil Pathinja Paattuveyryam (Songs That Blossomed in Resistance),” in *Mappila Keezhala Padangal*, ed. K.K Muhammad Abdul sathar (Calicut: Vachanam Books, 2014), 262–67.

4. Kunjalavi and Lavakutty



Image 14. Kunjalavi and Lavakutty, *Malarvadi*, August 2018.

Malarvadi published in August 2018 portrays two historical characters, Kunjalavi and Lava Kutty, who were the followers of Ali Musliyar during the Malabar uprising. They are described as follows:

During Ali Musliyar's regime in Tirurangadi, Kunjalavi took the role of minister, and Lava Kutty was the captain of the army. During the uprising, Kunjalavi killed Mr Johnson and Mr Rowl from the British army. When the British army attacked the Tirurangadi mosque, Kunjalavi and Lava Kutty fought bravely. The army caught Kunjalavi and awarded him the capital

punishment. Lava Kutty escaped from the British Army.²²¹

5. Abdul Kalam Azad



Image 15. Abdul Kalam Azad, *Malarvadi*, August, 2018.

Alongside the above discussed historical figures, the magazine also talks about pan-Indian nationalist Muslims such as Abdul Kalam Azad (1888-1958). Azad is portrayed as a pious, practising Muslim and reformer. The magazine explains, in 1912, Azad started a newspaper called *Al Hilal* with the objective of “enlightening Indian Muslims.” When the newspaper was banned by the colonial government, he started another newspaper named *Al Balag*. His newspapers were a major threat to the British government. He was barred from entering Bengal and many other provinces.

²²¹ “Swathanthra Samara Nayakanmar (Heroes of Freedom Struggle),” *Malarvadi*, August 1, 2018, 16.

He was imprisoned in Ranchi. He met Gandhi in 1920 and participated in the non-cooperation movement. He was imprisoned several times till 1945. He was the first education minister of independent India. He opposed Muhammad Ali Jinnah's two-nation theory and partition. He wrote many Islamic literary works, and his autobiography is titled *India Wins Freedom*.²²² Malarvadi celebrated and represents Azad as a pan Indian Muslim leader, a nationalist and an ideal role model.

SECTION III

The Idea of a Muslim Counter-Public Sphere

Several scholars have problematized the idea of the public sphere, pointing out that it can be deeply exclusionary. As I have discussed earlier, Chatterjee argues that the anti-colonial nationalist discourse constructed two separate spheres, namely, the material and the spiritual. The material domain is the realm of the outside signifying the world of western science, rationality, and progress. The spiritual domain bears the “inner” and “essential” marks of cultural identity and women become the bearers of this identity.²²³ Chatterjee further discusses how the “spiritual inner domain” is constructed through an exclusion of women from the lower and performing castes.

As M.S.S. Pandian points out what is hegemonically represented as authentic Indian culture is the culture of the brahmins and upper castes. And the “spiritual domain of culture un-colonized by the west” is indeed a realm of upper caste culture and spirituality given the status of “national culture.” Pandian argues that the counter-public of subaltern groups contest the modern authorized public sphere with its elite

²²² “Swathanthra Samara Nayakanmar (Heroes of Freedom Struggle),” *Malarvadi*, August 16, 2018.

²²³ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories*.

upper caste protocols is equally important. This is the sphere of constant dialogues and collaboration among lower castes which mobilizes modernity and speaks for universal freedom.²²⁴

The idea of the public sphere forwarded by Habermas argues that religious sentiments will gradually disappear from the public sphere and reason would be adequate ground for morality.²²⁵ There are many scholars who have underscored the complexity of public spheres where religion and religious sentiments continue to make sense. Punathil explores how the Muslims of Kerala, create counter publics through parallel discursive arenas, where members of subordinate social groups re-invent and circulate counter discourses, asserting their identities, interests and needs.²²⁶ He writes:

The history of Mappila Muslims demonstrates their subaltern features in colonial Kerala. Mappila marginalization can be seen to result partly from their position as a historically subaltern group, like other caste groups, and partly as a religious community. After the Rebellion of 1921, there was a rupture in the social life of Mappilas, and their colonial projection and negative labelling as ‘fanatic’ had major impacts on the public sphere, which restricted the community’s interaction and involvement with the wider public.²²⁷

Further he argues:

Later periods saw the emergence of identity consciousness among Mappilas, especially in the political sphere. This reflected the transformation of a caste-like group (*kulam*) into a community (*ummah*), and Malabar as a region

²²⁴ M.S.S. Pandian, “One Step Outside Modernity: Caste, Identity Politics and Public Sphere,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 18 (May 4, 2002): 1735–41.

²²⁵ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (England: Polity Press, 1992).

²²⁶ Punathil, “Kerala Muslims and Shifting Notions of Religion in the Public Sphere.”

²²⁷ Punathil, 55.

became important for this imagination. Internal tensions and conflicts remained, but especially in the political sphere they sought to project outwardly a common Muslim identity and argued for collective interests. Sometimes, they tried to create counter-publics, especially in the literary and political realms, with counter discourses and activities along with other subordinated groups.²²⁸

Here, Punathil discusses how the earlier Mappila Muslim appearance in colonial and post-colonial history restricted them the access to the public sphere, and how gulf migration, Mappila political reform and literary movements helped Mappila Muslims to create a counter public sphere in Kerala.²²⁹ Gole has discussed the two phases of public visibility of Islam in Turkey.²³⁰ The first starts at the end of the 1970s and reaches its peak with the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979. This phase is characterized by questions on Islamic identity, and political and religious rule. The second phase gives way to a collective voice and leads to “exit from a religious revolution.” Muslim identity, during this stage, is in the process of “normalization.” Individualism, consumerism, professionalism is reflected in the life of Muslims. She observes that in Turkey, during modernization, the public sphere was institutionalized and imagined as a site for secular and progressive way of life, and an individualistic liberalism shores up this public sphere. Modern codes of conduct penetrated all public spaces. Islamic cultural significance and the modern visibility created an ambiguity in the public sphere. When a *hijabi* woman enters a modern, secular public institution, she emerges as an ambiguous sign among Muslims and secularists. She argues that the

²²⁸ Punathil, “Kerala Muslims and Shifting Notions of Religion in the Public Sphere,” 56.

²²⁹ Punathil, “Kerala Muslims and Shifting Notions of Religion in the Public Sphere.”

²³⁰ Nilufer Gole, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

public sphere is not simply a pre-established arena; but is rather constituted and negotiated through performance; the Muslim body is a site for resistance to any fixed notion of secular modernity, and also a site where both differences and prohibition are linked to the formation of new subjects (neither Muslim nor modern) and new sociability.²³¹

The Counter-Public Sphere and the Ideal Citizen in *Kurunnukal* and *Malarvadi*

As children's magazines, both *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* address a group of readers who simultaneously receive secular and religious education, from the school and madrasa respectively. As their audiences are from a minority community, yet inhabit a hetero-cultural society, both the magazines have the responsibility to teach Islam in a balanced manner. I examine how these magazines imagine a public sphere, within which Muslims are very active participants and strong historical agents. This section also deals with the ways in which magazines for Muslim children teach its readers to address and deal with different social issues from a Muslim perspective. In other words, I explore how these magazines endeavour to bring Muslims from the periphery to the centre of a secular society, as well as the ways in which *Kurunnukal* and *Malarvadi* re-imagine the public sphere from an Islamic point of view.

I would like to provide a few instances to substantiate my points. *Kurunnukal* and *Malarvadi* construct certain role models for young readers and the community, with the goal to demonstrate how a Muslim can live in contemporary India without giving up her/his religious identity. This strategy skilfully strains against the grain of a more normative secular discourse. In *Balarama* and *Poombatta*, secular educational institutions are portrayed as ideal learning places; with characters like Damu Master

²³¹ Gole.

and Nanu Master- which I mentioned in the previous chapter- depicted as ideal teachers who work hard to reform Muslim students and make them responsible citizens. As a counter to such representation, *Kurunnukal* represents the madrasa as an ideal learning place. In *Kurunnukal*, the teachers of madrasa are portrayed as ideal teachers who know every student personally and emotionally. They visit the student's homes and even arrange financial support for a poor pupil. The visual appearance of madrasa teachers are similar to teachers working in the madrasas of Sunni sects. They are addressed as *usthad* or *musliyar*, which are the colloquial words for madrasa teachers.

Can Madrasa be a Site of Citizen-Making?

The issues of *Kurunnukal* published in 2000-01 carry a series titled *Shakkir*, by Abdul Khader Koduvalli. The series is advertised as the story of a boy named Shakkir from a poor family who becomes a good citizen through the guidance of a *musliyar*, or madrasa teacher. This story foregrounds the role of madrasa teachers in moulding good citizens, and the role of the madrasa as a responsible social and educational institution, contributing to the nation and society. Shakkir is represented both as a good citizen and a good Muslim with Islamic learning. The series assigns a central place to the madrasa in instilling correct values in him; his family does not play any significant role in his education and character building. Below I give a brief summary of the series. Shakkir is from a poor family. His father, a coolie by profession, compels little Shakkir to find some job in the market. But Shakkir's ambition is to become a doctor. He is an excellent student in both madrasa and school. His madrasa teacher, Hasan Musliyar, decides to meet his father to advise him to be more mindful of Shakkir's education, but his father refuses. Then, Hasan Musliyar and his fellow madrasa teachers constitute a welfare committee for Shakkir's education and find a

sponsor for him. Shakkir fights through all difficult situations in life and achieves his ambition. The narrative consists of several situations that illustrate how an ideal teacher should be.²³² One episode of the series titled *Naseema* addresses the charity works of Hasan Musliyar. In this episode, Hasan Musliyar brings a marriage proposal for Shakkir. He introduces the bride's family to Shakkir saying:

I know the girl; she is well behaved and pious. She has completed the second group of pre-degree and is expecting a good result. If she writes the medical entrance exam, she will get in. But the family does not have the financial capacity for that. So, they are thinking about her marriage. After marriage, the bridegroom can decide about her future education.²³³

Hasan Musliyar does not compel Shakkir to accept the proposal, even though he has a moral right owing to the way he has helped him in the past. Shakkir accepts the proposal and marries her, deciding to help her to go for the medical course. Hasan Musliyar and fellow teachers take care of all things related to marriage. At the time of departure, when Hasan Musliyar sees the board “Doctor Shakkir” in front of the house, he feels elated, and proclaims that they, the madrasa teachers, must create more educated and dutiful students like Shakkir.²³⁴ Thus, the novel brings out the importance to madrasa education alongside school education, in shaping a compassionate and responsible human being like Shakkir. Even after becoming a doctor, Shakkir appears in the traditional Muslim man’s dress code. He is seen wearing the white shirt and pants with white skull cap, the common markers of traditional Muslim men in Kerala. We also realize that Hasan Musliyar and fellow teachers never compel Shakkir to become a madrasa teacher like them, nor do they

²³² Abdul Khader Koduvalli, “Shakkir,” *Kurunnukal*, August 2001.

²³³ “Naseema,” *Kurunnukal*, February 2010.

²³⁴ Koduvalli, “Shakkir.”

dismiss the modern education system. Here, a good citizen is imagined as a person who has Islamic values blended with modern education, like Shakkir does. Shakkir's success encourages madrasa teachers to create more citizens like Shakkir.

The series also gives importance to women's education. When Hasan Musliyar brings the marriage proposal to Shakkir, he conveys that the bride wishes to study medicine after marriage. The story thus recognizes and encourages the aspirations of women to continue education and not succumb to the burdens of domesticity after marriage. Thus, the novel simultaneously challenges public notions and stereotypes around madrasa, citizenship, masculinity, and women's education within the Muslim community. One can clearly see how Hasan Musliyar is shaped as an alternative to Damu Master.

Jantustan, an Utopia in Malarvadi

Jantustan may be seen as illustrative of the counter-public spheres that appear in *Malarvadi*. *Jantustan* is an imaginary land, and a play on the idea of *Hindustan*. The word *Jantustan* originates from two Hindi words, *Jantu* and *stan*, literally meaning animal and land, respectively. *Jantustan* is a utopia which critiques the dystopian terrain of existing society. It is a satirical interrogation of several issues that plague the society-- corruption, anti-reservation policy of the government, misuse of liquor, etc. Concomitantly, it deals with different Muslim issues in India including the Babari Masjid controversy. *Pattalam Paili* and *Poocha Police* are the two major series based on events that take place in *Jantustan*. These two stories allegorically present a range of issues in our society. As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, inmates of *Jantustan* are illustrated in the hybrid form, comprising the body of a man and the head of an animal. For example, major characters in *Pattalam Paili* such as,

Kuttappan, Pattalam Paili and Khadarka are represented in hybrid forms of fox, bear, and goat respectively with a human body (see image 16). They are the inhabitants of *Jantustan*. *Poocha Police* is about a bold and brave cat named Cat Pole. Malayalam word *poocha* literally means cat. Cat Pole is a police officer of high rank. He and his police force investigate crimes that happen in *Jantustan*.



Image 16. Khadarka, Pattalam Paili and Kuttappan, *Malarvadi*, December 2017.

Khadarka: A Contemporary Muslim Man in *Jantustan*

Khadarka,²³⁵ the Muslim character in *Pattalam Paili*, along with his other non-Muslim friends participate in different cultural and relief activities. In the visuals, we

²³⁵ In spoken Malayalam, Muslims add the sound “ka” with last part of a name to show respect towards a person. The sound “ka” stands for “brother.” Here Khadarka’s

can see that Khadarka wears a green belt, white lungi and has a beard. These marks are commonly visible in mainstream narratives commonly depict the Malappuram Muslim with these markers. In these narratives, white lungi and green belt are routinely used to represent the Malappuram Muslims through an anthropological gaze, these markers denoting their backwardness and religious identity. Ansari argues that the marking of Mappila fanatic is also a marking of the Muslim body as a rupture in the liberal ideology.²³⁶ In mainstream discourse, the skull cap, shaven head, green belt, white lungi and vest become the signs of the “backward” Muslim.

Thus, it is significant that Khadarka- a very active, ideal, and humorous character in *Jantustan* with the very same visual markers--inhabits a central space within the society. In *Pattalam Paili*, like any citizen, Khadarka also engages in a range of social and cultural activities. Thus, *Malarvadi* counters the cultural stereotypes about Muslims while deploying the same visual signs that constitute such stereotypes. In *Pattalam Paili*, we can see there are many indications about the social location of its major characters like Khadarka, Kuttappan and Paili.²³⁷ Their very names reflect their religious identity. The magazine narrates many instances from their personal and familial lives which depict the celebration of their religious festivals and beliefs. While these characters are recognizably Muslim, the narratives do not subsume them under their religious identity alone, and consistently foregrounds of the strong friendships and fun they have. Through such strategies, the magazine creates an imagined shared community space.

formal name is Khadar. In *Malarvadi* everyone calls him Khadarka to express their respect towards him. To show respect towards women Muslims uses the sound “*tha*” or “*cha*” with a name.

²³⁶ Ansari, “Refiguring the Fanatic: Malabar, 1836-1922.”

²³⁷ Kuttapan and Paili follow Hindu and Christian religion respectively.

The recent issues of *Pattalam Paili* actively engage with contemporary issues and contestations around Muslim identity and existence in India such as the much debated issues of the NRC (National Register of Citizens) and CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act). *Pattalam Paili* published in the February 2020 issue of *Malarvadi* speaks of the illegal migration that happens in *Jantustan*. In this narrative, one day, during an evening walk, Khadarka, Kuttappan and Paili hear an announcement, “Many animals from outside forests have encroached *Jantustan*. Today evening, a group of animals are conducting a public rally demanding that these illegal migrants leave *Jantustan*.” Upon hearing this, Kuttappan is shocked, and says, “What they are saying? How can they expel animals?” Paili responds, “Oh. Don’t you read the newspapers? If any animal is not able to submit documents which prove that he/she is an inmate of this forest, they will have to leave.” Khadraka asks, “Why is the government suddenly suspecting our citizenship?” To which Kuttappan responds, “It may be a trick on their part to expel their enemies.” As a response, Khadarka says, “We will protest. We were not even afraid of the British, and we will not back off now.” In the evening, only five animals participate in the rally to expel illegal migrants. The rally is organised by a political party named “Balloon Party.” Mr Fox is the leader of the party. In the midst of the rally, a news channel on television reports that a *Jantustan* court has declared Mr Fox to be a culprit in a corruption case. After seeing the news report, the inmates of *Jantustan* attack Mr Fox and his team, saying, “We are one and we will not allow anyone to divide this forest.”²³⁸

The given narrative allegorically presents the ongoing debates around NRC and CAA. Though there is no direct reference to NRC or CAA movements happening across the nation, the magazine tries to sensitize young readers about these issues in a

²³⁸ “Pattalam Paili,” *Malarvadi*, February 2020, 36.

child friendly manner. Almost all the animals critique the “Balloon Party’s” initiative to expel animals, and share the opinion that it is illogical and insensible. Khadarka’s dialogue, “We were not afraid of even the British”²³⁹ invokes the legacy of Muslim participation in anti-colonial movements. Thus, *Jantustan* emerges as a metaphor for the nation, and the Muslim has earned a right to this space through their struggles against the anticolonial rule. The magazine sends out a message to its young Muslim readers how they can and must claim their right of belonging to the nation in the current political situation.

There are many occasions in which Khadarka and friends question the malpractices in the name of religion and faith. The October 16, 2017 issue of *Pattalam Paili* has a story about an amulet seller. One day, Khadarka and friends see a queue of people near an amulet seller. The seller claims that anyone who uses the amulets he sells can overcome all obstacles. Khadarka, Paili, and Kuttappan order four amulets, and tie one amulet to the seller's hand. Then, Pattalam Paili points his gun at the seller and says, “We would like to know whether the amulet can prevent the bullet.”²⁴⁰ Upon hearing this, the seller panics and runs away to save his life.

Pattalam Paili also discusses different social issues. The episode of the story published in the December 2017 issue of *Malarvadi* is about a group of fraudsters raising funds for fake patients. The story goes like this: one day, Pattalam Paili, Khadarka and Kuttappan see two people carrying a poster seeking donations to help a paralyzed bear and family. Khadarka and others join them and collect money for them. Next day, when Khadarka and Paili are on their way to the nearest town, they meet a desperate Kuttappan. When asked about the reason for his worry, Kuttappan

²³⁹ “Pattalam Paili,” 36.

²⁴⁰ “Pattalam Paili,” *Malarvadi*, October 16, 2017, 30.

takes them to a place, where they see a group of people collecting funds for Kuttappan. This time there is a photo of Kuttappan on the poster (see image, 16), which says, “Please help Kuttappan’s family, his two kidneys are damaged.” Encountering such blatant fraud, Khadarka and others call the police. In the final part of the story, we can see the police and others saying “such fraudulent acts will affect those people who really need help.”²⁴¹ As we can see in the above two narratives, the Muslim subject emerges as ethical and upright. Humour and wit are often deployed to engage the child reader.

Through such narratives, *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* debunk popular stereotypical notions of Muslims. Deepa Kumar observes five prevalent myths about Islam and Muslims. The first myth represents Islam as a static, monolithic religion, and “Muslim civilization”²⁴² as a set of unchanging values. It denies the diversity of Islamic culture and practices. The second myth is, “Islam is a uniquely sexist religion.”²⁴³ The dominant narratives portray Muslim women as subjugated and oppressed, worse than slaves. The third myth is that the “Muslim mind is incapable of reason and rationality.”²⁴⁴ Kumar contests this by referring to many Islamic scholars like Ibn Sina, also known as Avicenna, and their contribution to logic, science, medicine etc. The fourth myth about Islam is, “Islam is an inherently violent religion.” And the fifth is “Muslims are incapable of democracy and self-rule.”²⁴⁵ *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* constantly try to contest and debunk these popular imaginations and myths around Muslims through representing Muslims as concerned

²⁴¹ “Pattalam Paili,” *Malarvadi*, December 2017, 22.

²⁴² Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 11.

²⁴³ Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*.

²⁴⁴ Kumar, 12.

²⁴⁵ Kumar, 12.

and participating members of the society, engaging with its everydayness, and taking on civic and moral responsibilities.

Poocha Police - an Ideal Policeman in Jantustan.

Poocha Police (The Police Cat) is another series of fiction in *Jantustan*. The Malayalam word *Poocha* translates as cat. Cat Pole, the central character in *Poocha Police*, is an enthusiastic police officer with a cat's head and human body. Each issue of the magazine includes stories of his successful investigations. Cat Pole, along with his fellow officers, fights against criminals and stands for social justice. One interesting factor here is that *Malarvadi* never gives out any clue about the religious identity of Cat Pole through his dialogues and appearance. This shows *Malarvadi*'s re-imagination of the judiciary and legal system. By hiding the religious markers of the central characters in *Poocha Police*, the magazine indirectly communicates how the police system in the nation should work independently without any religious bias.

