

## **Heterodox Religions And Social Positioning of Women in The State of Kerala: Demythicalising Sabarimala Belief System**

Dr. Rajeesh C. Sarangadharan

Department of Political Science, *School of Humanities*

Lovely Professional University (LPU), India; rajeeshsasjnu@gmail.com

Ms. Ashwati CK

Centre for South Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), India; ashwatick@gmail.com

Mr. Vysakh CM

The Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), India

### **Abstract**

*This article examines the history of Sastha and Malikapurathamma worship in Sabarimala as a by-product of the interactions between various religions by examining the Pattini cult, animistic nature of Malayarayan's Sastha worship, Buddhist influence and Brahmanical tantric values. This hypothesis may help to evaluate how Dravidian, Buddhist and Hindu cultural aspects like tradition, customs and taboos restrict woman's right to pray and worship on the basis of biological features and menstruation. A careful attempt has been made in this paper to discern heterodox religions in determining the present day Hindu code of worship and its adverse impacts on women within the Sabarimala belief system.*

**Keywords:** Sastha; Pattini; Malayarayan; Dravidian; Buddhism; Hinduism

### **Introduction**

The Supreme Court of India's recent landmark verdict on the entry of women of all ages to Sabarimala temple (situated in Southern Kerala) was received with divergent and discrepant reactions. Those opposed the verdict were particularly the staunch supporters of traditional social institutions; affiliated to the right wing organizations and they found judicial intervention as an attack on the long cherished traditions. The grim law and order situation that followed the Supreme Court decision resulted in the eruption of violent protests in the pilgrimage route that has forcefully barred women of menstruating age i.e. between 10-50 years old from entering the temple. All these developments shook the very essence of Kerala's vibrant history of reformation in the pre-independent and post-independent periods as well as the milestones it has earned in the human development domains. De-barring women entry to Sabarimala in the name of traditions and unfolding of resistance to accomplish the same has put forth a scenario of growing gap between rational practices, protection of misogynist rituals and traditional beliefs which ultimately accentuates the

process of subjugation of women rights. Such situation critically questions the qualitative aspects of Kerala's literacy legacy and educational betterment as it fails to address issues pertaining to women.

This article explicitly addresses two questions. First, in response to the claim that the Sabarimala is a Hindu temple, it tries to prove that the present Sabarimala worship, particularly the *Sastha* forms the main deity and the *Malikapurathamma*<sup>i</sup>, sub deity, had been immensely influenced by the Dravidian and Buddhist religion. The transformation of *Sastha* into *Ayyappan* and *Pattini* into *Malikapurathamma* with the introduction of Brahmanical Hinduism in Kerala has been dealt in this article on the basis of historical and anthropological studies. It also takes cognizance of the history of *Sastha* and *Malikapurathamma* worship in Sabarimala as a by-product of the interactions between customs and practices of various religions by examining the *Pattini*<sup>ii</sup> cult, animistic nature of *Malayarayans* (tribal community) *Sastha* worship, Buddhist influence and Brahmanical tantra. Secondly, an attempt has been made to validate the core arguments of the paper that is to locate the social and customary position of women and its gendered nature of restrictions. Interconnections between the two sections provide concrete base to evaluate the conditionality of how Dravidian, Buddhist and Hindu customs and traditions amalgamated on certain contexts that have institutionalised the notions of impurity and developed multitude of pollution norms to restrict woman's movement, right to pray and worship in the state of Kerala on the basis of their biological features like menstruation.

A careful attempt has been made in this paper to discern the role of heterodox religions in determining the present day Hindu code of worship and its adverse impacts on women within the belief system in the Sabarimala context. To be precise, the interactions of Dravidian, Buddhist, Jain, and Vedic religions produced a skewed social order based on gender hierarchy, menstruation and a notion of the excessive protuberance of sexuality of women in the utmost pessimistic and demoralizing sense. Extent and form of such degradation of women in today's Kerala Hindu belief system have been actually conditioned by customary practices prevailed in accordance with the *Pattini* cult during Dravidian and Buddhist periods in Kerala. Later, the transformation of *Pattini* into *Malikapurathamma* with the introduction of Hinduism and Brahmanical Tantric culture has also validated the caste-gender hierarchy.

