

**MEMORY AS HISTORY: A SUBALTERN APPROACH TO C. AYYAPPAN'S
SELECTED SHORT STORIES**

Aiswarya Sudarsan

Assistant Professor on Contract

Department of English, Sacred Hearts College, Chalakudi.

aiswaryasudarsan9@gmail.com

Abstract:

C Ayyappan is undoubtedly the most significant Dalit writer Malayalam Literature has produced. Though he had published his works during the high mark of Modernism, in the 1960's and 70's, typifying important features of Modernist writings he was ignored by the literary and critical establishment, dominated by caste elitism. However, in the recent decades he has been reread and reassessed thanks to the emergence of a new Dalit literary and critical intelligentsia like K. K Kochu, K. K Baburaj, K. Salimkumar, Sunny M. Kapikkad, Pradeepan Pampirikunnu, to name only a few. Though these luminaries have explored the creative contours of C Ayyappan's fictional universe, none of them seem to have noticed the historical relevance of C Ayyappan's short fiction. Hence the relevance of this study exploring the role of memory in his select stories using the critical perspective of Subaltern Historiography. Caste is not just a civil issue but also a country's issue. Casteism that has been going on for ages is still affecting the existence of a section of people. That is why their history is not complete even today. It can be seen that mainstream historians have deliberately ignored the history of Dalits. New discussions on caste inequalities and discrimination began to be discussed with the advent of Dalit literature. Dalit literature historicizes the existence of caste inequality and discrimination that has taken new forms in modern and democratic India. Given these aims, the main aim pursued by Dalit literary scholars through Dalit studies is to recover the history of struggles for human dignity and caste discrimination by highlighting Dalit intellectual and political activities. Dalit as subaltern was rendered invisible in history and hence, they were the outcastes of history. Written off history the caste subaltern existed on the fringes of history as the marginalised 'Other'. With the emergence of colonial modernity fruits of learning were made accessible to them and they began to historicize their past and present memory in an attempt to construct their due space in history. Constructing such a history is possible only through fiction. Therein lies the significance of C Ayyappan's stories. This article explores the role of memory in C Ayyappan's fictional universe. A close analysis of C. Ayyappan's short story writings reveals that he creates his own people's history through the works using memory, a metahistorical category that includes folk history, oral history or myth, and others. C Ayyappan is reworking history's boundaries. through memory, myth, and ghost narration. Language itself becomes a unique narrative model in Ayyappan's stories, from the speech of a haunted person to the utterances of a madman. All of these narratives are rich enough to contain both geographical and cultural clues to subaltern life.

Keywords: C Ayyappan, Memory, Counter-history, Dalit narratives, Dalit short story, Malayalam Dalit writing.

Introduction

The term 'subaltern', coined by Antonio Gramsci in his work on cultural hegemony, identified people excluded from the established institutions of a society and thus denied the means to have a voice in their society. The terms subaltern and subaltern studies entered postcolonial studies through the works of the Subaltern Studies Group, a collective of historians of the Indian subcontinent. Social and economic elites in the history of the Indian subcontinent. As a means of constructing a larger historical picture of society, the subaltern's story is a revealing examination of society; the perspective of the most powerless population, the subaltern man and woman, living within colonial constraints; therefore, the researcher of post-colonialism should not assume cultural supremacy when studying the voices of the oppressed.

“Our memory is a more perfect world than the universe: it gives back life to those who no longer exist” (‘Guy de Maupassant Quotes (Author of Bel-Ami)’). Memories become histories with each passing moment. The memories of the oppressed help to record many histories that are purposively left unrecorded, their memories created today's history. Kerwin Lee Klein says memory replaces the old favourites of nature, culture, and language as the term most commonly paired with history, and that shift reshapes the historical imagination. History also finds its meaning through its counter-concepts and synonyms, so the emergence of memory promises to redefine the boundaries of history.