Below, I analyse a few stories from *Poocha Police* to demonstrate how it works towards representing an ideal police system. *Poocha Police* in the January 2016 issue of *Malarvadi* is about the drug mafia and cheating. One day, Cat Pole came to know that Miss Shunaka Raj- Director of SeaFood, a well-known seafood firm, is not well and the company is indulging in malpractices during her medical absence. Cat Pole feels an inquiry is called for, and one day he visits Miss Shunaka Raj with a doctor. The doctor's investigations reveal that Miss Shunaka Raj's body contains excessive toxic drug elements leading to her illness. Cat Pole then finds that Miss Shunaka Raj's son-in-law, has engaged the services of an Ayurvedic doctor, who has been prescribing a toxic drug to Miss Shunaka Raj on the pretext of treating her with an Ayurveda medicine. Cat Pole intimates this news to Miss Shunaka Raj. Finally, the

police arrest her son in-law and put him behind bars. Subsequently doctors provide necessary advanced treatment to Miss Shunaka Raj. Gradually, she regains her health and takes charge of SeaFood firm again.²⁴⁶

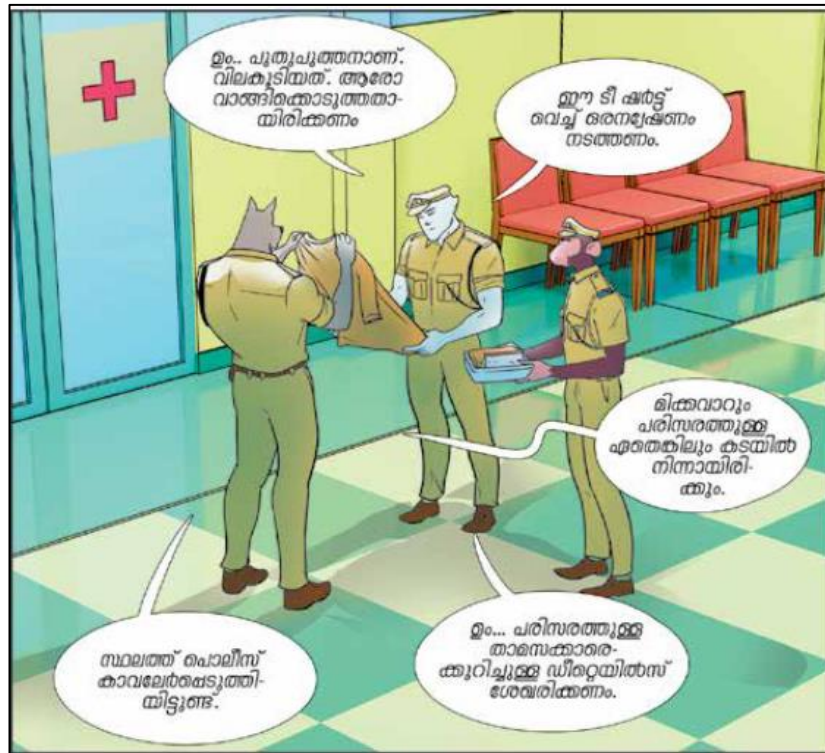


Image 17. Cat pole and crew, *Malarvadi*, January 2016.

Critiquing superstitions and religious malpractices is among the main objectives of *Malarvadi*. Sometimes the magazine suggests solutions to such issues. It also invites readers to respond to such issues. For example, in the *Malarvadi* published in February 1993, *Poocha Police* deals with religious exploitation, fraudulent saints and the kind of mafia of followers created by such saints. One day, a couple of saints come to *Jantustan* police station and tell Cat Pole that their spiritual guru wishes to visit *Jantustan* to bless followers and spread the message of peace. Cat Pole offers all help. Finally, the police come to know that the guru is in fact a criminal

²⁴⁶ “Poocha Police,” *Malarvadi*, January 2015.

known as Pothan Gunda (a buffalo with human body). They discover that Pothan and his associates are indulging in shady deals under the facade of religion. Cat Pole and his team secretly visit the palace of the guru and uncover their illegal practices. Following the raid, police arrest the fake guru Pothan Gunda and his followers.²⁴⁷ It may be noted that Cat Pole, who does not carry any religious markers, exposes, and take actions against a Hindu religious guru. This reverses the routine hegemonic narratives. Cat Pole is identified with the state/citizen. He is an upright police officer. The figure of the guru, on the other hand, is modelled upon the exploitative unscrupulous and fraudulent religious gurus who have been frequently exposed- in news media and popular debate.

During the early 90s, the period of the Babari Masjid demolition, *Malarvadi* writes extensively about the importance of communal harmony and brotherhood. The narratives in the *Poocha police* and *Pattalam paili* series recurrently touch upon the issue. For example, *Poocha Police* in the 1993 issue of *Malarvadi* is about communal violence. In this story, one day, Pothan Gunda and his friends plan to attack all religious institutions in *Jantustan*. They execute a series of bombings, and many animals get injured. Finally, Cat Pole and his team identify the culprits and punish them.²⁴⁸

The December 1992 issue of *Pattalam Paili* is an allegory on the demolition of Babri Masjid.²⁴⁹ The story goes like this: in *Jantustan*, goats and foxes live in rivalry. One day, Mansoor, the grandson of Khadarka, the leader of the goats, and the fox Vasu's son, Konthappan, start a discussion on religion. Mansoor asks the little fox,

²⁴⁷ "Poocha Police," *Malarvadi*, February 1993.

²⁴⁸ "Poocha Police," *Malarvadi*, June 1993.

²⁴⁹ "Pattalam Paili," *Malarvadi*, December 1992.

“When and why is your God coming into our mosque?” The fox replies, “Our God can appear anywhere at any time.” Mansoor responds, “Then we will remove it.” The angry fox threatens, “Then all goats will have to leave *Jantustan*.”²⁵⁰ After this conversation, a series of clashes happen between the goats and the foxes. Many goats are kidnapped and their houses are burnt. Each group starts to fight the other. Finally, Pattalam Paili, an ex-service man calls a meeting of the two groups and mediates peace between them.²⁵¹

The above example replicates the context and tension leading up to and following Babri Masjid demolition. The early 1990s were a critical period for Indian Muslims. The events leading up to the demolition of Babri masjid had the Indian Muslim community shaken and in a state of turmoil. As a Muslim children’s magazine, *Malarvadi* engages with the emotions and contexts which grip the community at this moment. Even though the incident shakes the confidence and trust of Indian Muslims in the secular principles of the Indian state, the magazine continues to teach the readers about the importance of tolerance, harmony, and brotherhood. *Malarvadi* allegorically represents a just system, with fair judiciary and police that ensures justice and protection of every citizen’s life and rights. Cat Pole works hard to ensure social justice to all, irrespective of religion. He fights against corruption of politicians and corporations, and advocates for ordinary people. In this way, the magazine puts forward the notion that the justice system should be free from all kinds of social and political influence.

The narratives that I discussed above also indicate what “undesirable” masculinity is for *Malarvadi*. The villain/ “Other” in *Malarvadi* is not a fixed single

²⁵⁰ “Pattalam Paili,” 29.

²⁵¹ “Pattalam Paili,” December 1992.

character, the magazine represents Hindu extremist ideology as disruptive of a peaceful order and men practicing this as embodying an undesirable, deviant masculinity. Many times, Pothan Gunda, a buffalo with human body and his followers are portrayed as examples of such undesirable masculinity. From the different context of the stories, it becomes clear that, they belong to Hindu religion. However, they misuse religious sentiments of others and devotees for their personal benefits. At the same time, there are Hindu characters in *Jantustan* like Kuttapan who do not fall into such negative category.

I would like to cite an example from *Pattalam Paili*. *Pattalam Paili* of the May 1993 issue is about a temple controversy in *Jantustan*.²⁵² Basheer, a relative of Khadarka buys a land from a Pattar to build a hospital. Kunjiraman, a fox with human body feels jealous on Basheer because he wanted to buy that land from Pattar. The jealous Kunjiraman hides an elephant idol in Basheer's land on which the latter has decided to build a hospital. When people discover the elephant idol in Basheer's land, they demand they demand that a temple be built there. A despondent Basheer approaches Pattalam Paili, Kuttapan and Khadarka who figure out it is Kunjiraman, who is behind the volatile situation created by the appearance of the idol. On the following day, Khadarka and team hide another idol in Kunjiraman's courtyard. They also leave a note with a message alongside the idol.²⁵³ The message is as follows: "I (the idol) wish that a temple be built here. I do not want a temple at Basheer's place."²⁵⁴ The same people who had demanded a temple on Basheer's land now ask Kunjiraman to vacate his home because the idol demands a temple there. Finally,

²⁵² "Pattalam Paili," *Malarvadi*, May 1993.

²⁵³ "Pattalam Paili."

²⁵⁴ "Pattalam Paili," 29.

Kunjiraman reveals the entire story to public and asks Basheer to forgive him.²⁵⁵ In the story Kunjiraman is depicted as a villain who misuses religion for personal benefits.

A Global Muslim Brotherhood

In this part, I look at how *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* negotiate different global issues which had a significant impact on the Muslim community, including the 9/11 events and the recent encroachment on Muslim nations by America and Israel. In *Malarvadi*, the counter discourse on the communal image of Muslims operates with narrative snippets from national and trans-national levels. As a Muslim children's magazine, along with national issues, *Malarvadi* considers multiple issues affecting the Muslim community across the world. It invites readers to empathize and engage with various national and international issues, including the Palestine-Israel war, Iraq-America war, Iran-Iraq conflict etc. which affect the Muslim community. Thus, *Malarvadi* tries to create a sense of brotherhood and harmony among Muslims, beyond the boundaries of the nation state.

For *Malarvadi*, Muslims belong to one “*ummah*” (followers of the Prophet) irrespective of them hailing from different parts of the globe. In the aftermath of 9/11, *Malarvadi* extensively writes about the various wars and encroachments led by America on Muslim countries to representing these as a new form of militarization. Simultaneously, it attempts to demonstrate that while the Muslim male bears the burden of being fanatic, radicalized and the aggressor the source of aggression lies in the geopolitical struggles for domination, led by western nations. During this period, the magazine brings in many changes in its focus. Apart from narrating Islamic

²⁵⁵ “Pattalam Paili,” May 1993.

history, it urges readers to question and challenge the new global power structure and hierarchy. The August 2003 issue of *Malarvadi* carry a column titled *Mashum Kuttikalum* (The Teacher and Students),²⁵⁶ which speaks about war and peace, and the contemporary colonization by America in Afghanistan and Iraq. It says, “During war, developed countries kill people with modern equipment. In Afghanistan and Iraq, millions of people were burnt by America. They use harmful weapons for this.”²⁵⁷ The magazine also questions the misuse of science. The article speaks of the deployment of harmful weapons in the name of science and progress. At the end of the article, the author advises and encourages readers to write poems and stories against war.

Malarvadi contains an article titled *Yudhathile Kapadyangal* (Hypocrisy in War).²⁵⁸ The article talks about wars and their consequences; to give an instance: “We can see endless cruelty in wars like the First World War, the Second World War, etc. If you think all these happened for the well-being of everyone, you are wrong! All of it occurred for the benefit of rulers, to establish power over others.”²⁵⁹ It further points out how the oppressor has a sense of superiority and considers the oppressed to be inferior humans:

The reason for the Second World War was that Hitler thought Germany and Aryan race were better than others. Now, we can see the same attitude in Israel’s attack on Palestine, Russian attack on Chechnya etc. The superior attitude that ‘my nation, race and caste is the best’ is the basis for this cruelty... Years of surveillance on Iraq led to the death of hundreds of children due to insufficient food and medicine. The only wrong they did was that they

²⁵⁶ “Mashum Kuttikalum (Teacher and Students),” *Malarvadi*, August 2003.

²⁵⁷ “Mashum Kuttikalum (Teacher and Students),” 7.

²⁵⁸ “Yudhathile Kapadyangal (Hypocrisy in War),” *Malarvadi*, February 2003.

²⁵⁹ “Yudhathile Kapadyangal (Hypocrisy in War),” 10.

were not afraid of America. America thinks that it is the only power that can rule the world.²⁶⁰

The article mentions about the aftereffects of war in daily life, and concludes with a note that says, "We should think about the teachings of Prophet Muhammad on war. The Prophet said, "During war, do not attack trees, women, children and elderly people."²⁶¹

The April 2003 edition of *Malarvadi* condemns the bomb explosions by America in Iraq. It says:

War is the biggest form of sin one can commit against one's friends and others. We should think in our life, who exactly are we? Are we oppressors? If yes, we should change ourselves ... Friends, we can also join in this war. We can join this war in solidarity with the innocent kids in Iraq. How will that be possible? We can fight against injustice and discrimination. Let us be loyal and honest. That is a greater war against war.²⁶²

The above articles demonstrate the engagement of *Malarvadi* with the militarism and invasions on Muslim countries. Here, the magazine turns the gaze back on the western nation as the cause for violence and global insecurity, thus subverting the stereotype of the Muslim as indulging in violent and terrorist activities. The magazine reminds us of the Islamic rules of war, that one should not cut trees, and should not attack women, children, and elderly people. During this period, at an organisational level, JIK conducted different programs against capitalism, and appealed to the public to boycott products made in America, Britain, and Israel. It

²⁶⁰ "Yudhathile Kapadyangal (Hypocrisy in War)," 11.

²⁶¹ "Yudhathile Kapadyangal (Hypocrisy in War)," 12.

²⁶² "Yudhathile Kapadyangal (Hypocrisy in War) II," *Malarvadi*, April 2003, 21.

conducted various programs all over Kerala under this banner. It publicly declared America as the largest enemy of Muslims and World Peace. *Malarvadi*, as a children's magazine disseminated by the JIK, participates in this project, leading its young readers to question the global power structure. These narratives emerge as a response and counter after 9/11 when Muslims are on a global level, portrayed as terrorist. Here, the magazine crosses the boundaries of the nation to address questions that matter to the Muslim community. It imagines all Muslims as part of one *ummath* (community) without boundaries. The magazine considers it as the duty of Muslims to preach to the society to resist oppression in humanitarian way, empathetic within the community, yet denouncing violence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate how *Kurunnukal* and *Malarvadi* bring an alternative ideal of Muslim masculinity into the centre of public discussion. The shaping of this masculinity is achieved through a range of narrative and discursive strategies. Re-presenting and disseminating the history of Mappila Rebellion and Muslim anti-colonial movements is one among them. Through such re-readings of movements, these magazines for Muslim children present its leaders as heroes and role models for the young readers. These alternative historical narrations are aimed at helping the Muslim child to grow up as with a sense of self and history, and as confident adults, in the face of the consistent encounter with mainstream Islamophobic narratives. This counter-masculinity also generates a critique of mainstream history premised on brahmanical norms, widely circulated in secular public schools via textbooks.

I also argue that magazines for Muslim children contest the singularity of the ideal citizen projected in *Balarama* and *Poombatta*—represented as “secular” even though normative worldview of the magazines point to the religious affiliations of this citizen. The alternative magazines for Muslim children, on the other hand, represent Muslims as ideal citizens who simultaneously practice their religious identity and faith. Their faith does not counter their citizenly selves; in fact each is strengthened by the other.

Presenting the day-to-day life of the community via narratives of Muslim men is another strategy frequently deployed by *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* to represent Muslim masculinity as humane and steeped in family and community ties. This involves a depiction of the Muslim man’s everyday engagement with society and social issues, and his position in and services to his family. *Kurunnukal* and *Malarvadi* use the same visual markers of Muslim male which appear in mainstream magazines; however these signs are re-contextualized and stand for connote an ideal Muslim masculinity. By portraying Muslims at the centre of a civic “everyday normal” life (unlike the routine representation of Muslim life as deviant and regressive), these Muslim children’s magazines subvert the dominant discourse of Muslim women as subjugated and victims of religious and pre-modern cultural norms, and Muslim men as patriarchal and uncivilized.

This chapter also discussed how these magazines re-imagine a public sphere in which Muslims are active and concerned participants. I also attempted to bring out how these magazines teach their readership to address and negotiate social and cultural issues from a perspective set within their community. In short, this chapter illustrates how these magazines re-locate Muslims in the centre of a modern society

through deconstructing popular stereotypes of Muslim men as irrational and aggressive, and opening up the possibilities of a public sphere inhabited by Muslims, within the ambit of civic and fair laws, yet not alienated from the Islamic worldview.

The next chapter will discuss how both these magazines, *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*, construct different childhoods based on their ideological differences while addressing problems and questions common to the community.

Chapter Four

Women and Childhood in *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*

The chapter focuses on how *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* attempt to shape the children of the Muslim community, according to the ideology of their respective parental organisations. As discussed before, children's literature is a major vehicle for constructing specific identities and training children to become the representative of a community/nation. I have stated earlier, *Malarvadi* is published by JIK- a reformist Muslim sect and *Kurunnukal* is published by *Samastha*- a traditional sect of Muslims in Kerala. In this chapter, I look at how *Malarvadi* as a children's magazine introduces and disseminates its parental organisation's understanding of Islam– its belief and ritual practices, and idea of the society and nation state to its young readers, and similarly, the ways in which *Kurunnukal* presents the rituals and practices of the traditional Muslim sect through its narratives.

As I have discussed in the earlier chapters, the “secular” curriculum and children's literature do not provide role models/figures that the Muslim children could look up to. Though various Muslim organisations have their own understanding of Islam and its ritual practices, these cultural differences and the heterogeneity are absent in mainstream narratives on Muslims. As Al-Hazza and T. Bucher observe, in America, many Arab-American students do not have any classroom experience that helps them to connect with their cultural identity. Initiating multicultural children's literature into the classroom is the primary step in enabling eradication of stereotypes

and prejudices which equips students to develop their own cultural identities.²⁶³ This observation questions monolithic narratives on culture and the pushes the need for a polyvocal cultural space which students from different (marginal) communities can relate to. With a similar aim, different sects of Muslims in Kerala publish their own children's magazines to teach the significance of cultural identity and present a cultural past which young Muslims can relate to—both as Muslim and Indian. Here, I argue that, though both these magazines share the common goal to critically engage with popular Malayalam children's magazines, and though both magazines are published from within the same region and religious community, the concept of childhood and the strategy adopted to introduce this concept to young readers is different according to the ideological framework of each magazine.

The chapter maps the ideological differences between *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* as a reflection of the distinct ideological positions of their parent organisations, namely the reformist and traditionalist sects of Kerala Muslims. It also attempts to locate how the narrative on religion and socio-cultural formations is framed in a manner that is accessible to the young readers. Arshad Alam calls this process of crafting internal differences among two schools of thought within the Muslim community as “creation of internal enemies.”²⁶⁴ He argues that, more than countering the misrepresentation and criticism from outside, madrasas run by different schools of thought, or sects, are primarily concerned with their own *maslaki*, or school of jurisprudence. Each *maslaki* is invested in to foregrounding their own form of Islam, more constructing a unified Muslim identity. He focuses on two madrasas at

²⁶³ Tami Craft Al-Hazz and Katherine T. Bucher, “Building Arab Americans’ Cultural Identity and Acceptance with Children’s Literature,” *The Reading Teacher* 62, no. 3 (November 2008): 210–19.

²⁶⁴ Alam, *Inside a Madrasa*.

Mubarakpur in U.P, named Madrasa Ashrafiya and Madrasa Ihya-ul Ulum.²⁶⁵ Both the madrasas had a common origin from a single *maktab*, or a small madrasa called Misbahul Ulum founded in 1899. Later, the madrasa split into two: Madrasa Ashrafiya and Madrasa Ihya-ul-ulum, reflecting two different attitudes towards Islam. After the split, these two madrasas followed different sects called Barelvi²⁶⁶ and Deoband,²⁶⁷ respectively. Their ideological and theological differences are reflected in their textbooks and teaching practices. The followers of each denominational (*maslaki*) sect consider the other madrasa as a bigger existential threat than the challenge posed by non-Muslim groups and opposed to “true” Islam. The textbooks and preaching inside the madrasa act as a tool to produce their “identity” vis-a-vis the other, in the process creating an “us” and “them” mentality.²⁶⁸

Drawing from these, I argue that within the contested space of identity construction, Muslim children’s magazines in Kerala create different “identities” and ideas of Islam through multiple narratives. The chapter looks at how childhood is imagined differently by *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* even though both are published from within the Muslim community during the same period. Further, I argue that, though these magazines represent the traditional as well as well as reformist ideas of Islam, they make a critical shift from the more rigid and patriarchal ideologies of womanhood embedded in their parental organisations in their representation of women. And I also argue that, instead of presenting Muslim women from an atypical or homogenised perspective, these magazines represent Muslim women in a range of

²⁶⁵ Alam.

²⁶⁶ Barelvi school of thought follows traditional Islamic viewpoint. The movement declare itself as the most authentic Islam and they also follow mystical elements of Islam.

²⁶⁷ Deoband school of thought follows reformist ideas of Islam forwarded by Wahhabism.

²⁶⁸ Alam, *Inside a Madrasa*.

ways unlike the more static and stereotypical representations in popular children's magazines and both magazines disrupt more stereotypical/secularist notions of Muslim women and their appearance/roles circulating in mainstream children's magazines.

To foreground my argument, I critically analyse a set of content from each magazine, written by known JIK and Sunni scholars. For the purposes of this analysis, I refer to the works of Abul Ala Mawdudi- founder of JIH, T. K Ubaid- chief editor of *Malarvadi*, A.P Aboobacker Kanthapuram and Shamsul Ulama E K Aboobacker- leaders of traditional Sunni sect. I will draw on several write-ups published in *Prabodhanam*- a mouthpiece of JIK, as well as the works and speeches of scholars from both the sects.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section looks into the ideological differences between reformist and traditional sects of Muslims and examines the reformist notions underpinning in *Malarvadi* and representation of women in the magazine. The second section illustrates how *Kurunnukal* represents the traditionalist sect of Islam and womanhood.