**Advent of Heterodox Religions in South India**

The heyday of the heterodox religions in South India was probably from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century A. D. While all scholars agree that Jainism and Buddhism were important religions during these periods, there are some differences pertaining to the influence of Hinduism. In general Tamil scholars are inclined to think that these were minor religions while Hinduism and Dravidian religion were dominant. However, some Kerala historians present a different discourse. Shreedhara Menon says that before 8<sup>th</sup> century, Brahmanical Hinduism was simply one of the prevalent religions in South India.

*‘It has been the practice among scholars to refer to the Hindu religious stir of this period in Southern India as a revival or renaissance, but it is a misnomer to call it so... as Hinduism did not enjoy a position of primacy among the religions of Kerala prior to the Kulasekhara age. It was only one of the religions which held a minor position in the land’* (Menon 1967: 145).

He argues that the period after 8<sup>th</sup> century saw the work of Sankaracharya and the rise of *Bhakti* religiosity resulted in the spectacular establishment of Hinduism as dominant religion of the South at the expense of Buddhism and Jainism. Along with this came the upward mobility of *Namboothiri*<sup>iii</sup> Brahmins as the dominant social group in Kerala and the firm establishment of the *Varna* system based on caste in this region. Few scholars argue that in the preceding periods, Jainism and Buddhism were competitors of Hinduism and were probably more popular. The masses probably adhered and venerated in what may be called as Dravidian religion, the cooperative folk religion of the people.

To substantiate the argument, literatures produced during *Sangam* age, notably *Silappatikaram* has references made to the goddess *Korravai*<sup>iv</sup> clubbed as a proto-Durga. Besides popular Dravidian religion, Jainism and Buddhism were successful in proliferating geographies spanning over the whole Tamil Nadu and Kerala as interpreted by Malayalam scholars. In a similar vein, one scholar has observed that *‘with the advent of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Jain and Buddhist religions had achieved greater popularity in the Kannada and Tamil countries than the Vedic religion’* (Pillai 1970: 105). There is no dearth in archaeological findings regarding the vitality and importance of Buddhism right down to the 9<sup>th</sup> century. For example, The Ay King (885-925) in the famous Paliyam copper plate describes the extended land properties in Southern Kerala to the *SriMulavasam*<sup>v</sup> Buddhist temple, at one time the

most famous of Buddhist pilgrimage in South India. Gopinatha Rao, an Indian Iconographer, says on the basis of excavations in Travancore:

*'The belief among the teachers of history in our schools and colleges is that the Buddhism died in the land of its birth not long after its birth and that the Brahmans killed it and drove away its followers. From what we have said above it would be patent that in Southern India Buddhism flourished till about the end, at least, of the 13<sup>th</sup> century A. D'* (Gopinatha Rao 1919: 123-124).

Hiuen Tsang mentions some decline in Buddhism but remarks repeatedly that it has yielded to *Digambara* Jainism (Sastri 1972: 427). In Kerala, the Jain temples were converted into *Bhagavati*<sup>vi</sup> shrines by the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This was also true for Buddhist temples, as highlighted in the works of Shreedhara Menon (Menon 1967: 88-90). The denigration of Jain and Buddhist shrines took place when the structures of worship were converted into another mother goddess, *Bhagavati*, in Kerala suggests very strongly that these religions had their own mother goddess at least in this region. However, by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Buddhism had practically disappeared from Southern India and Jainism was relegated to a very minor position.

Scholars have used the late 7<sup>th</sup> and early 8<sup>th</sup> centuries as the starting point of the decline of the Buddha and Jain religions in South India and the revival of Hinduism. This revival had three major facets: First there was a philosophical reorientation in traditional Brahmanism. A scholar observes, *'Sankara travelled all over India propagating his new philosophy of a rigorously consistent monism and triumphing against all rivals met him in debate'* (Sastri 1966: 428). He adopted Buddhist philosophical ideas and organized Hindu ascetic orders on the lines of Buddhist *Sangha*, such assimilative tendencies reflect the adoption of cultural practices to display accommodative values.