The concept of "subaltern memory" has been linked with indigenous and Afro-American memories within the field of memory studies, particularly in the Latin-American context. Subaltern memory is usually associated with other similar concepts, namely counter-memory or contested memory, all of which seek to distance themselves from official or hegemonic memory. The concept of counter-memory started to criticize consensual memory narratives. Michel Foucault suggested it in an essay entitled "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," which opposed official history and its objectivity in classical historiography. Foucault says that counter-memory tries to save silenced memories that have not been included in history, the “counter” part goes against the positivist conception of history. This notion of counter-memory is linked to the historical versions that have been alternative to official history or the historiographic trends that are in fashion in a certain period. Here, the notion of the contest is essential to understand the dynamics of this understanding of counter-memory. Subaltern memories refer to those memories related to minority groups that have been silenced and

marginalized. In Spivak's words, these memories cannot communicate, not because they cannot physically or structurally speak, but because the audience does not consider the subaltern capable of communicating anything relevant. Gayatri Spivak rejects the idea of considering subaltern pasts only as narratives that add some left or silenced histories within the mainstream history because she considers subaltern past as a radical challenge to hegemonic ways to think and narrate the past. The subaltern history is about expanding the scope of social justice and representative democracy and talking about the limits of official history. In Jacobson's terms, we could say that subaltern memory does not share the format of history or dominant memories. These memories, or the speakers, or the cultural references to which they are attached, are not considered real memories by the hegemonic listeners. Dipesh Chakraborty writes about "subaltern pasts" in his book 'Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference', for him, subaltern pasts question the epistemological foundations of historiography and historical narrative. Subaltern pasts resist historicization, they never accept hegemonic history or try to fit in it.

Subaltern history relies to some extent on orality. Orality is frequently linked to mythological or undeveloped cultures, and it has no room in history based on written sources. Thus, this oral tradition can be understood as a subaltern memory that questions the sense of history determined by European hegemonic cultures. In the context of the philosophical literature on multiculturalism, we can argue that models of cultural identity based on the voluntary possession of a set of cultural characteristics are seriously incomplete. In particular, such models fail to address the need among certain groups to reconstruct, invent and imagine alternative positive identities as a result of historical injustice, and to imbue the content of 'culture' accordingly. Looking at Dalits' present-day sense of history and existing power relations, we can analyze as an example the process of identity construction among former 'untouchables and members of other lower caste groups in India, 'Dalits'. Dalit strategies of culture and identity negotiation reveal a need on the part of members of this community to construct a cultural identity that is psychologically and politically meaningful because of the historical fact that they cannot imagine who they are. Repression, the analysis does not aim only at essentialism, nor at the reconstruction of identity claims. Rather, it highlights selected elements within the discourse of Dalit identity to illustrate the relevance of real historical relations of discrimination and inequality to the construction of culture; the spontaneous nature of 'selection' within this process; and the emancipatory possibilities afforded by imaginative narratives of cultural identity. A reconstructed past and reclaimed self-position also guarantee

to step stones to conscious and purposeful control of one's future life, and no secure or meaningful future is possible without roots in the past.

Dalit writing in Malayalam is vibrant with a variety of voices and divergent perspectives. There is an increased presence of people from all walks of life cutting across age, gender, and community here. The diversity and difference that exist in the socio-cultural life of the marginalized also get reflected in their intellectual and cultural interventions. Postmodern Malayalam literature finds space for the lives of the marginalized. C. Ayyappan through different narratives models the exploitations and persecutions faced by the lower caste community to which he belonged. Ayyappan often rejected the linguistic conventions of realism. Language itself becomes a unique narrative model in Ayyappan's stories, from the speech of a haunted person to the utterances of a madman. All of these narratives are rich enough to contain both geographical and cultural clues to subaltern life. Idioms and expressions from Dalit life help to subtly mark the stories in the minds of the readers. About the stories of Ayyappan who expressed his uniqueness in Malayalam short stories by writing only about thirty stories.

Ayyappan was born in 1949 in Keezhillum, Ernakulam district. His parents were both laborers working on small peasant holdings. Ayyappan himself admits to a love of the land and of working on it. Mainly as a result of his mother's belief in education, the children went to school. He was a college teacher and worked in different government colleges across Kerala, retiring as a Principal. The uniqueness and vigor of the vernacular form the basis of Ayyappan's writings. C. Ayyappan's writing deviated from the regular methods of systematic writing. The contradictions between the modernity of Kerala and modernity in writing are actively presented in Ayyappan's stories. His most important books are *Uchayurakamile Swapnaman* published in 1986, *Njandukal* published in 2003, and *C Ayyappante Kathakal*, a collection of complete stories published in 2008. His stories have also appeared in leading journals such as 'Sahitya Logam', 'Bashaposhini', 'Madhyamam', 'Deshabhimani', and 'Pachakuthira'.