SECTION I

Ideological Heterogeneity: The Reformist and Traditional Sects of Kerala

Below I briefly map the cultural differences between traditional Islam and Islamic reformation movements in Kerala as this will help me to set up an ideological backdrop for the magazines for Muslim children in Kerala. Samad notes the absence of Muslim organisations in Kerala before 1920. During that time, local religious leaders led the community. The loss of lives and property during the Malabar rebellion

left the community socio-economically and culturally deprived. However, by the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century, an organisation named *Nishpaksha Sangam* (The Unbiased Group) was initiated at Kodungallor by Vakkom Muhammad Abdul Qadir Moulavi and Hamdani Sheikh. The *Sangam* was subsequently renamed as *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam* (The Kerala Muslims' Unity Forum).²⁶⁹ Later due to some internal ideological conflicts, a group of *ulamas* within the *sangam* formed *Samastha Kerala Jami-yathul Ulama* (*Samastha* in brief) in 1925. Followers of *Samastha Kerala Jam-iiyyathul Ulama* were identified as Sunnis in Kerala.²⁷⁰ Like the other groups of Muslims in Kerala, *Samastha* also follows *Ahlu Sunnah Wal jama'ah*, meaning "those who adhere to the traditions of the Prophet."²⁷¹

JIK is the Kerala chapter of JIH. Reorganised after Independence in 1948, JIH has been actively evolving with its policies and programs. JIK came into existence in 1944; founded by Haji Muhammadali.²⁷² Both *Jamaat* and *Mujahid* come under the category of reformist movements. Mujeeb argues that the basic contrast between the ideals of "traditional" Sunnis and "modernist" organisations like *Mujahid* and *Jamaat* are based on three fundamental religious points, namely *istighaza*, *tawassul* and *taqlid*. In addition, the traditional sects of Muslims follow certain ritual practices such as *mouleed*, *nercca*, etc. which are absent in the reformist stream of Islam.²⁷³ The next

²⁶⁹ Abdul M Samad, *Islam in Kerala; Groups and Movements in the 20th Century* (Kollam: Laurel Publications, 1998).

²⁷⁰ Muslims of Kerala having allegiance to the organisations other than *Islahi* and *Jamaat-e-Islami* are known as Sunnis. But in a broader sense, every Muslim in Kerala falls into the rubric of being a Sunni with regard to the context of the global Shia-Sunni division.

²⁷¹ Samad, *Islam in Kerala; Groups and Movements in the 20th Century*, 65.

²⁷² Siddique Hasan, "Jamaat-Islami: Velluvilkalum Sadhyathakalum (Jamaat-Islami: Challenges and Possibilities)," *Prabodhanam*, 1992.

²⁷³ Mujeeb Vazhakkunnnan, "Reform and Revival as 'Revitalization': An Appraisal in the Kerala Muslim Context," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2015): 191–204.

section of the chapter deals with reformist positions and narratives as exemplified in *Malarvadi*.

Reading the Reformist Ideas of *Malarvadi*

As a children's magazine, ideologically affiliated to JIK, *Malarvadi* replicates the reformist notions of its parental organisation. In this section, I intend to trace the reformist lineage of the magazine. During the 1980s, E.V. Abdu was the honorary chief editor of *Malarvadi*. He had extensive knowledge of Arabic-sufi literature. He worked as an Arabic teacher at Santhapuram Islamiya College-an educational institution run by JIK, for a long time.²⁷⁴ He had deep personal contacts with renowned Malayalam literary figures of the time. The reflection of this cross literary/cultural contact can be seen in the early issues of *Malarvadi*. During the 1980s, prominent writers of Malayalam literary arena including M.T Vasudevan Nair, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, Kunjunni Mash contributed extensively to the magazine. When E.V. Abdu died in the early 1990s, E.V. Memorial Forum published a memoir for him titled *Youkikam* (The Collective). *Youkikam* is a commemorative piece on E.V. Abdu, with his colleagues recollecting Abdu's vision about *Malarvadi* as the first magazine for Muslim children.²⁷⁵

K.A. Siddique Hassan, former state president of JIK and one of the founding members of *Malarvadi*, remembers how E.V. Abdu mocked the religious educational system which gives importance to learning jurisprudence through memorisation.²⁷⁶ O. Abdurahman, the editor of *Madhyamam* newspaper published by JIK, says, "E.V. Abdu was always interested in children's literature. He understood the significance of

²⁷⁴ Siddique Hasan, "E. V Abduvinepattiyulla Rachanakal (Writings on E.V. Abdu)," in *Youkikam*, ed. N.P Muhammad (Kuttiady: E.V Memorial Forum, 2000), 14.

²⁷⁵ Muhammad, *Youkikam* (*The Collective*).

²⁷⁶ Hasan, "E. V Abduvinepattiyulla Rachanakal (Writings on E.V. Abdu)."

a children's magazine and its primacy in the Kerala Muslim community as a mode for overcoming educational backwardness.”²⁷⁷ N.P. Hafiz Muhammad, a prominent Malayalam writer, remembers:

The Muslim community should deeply acknowledge the magazine *Malarvadi*. It was a new move. It was not only a children's magazine, but also a warning to the Muslim community to understand that print publications from the community should move forward from merely being religious magazines. E.V. Abdu subtly, yet with his profound literary skill, injected this idea into the Muslim community.²⁷⁸

T.K Ubaid, the editor of *Malarvadi* recollects E.V Abdu's words:

The objective of Islamic children's magazine is not to teach jurisprudence to children. For this purpose, we have madrasas and their curriculums. Through children's magazines, we should impart Islamic values which are acceptable for everyone (with a multicultural premise). Islam carries such (holistic) values which are a mandatory part of Islamic instruction. This preaching and teaching should be done in a compassionate and cheery tone, which then would become acceptable for all children.²⁷⁹

All of these views reflect the vision and mission of *Malarvadi* in its initial stages. It critiqued the conventional pedagogic methods within the community and the existing notions of children's magazine. E.V. Abdu wrote, “The prime objective of art and literature is, it should not be against the ethics of religion. In Islamic history, there

²⁷⁷ O Abadurahman, “Youkikam (The Collective),” ed. N.P. Muhammad (Kuttiady: E.V Memorial Forum, 2000), 16.

²⁷⁸ N.P Hafiz Muhammad, “Sutharythayil Theliyunna Azham,” in *Youkikam* (Kuttiady: E.V Memorial Forum, 2000), 33–35.

²⁷⁹ T.K Ubaid, “E.V Abduvinepattiyulla Rachanakal (Writings on E.V. Abdu),” in *Youkikam* (Kuttiady: E.V Memorial Forum, 2000), 40.

are a lot of exemplary figures and narratives. We should re-narrate it to children in a simple and attractive way.”²⁸⁰

In short, the magazine *Malarvadi* has two objectives: first, to reframe the traditional religious knowledge imparting system in the community, and secondly, to claim a space in the field of mainstream children’s literature in Malayalam. It puts forward the idea that art and literature are not entities distinct and separate from religion. Here, as I pointed out earlier, one of the major concerns of *Malarvadi* is reframing the religious preaching in a relatable language, bringing out the polyvocal narratives within Islam. Instead of presenting Islam unilaterally through the teachings of the *ulama*, *Malarvadi* has been trying to represent Islam from the perspectives of Muslims from different walks of life, including businessmen, teachers, and writers.

Constructing a Rational God

I explore below the different techniques employed by *Malarvadi* to translate religious values and ideas into cross-cultural idioms appropriate for popular consumption. One of the main features of this process is presenting the idea of God and Islam in a manner which is acceptable for readers from different religions. The magazine presents Islam in a “moderate” and “secular” fashion and focuses on the political and social growth of young readers. Given below are a few examples from *Malarvadi* that illustrate how it presents the notion of God and faith in a rational manner. In the process, it also constructs the notion of a more relatable and less masculine/patriarchal God. This is significant because several scholars have reflected upon how the construction of a masculine/muscular god is pressed into the

²⁸⁰ E.V Abdu, “Bala Prasadheekaranagalude Prashnangal (Problems in Children's Literature),” in *Youkikam*, ed. N.P Muhammad (Kuttiady: E.V Memmorial Forum, 2000), 133.

militarizing of a culture. Hence it is notable that *Malarvadi* moves in a different direction. The editorial of *Malarvadi* published in February 1989 goes like this:

There is a saying that one should be fearful of God. What is the meaning of ‘fearful’ here? It does not mean that God is a monster. He is the most merciful. There is a rampant imagination that God will curse and punish us. Some believers think that flood, disease, disaster etc. are the results of God’s anger. So, they worship God to make him happy. It is like giving bones to an angry dog or giving bread to teachers, when they are trying to beat you. Readers should reflect on this: is this piety? Instead of fearing, one should love God...There are lots of reasons for loving God. He is the creator, protector, and provider. He created grandparents for our parents, parents for us. He created earth for us and the universe for earth. He provided us with good food, water, etc. These acts make him lovable.²⁸¹

Another editorial of *Malarvadi* speaks about devotion:

What is devotion? We can see many forms of devotion in our society. In the temple, we can see many sculptures of Gods and Goddesses. Believers worship these sculptures. In church, we can see sculptures of Christ and other saints, and believers pray before them. Homes, vehicles, business shops etc. all are decorated with photos and symbols associated with different deities. While Hindus and Christians worship the photos of Gods, Goddesses, Christ and Virgin Mary, Muslims do not have any photos of Allah and Prophets. So, they decorate their prayer rooms with photos of mosques and Quran verses. One should ask, is this real devotion? The omnipotent and omnipresent God is the protector and creator of the universe. There is no one other than him we can worship. Devotion arouses from this thought and faith is a distinct sacred emotion. In a devotee's mind, there should always be the thought of God’s greatness and magnificence. But the rampant devotional forms which are in

²⁸¹ “Editorial,” *Malarvadi*, February 1989, 2.

our society are nothing but merely pretensions to portray oneself as a ‘good’ devotee.²⁸²

Alongside these editorials, *Malarvadi* also carries guest editorials written by famous figures from multiple fields and different social locations, including the film, business and industries. The October 1996 issue carries a guest editorial written by Mridhanantha Swami, who had won the K.P Kesavan Nair Memorial *Vishista Vyakthi* award that year. He got the Kerala Sahithya Academy Award for his translation of Upanishads to Malayalam titled *Geethamritha Bodhini*. He brings in a distinct syncretic tone in this editorial:

We all should be loyal to God. He is the ultimate power which creates and protects the universe, and controls us. Devotees address that power in different names like Allah, *Eshwaran*, etc. There is only one power. That is the ultimate truth. That power is the one which sustains the entire universe; everything other than that power will collapse. Devotion and faith to that power will lead us through our path.²⁸³

Yet another editorial in *Malarvadi* is as follows:

Joseph, Krishnan Kutty, Abdurahman all study in the same school, same class, and are occupants of the same bench. They have the same teacher and textbooks. They all are supposed to obey the teachers and study. When the bell rings, they all should get into class, and to pass the examination, everyone requires basic marks. So, the rules and regulations are equal for everyone. But they all have a very crucial difference, which is their name- Joseph, Krishnan Kutty, and Abdurahman. The first one’s parents are Christians, so they named him Joseph. The second one’s parents are Hindus, so he became Krishnan Kutty. And the third one was born as the son of Muslim parents. In that way,

²⁸² “Editorial,” *Malarvadi*, March 1989, 2.

²⁸³ Mridhanantha Swami, “Editorial,” *Malarvadi*, October 1996, 2.

they belong to three religions. Abdurahaman has no rivalry with his Hindu friend Krishnan Kutty. Krishnan Kutty has no rivalry with Joseph, who is a Christian. If there were any grudges, they would not sit on the same bench, will not hangout after school, and will not eat sweets together. *Malarvadi* knows children well, and is sure that no child has rivalry with other children based on religion. But elders are not like this. They fight based on caste and religion. Hindus kill Muslims; Muslims burn the houses of Hindus. Children know that all of these actions are wrong because they possess innocent and pure minds.²⁸⁴

The editorial of March 1993 issue of *Malarvadi* is notes:

All religions came from one God, and aim at the well-being and salvation of human beings. Subsequently, hundreds of religions and gods emerged and people started to kill in the name of God. Instead of salvation and wellbeing, hell and destruction became rampant on earth. All friends should think as to how we can regain love and brotherhood here.²⁸⁵

The June 2002 *Malarvadi* editorial says:

Fundamentally, all human beings are the same. They have common needs and deeds. That is why all students learn from one school and the same teachers. It shows that there is no caste and religious difference for school, knowledge, and books... Our nation is a beautiful garden. Different religions, communities and ways of living are the various flowers of this garden. To sustain this beauty of our motherland, different religions and communities should learn about and respect each other. We should join our bonds with the thread of love and equality.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ "Editorial," *Malarvadi*, September 1990, 7.

²⁸⁵ "Editorial," *Malarvadi*, March 1993, 2.

²⁸⁶ "Editorial," *Malarvadi*, June 2002, 2.

The above editorials demonstrate the secular orientation of *Malarvadi*. Along with Muslim writers, it also welcomes literary figures from other religions to express their views on religion and humanity. Such an inclusive approach leads a secular character to the magazine by upholding the principles of religious harmony, fraternity, equality etc. When I asked about this trend, T.K. Ubaid, editor of *Malaravdi*, said:

Malarvadi never stands for atheism or non-religiosity. It is not only for teaching Islamic values to children, but it also upholds doctrines and values which are acceptable for every religion. Thus, *Malarvadi* gives importance to secularism and upholds the principles of brotherhood among different religions.²⁸⁷

His words point to the responsibility that such a magazine carries—it must establish both the secular and nationalist credentials of Muslims. As magazines from a mainstream location, *Balarama* or *Poombatta*, do not carry any such burden. Indeed, its stories, saturated in Hindu mythology and ethos, work with the premise that Hindu and nationalist map on to one another. We can see the same pattern in many other narratives of *Malarvadi*. For example, *Malarvadi* published in September 2017 has an article about *Eid* and *Onam* celebrations, written by Alakod Leelakrishanan, a famous Malayalam writer. The article narrates the specificities and values of these two celebrations. It also carries pictures of rejoicing kids during the celebrations. The author says, “This year *Onam* and *Eid* came together. Even when humans forget, God and time remind us we all are one in the world, although human beings are divided by race, religion etc. All religions teach us that we are one and should live like

²⁸⁷T.K. Ubaid, interview by Noorunnida.M, Calicut, December 15, 2016.

brothers.”²⁸⁸ Then the author narrates the different contexts of *Eid* and *Onam* celebrations and concludes: “In both celebrations, we can see the message of sacrifice, for the wellbeing of the entire human race. We should pray for the unity and prosperity of everyone.”²⁸⁹

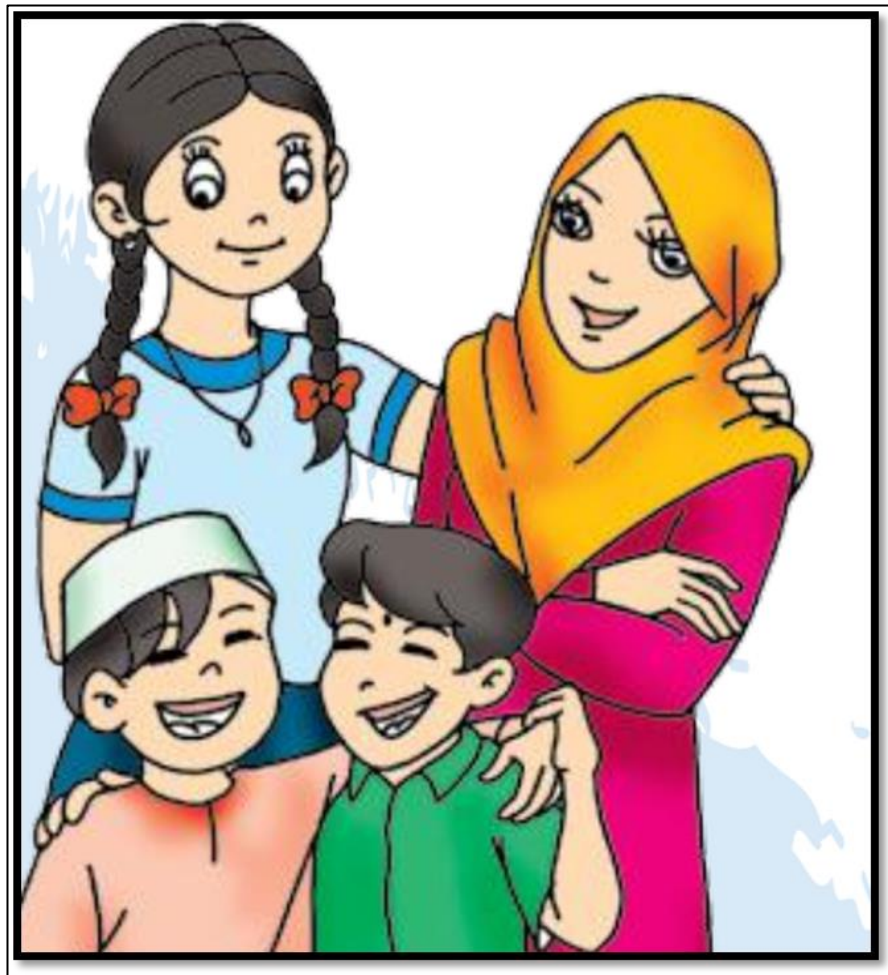


Image 18. Muslim and non-Muslim children, *Malarvadi*, September 2017.

The above picture is the context of *Onam* and *Eid* celebrations in *Malarvadi*. In the image, both Muslim and non-Muslim children appear with their cultural markers, but displaying a spirit of friendship and love. *Malarvadi* carefully presents

²⁸⁸ Alakode Leelakrishnan, “Onavaum Eidum (Onam and Eid),” *Malarvadi*, September 2017, 2.

²⁸⁹ Leelakrishnan, 3.

the humanitarian ideas underlying both celebrations. As a minority children's magazine *Malarvadi* carries the obligation to represent majoritarian culture and festivals even when it portrays the festivals of the Muslim community, at every step it must lay claim to a secular identity. The above-mentioned editorials also show how the magazine presents the idea of God within a rational and secular framework. Even though Islam stands for monotheistic principles, the magazine never uses the word "Allah" to denote God. Rather, it uses words like "Daivam," "Eswaran"²⁹⁰ which are widely used in standardised Malayalam to signify God, especially by non-Muslims. At the same time, it critiques the practice of worshipping photos and sculptures of gods and states it is not "real" devotion and that the ideal devotion arises from the piety of the heart. Here, *Malarvadi* tries to present an idea of God which is acceptable for a larger, more general *Malayali* public.

If we compare the editorial written by Mridhanantha Swami²⁹¹ with other editorials, we can see they all reiterate the same idea of God. Alongside such strategies, the magazine also translates a range of religious doctrines about God, love, brotherhood etc. to readers. These include doctrines from Upanishads, Bible, and Quranic verses. In this manner, the magazine blends the spiritual and humanitarian doctrines of different religions for its readers. While popular children's magazines like *Balarama* and *Poombatta* can claim secular credentials with ease, while remaining within a hegemonic Hindu discourse, *Malarvadi* labours to establish a secular identity through incorporating the values of other religions.

²⁹⁰ "Editorial," March 1993, 2.

²⁹¹ Swami, "Editorial."

The Assertion of Language in JIH

Abul Ala Mawdudi, the founder of JIH made a speech in Madras addressing Indian Muslims on 26 April, 1947.²⁹² In this Mawdudi analysed the social and religious future of Indian Muslims and proposed a four-point program for them. First among them was the end of the communal conflict. The second was to attract non-Muslims to Islam through acquisition of Knowledge about Islam and improvement in moral and societal conditions of the Muslim community. Thirdly, he laid out the scope and possibility of Muslim intellectuals systematically and in a planned manner. And finally, he encouraged all followers to learn to read and write in their regional languages and insisted they write and speak in their own languages.²⁹³ He had hoped that these four action plans would help post-partition Indian Muslims to progress and be a model community which could be imitated by any communities. Following this address, JIH followers started to write and spread their ideology and understanding of Islam in different regional languages.

In Kerala, JIK established a publishing house named Islamic Publishing House (IPH) in 1945, to spread its ideology in Malayalam through publishing Malayalam translations of works written by different Islamic scholars across the world. As a reformist organisation, JIK believes that it is essential to speak and write in standard Malayalam.²⁹⁴ The annual issue of *Prabodhanam* published in 1972 talks about the absence of literary contributions by Kerala Muslims in their mother tongue, Malayalam. It notes:

²⁹² Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, *A Historic Address at Madras* (New Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, 2009).

²⁹³ Mawdudi.

²⁹⁴ Ahmad, *Malayala Muslim- Basha, Samskaram, Charithram (Malayala Muslims- Language, Culture and History)*.

It is in recent times that the Quran and *Hadith* got translated into Malayalam. Our ancestors' negative approach to Malayalam is the reason for the absence of Islamic literature in Malayalam. At the same time, other religious communities were successful in propagating their values and ideology via Malayalam. Kerala Muslims lived in an enclosed circle with a different and defective script (Arabic-Malayalam).²⁹⁵

Here, the author is referring to Arabic-Malayalam—a hybrid script combining Arabic and Malayalam, used by Kerala Muslims and describes it as “defective script.” In his view, it has turned Muslims into an “enclosed and backward community”, with no interaction with the Kerala public sphere, a space dominated by standardized Malayalam. The author highlights how the JIK has conducted many programs, published newspapers, and initiated a journal in Malayalam to overcome this situation. Ahmad states that the endeavours of JIK for promotion in Malayalam have consisted of three ideas - first, to “purify” their own Mappila language, second, to introduce a new religious language into existing popular language discourse, and third, to creatively engage with the current Malayalam literary discourse. For this purpose, JIK introduced a stream of writing which is commonly called *Sarga Rachana*, which means “creative writing.” Under this project, many Islamic and devotional songs were published and performed.²⁹⁶

***Malarvadi* and “Standard” Malayalam**

Stuart Hall in his, *Representation, Meaning and Language* discusses the role of language in the process of representation. He regards representation as the

²⁹⁵ P.A Saidumuhammad, “Islamika Pracharanam, Malayala Sahithyathil (Islam in Malayalam Literature),” *Prabodhanam*, 1972, 42.