Second, concomitantly with the former there arose a popular Hindu movement of devotional religiosity, both *Shaivite* and *Vaishnavite*, whose followers were known respectively as *Nayanars* and *Alvars*. There was a real political change in which Hindu rulers began to patronize Hinduism at the expense of the heterodox religions (Obeyesekere 1984: 519). Viewed from an all India perspective, Buddhism and Jainism were being pushed farther and farther South from the 5<sup>th</sup> century. With the advent of *Bhakti* based Hinduism in the South and the espousal of Hinduism by South Indian Brahmins, Buddhists and Jains were

facing difficulties that were accentuated by the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the background of these historical processes, Buddhists and Jains had three alternatives:

- i) Move farther and farther South. This they did, among the archaeological evidences of their migration is the *Sri Mulavasam* temple and the Jain shrines of Chitalar and Kallil in the extreme South of India in the Kanyakumari district.
- ii) Assimilate into another Indian religion like Islam or more likely, Hinduism. This escape route was also probably adopted by the Buddhists and Jains. The conversion of Buddhist and Jains temples into Siva temples and *Bhagavati* shrines was probably a strategy adopted by the Buddhists and Jains themselves to thwart external catastrophic pressures mounting to any negative reactions.
- iii) Immigrate to other Buddhist nations like Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia and *Sri Vijaya*. This last alternative was available only to Buddhists, since there was no viable Jain community outside India.

Thus waning and waxing of various religious practices have flourished across Southern India for centuries that have influenced the sublimation of local cultures to that of foreign origin, shaped the gender relations, socio-political domain also remained susceptible to changes demanded by their assertive temporalities.

### **Evolution of Sabarimala *Sastha* Belief System and Buddhism**

Buddhism's from its arrival to decline as discussed in the previous section has interpreted to throw light on the religion's interactions and conflicts with other dominant belief systems in Southern India, particularly Kerala; this section's objective is to identify the narrative that revolves around the deity known as *Sastha*, particularly the Buddhist influences and the recurrent challenges to the feminine gender that have gyrated on the basis of socio-culturally sanctioned limitations over pilgrimage and reverence. The feminine identity that has prevailed for centuries is found to have roots in the marriage between Buddhism and *Sastha* Cult, which will be elaborated in the following passages.

*Sastha* known as *Ayyappan* or *Hariharaputra*, etymologically *Hariharaputra* means the son of Vishnu (Hari) and Siva (Hara), Vishnu having assumed the form of a woman. The *Sastha* is said to denote the power to protect. He is the guardian angel of the mountainous tracts, protecting all his devotees from the attacks of wild beasts. Sabarimala, the most famous

*Sastha* temple in Kerala, is situated on a high hill surrounded by dense forests infested by elephants, tiger and other wild beasts. In spite of the perils of the journey through these inhospitable forests two to three Lakhs of pilgrims flock every year to Sabarimala for the *Makaravilakku*<sup>vii</sup>(a festival). Some scholars find the *Sastha* a Hinduised version of the Buddha while some others regard him as a pre-Aryan or Dravidian deity incorporated within the Hindu fold by the Aryans during a very early stage of their colonisation of South India.

The *Travancore Census Report* (1931) also asserts that the famous *Sastha* temples like the one at Sabarimala were originally none other than temples dedicated to Buddha. The main arguments advanced in favour of the Buddhist theory of the *Sastha* may be summarised here. When Buddhism was getting absorbed within Hinduism the Buddha himself was rechristened as Hindu and worshiped under the name of *Sastha*. The *Amarakosa* actually mentions the *Sastha* as one of the synonyms of the Buddha. The pilgrims have to observe vows of non-violence, vegetarianism and abstinence from worldly pleasures for a period of about two months prior to their pilgrimage and this is a practice which is reminiscent of the Buddhist doctrine of *Ahimsa*. Further the pilgrims do not observe any caste distinctions during the period of their vow and this also accord well with the Buddhist emphasis on casteless and cosmopolitanism. The recital and chanting of *SaranamAyyappa* by the pilgrims to Sabarimala also reminds one of the triple *Saranam* formulas of the Buddha, the *Dharma* and the *Sangha* of the Buddhists. Even the story regarding the birth of the *Sastha* as the son of Hari and Hara is regarded as the result of an attempt on the part of the *Saivaites* and *Vaishnavaites* to accommodate Buddhists within their fold.

From the geo-spatial perspective the location of the famous *Sastha* temples in the interior of the forests is said to lend additional support to Buddhist theory because it is believed that the Buddhists preferred to live in far-away secluded places. Some scholars also point out that there is striking resemblance between the figures of the Buddha and the *Sastha* in posture as well as in form. Such arguments advanced in support of the Buddhist theory of the *Sastha* are not accepted by all scholars. It is pointed out that fasting and such other rituals observed by the pilgrims to Sabarimala are not peculiar to Buddhism; however are characteristics of the *Hindu* religion as well. The alleged resemblance between the images of *Sastha* and of the *Buddha* is also denied. It is further argued that the *Sastha* is worshipped as a popular deity by almost all classes of people and that this universal prevalence of *Sastha* worship is incompatible with the theory of the *Sastha* as the Hinduisation of Buddha.