C Ayyappan as a Subaltern Historic Writer

The subaltern theory takes the perspective of the "other" as the one who has had no voice in society due to their race, class, or gender. It emphasizes that norms are established by those in power and imposed on the "other". Gayatri Spivak and Ranajit Guha point out that this branch of the theory emphasizes how the colonialist discourse has socially constructed signifiers from the colonial language, giving no real voice to the oppressed and colonized whereas Homi K Bhabha focuses on the fact that ideas are expressed in the dominant discourse,

in which the oppressed or colonized are not well versed so that they are not as skilled at expressing their validity claims. Consequently, the claims of the oppressed are often expressed in a poor imitation of the master discourse, and thus, not given good faith hearing by those skilled in the use of the dominant discourse.

The short stories of C. Ayyappan as such are reinforcing the memory of the past through recollection and prove that once the memory is strengthened, it empowers the subaltern to oppose the totalitarian system which had intentionally obscured the reality of the past. Since there is no documented history, the Dalit history can be constructed only through the methods used by subaltern historians like taking recalls to memory, myth, oral narratives, and collecting information from varied other sources. Ayyappan did not try to fit into the Kerala literary space of modernism literature. Ayyappan underwent his unique way of writing giving a new scope for Malayalam Dalit writing. Today, Ayyappan is seen by many as the most significant Dalit fiction writer in Malayalam. When he began writing in the late sixties, the category of Dalit writing was not so famous in Kerala. The dominant idioms of resistance in writing and politics came from diverse idioms of left politics. Lower caste social reform movements, especially the successful Ezhava movement and the nationalist and left movements, have prevented the public recognition of an autonomous domain of Dalit articulation, especially in the decades after independence and the formation of a Kerala state. The first two recognized short story writers who wrote about the plights of Dalits in Kerala were not read as Dalit writers but as writers who focused on the experiences of certain disadvantaged sections in society. C. Ayyappan is a storyteller who did not get the attention of readers and critics at the time of his writing but later recovered as part of a unique cultural context and debates. Through his writings, C. Ayyappan tried to tell the contradictions of social life determined by factors such as caste, gender, economic status, etc. His writings are driven by the desire to get away from the world of numbness, inferiority, fear of failure, and the constant deception that is hidden in these elements.

While examining the discourses on subaltern memories, by Ayyappan it can be said that subaltern memory does not only apprehend the official history but also attacks the official memory that is imposed on the community at large as the only legitimate or legal one. It works precisely by impeding a daytime reading of what is recognized as Dalit experience, and issues of masculinity and memory figure centrally in the strange temporality of this interruption. The cultural uniqueness of different social groups is an important theme in Marginalism around the world. Black, oppressed, and women have tried to express strange and unimaginable life

experiences in his stories. Specters haunt Ayyappan's stories, ghost appear before the protagonists of these stories to narrate their history, their story that is never told. The time of the ghosts begins at midnight, marked by the siren from a distant factory; they disappear with the break of dawn when the first rooster's crow. Ghosts are not mere visitors to the world of the protagonists; they are the principal narrators in many of Ayyappan's stories.

Ayyappan's spectral narratives often adopt the first person, frequently and powerfully, invoking the autobiographical as the enabling instance of articulation for their Dalit characters. However, death in the formal sense of a conclusion to temporal unravelling is insufficient to enable the acquisition of posthumous powers of narration. It is a certain type of death, like accidental inauspicious and unmitigated, what in Malayalam is usually called '*durmaranam*' or bad death that causes ghosts to be born. such forms of death constitute the dead person as a victim, a prey to the unjust will of others, or the brute and contingent force of the external world. In such instances, the forced exit from life is the act of injustice against which the specter's continued desire for speech and life struggles. The dead person's spirit returns to the world again to fulfil desires unrealized in life. In the cultural history of lower caste practices in Kerala, the world of deaths and spirits and rituals of propitiation has played an important role. Rituals like the Theyyattam is an example of that because Theyyatam has been noted as commemorating the unjust killing of lower caste subjects, invoking them as Gods and propitiating them. Dalit literature or literature of the suppressed has developed a separate aesthetics, an aesthetics that opposed the common concept of literary aesthetics, with its alternative narrative strategy and thematic representation.