²⁹⁶ Ahmad, *Malayala Muslim- Basha, Samskaram, Charithram (Malayala Muslims- Language, Culture and History)*.

production of meaning of a concept which is in our mind, and its articulation via language. He argues there are two systems of representation; one is the mental representation and second is in language. Any sound, word, image, or object which functions as a sign, and is recognized with other signs into a system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning, is considered as a language.²⁹⁷ He also discusses how the reader becomes a cultural subject. He says,

The meaning is constructed by systems of representation, which is through concepts and our languages. It is the result of a set of social conventions. It is fixed socially, or fixed in culture...When children learn these codes; they become not merely biological individuals but cultural subjects.²⁹⁸

Language is one of the major concerns in the initial issues of *Malarvadi*.

Paralleling with the concern of JIK during the period, *Malarvadi* promoted standardized Malayalam for literary articulation. Here, I focus on the way in which *Malarvadi* uses standardized Malayalam to counter the mainstream monolithic representation of Muslims. As I mentioned in my previous chapters, the “debasement” of the language of Muslim characters in the mainstream narratives is one of the major tools to present Muslim characters as the “Other” in *Balarama* and *Poombatta*. Muslim characters in these magazines use colloquial Malayalam which is commonly used in places like Malappuram and other Malabar areas with large Muslim communities. The mainstream magazines represent Muslim characters as illiterate and backward for using this form of Malayalam, which is seen as an inferior and debased form of language. On the other hand, the non-Muslim characters in these magazines are identified by the fluent and standard Malayalam that they speak. There are many

²⁹⁷ Hall, “The Work of Representation.”

²⁹⁸ Hall, 13.

incidents in *Balarama*, where the non-Muslim, standard Malayalam speakers attempt to “reform” the Muslim characters and their speech. *Malarvadi* consciously counters this tendency through using standardised Malayalam. And magazine also offers a critique of the indigenous Arabic-Malayalam script. For *Malarvadi* Arabic-Malayalam is root cause of language backwardness of Mappila Muslims. As opposed to this, one can see that *Kurunnukal* includes many articles about the significance of Arabic-Malayalam in Mappila Muslim history. Here one can argue that, both magazines are responding to the mainstream representation of Muslims in different ways, one is through internalising the mainstream equation that is standardised Malayalam is equal to “modern.” And another is by glorying the cultural past of Kerala Muslims through Arabic-Malayalam. The second section of this chapter deals with it in detail. Here I am focusing how *Malarvadi* is reforming its reader through standardised Malayalam.

The initial issues of *Malarvadi* include a series of columns by a famous Malayalam poet, Kunjunni, popularly known as Kunjunni Mash, who wrote small poems for children. The column is titled as *Kunjunni Mashum Kuttikalum* (Kunjunni Master and Children). In *Malarvadi*, the poet Kunjunni talks about the different techniques of poetry and prose writing in Malayalam, usages of different Malayalam words and so on. The column started in the 1990s, and it is framed as an interactive section with the readers sending their creative works – poems and stories- and mailing literary doubts addressed to the poet. Kunjunni, in turn, reviews their work and offers suggestions. The primary objective of this session is to educate young readers how to write and speak in fluent Malayalam. The column continued for around a decade. The October 1998 issue of *Kunjunni Mashum Kuttikalum* includes many letters sent by readers. In one of the letters, a reader enquires about the correct Malayalam word for “orator,” whether it is “*prasangakan*” or “*prasangikan*.” Kunjunni suggests the

correct Malayalam word for “orator,” which is “*prasangikan*.”²⁹⁹ The same issue includes another letter, in which a reader writes a small poem about childhood. Kunjunni, in his reply, suggests that after writing a poem, one should recite it to friends. According to him, with each recitation, the poem becomes better than its earlier version.³⁰⁰ In this manner, he encourages the readers to write and speak in standard Malayalam. In the same period, JIK introduces a new form of poetry, which is commonly called as *Islamika Ganagal* or Islamic songs, along with a stream of children’s literature called *Islamika Bala Pankthikal*. *Islamika Bala Pakthikal* is envisioned as a project to translate Persian-Urdu stories into Malayalam and make them available for children. Some of these stories and songs were published in the initial issues of *Malarvadi*.

Social Activism and JIK

This part focuses on how *Malarvadi* engages with different social issues within the framework of its ideological position. Recurring discussions in *Malarvadi* include issues on climate change, deforestation, and globalisation. It is significant to observe that this social engagement of *Malarvadi* has a direct link with the social activities of JIK and ideological positioning rooted in Mawdudi’s concept of Islamic order. According to him, the main feature of Islam is the way it blurs the line between the spiritual and the worldly aspects of life. Islam, for Mawdudi, is a holistic terrain encompassing both the individual and the society.³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ Kunjunni Master, “Kunjunni Mashum Kuttikalum (Kunjunni Master and Kids),” January 1993, 16.

³⁰⁰ Master, “Kunjunni Mashum Kuttikalum (Kunjunni Master and Kids).”

³⁰¹ Abul-Ala Mawdudi, *Islamic Way of Life* (Batha: Corporative Office for Cell & Guidance., 1996).

In *Prabodhanam* weekly- a mouthpiece of JIK, there are multiple write-ups articulating the importance of environment protection. These write-ups directly engage with different environmental issues in Kerala. For example, there are several essays which talk about the endosulfan pesticide tragedy in Kerala, and *Prabodhanam* urges its readers to fight against this issue and sensitise the public about the dangerous consequences of such pesticides. C.R Neelakandan, an environmental activist, politician, and writer, wrote in *Prabodhanam* annual issue published in 2009 on how the mainstream political parties neglected different environmental protests that happened in the 2000s, including the anti-Coca-Cola struggle in Plachimada and the anti-endosulfan movement. Neelakandan points out how the movement was led by the marginalised and victimised strata of society, and how it was later taken up by the media. He also observes that grass-root level activists including Mayilamma, C.K Janu, Pokkudan, etc. entered the Kerala mainstream as a result of these media engagements.

I would also like to note here how *Prabodhanam* intertwines the cause of environmental protection within the Islamic matrix.³⁰² For instance, in *Prabodhanam* published in May 7, 2011, there is a reference to the geographical landscape, including the hills, which had a significant role to play in the life of Prophet Mohammed.³⁰³ Several times, he stayed for a long time in a cave called Hira in Jabal Noor hills of Makkah, as a part of his meditation. Apart from that, he stayed on a hill called Thaur to escape from enemies during his journey from Makkah to Madinah. By bringing in the reference of several hills and intertwining them with Prophetic life, the article establishes the significance of environmental protection in the Islamic dictum. For

³⁰² C.R. Neelakandan, "Prabodhanam Special Issue," *Prabodhanam*, 2009.

³⁰³ Ibrahim Samnad, "Mamalakale Snehicha Pravachakan (Prophet Who Loved Hills)," *Prabodhanam*, May 7, 2011.

instance, in the concluding part, the article states, “People who follow the prophet's life must protect hills and mountains. In third world countries, many hills are destroyed; leading to different environmental crisis.”³⁰⁴

Social Activism in *Malarvadi*

What I argue here is that *Malarvadi*, as a magazine from JIK, while reiterating the local issues of environmental protection and framing it as a social cause, simultaneously deploys an Islamic register and highlights the religious responsibility of Muslims towards nature. Added to that is the local adaptation of Mawdudi's notion of an Islamic social order which is used to sensitise young readers. Below, I draw on a few examples from the magazine to substantiate my argument.

Malarvadi conducts various programs under the banner of *Malarvadi Balasangam*.³⁰⁵ *Malarvadi Balasangam* was established in 1983 as SIO (Student Islamic Organisation)³⁰⁶ *Balasangam*. Subsequently, in 2003, its name was changed to *Malarvadi Balasangam* (Children's Collective) It is a group open for all students up to seventh standard, irrespective of gender, religion, and caste. The major objectives of the program are to develop the innate skills of children, nourish moral and human values, enrich creativity, strengthen an attitude for social service, nurture religious harmony etc. *Malarvadi Balasangam* conducts various programs like *Changathikoru Veedu* (Home for a Friend), *Mannariyam Vitheriyam* (Know the Land, Sow Seeds), *Oru Kai Oru Thai* (One hand, One plant), painting and drama competitions, cinema workshops for children, children's audio albums, art parade, anti-war rallies, as well as environmental campaigns like anti-plastic campaign, environmental oath, etc.

³⁰⁴ Samnad, 20.

³⁰⁵ The word *Balasangam* is derived from two words, *Bala* and *Sangam* which means child and group respectively.

³⁰⁶ SIO is the student organisation of JIH.

across Kerala. *Changathikoru Veedu* (Home for a Friend) is a student initiative, in which students from different schools across Kerala collect money to build homes for homeless children. *Mannariyam Vitheriyam* and *Oru Kai Oru Thai* are the environmental campaigns to enhance a harmonious relation between children and nature.³⁰⁷

Creating awareness about environmental issues is one of the major objectives of *Malarvadi*. It has published many articles on different environmental issues, including climate change and deforestation. The magazine considers environmental protection as the religious duty of a Muslim. For example, the *Malarvadi* published in March 2016 critiques first world nations and their exploitation of nature for industrial and developmental purposes, leading to climate change. It says:

The Industrial Revolution is one of the landmarks of human history. After that, human beings started to depend on motor and vehicles in a large manner. For fuels, man exploits nature. Climate change is the result of the industrial revolution, and the uncontrolled exploitation and human intrusion on nature.³⁰⁸

Malarvadi published in February 2016 includes an article about the Western Ghats and deforestation. The article, titled *Pashchima Gattathe Samrakshikkuka* (Protect the Western Ghats) discusses the importance of Western Ghats, and investigates the Gadgil committee report³⁰⁹ about their preservation. Below is an extract from the article:

³⁰⁷ Muhammad, *Youkikam (The Collective)*.

³⁰⁸ “Kalavastha Vythiyanam (Climate Change),” *Malarvadi*, March 2016.

³⁰⁹ Gadgil committee is an environmental research commission headed by Madhav Gadgil. The commission submitted its report to the Government of India on 31 August 2011. It includes the suggestions on how to improve the condition of Western Ghat.

You may have heard and learnt about the Western Ghats. Now, the Ghats is facing many challenges. Younger friends should think about the importance of Western Ghats- whether it should be protected or destroyed for our greedy and selfish needs...If our ancestors had been greedy like us, we could not have seen this biodiversity and natural resources. They were wise people who preserved nature for future generations. But we are not even ready to maintain nature for ourselves. We are never conscious about the outcome of our greediness. Dears, we can work together to protect the Western Ghats. Let's start to love nature.³¹⁰

In the latter part of the article, the author discusses the diverse flora and fauna, and rivers in the Western Ghats, and how the Ghats protect Kerala and the climatic conditions of the neighbouring states. The above articles unravel how *Malarvadi* sensitises its readers about different environmental issues. However, for the magazine, the protection of natural resources is not an isolated from but in sync with Islamic beliefs and practices. A similar, holistic understanding of nature as a part of religion, is visible in Mawdudi's preaching and writings too. He states:

Resources which are provided by nature and which can be used directly by man may be utilised freely, and everyone is entitled to benefit from them according to his needs. Water in the rivers and springs, timber in the forests, fruits of wild plants, wild grass and fodder, air, animals of the jungle, minerals under the surface of the earth and similar other resources cannot be monopolised by anyone nor can restrictions of any sort be imposed on their free use by God's creatures to fulfil their own needs. Of course, people who want to use any of these things for commercial purposes can be required to pay taxes to the state. Or, if there is misuse of the resources, the Government may

³¹⁰ "Pashchima Gattathe Samrakshikuka (Protect the Western Ghats)," *Malarvadi*, March 2016, 24.

intervene.³¹¹

Critiques of Capitalism

Malarvadi initiates a critique of capitalisation, privatisation, and globalisation. Challenging capitalism and colonisation have been one of the major concerns of *Jamaat*. Its founder, Mawdudi writes:

According to the Islamic point of view, God has created for mankind the earth and all that it contains. It is, therefore, the birth right of every human being to try to secure his share of the world's wealth and sustenance. Islam does not allow a particular person, class, race, or group of people to create a monopoly in certain economic activities; equal opportunity for all is its watchword.³¹²

Here, Mawdudi critiques the idea of wealth accumulation by a particular person or a group. He stands for the Islamic idea of capital, that is, the circulation of wealth through Zakat, and foregrounds the notion of balance between individual and society. A person, according to Mawdudi, has the freedom to initiate enterprise within a framework which ensures the wellbeing of both the individual and the society. He states:

One is permitted to accumulate wealth that is left over after meeting one's legitimate and reasonable commitments and these savings can also be used to produce more wealth; there are, however, restrictions on both these activities. A rich man will, of course, have to pay Zakat at the rate of two and a half percent a year on the accumulation exceeding the specified minimum. He can only invest it in a business which has been declared legitimate. In this

³¹¹ Abul-Ala Mawdudi, *Islamic Way of Life*, ed. Khurshid Ahmad and Khurram Murad (Islamic Foundation, 1986), 27.

³¹² Mawdudi, 27.

connection, he may own the legitimate business himself or he may make his capital available to others on a profit-loss sharing basis. It is not at all objectionable in Islam if, working within these limits, a man becomes a millionaire; rather, this will constitute a Divine favour. But in the interests of the community as a whole, Islam imposes two conditions on the individual: first, that he should pay Zakat on his commercial goods and ‘*Ushr* (one tenth) on the value of agricultural produce; second, that he should deal fairly and honestly with those he does business with in trade, industry or agriculture, with those he employs and with the Government and the community at large. If he does not voluntarily act justly to others, particularly his employees, the Islamic state will compel him to do so.³¹³

Malarvadi, published in February 2015 starts like this, “The world comprises of different cultures, tastes, and places. Globalisation destroys these diversities and creates a universal and monolithic taste and culture.”³¹⁴ Here the article discusses how globalisation wipes out native cultures, and how multinational products replace native foods and goods. It says:

Greediness is one of the major characteristics of globalisation. People are in a hurry to buy new cars, dresses etc. Globalisation makes everyone greedy through their advertisements. Developed countries consider other countries as a market to sell their goods through their advertisements. It affects every aspect of our life. Our concepts of family, society, leisure, food, etc. are changing. Fashion and trends control the market and everyone is busy towards attaining these. Different television programs and games influence the youth, and a west-centred imagination dominates their socialization at a very young age.³¹⁵

³¹³ Mawdudi, 32.

³¹⁴ “Agolavalkaranam (Globalisation),” *Malarvadi*, April 2015.

³¹⁵ “Agolavalkaranam (Globalisation),” 24.

The major objective of this write-up in *Malarvadi* is to sensitise the child reader about the after effects of globalisation, and the importance of using local products and staying rooted in one's own culture. The article regards globalisation as a new form of colonisation. This observation in *Malarvadi* should be read in tandem with the various protests organised by JIK against different multinational companies in Kerala. Significant among them is the protest against Coca-Cola Company staged in Plachimada. *Malarvadi*, as we can see, reflects the stand of JIK on distribution of wealth and globalization. It critiques the monopoly of certain countries such as America, Britain, and France etc, over raw material. It also challenges the exploitation of labour and accumulation of wealth.

My observations above unravel how *Malarvadi*, as a reformist organisation's children's magazine, imparts the notions and distinct Islamic understandings of JIH to its readers. The organisation considers *Malarvadi* as an effective medium to generate a group of young readers to sustain its ideology within the Kerala Muslim community. Although *Malarvadi* is influenced by the socio-political ideology of JIH, there is a notable deviation in the magazine's stance on women, particularly in comparison to Mawdudi's concepts on womanhood. The following section of this chapter will analyse the representation of women in *Malarvadi* and explore the differences between the magazine's approach and Mawdudi's ideas on womanhood.

Mawdudi and women

Mawdudi wrote *Pardah* in 1939 when nationalism was at its peak and many political organisations started women's movements.³¹⁶ In *Pardah*, he discusses the

³¹⁶ Abul-Ala Mawdudi, *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, ed. al-Ashari, 1st ed. (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1972).

status and role of women in Islam and the West. He found three reasons for the deprivation and abuse of women in the west; equality between men and women, economic independence of women and free intermingling of sexes. He believes that these circumstances are the primary cause of society's decline. When individuals are constantly exposed to sexual stimuli, they are unable to attain the inner peace and calmness necessary for productive and innovative endeavours.³¹⁷

He observes that in different nations and religions, women are considered embodiments of depravity, disgrace, and sin in the world. It is Islam which changed the social status of women, and it was the Prophet Muhammad who taught that women are also human beings like men. Islam provides social and economic rights for women. He says, "All laws, except the law of Islam, have weakened the economic position of women. And this economic helplessness is the chief factor that has reduced her to virtual slavery in the society."³¹⁸ A woman has been granted the lawful entitlement to obtain a divorce from her husband in case of cruelty or impotence. Additionally, widows have been bestowed with the right to enter into a new marriage. It is possible for women to achieve the same level of respect and prestige as men do through their virtuous conduct and good deeds.³¹⁹

Mawdudi emphasised that Islam gave many rights to women. They have the right to deny marriage against their wish, as well as access educational rights like men. He observes that the real purpose of women's education is to prepare them to become good housewives. He considers the woman as the "queen" of the house. And the most appropriate place for her, according to Islamic law, is her home. She is not

³¹⁷ Mawdudi.

³¹⁸ Mawdudi, *Islamic Way of Life*, 1996, 98.

³¹⁹ Mawdudi, *Islamic Way of Life*, 1996.

allowed to travel except in the company of a male guardian (*mahram*) like father, brother, son, or any other relatives with whom she cannot enter marital relationship.³²⁰

He said:

Man's position in the family is that of a provider. In other words, he is in charge of the family and its protector and is responsible for its conduct and affairs. It is obligatory on his wife and children to obey him provided that it does not involve them in the disobedience of Allah and His Prophet. He is responsible for earning a living for the family and providing it with the necessities of life... In this organisation the woman has been made queen of the house. Earning a living for the family is the responsibility of the husband, while her duty is to keep and run the house with his earnings.³²¹

Mawdudi's ideal of womanhood has been critiqued from several quarters including from within the organisation. Irfan Ahmad maps Mawdudi's perception on womanhood, and discusses how JIH followers critique his idea.³²² According to Irfan Ahmad, Mawdudi believed that one of the clear indications of Islam's contamination was the "moral degradation" of women. In his book titled *Purdah – (The Veil)*, Mawdudi claimed that the freedom given to women had caused the downfall of numerous societies. Mawdudi considered the heterosexual family as essential in sustaining Islamic culture and values, and hence, he addresses the middle-class family and women. He stands for women's rights in Sharia law and is paranoid about "modern" women's rights like free the right to free mobility, the right to vote and so

³²⁰ Mawdudi, *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*.

³²¹ Mawdudi, 96.

³²² Irfan Ahmad, "Islam and Politics in South Asia," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, ed. J.L. Esposito and E.E. Shahin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 324–39.

on. He argues that men are superior to women, and at the spiritual level, they both are equal.³²³

Irfan Ahmad called Mawdudi's gender ideology as a plain re-play of patriarchy, and calls it neo-patriarchy, a reworked version of the traditional patriarchate in a modern context. In the latter part of his essay, Irfan Ahmad maps the discontent of *Jamaat* followers towards Mawdudi's ideology on gender. He unpacks the understanding of women's role in Islam as expressed by some followers of JIH and their critique of Mawdudi's concept of womanhood. One of them argues that Mawdudi considered Islam as an ethnic group and avoided a universal approach to Islam, which led him to neglect the diversity of womanhood. Many of them advocate that women can engage in public affairs like men, and in Islam, there is no strict rule against that. If she wants, she can dance, sing and act in films, and study with men; also, there is no compulsion of the veil in Islam.³²⁴

Metcalf argues Mawdudi overlooks the Islamic and gender practice of Muslims in lower class. She says:

Mawdudi, unlike the social reformers, denounced European women. Typically, his work dwelt at length on the horrors that followed upon the freedom of Western women. Against this he set not the actual life of women in Muslim societies but an ideal social life, accessible if at all only to the more privileged classes, he found in Islam³²⁵.

The above discussion maps the concept of womanhood by Mawdudi and how scholars like Metcalf and Irfan Ahmad read him. Drawing from these, I will now look

³²³ Ahmad.

³²⁴ Ahmad.

³²⁵ Metcalf, *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan*, 112.

at how *Malarvadi* represents its women characters and its similarities with and differences from Mawdudi's concept of womanhood.

***Malarvadi* and Women**

In *Malarvadi*, there are many stories, novels and images depicting women's lives. Below, I draw a few examples from *Malarvadi* to understand its idea of womanhood. E.V. Abdu- the first editor of *Malarvadi*, during his editorship, approached several well-known writers in Malayalam to publish their works in *Malarvadi*. As per his request, M.T. Vasudevan Nair, an acclaimed writer in Malayalam, wrote a novel for *Malarvadi* which is titled *Daya Enna Penkutti* (The Girl called Daya).³²⁶

The story follows the adventures of a smart slave girl named Daya and Mansoor, a wealthy nobleman's son who loses his fortune after his father's death. Abandoned by his friends, Daya suggests he sell her at a high price in the slave market. However, the King's messenger intervenes and takes Daya to court, where she impresses the King with her intelligence and is granted many gifts. Daya and Mansoor fall in love but she is kidnapped by notorious businessmen who sell women into slavery. Mansoor and his neighbour Amina plan to rescue Daya, but she is once again abducted by a thief. To save herself, Daya disguises herself as a man and becomes a loyal minister in another kingdom, where the King's daughter becomes infatuated with her. She takes revenge on those who mistreated her before reuniting with Mansoor. When the King finds out, he punishes Daya, but the subjects appeal to him to pardon

³²⁶ Muhammad, "SouhrthathilTheliyunna Azham (Depth of Freindship)."

her. The story ends with Daya and Mansoor getting married and living happily ever after.³²⁷

The above story deviates from Mawdudi's notions of gender roles and the place of woman. It clearly challenges his idea that the domestic place is ideal for women, and that women cannot become rulers of a state. According to Mawdudi, a meaningful education for women is one that provides knowledge in different areas that help them become good housekeepers. He said:

From the Islamic point of view, the right sort of education for a woman is that which prepares her to become a good wife, good mother, and a good housekeeper. Her sphere of activity is the home. Therefore, she should be trained primarily in those branches of knowledge which make her more useful in that particular sphere.³²⁸

Mawdudi also believed that a woman could not be the ruler of a country. In the above story, Daya is portrayed as an intelligent girl who is well versed in logic, mathematics, and art and so on. She also becomes a very efficient minister of a state. The magazine published many other stories and articles which talk about women's life. For example, August, 2017 *Malarvadi* includes an article about women freedom fighters in Indian national movements. It includes women freedom fighters from different communities. Begum Hazrat Mahal (1820-1879), Biumma (1850-1924),

³²⁷ M.T. Vasudevan Nair, "Daya Enna Penkutti (The Girl Called Daya)," *Malarvadi*, 1986.