Those who reject the Buddhist theory of the *Sastha* alternatively identify him with *Ayyanar*, non Aryan deity, commonly worshipped on the east coast and known by such diverse names as *Sattan*, *Ayya*, *Ayyappan* and *Hariharaputran*. It is a fact that Hinduism of Kerala is the result of the synthesis of Aryan and non-Aryan elements and *Sastha* worship is regarded as the Dravidian element which was incorporated into the Aryan religion in the wake of the Aryanisation of the West Coast. Considering the question in its all aspects, the theory of the *Sastha* as a Dravidian deity seems to be more acceptable. It is significant that even today *Sastha* is worshipped mainly by sects other than orthodox Brahmins. It must however be stated that even if one cannot accept the Buddha theory of *Sastha* it is difficult to deny Buddhism with its large following among the people of Kerala at a remote period of its history influenced in its own way the development of the *Sastha* cult.

### **Sabarimala of Malayarayans: Counter Narratives**

Apart from the mainstream religious narratives thus constructed on the symbolic significance of Sabarimala deity, there are sources that points toward *Sastha* cult's close association with that of tribal belief systems. From the utmost anthropological understanding tribal population and their habitation in the hills of Sabarimala has striking cultural rituals that have been influential in the development or the in the translation of the deity to its contemporary stance. The story of *Malayarayan*, a tribe who lives in the sloppy regions of Sabarimala, and their peculiar customs and rituals for the deity *Ayyappan* (*Sastha*) reveals that there are more stories revolves around the deity beyond Buddhism and Hinduism. As per the available sources, religion of the Malayarayans may be described as a system of animism or spiritualism and their attitude to the supernatural is one of reverential fear in the presence of certain supernatural powers and beings (Iyer 1941). So, ancestor worship is part of their peculiar belief system. Among them, wide and deep traces appear of surviving cultures of ancestors. They worship five eminences, *Thalaparamala*, *Azhamala*, *Puthiyamala*, *Pothemnala*, and *Savamparamala*, because they are believed to have a special local spirit who acts as guardian. Krishna Iyer identifies *Sastha* worship, a sylvan deity of hoary antiquity, constitutes an important feature of the religion of the Malayarayans.

Formerly, during their preparations to visit Sabarimala, the Malayarayans used to eat meat and carry dried meat in his Kettu (bag) as well as toddy to drink and they go as a group including women. If any woman was found to have attained menses during the pilgrimage

were forced to lose caste and becomes the property of an *Ulladan*, *Thottakatti* and *Kochuvelan* (lower tribal castes). The avoidance of flesh is dictated by the elimination of undesirable qualities with which a person believes them to be infected. Health, wealth and life are to be gained by a rigid observance of the vow, and a person who breaks it jeopardises the result that is being striven for. The net result of this disciplinary life is seen in an accession of strength and grit to the votaries who are enabled to bear the tedium of the journey to Sabarimala with greater ease. They go in batches led by the most senior man, Periaswamy. All votaries are called Ayyappans or Swamies, and the head of the fraternity is called *Periaswamy*, whose word is law. Any exchange of abusive language is visited with fine or calling *Saranams* a certain number of times (Iyer 1940: 197199).

Malayarayans take part in *Pettathullal*<sup>viii</sup>, which is an interesting ceremony at Erumeli where the Ayyappans congregate for the day. It is commemorative of *Sastha* shunting expedition at Erumeli and return with spoils of the chase. The Ayyappans blacken their faces and bodies, and carry some vegetables in a blanket. Suspending the loads on their shoulders, they run towards *Sastha's* temple, where they worship *Sastha*. The blackening of the face is emblematic of the original inhabitants of the forests, the forbears of the present-day hill-tribes, who followed *Sastha*. Therefore, Sabarimala ritualistic practices is open to debate due to the existence of juxtaposing identifiable claims made by populations of different ethnic origin. This argument points to the domination of certain ethnic identities over different periods of history and it also accentuates the relative power relations maintained by them in authorizing narratives for their subjects in the spiritual domain. In essence, Sabarimala significance is highly influenced by the demographic changes.