Counter-histories feed off counter-memories and at the same time transform them, offering new discursive resources to draw on. When it comes to knowledge of the past and the power associated with it, this battle involves mainstream history by resisting the omissions and distortions done in official histories, returning to silenced voices and forgotten experiences, and relating to the past from the perspective of the present in an alternative way. And this is precisely what the Foucauldian notions of 'counter-history' and, 'counter-memory' offer. Official histories are produced by monopolizing knowledge-producing practices concerning a shared past. Official histories create and maintain the unity and continuity of a political body by imposing an interpretation on a shared past and, at the same time, by silencing alternative interpretations of historical experiences. Counter-histories try to undo these silences and undermine the unity and continuity that official histories produce (Medina). In this view, alternative memories are not simply the raw materials to be coordinated in a heterogeneous

(but shared) collective memory; rather, they remain counter-memories that make available multiple pasts for differently constituted and positioned publics and their discursive practices.

C. Ayyappan constructed a history not often documented. In his story, “Elumban Kochathan” the honest Pulaya worker, goes in search of his five lost buffaloes which are owned by his lord of the land. He fears his landlord, he hides from the lord. The story also represents slavery. He is starving and goes to his only sister. She is now married to a rich farmer and cattle owner; still, she never cares to help her brother. Ayyappan shows how the same community people show distinction to each other as their class differs economically. Kochathan is later helped by his cousin sister and husband who are poor themselves. Though they are poor they show real gratitude to their brother who once helped them. We see Ayyappan’s use of myth along in the story by which he gets around five hundred buffaloes, more than a hundred times as much of buffalo that went missing. Despite the betrayal of his sister, and thanks to the unalloyed love of his cousin, and gets them all back in rich recompense, five hundred buffalo throng around the hill on which he stood. The Lord is pleased with Kochathan and forgot the fact that the land was given for lease because of him and asked Kochathan what he wants in return. Though he had the chance to ask anything he asked for only three sacks of rice and wheat because of Kochathan. This show how humble the Dalits were to their landlords and they couldn’t think of anything more to ask from their lords whom they viewed as their gods. Through this Ayyappan tells the readers how capable Dalits were with their customs and beliefs. The efficiency of the Dalit who can bring five hundred buffalos in place of five shows they are more talented and stronger than the lord who enslaves them. But Dalits unaware of their strength continue their used way of living working for high-class people. Because slavery restricted their freedom and chained them to be slaves forever. This story ends with the buffaloes trampling to death the unloving blood sister, mixing her body with the soil in the fields. All these buffaloes were the ghosts of their dead ancestors. Each of the five hundred buffaloes appeared like a ‘Badha’ (a possessing spirit). Telling and retelling the stories of these heroes, building memorials, and organizing celebrations around their stories repeatedly to build a collective memory in the psyche of the people.

C.Ayyappan’s stories are blessed with lively and rare observation and a dreamlike quality in narration. The fundamental fact about these characters is that they confront us as Nairs, Namboodiris, Christians, or Pulayas. The story “Aana” (Elephant) offers a complex allegory of this. Framed against shifts in caste power, “Aana” is about a Namboothiri Brahmin of a renowned, now declining family in the village, who wants to buy an elephant but cannot

afford it. Unni's mother asks a young man Padmanabhan, their neighbor, and a Dalit to help cure her son's craze. And the young man promises her to buy an elephant. Unni Namboodiri's mother is an *antharjanam* (female head of a Brahmin family) who is secretly happy at the thought that if he brings her an antlion, she will be able to curse him to her heart's content because Padmanabhan though a Dalit is more successful than her son, which her casteist mind cannot digest. Since *illams* and *antharjanams* constitute the quintessential personifications of good in the Malayali mind, this depiction has a sort of violent beauty. This is the negation of the tradition that values are caste specific. The aesthetic sense of the Malayali which he has internalized by rote is not strong enough to bear this Antharajanam. Unni has an explanation for his obsessive desire, in earlier times, in the time of his grandfather, the family-owned an elephant called Ramakrishnan. Just for fun, the elders would let him loose in the night to trample and destroy the crops in the village. The villagers tried all they could to tie down this violent elephant, but all attempts failed. Then they started attacking it, throwing at it stones, lit torches, knives, household objects, anything that came to their hands. The elephant retreated into the inaccessible folds of the night. All darkness turned into the elephant. Even as they trembled at the fearsome trumpeting of the elephant, the villagers continued their relentless battle with darkness. The elephant is dead, but it continues to roar in the mind of the Namboothiri. He wants to buy that elephant and retrieve it from across generations. Here, in an uncanny moment of spectrographic transformation, the words slip, and the Namboothiri turns into an image of rage. Now he wants to kill the elephant; he is among the obsessive stone-throwers. He stands divided – and united – with his longing for the elephant and his urge to kill him; a desire to translate all unwieldy heritage into the ambit of light and uncontrollable, blood-thirsty anticipation of the dark. This style which is at once revolutionary and dismissive of dominant values makes Ayyappan's stories Dalit narratives.