³²⁸ Mawdudi, *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, 72.

Vijayalaxmi Pandit (1900-1990), Akkamma Cheriyan (1909-1982) are few among them.³²⁹



Image 19: Begum Hazrat Mahal, *Malarvadi* August 2017.

These women are presented as brave and courageous. And they spent their lives for freedom struggle along with men. For instance, narration about Begum Hazrat Mahal goes like this--Begum Hazrat Mahal was born at Faizabad. She was the first wife of Avadh Nawab Vajid Ali Shah. When 1857, British East India Company exiled Vajid Ali Shah into Calcutta; Begum took charge of the affairs of Avadh and led armed struggle with British East India Company.

³²⁹ Anoop Ananthan, "Swathanthra Samara Charithrathile Sthreekal (Women in Freedom Movement)," *Malarvadi*, August 1, 2017.



Image 20: Biumma *Malarvadi* August 2017

Malarvadi presents Biumma as a courageous mother and freedom fighter. Description about her goes like this, born in 1852, Biumma was married to Abdul Ali Khan and together they had five sons and one daughter. Biumma recognized the importance of education and despite being uneducated herself; she ensured that her children received a modern education by sending them to English medium schools and even to universities such as Aligarh and Oxford for higher studies. Biumma's sons, who were famously known as the Ali brothers, became leaders of the Khilafat movement against the British. When they were imprisoned during this movement, Biumma showed her unwavering courage and determination by traveling across the

nation to spread the message of religious harmony and freedom. She was a true freedom fighter who stood up against the British rule and inspired others to join the cause. *Malarvadi* presents Biumma as an exemplary mother who not only raised her children well but also instilled in them the values of education, freedom, and equality.³³⁰

Through such stories and articles, *Malarvadi* showcases the immense contribution of Muslim women to society and the national history. The magazine encourages its readers to appreciate the struggles and sacrifices made by women in different fields and inspires them to emulate their courage and determination. Simultaneously the magazine critiques the concept of Muslim womanhood in *Balarama* and other popular children's narratives. As I stated in the previous chapters, there were many films and novels during the end of the 1900s which presented Muslim women as victims of patriarchy, subordinate, illiterate etc. Her dressing choices, language etc. were represented as symbols of oppression.

In such narratives, Muslim women become a symbol of freedom and “acceptable” only when she breaks free from the barriers of religion. In this context, I argue that *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* also use all the typical religious markers to represent Muslim women, but present these markers as normal—embedded in the everyday and public lives of women. These markers are not deployed to represent Muslim women as victims caught in the clutches of a regressive community. These magazines bring Muslim women from the margins to the centre of civic life and society, without erasing their community marker.

³³⁰ Ananthan.

SECTION II

***Kurunnukal* and the Traditional Islam**

This section of the chapter deals with how *Kurunnukal*, the first children's magazine from the traditional sect of Kerala Muslims, has been trying to introduce young readers to the traditional Sunni Muslim cultural practices. I argue that even though the main objective of *Kurunnukal* is to counter and reframe the Muslim representation and hegemonic practices of popular children's magazines, it also maintains an ideological position distinct from that of *Malarvadi*. This section, through an engagement with *Kurunnukal*'s approach to Arabic-Malayalam and traditional ritual practices, attempts to bring out its distinct identity and ideology.

Re-presenting Arabic-Malayalam (*Arabi Malayalam*) and Mappila Muslims

Here I explore how *Kurunnukal* as a children's magazine from the traditional Muslim sect, underscores the importance of Arabic-Malayalam in the Mappila Muslim cultural past. In *Kurunnukal*, there are multiple articles which promote Arabic-Malayalam (popularly known as Arabi Malayalam). For Muslims, it is essential to learn Arabic, because it is the language in which the Holy Quran is written. There are twenty-eight letters in Arabic; among these, thirteen letters do not have the sound equivalents in Malayalam. In Arabic-Malayalam, people write Malayalam words in Arabic script. Even today, the primary madrasa textbooks of traditional Sunni Muslims are published in Arabic-Malayalam. Debates around the use of Arabic-Malayalam has raged for a long period between traditional and reformist Muslims of Kerala.³³¹

³³¹Reformist sects among Kerala Muslims critique the Arabic-Malayalam system and advocate that Muslim community should accept the changes that happen around them

There are many works in Arabic-Malayalam which show the history and participation of Mappila Muslims in the anti-colonial movement. *Tuhfat al Mujahidin* written by Zainudheen Makdhoom is notable among them. It was written in the 16th century and maps the struggle between Mappila Muslims and Portuguese colonial forces. A.P Ibrahim Kunju pointed out that *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin* is considered as one of the primary sources of early information on Kerala Muslims. The work is divided into different chapters. The first chapter calls upon Muslims to fight against unbelievers, who oppress and ruin the life of Muslims. The second chapter is about the appearance of Islam in Malabar; the third chapter discusses costumes and cultural practices among non-Muslims in Kerala. And the final chapter deals with the arrival of Portuguese in Malabar and their tyranny.³³²

There are several prose and poetry written in Arabic-Malayalam. *Muhyiuddin Mala*, written in 1607 by Qazi Muhammad is considered to be the oldest poem in Arabic-Malayalam script.³³³ The poem contains tales praising Abdul Qadir Gilani, popularly known as Muhyiuddin Shaikh Gilani, who was a mystic, sufi and orator. He was also the founder of Qadiriyya Tariqa, one of the sufi orders of Islam. *Mala* literally means garland. *Malapattukal* can be defined as poetic works which are

regarding language, and develop an affinity towards standardized Malayalam. The fifteenth-anniversary issue of *Prabodhanam*, the official magazine of JIK, for instance, critiques the literary contribution of Kerala Muslims before the establishment of IPH (a publishing house run by JIK). It points out that Muslim scholars of earlier period gave many contributions to the world of literature; following which a breakage occurred, in which Muslims detached themselves from literature and education. The phenomena of detachment from literature, the article observes, was visible in Kerala too. According to the article, superstitions controlled the thought process of Muslims which found a reflection in their literature. It led to a “bizarre” portrayal of Islam through *Khissapaatt*, *Sabeena* etc. which are written in Arabic-Malayalam language.

³³² Kunju, “Tuhfat Ul-Mujahidin, a Historiographical Study.”

³³³ G.P Muneer, “Muhyiddin Mala as a Medium of Spiritual Leadership in Anti-Colonial Struggle,” in *Linguistic Magnitude of Mappila Malayalam*, ed. S.A Shanavas and V.P.C Ubaid (Thiruvananthapuram: University of Kerala, 2014).

composed in praise of glorious figures like the noble Prophet and his companions, and sufi saints.³³⁴ *Muhyuddin Mala*, *Nafeesath Mala*, *Badr Mala*, *Manjakulam Mala*, *Mamburam Mala* etc., are examples of such poetic work.³³⁵ Most of the poems in this genre deal with the life and miracles performed by different sufi saints. For example, *Nafeesath Mala* is about a sufi woman named *Nafeesa*, who lived in Egypt in the eighth century. *Manjakulam Mala* is about Sheikh Hussain Madani who lived in Palakkad, Kerala. *Rifai Mala* is about Ahammed Rifai (1166 A.D), the founder of Rifai sufi order.

Alongside these, there are other poems written in Arabic-Malayalam known as *Padappattu*, or army songs. *Cheroor Padappattu* (1851), *Malappuram Padappattu* (1883), are some examples. This genre of songs narrates the history of Mappila resistance against colonialism. For example, *Cheroor Padappattu* is about a battle against the British in 1843, at a place called Cheroor, under the leadership of Mampuram Alavi Thangal.³³⁶ A.P Ahammad observes that, during the Portuguese colonization, Zainudheen Makhdoom wrote *Thahrilul Ahli Imami Ala Jihadi Abathathilsulban* which is considered as the first military song or *Padappattu*.³³⁷ The work narrates the anti-colonial resistance of Kerala Muslims. Moyinkutti Vaidyar's *Padappattu* is a significant work within this genre, which encourages Muslims to fight against the oppressors.³³⁸ There are several critiques developed within the traditional

³³⁴ Muneer.

³³⁵ Umar Tharemal, "Politics of Exclusion: Text and Culture of Mappilappattu in the Context of Colonialism and Kerala Renaissance," in *Linguistic Magnitude of Mappila Malayalam*, ed. S.A Shanavas and V.P.C Ubaid (Thiruvananthapuram: University of Kerala, 2014).

³³⁶ Tharemal.

³³⁷ Ahammad, "Padakalil Pathinja Paattuveyryam (Songs That Blossomed in Resistance)."

³³⁸ Ahammad.

sects of Muslims towards JIK's position on Arabic-Malayalam. K Aboobacker (2007) argues:

Arabic-Malayalam language and its articulation were significant in the cultural formation of Kerala Muslims. It had the potential to reflect Islamic thoughts and gestures. But gradually, reformists questioned Arabic-Malayalam and became sceptical of its role in communicating with the Kerala public. Reformists are capitalist agents whose aim is to establish authority over the Muslims. They constructed a bridge for capitalism and consumerism to enter the community. As a result, Mappila Muslims lost their spirituality, worldview, and life imagination, which they acquired through Arabic-Malayalam. Reformists thought that they could write creatively in Malayalam. But they failed to create a tradition rooted in Islamic creativity.³³⁹

Several scholars have critically examined the negligence of Arabic-Malayalam in the arena of Malayalam literature. M.H Ilias and Shamshad Hussain K.T argue on how the mainstream literary history considered Arabic-Malayalam as “foreign” to the literary sensibilities of Kerala.³⁴⁰ The split of “us” and “them” operates in the arena of literature, placing secular/Malayalam on one side, and communal/Arabic-Malayalam on the other. By the end of the first half of the twentieth century, Malayalam sanskritised Malayalam became the master narrative, and began to be considered as the most perfect expression of the ideal *Malayali* and national self. Literatures from

³³⁹ Aboobacker, “Vaythapetta Navodhanam Puna Parishodhichal (Revisiting the Celebrated Renaissance),” in *Kerala Muslim Navodhanam Oru Policheyth*, ed. Zainudheen Mandhalamkunnu, P.A. Aboobacker, and K Aboobacker (Calicut: Islamic Publishing Bureau, 2007), 9–15.

³⁴⁰ M.H Ilias and Shamshad Hussain, *Arabic-Malayalam Linguistic-Cultural Traditions of Mappila Muslims of Kerala* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2017).

other languages were suitably side-lined in order to re-conceptualize literature on nationalist-*Malayali* terms.³⁴¹

The elements of the critique raised by Ilias and Shamshad Hussain on the marginalization of Arabic-Malayalam dialect are visible in the writings of *Kurunnukal*. Even though the magazine is published in Malayalam, it promotes Arabic-Malayalam and highlights its importance in their cultural past. *Kurunnukal* highlights the art and literature in Arabic-Malayalam, which have been neglected in the mainstream literary discourse of Kerala.

Below, I look at some literary examples from *Kurunnukal* which engage with the art and literature of traditional Muslims. The magazine has a series of articles about famous personalities within the organisation under the title of *Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar* (Literary Figures of Malayalam). Written by K.P Kunjimoosa, the series introduces famous Muslim writers and their works. Through this, *Kurunnukal* brings out the contributions of Muslims to Mappila literature, especially in Arabic-Malayalam. I argue through my analysis of these narratives that *Kurunnukal* attempts to construct an alternative narrative of Mappila literature, and simultaneously bring out the negligence meted out to Mappila literature, in the wider area of Malayalam literature and within the specific context of Muslim reformist sect's antagonism towards Arabic-Malayalam. The September 2009 issue of *Kurunnukal* mentions the poet Parikkutty, who wrote *Futhuhu Shamin*. The article says:

The *Futhuhu Shamin* is considered the first classic work in Mappila literature written in Arabic-Malayalam. The poem is about the Muslims in Syria after the Prophet's life and was written 376 years back. The poet introduced a new style and dictum for the poem by writing this work. But later, Arabic-

³⁴¹ Ilias and Hussain.

Malayalam literature was criticized and neglected by certain people. As a result, the poet - neglected by others- was also forgotten.³⁴²

An article in the series *Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar*, which appeared in April 2011, was about Pulikottil Hyder, who has written around two thousand Mappila songs.³⁴³ It mentions that Pulikottil Hyder lived in Eranad, and was trained to write poems in Eranad Malayalam slang by his mother. He wrote about contemporary issues in a poetic style. Thousands of people listened to him. During that time, there was no one who was unfamiliar with his poems.³⁴⁴ The February 2012 issue of *Kurunnukal* speaks about C.M Abdulla Moulavi, who wrote *Chembarikka Mala* in Arabic-Malayalam:

C.M Abdulla Moulavi died half a century after *Chembarikka Mala*'s publication. The *maqam* (tomb) of C.M Abdulla Moulavi is situated in a place called Chemabarikka. He advocated that the affection towards Arabic–Malayalam is not merely factional. He honoured the sacred *maqams* of different saints through his Arabic-Malayalam poems. He reminded others of the importance of interaction with holy saints as a sacred activity, irrespective of whether they are alive or not.³⁴⁵

The articles discussed above indicate the negligence towards Arabic-Malayalam language by the dominant literary discourse. Even though *Kurunnukal* is

³⁴² “Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar (Literary Figures in Malayalam),” *Kurunnukal*, September 2009, 12.

³⁴³ “Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar (Literary Figures in Malayalam),” *Kurunnukal*, April 2011.

³⁴⁴ “Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar (Literary Figures in Malayalam).”

³⁴⁵ “Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar (Literary Figures in Malayalam),” *Kurunnukal*, February 2012, 12.

published in Malayalam, it draws attention towards the role of Arabic–Malayalam in Mappila literature, and encourages readers to read and write in Arabic-Malayalam.

Traditional Islam and Women

The following part will delve into how women are represented in *Kurunnukal* and how it differs from *Malarvadi*'s concept of womanhood. It will also explore traditional Islam's notions of womanhood. To begin with, the section will examine *Samastha*'s ideological perspectives on womanhood by analysing its souvenirs, speeches of certain *Samastha* leaders, and other relevant materials.

One of the souvenirs published by *Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulama* in 1985 records the organisation's opinion and concerns on various matters like whether *nercca* is allowed in Islam, translations of *khutbah* (Friday sermons), women and writing etc. These are a few topics of debate among the traditional and reformist Muslims in Kerala. Here, I attempt to understand the perspective of the followers of traditional Islam on women's education and roles. The souvenir mentioned above states:

In all matters, Islam takes different jurisprudential positions on women, as compared to men. If we analyse these differences, we can understand that ultimately Islam gives importance to maintaining the chastity, health, and beauty of women. Whether women are allowed to learn writing is also included in these debates, and here also, Islam takes a different position on women, compared to men.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁶ “Samastha Kerala Jam’iyyathul Ulama” (Souvenir, Kozhikode, 1985).

Then the article mentions a fatwa by Imam Ibnu Hajar Haytami³⁴⁷ in *Fatawal Hadeesiyya*. It states: “Imam Ibnu Hajar Haytami never states that teaching women how to write is *haram*. He has said that it is allowed in Islam, but it is better to avoid.”³⁴⁸ This reflects the approach of traditional Muslims with *Samastha* affiliation to the position of women. They do not unambiguously propagate women’s education, especially secular education. When it comes to *Kurunnukal*, however, one can see many changes deviating from such orthodox ideology on women, regarding education and public visibility. Below, I bring in a few examples to substantiate my argument.

Women in *Kurunnukal*

Kurunnukal represents many historical Muslim women as role models to readers. Aysha bint Aboobacker (wife of Prophet Muhammad) and Fatima bint Muhammad (daughter of Prophet Muhammad) are some of them. The magazine represents Aysha as an intelligent woman and a supportive wife to Prophet Muhammad. *Kurunnukal* carries an article about Aysha.³⁴⁹ It narrates how Aysha learned the basic lessons of Islamic jurisprudence from the Prophet, and she clarified the doubts of other followers on the same. Women approached her to clarify their personal queries and doubts. The Prophet and Aysha lived in a hut near the holy Ka’ba. She never craved for a luxurious life. Her only intent was to lead a simple and ideal life, remaining accessible to other followers.³⁵⁰ The article further states:

She never insulted the Prophet. She lived without any conflict with him. She skilfully avoided messy situations and she was very intelligent. She was a good policy maker and conducted many negotiations...Before the fourteenth

³⁴⁷ Imam Ibnu Hajar Haytami is a 16th-century Sunni Muslim Shafi` scholar.

³⁴⁸ “Samastha Kerala Jam’iyyathul Ulama.”67.

³⁴⁹ “Aysha,” *Kurunnukal*, September 2012.

³⁵⁰ “Aysha.”

century, Aysha showed the world that a woman could be a teacher and, a leader for men... Once the Prophet said: ‘Learn half portion of religion from Aysha.’³⁵¹

In this manner, *Kurunnukal* represents Aysha as an ideal woman and a role model for women in every stage of life. Along with her contributions to the Prophet’s personal life, it also discusses her contributions to Islam. By quoting the Prophet’s words, “Learn half portion of Islam from Aysha,” the magazine shows the status of Aysha in Islamic intellectual history and her knowledge of the founding texts of Islam.

In the same vein, the magazine represents Fatima, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad, as another ideal persona. *Kurunnukal* represents her as a replica of Prophet Muhammad.³⁵² It brings how she emulated him in her life. She had a very simple and humble marriage, and led a peaceful marital life with her partner, Ali. She was kind and obeyed him. Though Ali was from a poor background, she never devalued him. When Ali went to war, she accompanied him. She witnessed and faced many painful experiences because of her Muslim identity and faith. She lost her mother and three elder sisters in the early stages of her life, and all this made her stronger and more mature.³⁵³ As one can note in these descriptions, the article represents Fatima as an ideal wife and daughter. By foregrounding her simple marriage and life despite being the daughter of the Prophet, the magazine implicitly questions the luxurious marriage customs and lifestyles prevalent in the contemporary society and encourages readers to lead a humble and peaceful life, notwithstanding their social and economic positions.

³⁵¹ “Aysha.”13.

³⁵² “Fathima,” *Kurunnukal*, June 2012, 20.

³⁵³ “Fathima.”



Image 21: Women in *Kurunnukal*, August 2008.

Along with such characters, *Kurunnukal* carries stories which represent women as icons of courage, piety, patience etc. To bring in an example, it includes the story of a woman who faces many painful experiences and loses all her family members in tragic circumstances.³⁵⁴ She leads a lonely life at Makkah and believes that all the experiences she faced will help her to become stronger and attain a place among the favourite subjects of Allah. The story is in the form of a conversation between the woman and a man. After hearing her painful story, the man asks her,

³⁵⁴ “Kshamayude Falam (Reward of Patience),” *Kurunnukal*, September 2009.

“How did a simple woman like you overcome such difficult trials?”³⁵⁵ She replies, “Why should we invoke Allah’s wrath with our impatience when he gives rewards for patience?”³⁵⁶ Through the story, the magazine demonstrates the value of patience in one’s life and how, through patience, irrespective of gender, anyone can attain a favoured place among the followers of Allah.

Kurunnukal also contains a range of narratives centred on Muslim lives, often focusing on women who handle domestic affairs. In some of these stories, women are portrayed as objects of reform by their male counterparts. For instance, in each issue of the magazine, a story titled *Ali* revolves around a pious and religious scholar named Ali. Ali is depicted as an ideal young man who lives in a village where everyone respects him. He walks from madrasa to home every day. On the way, if he witnesses any un-Islamic practice carried out by anybody, he advises and corrects them.

Most of the time, the women in Ali’s village are the ones who benefit from his reformist actions. For instance, in the story of *Ali* from *Kurunnukal*’s August 2004 issue, Ali notices an uncovered food bowl on the table when he comes home from madrasa. He immediately calls his mother and tells her that leaving food uncovered is not right, as the Prophet taught them to keep food clean and hygienic. His mother follows his advice, and the story ends with Ali imparting some religious moral advice to the readers in a story-like manner.³⁵⁷ This pattern of stories in *Kurunnukal* serves as a means of reform, with women often portrayed as the recipients of Ali’s advice. Through Ali’s character, the magazine promotes values such as cleanliness, hygiene, alongside other Islamic values, and encourages readers to adopt them in their daily

³⁵⁵ “Kshamayude Falam (Reward of Patience).”23

³⁵⁶ “Kshamayude Falam (Reward of Patience),” 23.

³⁵⁷ “Ali,” *Kurunnukal*, August 2004.

lives. As one may note, reformist, modern norms are brought together with Islamic values in these articulations.