### **Tantrasamuchaya and the Brahmanisation of Sabarimala Belief System**

The genesis of Vedic period in India played crucial role in establishing rigid caste system based on hierarchy, to have originated in the Gangetic plains of North India, caste system and ritualistic practices legitimized by Brahmans moved to the South of Vindhyas and impacted the Dravidian culture as well. It would be no exaggeration to state that Brahmanical domination of religious scriptures and transformation of local deities as that of Vedic one were observed extensively. *Tantrasamuchaya* scripted by the Brahmanical order categorically intended to relegate the position to that of margins, and such gender based oppressive norms were developed out of their biological features like menstruation, thus

notions of purity and pollution were firmly established through religious scriptures as an extension or re-interpretation of *Manusmriti* in the Kerala context.

The *tantra* literature treats of a host of subjects such as creation, destruction, worship of God, attainment of superhuman faculties, four modes of union with the God etc. plays a crucial role in establishing a parochial belief and customary system in Kerala (Unni 2006). Though there is plethora of literature written on these aspects, the most crucial among them is *Tantrasamuchaya* authored by Chennas Narayana *Namboothiri*. For the purpose of this work, *Tantrasamuchaya* is critically analyzed here to develop an understanding on the Brahmanisation of Sabarimala belief system. Because this work is conceived as a practical manual for use in the temples of Kerala and the deities dealt in the work are commonly found consecrated in the temples of the region including Sabarimala.

The *Tantrasamuchaya* seems to be an attempt to regulate the religious life of people of Kerala in line of *Chaturvarna* system by positioning Brahmins or *Namboothiris* as the head of religious and social life. It reflects caste and gender hierarchy in rituals and worship pattern. Moreover, it assigns Brahmins as the only community who entitles to enjoy the economic privileges and benefits from the temples. The Brahmin priest who is enjoyed with the traditional rites for installation of idols, conduct of special rituals, festivals and other rites is called *Tantrin*. Today, most famous *Tantrin* in Kerala is the member of the Tarananallur family who has these rights in almost all temples. In purview of establishing such ritual rights and economic benefits for Brahmins, Narayanan *Namboothiri* added a myth that the Sage *Parashurama* is supposed to have given this authority to the families of the Trarananallur members of which enjoy these rights down the centuries till date (Unni 2006: 10).

Later, it has institutionalized even by establishing Dewasom Board<sup>ix</sup> under a special ministry of the government of Kerala. Almost every major temple in Kerala has a high priest called *Tantri* who enjoys the hereditary authority on matters of rituals in the temple. *Tantrasamuchaya* clearly states that the preceptor of a temple shall be a Brahmin of nobility, enjoined with the performance of domestic rituals, well-versed in Vedas and scriptures along with their principles, devoted to the performance of rites pertaining to the caste and stages of life, properly consecrated in rites, competent, pious and above all a believer in divinity. A pair of clothes should also be offered to the preceptor with the chanting of mantras.

Thereafter a golden ring shall be given to him. Then, he may be presented with *Kundalav* (ear ornament) and *Yajnasutra* (the sacred thread).

The causes that give rise to pollution within the temple campus are the entrance of people with impurity, low class women and fallen people from status, occurrence of death and birth of people and contamination of urine and blood. In addition the entrance of owl, hawk, dog, ass, camel, hog, jackal, monkey, serpent etc., are also causes of impurity. The seven act of purifying the location are digging (*khanana*), removal (*harana*), burning (*dahana*), and filling (*purana*), occupation by cattle (*gonivasana*), placing of leftovers of food supplied to Brahmins (*viprocchistam*) and sprinkling with Panchagavya.<sup>vii</sup> In order to purify the temple premises, the courtyard may be sprinkled with urine of cow, sanctified water after washing the feet of Brahmin and *Panchagavya*<sup>x</sup>. Thereafter, in a levelled ground a pavilion may be erected in which all Brahmins may be supplied sumptuous food including ghee and *Payasa*<sup>xi</sup>. Similarly, as prohibitory orders, people of the lower caste should not enter the inner quadrangle of the Shrine. Failure to perform daily services also called for purification. Such caste and *varna* based discriminations have deeply entrenched in each and every lines of *Tantrasamuchaya* and it institutionalized the already privileged positions of *Namboothiri* in the socio, economic and cultural spheres of Kerala. The worst sufferer is women and the questions of pollution and impurity have been pelted at them mercilessly on the basis of biological determinism.