“Prethabhashanam” or Ghost-Speech is a story by C.Ayyappan, in this story, a woman spirit, who has come to stay in the body of her betrayed lover's younger sister to induce incest between them, explains to the possessed girl the logic of her actions. Kunchako is a Syrian Christian and the maid is a Pulaya housemaid. Being a Dalit, being rejected from love, being spit on her face when she expresses to Kunchako her desire to bear his child, and unable to endure the trauma she commits suicide and rises as a ghost and criticizes the casteist society she lived in. Most of the characters in his stories get realization after their death. Here, the ghost understands her mother was also a victim of caste rape and the man who impregnated her is her brother in a way. She thus asks God a question: “How can a Pulaya woman be sister

to a Christian, old man?” (Ayyappan, 76) At this question, it was as though someone had stuffed a plantain in God’s mouth. The Pulaya woman who stuffed a plantain into god’s mouth is a powerful symbol that haunts the Malayali’s pretensions of progressiveness and values. It is only within a shudder we realize that the question would render the average Malayali also speechless.

The father who comes to realize that his son has an affair with the maid tries to dissuade him. The son in question is Syrian Christian and the maid is Pulaya. The son responds that he is not going to marry her in any way. The response makes the father feel that someone has stuffed plantain into his mouth. The father laps into silence before the commonly held impression that it is perfectly permissible for a Christian (generally a savarna) to have an affair with Pulaya (a Dalit) woman so long as he does not propose to marry her. It is this wild assault on the sham morality of the Malayali which turns Ayyappan’s stories into a new aesthetic experience. It is this strange process in which each character matures through their social identity and confronts one another that makes Ayyappan’s stories Dalit stories.

In some of the stories, female ghosts appear in the world of living male protagonists. Spirits carry their gendered identities and personal histories with them in a strangely immaterial experience of embodiment. Spectral inhabitation in Ayyappan’s fictional world mobilizes several attributes of ghostliness familiar to us: the past and the present, objects of insufficient and impossible mourning, melancholically introjected losses. All these lines of thinking consider the ghostly domain as that where the unfinished business with the past is played out. Ayyappan’s stories, however, seem to work with a different sense of time. Stories like “Kavalbhutam” or “Prethabhashanam” present the ghosts as unrelenting in their grip over time. Life itself takes place under the effect of the ghosts; their domain is lived out as an unsurpassable present.

Dreams and disorienting spaces and journeys are sites where the boundaries between the ghostly and the diurnal become permeable. The protagonist of “Bhranthu” tries to police them with great success. His sister, suffering from insanity, is being taken to a mental hospital by a Panchayat member and some other well-wishers. When they come to his house, the protagonist pretends to see nothing, making one of them ask him if he too has gone mad! The story takes the form of his explanation: just as the ghosts explain their actions, this sane protagonist his name is Krishnan Kutty explains the rationale behind his strange behavior. Krishnan Kutty is similar to Pandurang Satwa Waghmare, the protagonist of Arjun Dangle’s short fiction ‘Promotion’. Both of them fear their caste identity. They started forgetting their

past and could not face the harsh social realities surrounding them. Both the authors reveal the false identity of the Dalit bourgeois. Krishnan Kutty hides his original identity and exposes his false identity. He cannot risk his status in society by admitting to the existence of his insane sister and his poor, unsophisticated family whose identity as Dalits will be evident to any observer. Krishnan Kutty's wife and daughter are now insulted by their relatives. It shows that after receiving the benefits of the government, Dalit officers and their family loses contact with common and poor people from their community. Education and freedom give voice to the voiceless. It does not reduce the gap between Dalits and the elites of India. What remains the last long is casteist identity. He would like to visit his sister in hospital, but what is the point of visiting an insane person who cannot even recognize the visitors is the question he finally asks the readers.