In short, *Samastha*, the parental organisation of *Kurunnukal*, holds a traditional view of womanhood that emphasizes traditional gender roles and modesty. This perspective is reflected in the content of the magazine, which often depicts women in domestic roles and highlights the importance of modesty and piety in women. The stories featuring Ali depict women as receivers of his advice, reinforcing traditional gender roles where men are the leaders and women are the followers. In contrast, *Malarvadi* demonstrates a more progressive view of womanhood that emphasizes women's empowerment and leadership. *Malarvadi* features articles about women leaders and activists, challenging traditional gender roles and offering alternative models of womanhood.

As magazines for Muslim children both *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* represent women in a manner that endorses and validates the community identity. They portray women in diverse ways. They are depicted in colourful attires, such as the *saree*, *purdah*, *salwar* etc. Colourful *purdahs* and headscarves are part of the contemporary dressing style of Muslim women in Kerala. By using headscarves and colourful dresses for women characters in its narratives, *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* try to assimilate current trends in women's attire as part of contemporary Islam. In this way, they also respond to the changing trends of the market. Instead of representing Muslim women as a homogeneous category, these magazines portray Muslim women in a range of ways unlike the more static and stereotypical representations in mainstream popular children's magazines.

Hence, I argue that both magazines disrupt more stereotypical/secularist notions of Muslim women and their appearance/roles circulating in mainstream children's magazines. In *Balarama* and *Poombatta*, the normative and ideal womanhood is represented as universal and "secular," yet bears Hindu cultural markers. Women appear with uncovered heads with *bindis* on their foreheads. They practise Hindu rituals. These women speak standard Malayalam and talk about humanity and secularism. At the same time, Muslim women's representations in these magazines are steeped in poverty, patriarchy, sorrow, illiteracy, and religious fundamentalism. Most of the time, these women are portrayed as objects of reform for the non-Muslim male. Aysha's story from *Balarama* that I analysed in an earlier chapter is one of the many examples. When her father decides to stop her primary education, Damu master promises her father he will take care of her. Instead of representing Muslim lives and cultures in historical contexts, these magazines represent Muslim women as the bearers of the regressive customs of the community. The hijab, specifically, becomes a sign of deprivation and backwardness. In the mainstream magazines for children, Muslim women in the hijab emerge as signs of a patriarchal and reactionary Islam, never situated within the contexts and history of the community or contemporary society.

Mysticism: Perspectives of the Traditional and Reformist Sects

One of the recurring concepts that appear in *Kurunnukal* is the *karamat* or the mystical power of Prophets, *swahabs*,³⁵⁸ *auliya*, etc. In each issue, the magazine includes at least one story about the mystical prowess of these figures. According to *Samastha*, such people have mystical power, and they can perform miracles. *Samastha* frames this as an essential part of their belief system and considers it as a primary duty

³⁵⁸ Followers of Prophet Muhammad

of a Muslim to believe in *karamat*, or the mystical power of Prophets and *auliyas*.³⁵⁹

A speech made by Shamsul Ulama- a prominent Sunni leader, in the 60th conference of *Samastha*, discusses the place of mysticism in faith. He argues that the basis of Islamic religion is the absolute belief in the Prophet and his purity. The Prophet guided and purified a group of people and led them. Shamsul Ulama further argues that Prophet is not a mere human being. He and his companions are not ordinary people, as they occupy a high spiritual status, and this is the only truth. But, Shamsul Ulama, rues that some people think and preach that Prophet Muhammad was a person devoid of mystical abilities.³⁶⁰ Clearly, Ulama here is referring to the reformist sections of the community.

Following the ideology of *Samastha*, *Kurunnukal* contains narratives and histories of saints and tomb worship. Mysticism and tomb worship are issues of major debate among the traditional and reformist sects of Muslims in Kerala.³⁶¹ For the reformist sects of Muslims, especially the *Mujahid*, *Istighaza* or praying to dead people is *shirk* or heresy. Based on this belief, they vehemently oppose some Sunni ritual practices including *mauleed*, *nercca*, *urus* etc., performed in the name of Prophets and saints.³⁶² Mawdudi considers worshipping tombs or saints as a form of polytheism.³⁶³ While discussing the characteristics of polytheism, he mentions that saint worship is a part of it. He says:

Someone becomes an attendant at a shrine or a temple and sets himself up as an intermediary between the people and some supernatural power who rules

³⁵⁹ Vazhakkunnan, "Reform and Revival as 'Revitalization': An Appraisal in the Kerala Muslim Context."

³⁶⁰ Shamsul Ulama, "Samastha 60th Conference" (Kollam, Dember 2019).

³⁶¹ Vazhakkunnan, "Reform and Revival as 'Revitalization': An Appraisal in the Kerala Muslim Context."

³⁶² Vazhakkunnan.

³⁶³ Abul-Ala Mawdudi, *Islam and Ignorance* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1976).

over the destinies of mankind. Someone becomes a 'Pundit' or a "Peer" (a saint) and by the stratagem of amulets, charms, sorcery, and practice of magic, hoodwinks the people into believing that through these supernatural means all their desires can be obtained. The progeny of these tricksters form themselves into hereditary family groups and classes whose rights, privileges and influences continue to grow and become entrenched with the progress of time. This belief, therefore, thrusts upon the necks of the people the yoke of slavery of royal families, religious functionaries, and spiritual guides.³⁶⁴

In a similar manner way, Muslim reformist movements consider different practices of worshipping tombs or saints as a form of idolatry. There are many scholars who discuss the mystical elements of Islam and saint worship in Kerala. Carl W Ernst in his *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* discusses mystical aspects of Islam and the way in which it is connected to sufism.

He argues that the mystical dimension of Islam is embodied in Sufism. Sufis look up to Prophet Muhammad as a spiritual model and seek to emulate his religious practices and inner spiritual experiences.³⁶⁵ The statement "I came only for the perfection of character" is a reflection of his role as a mentor. Sufis consider Muhammad as a divine being whose creation preceded that of the universe, and his mission was a universal one. Through his compassion, he was the only Prophet capable of interceding on behalf of all of humanity.³⁶⁶ According to Ernst:

One important institutional feature of Sufism was Sufi saints' tombs. A Sufi is considered the 'friend of God,' or a saint, as one who is perfect in obedience to God and who is sustained by the love of God. The saints were seen as

³⁶⁴ Mawdudi, 9.

³⁶⁵ Carl W Ernst, *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

³⁶⁶ Ernst.

invisible supports of the world. While it may have been rare to obtain the direct guidance of Sufi saints during their lifetime, nothing prevented people of all classes from seeking the aid of the saints after their demise; saints, it must be recalled, like martyrs, were not regarded as really dead but were still living and conscious in the grave.³⁶⁷

Here we can see some similarities between Kerala Sunni assertion of mysticism and sufism. Dale and Menon narrate the form of saint worship in the Mappila Muslim community known as *nercca*. They focus on four *nerccas* that they observed in Malappuram District during 1975 and 1976, including those at Kondotty, Kuttayi, Malappuram town, and Pookkottur.³⁶⁸ They argue, the tradition of *nercca* originally began in Kerala as a result of the centuries-long wars fought along the Malabar Coast against the European powers following the Portuguese arrival in 1498.³⁶⁹ The Mappilas inherited a tradition of religious militancy from their struggle, which they expressed in various types of conflicts, including those related to trade, politics, and agriculture, and against the non-believers of different faiths, such as Christians, Jews, or Hindus.³⁷⁰ They observe:

Saint worship is a form of religious expression common to most Islamic societies, but it is especially important in the religious life of the Mappilas, the Muslims of Kerala State, and South India. The Mappilas' largest public festivals are a variant of saint worship known as *nerccas*. These are expensive and elaborate ceremonials which combine nominally Islamic elements with certain features of indigenous folk festivals. Thus, while the focal point of each

³⁶⁷ Ernst, 75.

³⁶⁸ Stephen F Dale and M. Gangadhara Menon, "Nerccas": Saint-Martyr Worship among the Muslims of Kerala," *Cambridge University Press* 41, no. 3 (1978): 523–38.

³⁶⁹ Dale and Menon.

³⁷⁰ Dale and Menon.

nercca is the reverence shown to a *pir*, *shaykh*, or *shahid*, all the festivals are conducted within a ritual framework derived from the worship of folk deities in Kerala. The *nerccas* are important just because of this hybrid character; that is, they provide examples of an especially complex variety of Islamic saint and martyr worship.³⁷¹

Here Ernst, Dale and Menon are trying to connect the religious and cultural aspects of saint worship in Islam. Dale and Menon are investigating the roots of *nercca* in the Mappila community, and its hybrid nature rooted in saint and martyr worship. Pookkottur, Kondotty, and Malappuram *nerccas* are examples of martyr worship. In this way, these *nerccas* celebrate the resistance of Mappilas to local and foreign political dominance. In *Kurunnukal*, we can see many references about the history and significance of *nerccas*. It presents *nerccas* as an inevitable part of Islam and Mappila history.

Mysticism and *Nercca* Practices in *Kurunnukal*

For *Kurunnukal*, narratives on mysticism and tomb worship are an important pedagogical tool in making the child readers aware of the Sunni ritual practices. However, I argue that, the mystical stories of the magazine counter the popular stories involving Muslims and magic or mysticism in mainstream children's magazines in Kerala, including those published in *Balarama* and *Poombatta*. *Arabian Tales*, *Mayajala Kathakal* and *Alavudheenum Albhutha Vilakkum* are some such stories published in popular Malayalam children's magazines. *Kurunnukal*, on the other hand, presents a mystical world within a religious and historical context. Simultaneously, it offers a critique of the reformist Muslims' rejection of mysticism in Islam. Most of the

³⁷¹ Dale and Menon.

time, the magazine uses such stories to present Islamic ideas including jihad, existence of God, angels, jinn, and Islamic duties like *Zakath* and *Hajj*. In *Kurunnukal*, *nercca* and other similar ritual practices are framed in two ways. While writings on *nercca* depict the love for saints and ulamas, they are also deployed to pass on the heritage of Mappila anticolonial struggle to young readers. In both cases, the magazine uses *nercca* as a pedagogical tool to teach Mappila heritage and culture, and to claim a Sunni legacy.

However, I would like to point out that while *Kurunnukal* represents the participation of Kerala Muslims in nationalist history through the practice of *nercca* and tomb worship, it only marginally refers to Muslim women's leadership or examples of women saints and followers. This is significant because, in traditional Muslim households in Kerala, a majority of women follow mystical practices or read/chant prayers about saints and sufis, as a resort to find support for everyday struggles, especially in gendered contexts such as managing the wellbeing of the house or during times of childbirth and nurturing. Sometimes, *Kurunnukal* refers to such gendered contexts. Below is an example.

The early issues of *Kurunnukal* (2000-01) carry a series about Tippu Sultan titled as '*Mysore Simham*' (Lion of Mysore), which is written by Afzal Vazhakkadu. The story tells about Tippu Sultan and his father Hyder Ali, and their engagement with the British rule. It narrates the personal and political life of these kings, represented as legends. The March 2000 issue mentions Hyder Ali's marriage with Faqrunnisa and their post-wedding decision to visit the tomb of Tippu Mastan Auliya, a sufi saint who lived in the early 1770s. Hyder Ali had great devotion for the *auliya*. The novel visually depicts the couple praying in front of the *dargah* (tomb) with other

people. In the picture, it is visible that the male devotees wear a white cap, and that there is a different place for women and men for prayer, and there is a man near the tomb reading a holy book. In the story, after their visit to the tomb of Tippu Mastan, Faqrunnissa advises Hyder Ali to visit the *dargah* again after her delivery. Conceding her request, he visits the *dargah* after their child's birth and prays, "Oh, Allah, protect my son and grant him a healthy and long life."³⁷² Hyder Ali named his son Tippu, in honour of the saint Tippu Masthan Auliya.

In the above story, the *dargah* is projected as a place of prayer which people visit for their daily needs and blessings. It is a healing place where devotees offer their prayers to Allah in the presence of an *auliya*. According to *Samastha* ideology, such prayers can take the form of two methods, as *Isthigasa*³⁷³ and *tawassul*.³⁷⁴ Mujeeb argues, the Sunni sects believe that Prophets and saints- dead or alive, with their supernatural powers, can help those who pray for their aid; and consequently, can act as intermediaries between them and God.³⁷⁵ They also believe that, the believers can use these prayers to access the exclusive rights and privileges of holy intermediaries in order to establish a connection with Allah. These prayers are considered to be a sacred practice in Islam, and are not prohibited.³⁷⁶

Nercca, Gender, Masculinity

The above story, as we can see, communicates the presence of saint worship in the everyday domestic and marital contexts of women, especially in the contexts of

³⁷² "Tippu Sultan," *Kurunnukal*, September 2010, 27.

³⁷³ *Isthigaza* is a kind of prayer where believers place a dead person as an intermediary between them and Allah.

³⁷⁴ *Tawassul* is a kind of prayer where people place an intermediary between them and Allah

³⁷⁵ Vazhakkunnan, "Reform and Revival as 'Revitalization': An Appraisal in the Kerala Muslim Context."

³⁷⁶ Vazhakkunnan.

pregnancy and childbirth. However, the narratives about saint worship and *nercca* are largely marked by an absence of women. Most of the martyrs and saints and their followers are men. While the magazine reconstructs the mainstream anti-colonial resistance narratives, and sensitizes its child readers about the significance of *maqams*, or tombs, in their cultural past, it excludes the presence of women in these contexts. As we will see below, all these narratives celebrate and reinstall an ideal form of Muslim masculinity.

In the Ali Musliyar novel, which I discussed in the earlier chapter, we can see a reference to the Tirurangadi *nercca*. It is mentioned that the *nercca* is observed in memory of the martyrs who died during the Khilafat movement.

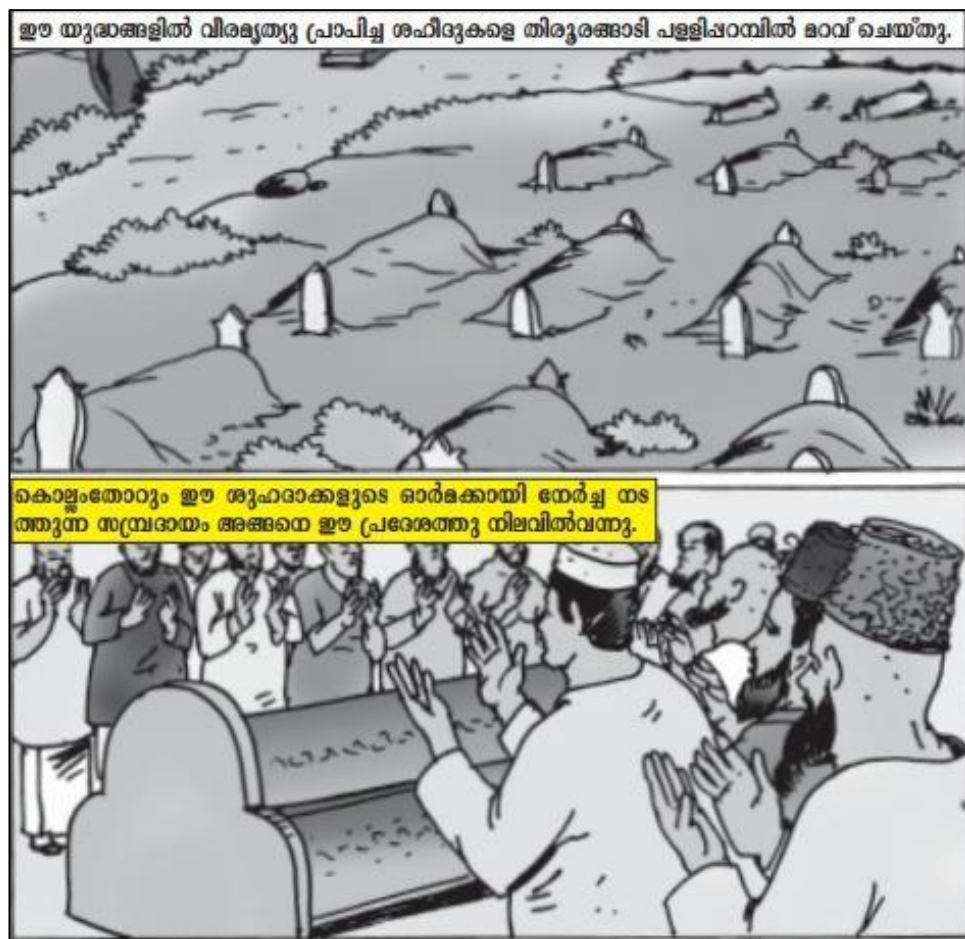


Image 22 Visuals of Tirurangadi *Nercca*, *Kurunnukal* October 2010.

Kurrunnukal published in October 2012 carries an article titled, *Ormayil Unarunna Omanoor Sambavam* (Memories of the Omanoor Incident). It is about a *nercca* that happens in Omanoor, Malappuram district of Kerala. The article starts like this:

There are very few people in Malappuram who are unaware of Omanoor *nercca* and Omanoor *shuhadakkal* (Martyrs). The *nercca* takes place on the seventh of the month of *Dulhaji*. Community donation is the primary financial source for the *nercca*. Irrespective of caste and religious differences, everyone attends this function.³⁷⁷

The March 2011 issue of *Kurrunnukal* has an article about Shaheed Mahin Poker and his followers. The article says that the tombs of Shaheed Mahin Poker and his followers are in Mamba Siyarathukara Juma Masjid near Kannur district of Kerala.³⁷⁸ When the Portuguese attacked women and children in Kannur, Mahin Poker started a resistance movement against such atrocities and got killed by the Portuguese. Today, irrespective of religion, people visit his tomb and offer *nercca*, and believe that they can get cured of chronic diseases through the blessings of Shaheed Mahin Poker. There is a *dars*³⁷⁹ adjacent to the Siyarathukara Masjid. The Mosque uses donated money (*nercca paisa*) money to maintain its *dars* (a boarding facility). The students of the *dars* spend their time learning about the Shaheed and his resistance against the Portuguese. The article further mentions a group of madrasa students who decide to study different famous *maqams* (tombs) in central Malabar. The information they

³⁷⁷ “Ormayil Unarunna Omanoor Sambavam (Memory of Omanoor Event),” *Kurrunnukal*, October 2012, 15.

³⁷⁸ “Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar (Literary Figures in Malayalam),” *Kurrunnukal*, March 2011, 12.

³⁷⁹ *Dars* is a form of madrasa education and it is generally adjacent to a mosque.

collect throws light on the good deeds of their ancestors. Through narratives such as the ones discussed above, the magazine brings in the ritual practice of *nercca* and advocates readers to learn about different *maqams* (tombs) and their peculiarities in history. By lamenting that there is no space for *maqams* in history, it critiques the reformist/*Jamaat* narration of Kerala Muslim history and attempts to build a Sunni perspective of history.³⁸⁰ The observations above indicate that *Kurunnukal* functions as a medium to propagate its parental organisation's traditionalist perspective of Islam. The magazine distinguishes itself from *Malarvadi* through its stories and narratives about mysticism and its practices.

Thus, as the above narrative exemplify, *Kurunnukal* celebrates the fearless Mappila Muslim men who fought against the colonizers and resurrects them in public memory. It also sets them up as role models for Muslim children. It teaches children an alternative history. For instance, it narrates how Muslims staged protests against the British rule across Kerala under the leadership of Ali Musliyar. Similarly, Mahin Poker is represented as fearless and a saviour of women and children. However, these alternative histories are marked by an absence of the agency of women. Perhaps in future another magazine for Muslim children will be attentive to this gap.

Conclusion

In short, this chapter brought out the debate and differences between the traditional and reformist sects in the Kerala context, and how they are reflected in *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*. In the chapter, I argued that though one of the common goals of both these magazines is to critically engage with popular Malayalam children's magazines, they imagine different childhoods in accordance with their

³⁸⁰ "Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar (Literary Figures in Malayalam)," March 2011, 13.

ideological and cultural values of their parent organisations and thus have internal differences.

Even though both magazines are published from the same region and religious community, the concept of childhood and the strategy adopted to introduce this concept to young readers is different for each magazine. To support my argument, I map local and internal debates among the Kerala Muslim community to bring out their differences. I also draw on various academic debates to foreground my argument. I analyse narratives from *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* which directly and indirectly present reformist and traditional perspectives of Islam to their respective readership. For this purpose, I select a few editorials, visuals, stories, and readers' letters which were published in these magazines during different time periods. I select a few internal debates like the Arabic-Malayalam language controversy, presentation of Islam and ritual practices, representation of women etc. Drawing from these, I argue that within the contested space of identity creation, different Muslim children's magazines in Kerala create different identities and Islam through a range of narratives and representative strategies.

Chapter five

Conclusion

I wish to use this space to share my unforgettable experiences while doing Ph.D. and fieldwork. In the initial phase of Ph.D., I decided to work on the Kerala education system. I remember that one day my supervisor suggested that I find a new area for research because we both felt my previous topic- which was a comparative study of school and madrasa education- was not enough for a Ph.D. dissertation. Sitting in front of her, suddenly my mind was filled with imageries from the Muslim children's magazines. I read growing up, and without any prior preparation, I started speaking about these Muslim children's magazines and their peculiarities.

For me, this is not merely a Ph.D. dissertation, but also a work that helped me to theorise and shape different questions that I faced as a Muslim (girl) during my school and college days. As I mentioned in the introduction chapter, I had a childhood which was filled with Hindu mythological stories from popular children's magazines, different series of *Amar Chitra Katha*, and *Eureka*. These stories either misrepresented or overlooked Muslim lives. As a young reader, it created a sense of inferiority and inhibition within my Muslim self. This study helped me articulate the complexities and confusions that I faced during my childhood.