The stories, like "Oru Visadikaranakkurippu", "Bhranthu", and "Sarvajnanaya Kathakrthum Oru Pavam Kathapathravum" may be identified as belonging to the second set of narratives in Ayyappan's work. Unlike the memory narratives of ghostly spirits who live through their acts of possession over the living, these stories are told by the living from their memory. At an apparent level, the stories in this second group are not about victims but about Dalit men who seem to have succeeded in life, obtained jobs, and married into families with higher material and cultural capital. Their estrangement from their original families and the community, and the accompanying sense of guilt and awkwardness, are the avenues through which these stories explore the Dalit question.

"Sarvajnanaya Kathakrthum Oru Pavam Kathapathravum" begins by rehearsing the other side of these effects: after the farewell party on the day of Krishnan Kutty's retirement, the protagonist becomes increasingly suspicious of the behavior of his colleagues: did the familiar rituals of the farewell function conceal suppressed upper caste sarcasm? His way of getting back is to repeat the same gesture, and write a novel to humiliate one of his Dalit acquaintances, Dr. Pradeep by highlighting his inferior caste status. "Yes, I will write a novel. And dig up and expose your history. I want to know from where you got your fair skin and light eyes. You know why? For no reason. Just like that." (Ayyappan, 135) Thus concludes the explanatory note of this successful Dalit subject. He narrates how Dalits are mistreated even in offices. In many areas of life, Dalits face caste insurgency, and humiliation and remain at the receiving end. At times neither peons nor clerks listen and respect a Dalit officer. Krishnan Kutty, a Paraya gets insulted by other casts, including people like Dr. Pradeep and he is insulted in his community for marrying a girl from Pulaya Community. This shows how there is a Dalit

within a Dalit. Krishnan Kutty and Pradeep fight in name of caste where both are feeling insulted by their cast. Even after being educated and well-earned people reclaim themselves in name of religion and cast. Official memory says education is a remedy to Dalit issues. The question of memory's relation to power lurks within the battle between official and subaltern memories. Looking at the big structures of history and how they are experienced on the local levels reveals how subaltern memories rise through the cracks and become counter-hegemonic.

In one of Ayyappan's stories, "Oru Visadikaranakkurippu" ("An Explanatory Note") the narrator, a government employee who participated in a public protest march demanding a rise in wages explains why all the protesters fled in fear without any apparent provocation. The note clarifies that when the march was in progress a group of beggars and lepers and prostitutes – onlookers from the street – joined them in support and started shouting the same Slogans. The presence of these real subalterns is felt as an unbearable physical threat by the protesters, and eventually, they flee from their presence. Ayyappan's stories of the living, using the form of the explanatory note, effectively rehearse deep disorientation in their protagonist's occupancy of the social domain. Deception, betrayal, and dissimulation plague instances of success, turning the inhabitation of normalized middle-class life into nightmares of anxiety. Assimilation is accompanied by a cycle of disavowal and humiliation. The memory of these events is not just part of Dalit memory but also a part of the broader collective memory of the region that is reflected in the songs, plays, and other mediums of popular culture. This fact enabled the Dalits to invent their heroes and histories who could become both local heroes and identity markers for the entire community in its everyday struggle for dignity and self-respect. M Mukundan proposed that Dalit literature is the new remarkable stream that has emerged in Malayalam over the last few years. Such new readings clarify that Dalit writing is to be recognized as a powerful reforming force that is shaking and breaking the foundations of conventional wisdom and sensibility. These counter-hegemonic groups resist through literature. Sentiments hanker and the struggles of the suppressed are portrayed in Dalit literature. The suppressed community gets an opportunity to converse about what is in their mind through literary works. It is their protests against social injustice, inequality, cruelty, and economic exploitation based on caste and class.

C Ayyappan has incorporated the collective memory of society and has made it stand the test of individual memory. The collective memory is the official version of the truth which

is deprived of authenticity and is blinkered through and through, whereas individual history is a personal account of the past that is borne by the victim or the subaltern.

In the stories, the aspect of collective memory has been depicted by the elitist authority whereas the subaltern or individual memory has been reflected in the character of the protagonists. The objective is, that subaltern memory or oral accounts can subvert the abuse of power of the elite and engender a subaltern history without any interference from the elite.

Conclusion

In recent decades Dalit literature has emerged as an important sub-genre in Indian literature. Earlier Dalit literature was concerned with the trials and tribulations of the community, but as time passed, Dalit literature acquired new dimensions and moved away from autobiographies to poetry, drama, novels, and short stories. As time passed it became more creative styling itself in different unique ways than other forms of writing. The Subaltern historians state that the elite and subaltern consciousness is not integrated into each other and they remain in a state of constant conflict. The mainstream historians while narrating the historiography of nationalism have ignored the conflict-ridden relationship between the elite and the subaltern classes. They represent nationalism as a monistic movement devoid of any internal contradictions. The domain of politics was naturally split and not unified and homogenous as elite interpretation had made it out to be. Spivak does not agree with subaltern historians that the subaltern is a sovereign political subject. The sovereignty of the subaltern is only an effect of the dominant discourse. She argues that the political will of the subaltern is constructed by the dominant discourse as an aftereffect of elite nationalism. Thus, when Spivak says a subaltern cannot speak she tells in the context that a subaltern cannot speak using elite methodologies. That is where the prominence of subaltern historians comes. Post-modern historians including Foucault believe that memory has power in shaping public interpretation and knowledge about the past and memories and counter-memories shape an individual's relationship to that past. This concludes that subalterns can speak in their voice giving voice to the voiceless using their methodologies. Dalit studies thus require a methodology. The methodology of social sciences and cultural studies can be adopted. An interdisciplinary method, combining methods of different disciplines, is in vogue now. It is not enough to know what the leaders did or how they lived; it is equally important to know what ordinary Dalits did, and how they lived. It is also important to know what they do and how they live now.

Biographies and autobiographies of Dalit men and women who are of varying age groups, who are engaged in different traits, who belong to different economic backgrounds,

and who belong to different faiths and movements, should be written. This calls for conscious and collective effort. In the case of those who are alive, the method of the interview can be adopted. In all Dalit struggles for democratic rights, women have played roles comparable to that of men. But for want of evidence, even in written Dalit histories, Dalit women remain invisible. No community which has recorded nothing and which does not produce a written discourse will have either history or a place in history. Dalit historiography begins with this truth. When T.K.C Vaduthala, Paul Chirakkarodu, and D.Rajan depicted caste oppression from a humanist perspective. S.E. James and C. Ayyappan's fictional works are marked by experiments in form and technique and sophistication of style which put them alongside the best contemporary Malayalam writers. Ayyappan's collection of short fiction, 'Uchayurakkathile Swapnangal' (Siesta Dreams, 1985), continues to disturb the caste unconscious of progressive Kerala. The second chapter thus as a general introduction interprets the historical, cultural, and social contexts of Malayalam Dalit writing, and provides the logical and conceptual framework of the selections for a better understanding of this hitherto marginalized discourse.

To deconstruct the prevalent hegemonic aesthetics, the discursiveness of language must be explored and explained. The interrelations between language and power must be addressed. Contemporary Dalit writing space in Malayalam must be developed along these lines both politically and theoretically. The methodological framework of Dalit studies includes the analysis of the emancipatory narratives of the excluded and the muted, and it goes further beyond multiculturalism into the democracy of the future. The new and radical writing of the Dalit cannot be read without harming the existing old decadence.

C Ayyappan's stories attack the mainstream writers and their representation with a peculiarly postmodern narrative technique, formal subtlety, and memory structure. They reject the language of the outer world and express it through the language of the underworld. They constitute a discourse of the sub-worlds or other worlds. In his own words, his works are sobs and grumbles for self-respect. He conjures specters for revenge and resistance. Most of his characters come alive with an avenging realization that the dead cannot be undone again. His collections include *Jnandukal* (2003) and *Uchayurakkathile Swapnangal*(1986). K K Baburaj observes that the general trend of Ayyappan's fiction is marked by the return of subaltern or women, posthumously as ghosts and specters. They subvert the conventional space-time frame of narration with a vengeance. They construct the Dalit counter-speech structure and reject the logic of the Savarna language. They silence the hegemonic articulating systems from a

narrative imaginary and unconscious with a striking dynamism of language sense. They are attempted counter-speeches. They represent the subject formation of the erased and invisible in the Kerala public sphere. Ayyappan represented the desires and pangs of hunger for life in the context of the subaltern struggle for sustenance and survival. He also reversed the Savarna gaze that surveyed the subaltern body for hidden desires. He dared to make his character ask the question “how can a Pulaya wench become the sister of a Syrian Christian?” His narratives signify counter-hegemonic resistance and democratization of culture from within the space of fiction. When we turn to C. Ayyappan’s work what we find is the subaltern speaking of their experience, without any intellectual mediation. It is the direct rendering of their voice and agency. An attempt to deconstruct the mainstream version of history. Thus, a reliable subaltern history can be found in Dalit writing.

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