Moreover, the study introduces Malayalam Muslim children's magazines to the academic world for the first time. Though *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* started publication in the early 1990s and 2000s respectively, they do not have a diverse and mass readership as compared to popular children's magazines. I collected old copies of these magazines from their offices. The well-maintained archives and friendly

office staff reduced my otherwise tiresome labour of data collection. At the same time, when I contacted the offices of *Poombatta* and *Balarama* for old copies, their responses disappointed me. They were not ready to share old copies. When I inquired, the response I got was that their new archives policy does not allow the staff to share old documents. It limited my study objectives and I focused on earlier issues of *Balarama* and *Poombatta* that I got from Appan Thampuran Library, Thrissur.

Findings of the Study

The study has been attempted to show how a subaltern group claims its space in the field of Malayalam children's literature, which was otherwise controlled and dominated by mainstream media and organisations. Muslim children's magazines introduced a new style of writing in children's literature which aims not only to teach Islamic values, but also to introduce Muslim intellectual heritage to readers. In E.V. Abdu's words:

The objective of Islamic children's magazines is not to teach jurisprudence to children. For this purpose, we have madrasas and their curriculums. Through children's magazines, we should impart Islamic values which are acceptable to everyone. Islam carries such values which form a mandatory part of Islamic instruction. This preaching and teaching will be in a joyful mode. Then it will become acceptable for all children.³⁸¹

E.V Abdu aimed to start a children's magazine which demonstrated the divinity of writing. He believed that the objective of children's magazines should not be confined to merely giving moral values and advice to readers. Rather it should be child friendly and attractive in its content. He also believed that the existing children's

³⁸¹ Ubaid, "E.V Abduvinepattiyulla Rachanakal (Writings on E.V. Abdu)," 18.

magazines lack such qualities, and therefore advocated the idea of introducing a children's magazine in the Muslim community to overcome this limitation. It is clear that E.V. Abdu's primary intention was not to counter popular children's magazines; rather he tried to introduce a new style of children's literature. For this purpose, he contacted many popular and budding writers to write for children. Gradually, in the 1990s, the magazine started to critically engage with the narratives of popular children's magazines. The study shows how Muslim children's magazines critique popular children's literatures that represent Muslims as backward, ignorant, uncivilized and victims of patriarchy. Along with that, Muslim children's magazines also try to represent the forgotten history of Muslims, ignored by popular media and history.

The study focuses on how masculinity plays a major role in children's magazines, deployed in the construction of desirable and undesirable childhoods. In popular children's magazines, the upper-caste Hindu male is presented as an ideal citizen and role model for readers. Such idealization is substantiated through the representation of Muslim men as undesirable and backward. Unlike mainstream discourses, *Balarama* and *Poombatta* do not aggressively villainize or demonize the Muslim man. Rather these magazines represent them as yet-to-be-modern and incapable of acquiring modern standards of life qualities such as parenting, hygiene, education etc. They often appear in need of help and scaffolding to acquire such standards; in such occasions, a Hindu man then arises as a saviour or reformer, and helps the pre-modern Muslim man to acquire the requisite modernity. In the private life, Muslim men are depicted as hyper masculine and patriarchal. They enslave their wives and daughters and deny them their rights of maintenance, education etc.

As a counter to this, Muslim children's magazines construct a counter-Muslim masculinity. They present the day-to-day life of Muslim men wherein they can be the ideal citizen without compromising their religious identity and faith. Through these narrative strategies, *Kurunnukal* and *Malarvadi* reconstruct an 'ideal' Muslim; subverting the aspects that appeared in *Balarama* as signs of the "bad" Muslim. For *Balarama*, a Muslim male with religious markers such as the beard, skull cap etc. is a symbol of backwardness and irrationality. *Kurunnukal* and *Malarvadi* deploy the same visual markers of the Muslim male to denote an ideal Muslim male.

The representation of Muslim women as subjugated and victims of religious and cultural norms, and Muslim men as patriarchal and uncivilized is subverted by these Muslim children's magazines through representing Muslims as actively participating in civic life and negotiating familial and community issues in humane and rational ways. Many times, the magazines play a crucial role to sensitise its readers about different issues faced by Muslims on a national and global level. Such narratives are intended to help the young Muslim readers to acquire the confidence to be at home with an Islamic way of life, without experiencing it as forever in conflict with the national/citizen self. For this purpose, the magazines also narrate accounts of Mappila Muslim engagement in anti-colonial movements. They re-narrate stories of Tippu sultan, Aurangzeb, Ali Musliyar etc. to the readers. The major purpose of such narratives is to claim a space in mainstream national history and challenge mainstream Islamophobic historical narratives which present Muslim rulers as cruel and communal.

The study also enquires who is an ideal citizen in these magazines. An ideal citizen in popular children's magazines is an upper-caste Hindu male. He fights for his

kingdom and protects his subjects from British or Muslim rulers and *asuras*. On the other hand, Muslim children's magazines represent Muslims as ideal citizens, contributing to and a part of the national life as much as their Hindu counterparts. *Kurunnukal* teaches that it is the duty of a Muslim to love his nation and a Muslim should stand for national progress. *Malarvadi* stands for trans-nationalism and global citizenship, extending the idea of citizenship and identity. It constructs a sense of brotherhood or feeling of *ummah* among readers through discussions of global Muslim issues.

The study also shows how Muslim children's magazines introduce a language to resist colonialism, capitalism, globalisation etc., within the framework of Islam. While *Eureka* resists capitalism, colonialism etc., within the framework of the left, *Malaravdi* advocates the position that it is the duty of a Muslim to resist and challenge all kinds of oppression. According to Muslim children's magazines, Islam or Islamic values have the inherent potential to liberate people from oppressive and exploitative systems of subjection. They put forth the view that it is the responsibility of Muslims to challenge and fight against all oppressive power structures in the society, and thrive to establish a more egalitarian, just and humane society.

The study also argues that though *Eureka* and *Parishad* consider science to be a means to liberate people from religion and irrational beliefs and bring about social revolution, the discourse of *Parishad* is embedded in the very religious framework from which it seeks liberation. Even though *Parishad* initiated the magazine *Eureka* as an important medium for educating young readers about science and to popularise science among them, it ends up propagating a modern rational childhood that is seamlessly embedded in Hindu worldview. Right alongside, its science narratives, the

magazine re-presents and re-validates values, myths, and icons identified with vedic/mainstream Hindu, strategically through stories and articles. Though *Eureka* claims that it challenges *Balarama* and *Poombatta's* representation of Hindu mythical characters and values, it, ironically, premises, its rational childhood on the same values.

The study also informs that the idea of childhood in each magazine for Muslim children is closely connected with its publisher's ideology. Publishers of these magazines consider younger readers as a medium to spread and sustain their ideology. Each constructs a notion of childhood that is within the ideological framework of their parental organisation. This is evident in the ways *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal* engage with the ideological conflicts and debates between reformist and traditional sects of Mappila Muslims, such as the Arabic-Malayalam controversy, ritual differences, views on women/gender etc. I have attempted to pay attention to the internal differences between the two magazines for Muslim children, instead of conflating them as an undifferentiated community initiative.

In short, the study argues that the imaginations of childhood in these magazines are different. Each magazine propagates its ideology and convictions to its child readers through various strategies like depicting certain communities as the "Other," excluding subaltern cultures, and portraying certain cultural practices and icons as "ideal" etc.

Limitations and Future Directions

Magazines for Muslim children open up a vast and complex terrain for research. Each sect of Muslims in Kerala has their own children's magazines. I have limited my study to only *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*, as pioneers of magazines for

Muslim children in Kerala. I have looked at only *Balarama* and *Poomabttta* as examples of the popular children's magazines, owing to the reason that these two are pioneers and most circulated in the area of popular children's magazines in Kerala. At the same time, I have omitted other popular children's magazines like *Balabhoomi*, *Balamangalam* etc. started by different Malayalam newspapers. These omissions and selections are purely based on the popularity of the magazines, and the limitations of the time that I had to grapple with as a researcher. I strongly believe that the above-mentioned magazines that I could not include as the part of this research, open up scope for further, extremely significant research. Unavailability of old copies of *Poombatta* and *Balarama* were another limitation of the study.

The study is focuses mainly on the perspective of masculinity; other components and dimensions of gender have not been looked at with similar emphasis, but they appear in relation to masculinity. I have observed several elements of womanhood in these magazines like the construction of traditional and reformist Muslim womanhood in *Malarvadi* and *Kurunnukal*, presentation of women from different social locations in popular children's magazines, role of women in the making of rational childhoods in *Eureka* etc. To limit my research questions and goals, I could not give the attention they deserve to these elements of femininity in these magazines. That will be an area for future exploration and study.

Readers' perspectives of these magazines are another area to be explored, like the impact of historical narratives, stories, etc., among readers. For instance, how the readers understand the mixing up of mythology and rationality, how they conceive ideological projection in these magazines etc. The study also has not focused on writers and artists of these magazines to explore the kind of directions they received

from the editorial boards and how they ultimately executed the different discourses and ideologies of in these magazines. All these, I believe, are potential prospects for further research and study.

Bibliography

- Abadurahman, O. "Youkikam (The Collective)." edited by N.P. Muhammad, 10. Kuttiady: E.V Memmorial Forum, 2000.
- Abdu, E.V. "Bala Prasadheekaranagalude Prashnangal (Problems in Children's Literature)." In *Youkikam*, edited by N.P Muhammad, 134. Kuttiady: E.V Memorial Forum, 2000.
- Aboobacker. "Vaythapetta Navodhanam Puna Parishodhichal (Revisiting the Celebrated Renaissance)." In *Kerala Muslim Navodhanam Oru Policheyth*, edited by Zainudheen Mandhalamkunnu, P A Aboobacker, and K Aboobacker, 9–15. Calicut: Islamic Publishing Bureau, 2007.
- Abraham, Santhosh. "Constructing the 'Extraordinary Criminals': Mappila Muslims and Legal Encounters in Early British Colonial Malabar." *Journal of World History* 25, no. 2 (2014): 373–95.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Ahammad. "Padakalil Pathinja Paattuveyryam (Songs That Blossomed in Resistance)." In *Mappila Keezhala Padangal*, edited by K.K Muhammad Abdul sathar, 262–67. Calicut: Vachanam Books, 2014.
- Ahmad, Irfan. "Islam and Politics in South Asia." In *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, edited by J.L. Esposito and E.E. Shahin, 324–39. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Ahmad, Jameel. *Malayala Muslim- Basha, Samskaram, Charithram (Malayala Muslims- Language, Culture and History)*, 2018.
- Ajithkumar, A.S. "Onagalum Keralangalum (Onam and Kerala)." Portal. Utharakalam, December 8, 2012.
- Alam, Arshad. *Inside a Madrasa*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2011.

Al-Hazz, Tami Craft, and Katherine T. Bucher. "Building Arab Americans' Cultural Identity and Acceptance with Children's Literature." *The Reading Teacher* 62, no. 3 (November 2008): 210–19.

"Amritham Moshtichavr (The Thieves who Stole Amritam)." *Eureka* 3, no. 4 (July 1973).

Ananthan, Anoop. "Swathanthra Samara Charithrathile Sthreekal (Women in Freedom Movement)." *Malarvadi*, August 1, 2017.

Ansari, M.T. "Refiguring the Fanatic: Malabar, 1836-1922." In *In Subaltern Studies, No 12*, edited by Shail Mayaram, M.S.S Pandian, and Ajay Skaria. New Delhi: Permanent Black and Ravi Dayal Publisher, 2005.

Arunima, G. "Imagining Communities Differently. Print, Language and Public Sphere in Colonial Kerala." *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43, no. 1 (2006): 63–76.

Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Balarama. "Editorial." April 1974.

Balarama. "Editorial." April 1977.

Balarama. "Hari Sree." September 1977.

Balusseri, Sreeni. "Motta Poker (The Zero Poker)." *Balarama*, February 1980.

Bharatheeyan. "Mahanmaraya Bharatheeyan-Raja Ravi Varma (Great Indians -Raja Ravi Varma)." *Poombatta*, July 1979.

———. "Mahanmaraya Bharatheeyar- Dheekshithar (Great Indians -Dheekshithar)." *Poombatta*, April 1980.

———. "Mahanmaraya Bharatheeyar- Nachikethass (Great Indians-Nachikethass)." *Poombatta*, March 1979.

- . “Mahanmaraya Bharatheeyar- Veluthambi Dalawa (Great Indians-Veluthambi Dalawa).” *Poombatta*, August 1979.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction*. London: Routledge, 1984.
- Chandra, Nandini. *The Classic Popular Amar Chitra Katha 1967-2007*. New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2008.
- Chatterjee, Partha. “Claims on the Past: The Genealogy of Modern Historiography in Bengal.” In *Subaltern Studies. Writings on South Asian History and Society No. 8*, edited by David Arnold and David Hardiman. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- . “Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India.” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 622–33.
- . *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Connell, R W, and James W. Messerschmidt. “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept.” *Gender & Society* 19, no. (6) (2005): 829–59.
- Dale, Stephen F, and M. Gangadhara Menon. “Nerccas”: Saint-Martyr Worship among the Muslims of Kerala.” *Cambridge University Press* 41, no. 3 (1978): 523–38.
- Das, Veena. “Subaltern as Perspective.” In *Subaltern Studies. Writings on South Asian History and Society No. 6*, edited by Ranajit Guha, 310–24. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Datta, Amaresh. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature*. Vol. 1. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1987.
- Demetriou, D.Z. “Connell’s Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique.” *Theory and Society*, 2001.
- Devji, Faisal. “Hindu/Muslim/Indian.” *Public Culture* 5, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 1–18.

Ernst, Carl W. *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*. University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Eureka. "Letters." February 1973.

Eureka. "Saraswati Puja." June 1973.

Gole, Nilufer. *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

Guha, Ranajit. "Dominance without Hegemony and Its Historiography." In *Subaltern Studies. Writings on South Asian History and Society No. 6*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.

———. "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency." In *Subaltern Studies II*, edited by Ranajit Guha. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.

———. "The Small Voice of History." In *Subaltern Studies IX*, edited by Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Gupta, Charu. "Anxious Hindu Masculinities in Colonial North India 'Shuddhi' and 'Sangathan' Movements." *CrossCurrents* 61, no. 4 (December 2011): 441–54.

Habermas, Jurgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. England: Polity Press, 1992.

Hall, Stuart, ed. "The Work of Representation." In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 1–13. London: Sage, 1997.

Hasan, Siddique. "E.V Abduvinepattiyulla Rachanakal (Writings on E.V.Abdu)." In *Youkikam*, edited by N.P Muhammad, 14. Kuttiady: E.V Memorial Forum, 2000.

———. "Jamaat-Islami: Velluvilkalum Sadhyathakalum (Jamaat-Islami: Challenges and Possibilities)." *Prabodhanam*, 1992.

Ilias, M.H, and Shamshad Hussain. *Arabic-Malayalam Linguistic-Cultural Traditions of Mappila Muslims of Kerala*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2017.

Jaffry, Anwar, Mahesh Rangarajan, B Ekbal, and K.P Kannan. "Towards a People's Science Movement." *Economic and Political Weekly* 18, no. 11 (March 12, 1983): 372–76.

Kannan, K.P. "Secularism and People's Science Movement in India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 6 (February 10, 1990): 311–13.

Khader, U.A. "Mukthi." *Balarama*, February 1975.

Kochu, K.K. "Onam, Charithrathilum Samudayathilum (Onam in History and Community)." Portal. Utharakalam, September 7, 2014.
<http://utharakalam.com/2014/09/07/11604.html>.

Koduvalli, Abdul Khader. "Shakkir." *Kurunnukal*, August 2001.

Kumar, Deepa. *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

"Kumara Sambvam." *Balarama*, November 1976.

Kunju, A.P. Ibrahim. "Tuhfat Ul-Mujahidin, a Historiographical Study." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 41 (1980): 317–25.

Kurunnukal. "Ali." August 2004.

Kurunnukal. "Ali Musliyar." March 2009.

Kurunnukal. "Ali Musliyar." November 2010.

Kurunnukal. "Aysha." September 2012.

Kurunnukal. "Fathima." June 2012.

Kurunnukal. "Kshamayude Falam (Reward of Patience)." September 2009.

Kurunnukal. "Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar (Literary Figures in Malayalam)." September 2009.

Kurunnukal. "Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar (Literary Figures in Malayalam)." March 2011.

Kurunnukal. "Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar (Literary Figures in Malayalam)." April 2011.

Kurunnukal. "Malayalathile Sahithya Nayakanmar (Literary Figures in Malayalam)." February 2012.

Kurunnukal. "Naseema." February 2010.

Kurunnukal. "Ormayil Unarunna Omanoor Sambavam (Memory of Omanoor Event)." October 2012.

Kurunnukal. "Tippu Sultan." September 2010.

Kurunnukal. "Variyam Kunnathu Kunjammad Haji." January 2010.

Kurunnukal. "Veliyankode Omar Qazi." January 2011.

Kutty, O.P Mayan. "Ali Musaliar: A Khilafat Martyr of South India." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 71 (2010): 618–25.

Leelakrishnan, Alakode. "Onavaum Eidum (Onam and Eid)." *Malarvadi*, September 2017.

Malarvadi. "Agolavalkaranam (Globalisation)." April 2015.

Malarvadi. "Editorial." February 1989.

Malarvadi. "Editorial." March 1989.

Malarvadi. "Editorial." September 1990.

Malarvadi. "Editorial." March 1993.

Malarvadi. "Editorial." June 2002.

Malarvadi. "Kalavastha Vythiyanam (Climate Change)." March 2016.

Malarvadi. "Mashum Kuttikalum (Teacher and Students)." August 2003.

Malarvadi. "Pashchima Gattathe Samrakshikuka (Protect Western Ghat)." March 2016.

Malarvadi. "Pattalam Paili." December 1992.

Malarvadi. "Pattalam Paili." May 1993.

Malarvadi. "Pattalam Paili." October 16, 2017.

Malarvadi. "Pattalam Paili." December 2017.

Malarvadi. "Pattalam Paili." February 2020.

Malarvadi. "Poocha Police." February 1993.

Malarvadi. "Poocha Police." June 1993.

Malarvadi. "Poocha Police." January 2015.

Malarvadi. "Swathanthra Samara Nayakanmar (Heroes of Freedom Struggle)." August 1, 2018.

Malarvadi. "Swathanthra Samara Nayakanmar (Heroes of Freedom Struggle)." August 16, 2018.

Malarvadi. "Yudhathile Kapadyangal (Hypocrisy in War)." February 2003.

Malarvadi. "Yudhathile Kapadyangal (Hypocrisy in War) II." April 2003.

Martino, W. "Boys and Literacy: Exploring the Construction of Hegemonic Masculinities and the Formation of Literate Capacities for Boys in the English Classroom." *English in Australia*, 1995, 11–24.

Massad, Joseph. *Islam in Liberalism*. University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Master, Kunjunni. "Kunjunni Mashum Kuttikalum (Kunjunni Master and Kids)." *Malarvadi*, January 1993.

Mawdudi, Abul-Ala. *Islam and Ignorance*. Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1976.

———. *Islamic Way of Life*. Edited by Khurshid Ahmad and Khurram Murrad. Islamic Foundation, 1986.

———. *Islamic Way of Life*. Batha: Corporative Office for Cell & Guidance., 1996.

———. *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*. Edited by al-Ashari. 1st ed. Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1972.

Mawdudi, Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala. *A Historic Address at Madras*. New Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, 2009.

Metcalf, D Barbara. *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Mufti, Aamir R. "Secularism and Minority: Elements of a Critique." *Social Text* 45 (Winter 1995): 75–96.

Muhammad, N.P., ed. *Youkikam (The Collective)*. 1st ed. Kuttiady: E.V. Memmorial Forum, 2000.

Muhammad, N.P. Hafiz. "SouhrthathilTheliyunna Azham (Depth of Friendship)." In *Youkikam*, 33–35. Kuttiady: E.V Memorial Forum, 2000.

Muhammad, V.P. "Oru Kaviyude Jananam (Birth of A poet)." *Balarama*, September 1974.

———. "Penninod Thottu (Lost to a Woman)." *Balarama*, July 1974.

Muneer, G.P. "Muhyiddin Mala as a Medium of Spiritual Leadership in Anti-Colonial Struggle." In *Linguistic Magnitude of Mappila Malayalam*, edited by S.A Shanavas and V.P.C Ubaid. Thiruvananthapuram: University of Kerala, 2014.

- Nair, M.T.Vasudevan. "Daya Enna Penkutti (The Girl Called Daya)." *Malarvadi*, 1986.
- "Nakshatrangale Ariyuka-Thri Moorthikal (Know the Stars- The Trinity)." *Eureka* 3, no. 2 (February 1973).
- Nalini. "Thrimoorthikal (The Trinity)." *Eureka*, March 1975.
- Nanda, Meera. *Prophets Facing Backward Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India*. London: Rutgers University Press, 2003.
- Neelakandan, C.R. "Probodhanam Special Issue." *Prabodhanam*, 2009.
- Nikolajeva, Maria. "Children's Literature as a Cultural Code: A Semiotic Approach to History." In *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature*, edited by Maria Nikolajeva, 39–48. London: Greenwood Press, 1995.
- Nileswaram, Subaida. "Sammanam (The Gift)." *Balarama*, September 1979.
- Nodelman, Perry. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.
- Noorunnida, M. "Children's Magazines and Different Childhoods in Kerala." Open. Sahapedia, July 24, 2019. <https://www.sahapedia.org/childrens-magazines-and-different-childhoods-kerala>.
- Osella, Caroline, and Filippo Osella. *Men and Masculinities in South India*. London: Anthem, 2006.
- Pandey, Gyanendra. "Can a Muslim Be an Indian?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 4 (1999): 608–29.
- . "The Prose of Otherness." In *Subaltern Studies VIII*, edited by David Arnold and David Hardiman. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Pandian, M.S.S. "One Step outside Modernity: Caste, Identity Politics and Public Sphere." *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 18 (May 4, 2002): 1735–41.

Parishad Pinnitta Nalpath Varsham (Forty Years of Parishad). Kozhikode: Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, 2003.

Poombatta. "Editorial." 1978.

Punathil, Salah. "Kerala Muslims and Shifting Notions of Religion in the Public Sphere." *South Asia Research* 33, no. 1 (2013): 54–69.

Radha. "Classukayattam (Class Upgrading)." *Balarama*, September 1977.

Rowena P, Jenny. "Reading Laughter: The Popular Malayalam 'Comedy-Films' of the Late 80s and Early 90s." English and Foreign Language University, 2002.

Saidumuhammad, P.A. "Islamika Pracharanam, Malayala Sahithyathil (Islam in Malayalam Literature)." *Prabodhanam*, 1972.

Samad, Abdul M. *Islam in Kerala; Groups and Movements in the 20th Century*. Kollam: Laurel Publications, 1998.

"Samastha Kerala Jam'iyathul Ulama." Souvenir. Kozhikode, 1985.

Samnad, Ibrahim. "Mamalakale Snehicha Pravachakan (Prophet Who Loved Hills)." *Prabodhanam*, May 7, 2011.

Shukoor, Abdul. "Dukham (The Sorrow)." *Balarama*, March 1976.

Sreenivas, Deepa. *Sculpting the Middle Class: History, Masculinity and the Amar Chitra Katha*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2010.

———. "Telling Different Tales: Possible Childhoods in Children's Literature." *Childhood* 18, no. 3 (2011): 316–22.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568211407531>.

———. "The Muslim 'Other': Figures of Evil and Charisma from Popular Visual Culture in India." *Tasveer Ghar*, 2020, 1–39.

Swami, Mridhanantha. "Editorial." *Malarvadi*, October 1996.

- Tharemal, Umar. "Politics of Exclusion: Text and Culture of Mappilappattu in the Context of Colonialism and Kerala Renaissance." In *Linguistic Magnitude of Mappila Malayalam*, edited by S.A Shanavas and V.P.C Ubaid. Thiruvananthapuram: University of Kerala, 2014.
- Ubaid, T.K. "E.V Abduvinepattiyulla Rachanakal (Writings on E.V. Abdu)." In *Youkikam*, 36. Kuttiady: E.V Memorial Forum, 2000.
- Ulama, Shamsul. "Samastha 60th Conference." Kollam, December 2019.
- Vazhakkunnam, Mujeeb. "Reform and Revival as 'Revitalization': An Appraisal in the Kerala Muslim Context." *Journal of South Asian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2015): 191–204.
- Watkins, Tony. "Reconstructing the Homeland: Loss and Hope in the English Landscape." In *Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature*, edited by Maria Nikolajeva, 165–70. London: Greenwood Press, 1995.



Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology

(An Autonomous Institute under Department of Space, Govt. of India)
(Declared as Deemed to be University under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)
Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram 695 547, Kerala

Department of Humanities

Certificate of Participation

This is to certify that *Dr/Mr/Ms* *Nooru Maida M* *attended/presented*
a paper/ chaired a session at Theorising Space: Three Day National Conference on the Intersections of Space and Culture
organized by the Department of Humanities, Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST), Thiruvananthapuram
in collaboration with Centre for Cultural Studies, University of Kerala and Litcirt on 14th to 16th December 2017.

Am S. M.
Organising Secretary
Space Conference
IIST

Udadahwal
Director
IIST



مولانا آزاد نیشنل اردو یونیورسٹی

مولا آنا آزاد

Indian Council of
Social Science Research



Maulana Azad National Urdu University

(A Central University Established by an Act of Parliament in 1998)

(Re-Accredited with Grade 'A' by NAAC)
Gachibowli, Hyderabad-500032

Al Beruni Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (ACSEIP)

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

ETHNICITY AND MINORITY: DEBATES AND DISCOURSE IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Ms/Mr/Dr./Prof. Noorunnida M

has participated / Presented a paper / Panellist / Chaired a Session in ICSSR Sponsored Two Day International Seminar on "Ethnicity and Minority: Debates and Discourse in Contemporary India", held during March 15-16, 2018 and presented a paper entitled Conversion & Religious Rights.

Political Questions Surrounding The Newly Converted Women In Kerala

Dr. K.M. Asyfauddin
Seminar Convener

Dr. Afroz Alam
Director, ACSEIP

Gender and Childhood : A Critical Study of Malayalam Primary Schools Textbooks

- Noorunnida. M, Research scholar , Centre for Women's Studies, University of Hyderabad, Telangana, India.

Abstract :

Kerala is considered as one of the progressive states in India and government has introduced many gender friendly innovations in curricula and pedagogic practices of primary schools. However, in this article I argue that despite various state initiatives to address the gender issues in school curriculum and pedagogic practices, primary school textbooks still generate gender hierarchy for readers. The paper mainly deals how these textbooks use male and female characters to impart ideas that reinforce the hierarchical gender and power relations in family, society and in the process of knowledge transmission.

Keywords : Gender, stereotype, hierarchy, representation, pedagogy

Introduction :

Education serves as a tool for socialization and control. One of the active mechanisms of cultural reproduction and social control is the curriculum. In his piece 'What is Worth Teaching,' Krishna Kumar (2005) explores the subject of the school curriculum in India. The textbook is an essential part of the curriculum in any Indian school. The instructor is obligated because the textbook is prescribed and recommended by the state. The author claims that in India, curriculum planning at the school level is in the hands of the education bureaucracy, which chooses which types of knowledge to teach through textbooks (Kumar, 2005). Gender is one among them. Schools curriculum

plays a major role to insist different gender roles among students. Gender is constructed in the classroom at two levels: one is in the form of curriculum and the other in the form of hidden agenda. Content, themes, language, and images in the textbooks are the major tools of structuring gender through the curriculum. The hidden agenda in the classroom assumes many forms. In the classroom hidden agenda of the curriculum is carried out in a subtle way, such as seating arrangement of students in the classrooms, methods of evaluation, allocation of responsibilities and mentoring of students. Many scholars problematized gender discrimination in the formal education system.

For two decades, David Sadhkar and Myra Sadhkar (1994) investigated the American education system and discovered that gender disparity persists in numerous ways in the classroom. In comparison to boys, girls have fewer academic contacts, are asked lower-level questions, and receive less constructive feedback and encouragement (Sadker, 1994). They pointed out that textbooks with modern family values depict males as dominating in the family in schools, and particular topics focus on specific gender groups, such as mechanical studies for men and food technology for women, as a significant source of gender socialization.

American Association of University Women has elaborated the key forms of sex bias in textbooks as (i) the exclusion or invisibility of girls and women from textbooks (ii) sex stereotyp-

ing (iii) the subordination of girls or women to boys or men in the textbooks and absence of female figures in the history textbooks (Khalid, 2010). The curriculum and textbook development in many South Asian countries tend to be male-dominated. In Nepal, for example, most textbook writers are men with potentially inadequate sensitiveness to gender issues in education. In their study material, men are shown as breadwinners, doctors, principals and scientists and women as nurses, teachers, mothers and servers of food (Heijnen, 2008). Same way, NCERT's report shows once girls are given access to schools or formal education, the assumption is that girls and women enter the public sphere. Still, the schools create boundaries and hence limit possibilities for them. The content, language, images in the textbooks, the curriculum, the perception of teachers and facilitators, etc, strengthen the hold of patriarchy. In this way, the school acts as an enclosed space, like the domestic sphere, where discrimination and violation are not discussed or questioned, and the textbooks depict the gender-based division of labour (NCERT, 2006).

The paper's focus is a representation of men and women and the use of gendered language in SCERT primary textbooks. It mainly deals

with how these textbooks uses male and female characters to teach ideas that help in reinforcing the hierarchical gender and power relations in family and society. It also attempts to understand the gender dynamism in the process of knowledge transmission.

Gender construction in SCERT textbook :

In school textbooks an ideal family is headed by father, and mother represent as a desirable home making character (see picture one). These texts keep silence over sexual minorities such as gay, lesbians, homosexual, etc. Through repetitive pictures and narrations of heterosexual norms, the school textbooks also orient its students towards the heterosexual norms. The mother figures and other women characters in SCERT textbooks mainly talk about matters related to domestic space and these characters are mostly depicted in domestic settings whereas male characters talk and take part in larger and general issues. For example, fourteenth chapter of the third standard of *Paristhithi Padanam* (Environmental Studies) narrates a conversation between a mother and children about the precautions one has to take at home at the time of lightening and fire and also while operating electric instruments, etc. The conversation is set at home (See picture one).



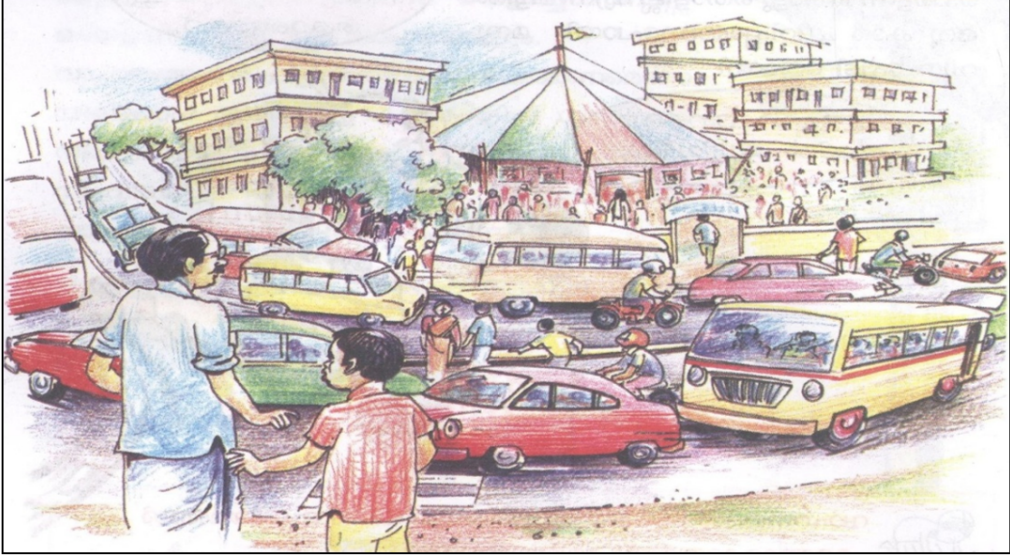
Picture one : Communication between mother and children in a domestic setting

Content of Picture one :

- Mother : We have to be cautious of many things while using electricity and fire at home.
- Girl : We use fire mostly in kitchen, don't we?
- Boy : What are the things to be taken care of while cooking?
- Mother : We should keep kerosene and other inflammable things away from the stove. We have to be

highly careful while igniting gas or firewood. We should not wear dresses which will catch fire easily.

Chapter nine of the same textbook titled "Nagara Kazhchakal" (City Views) has a boy and his uncle talking about traffic laws, road signals, driving rules etc. If one examines these two chapters carefully, one can easily understand that the former chapter is totally about home and the mother is depicted as the source of domestic knowledge there, especially knowledge about kitchen. And the latter chapter is set in a public place where men explain things.

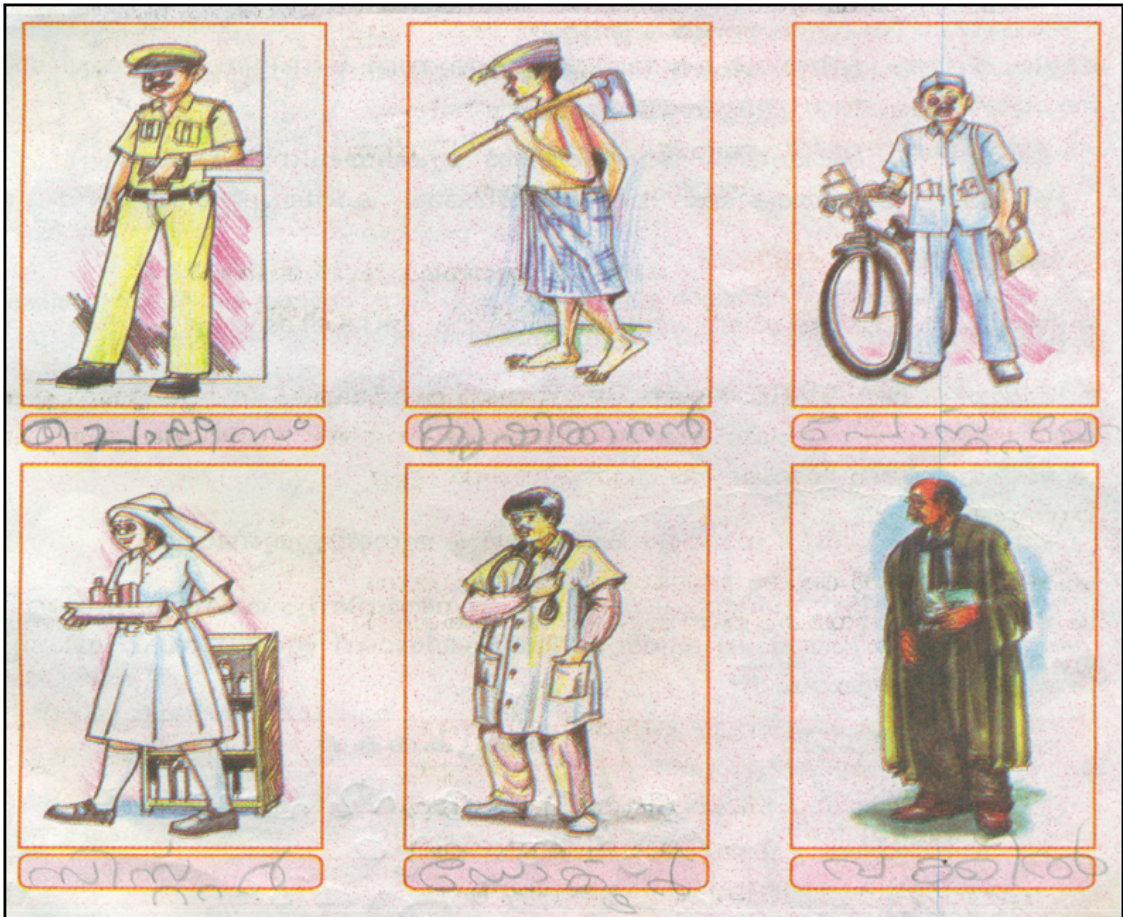


Picture two : Uncle and child in a city

The man here is the guide and the pathfinder for the boy. This is considered as the first step in knowledge acquisition. Through such narrations and depictions, the school textbooks reinforce gendered spaces and roles. Primary level school textbooks also depict women as caretakers. Through pictures and narrations, these textbooks emphasise women's role as homemakers and caretakers. For example, ninth chapter of the second standard Malayalam textbook has a poem about a sister titled "Kunjedathi" (elder sister). The poem talks about the sufferings of an elder sister who takes care of her younger brothers. Her mother dies

after the birth of the seventh child, which in turn keeps the responsibility of the home and family on the shoulders of the elder sister. The poem says that she hardly gets enough time to take care of herself and she always spends her time with brothers trying to make them happy. The poem never talks about her father and what he is doing for his children.

In school textbooks, women are always depicted as involved in traditional professions like nurse, teacher, and helping men in their work etc. whereas men are depicted as involved in professions like that of police, doctor, postman, etc (see picture four).



Picture three : Men and women in different profession

The above picture is part of a lesson titled as “Thozhilum Vasthravum” which means “Dress and Profession”. Though the aim of this chapter is to introduce the dress code of different professions it reinforces the existing stereotyped notions of gender division of labour. The columns just below the photos are to be filled by the student. In this picture the student fills the columns as police, farmer, postman,

nurse, doctor, and advocate respectively. So it reveals that the gendering agenda of these textbooks reaches the student without fail. Similarly, in school textbooks, almost all teaching professions are “reserved” for women. Second standard *Kerala Padavali* depicts a picture of a public health centre which includes patients, a doctor and a nurse. In that particular picture the role of “doctor”, “nurse” and patients are given to a man, a woman and women and children respectively.



Picture seven: men and women in work place

We can see similar pattern in the portrayal of jobs which are commonly called as unskilled. In these depictions women are portrayed as assisting men in their works and as doing some “light” jobs in the field. At the same time, men are depicted as doing hard works like breaking the rocks, woods and guiding women while they work (see picture five). This depicts the job division as depicted in these textbook on the basis of gender and reflects the existing job division in the society without making challenging and questioning such hierarchy.

Conclusion :

Kerala is considered one of the progressive

states and government introduced many gender friendly innovations in schools. Gender neutral uniform, female literacy, employment etc. are few among them. The papers though government initiates these innovations, narratives and discourses of school textbooks are not free from gender bias, stereotype, and hierarchy. Through pictures and narratives the textbooks construct an ideal femininity and masculinity for little scholars. And its replication can see in daily class room practices also. For example, female students are forced to clean class rooms and male students are trained to operate technical devices like loud speakers, mikes etc for class room and school function. The paper shows these job divisions and its manifestation comes from the learning material that they follow.

Bibliography :

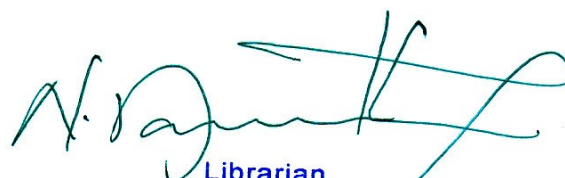
1. Sadker, M, and Sadker, D. Failing at Fairness: How America's schools cheat girls. New York: Touchstone, 1994.
2. Kalia, Narendra Nath. The Lies we Tell our Children: Sexism in Indian Education. New Delhi: Vikas, 1980.
3. Kumar, Krishna. What is Worth Teaching? Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2004

4. National commission for Minorities, http://ncm.nic.in/Constitutional_provisions.html. Web. 22 April 2012.
5. Kerala Padavali: Malayalam (Standard 2). Thiruvananthapuram: SCERT, 2012.
6. Kerala Padavali: Malayalam (Standard 4). Thiruvananthapuram: SCERT, 2012.
7. Paristhithi Padanam (Standard 2). Thiruvananthapuram: SCERT, 2012.
8. Paristhithi Padanam (Standard 3). Thiruvananthapuram: SCERT, 2012.

★ ★ ★

Reimagining Muslim Masculinity: Alternative Narratives in Select Magazines for Muslim Children in Kerala

by Noorunnida M



Librarian
Indira Gandhi Memorial Library
UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD
Central University P.O.
HYDERABAD-500 046.

Submission date: 17-May-2023 10:57AM (UTC+0530)

Submission ID: 2095207283

File name: Noorunnida_Thesis_For_antiplagiarism_check_16_May.docx (4.71M)

Word count: 45662

Character count: 247773

Reimagining Muslim Masculinity: Alternative Narratives in Select Magazines for Muslim Children in Kerala

ORIGINALITY REPORT

3%

SIMILARITY INDEX

2%

INTERNET SOURCES

1%

PUBLICATIONS

1%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

pt.scribd.com

Internet Source

<1%

2

go.gale.com

Internet Source

<1%

3

archive.org

Internet Source

<1%

4

www.sahapedia.org

Internet Source

<1%

5

muse.jhu.edu

Internet Source

<1%

6

ebin.pub

Internet Source

<1%

7

Submitted to University of Auckland

Student Paper

<1%

8

Nilüfer Göle. "Islam and Secularity", Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2015

Publication

<1%

9	Stephen F. Dale, M. Gangadhara Menon. " : saint-martyr worship among the Muslims of Kerala ", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 2009 Publication	<1 %
10	dspace.uohyd.ac.in Internet Source	<1 %
11	ijllnet.com Internet Source	<1 %
12	therevealer.org Internet Source	<1 %
13	IRFAN AHMAD. "Cracks in the 'Mightiest Fortress': Jamaat-e-Islami's Changing Discourse on Women", Modern Asian Studies, 03/2008 Publication	<1 %
14	waikato.researchgateway.ac.nz Internet Source	<1 %
15	Dafna Zur. "Figuring Korean Futures", Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2020 Publication	<1 %
16	Submitted to Sim University Student Paper	<1 %
17	malikussaleh.files.wordpress.com Internet Source	<1 %

18	Nevzet Çelik. "From Secularism to Laïcité and Analyzing Turkish Authoritarian Laiklik", Insight Turkey, 2018 Publication	<1 %
19	Renu Elizabeth Abraham. "Acculturation and Holistic Development in Children in India: Educative Possibilities of Children's Edutainment Magazines in English", New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship, 2021 Publication	<1 %
20	ARSHAD ALAM. "The Enemy Within: Madrasa and Muslim Identity in North India", Modern Asian Studies, 2008 Publication	<1 %
21	Submitted to School of Oriental & African Studies Student Paper	<1 %
22	journals.sagepub.com Internet Source	<1 %
23	Submitted to University of Arizona Student Paper	<1 %
24	opac.lib.idu.ac.id Internet Source	<1 %
25	Submitted to University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute Student Paper	<1 %

26	"Tagore and Nationalism", Springer Nature, 2017 Publication	<1 %
27	Submitted to UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta Student Paper	<1 %
28	Submitted to Indian Institute of Technology, Madras Student Paper	<1 %
29	Submitted to Kingston University Student Paper	<1 %
30	scholars.wlu.ca Internet Source	<1 %
31	Kelvin Chikonzo. "Subaltern Voices/Interests in Contemporary Protest Theatre in Zimbabwe", African Research & Documentation, 2022 Publication	<1 %
32	Submitted to Missouri State University Student Paper	<1 %
33	S. Vatuk. "Shurreef, Herklots, Crooke, and Qanoon-E-Islam: Constructing an Ethnography of 'the Moosulmans of India'", South Asia Research, 04/01/1999 Publication	<1 %

Exclude quotes On

Exclude matches

< 14 words

Exclude bibliography On