## End Notes

---

<sup>i</sup>Maalikapurathamma is a female deity, locally known as Manchambika and Mancha Mathavu who is worshipped in a subsidiary shrine at Sabarimala Sastha/Ayyappa temple and situated on a small hill just 100 meters away from the sanctum sanctorum.

<sup>ii</sup>The Pattini cult was one of the most popular female deities among the Buddhists of Sri Lanka and the Hindus of the east coast of the island. This cult has migrated to South India with the advent of Buddhism but has dried out in the region and has been assimilated into the Kali, the Draupadi and other cults of the Indian mother goddess.

<sup>iii</sup>Brahmin caste in Kerala and historically, dominant landed elite.

<sup>iv</sup>In ancient Tamil pantheon, Korravai was depicted as the goddess of war and victory. The earliest references to Korravai are found in Tolkappiyam, the ancient Sangam literature. During the Brahmanization, Korravai cult was adopted in Hindu pantheon and assigned to the goddess Durga, Kali and Parameswari.

<sup>v</sup>The temple was constructed in the Chera territory.

<sup>vi</sup> Etymologically it traces to Sanskrit language and refers to female deities.

<sup>vii</sup>Makaravilakku is an annual festival held on Makar Sankranti (a festival day as per the Hindu calendar) at the shrine of Sabarimala. The festival includes the Thiruvabharanam (sacred ornaments of Ayyappan) procession and a congregation at the hill shrine of Sabarimala.

<sup>viii</sup>Pettathulal, also known as PettaKettu, is a historic ritualistic dance held annually on 27th Dhanu at a place called Erumely near to Sabarimala Shrine. It is performed during the Makaravilakku period (November, December and January) in the presence of thousands of devotees which depicts the joyfulness of people by the slaying of Mahishi by Lord Ayyappa.

<sup>ix</sup>Devaswom (property of God) Boards are socio-religious Hindu trusts in Kerala that comprise members nominated by both government and community. Their aim is to manage Hindu temples and their assets and to ensure their smooth operation in accordance with traditional rituals and customs.

<sup>x</sup>Panchagavya means mixture of five cow products used in traditional Hindu rituals that is prepared by mixing five products of cow. The three direct constituents are cow dung, urine and milk; the two derived products are curd and ghee. These are mixed in proper ratio and then allowed to ferment.

<sup>xi</sup> Payasa or payasam is a form of pudding, prepared in milk.

## REFERENCES

Aiya, Nagam. 1989.*The Travancore State Manual*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.

Ayyar, K. V. Krishna. 1966. *A Short History of Kerala*. Ernamulam: Pai & Co.

Beck, Brenda. 1972.*Pre-Colonial Merchants and Rationality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Beck, Brenda. 1978. The Metaphor as a Mediator between Semantic and Analogic Modes of Thought, *Current Anthropology* 19:83-97.

Chandera, CMS. 1973.*Kannikkiyum and Cheermakkavum*. Kottayam: College Book House.

Dumont, Louis. 1998.*Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Gupta, Dipankar. 2000.*Interrogating Caste: Understanding Hierarchy and Difference in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Hutton, John Henry.*Caste in India: Its Nature, Function and Origins*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Induchudan, V. T. 1969.*The Secret Chamber*. Trichur: Cochin Devaswam Board.

Iyer, Ulloor S. Parameswara. 2015. *History of Kerala Literature*. Triavndrum: Keralaśarvakalasala.

Jaiswal, Suvira. 2016.*The Making of Brahmanic Hegemony: Studies in Caste, Gender and Vaisnava Theology*. New Delhi: Tulika Books.

John, Dharmatheerthan. 1958.*Hinduism and Christianity and the Religion of the Free Peoples*. Trivandrum: Popular Press.

Krishna Iyer, L. A. 1941.*Tribes and Castes: The Aborigines of Travancore*. Trivandrum: Government Press.

Menon, A. Sreedhara. 1967.*A Survey of Kerala History*. Trivandrum: SahityaPravarthaka Cooperative Society.

Obeyesekere, Gananath. 1984.*The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Ouwerkerk, Louise. 1945.*The Untouchables of India*. London: Oxford University Press.

Pillai, Kunjan. 1970.*Studies in Kerala History*. Kottayam: National Book Stall.

Pillai, Kunjan and Rao Sahib. 1931.*The Travancore Census Report*. Trivandrum: Government Press.

Rao, T. A. Gopinatha. 1914.*Elements of Hindu Iconography*. Madras: The Law Printing House.

Sastri, K. A. Nilakanta. 1955.*A History of South India*. London: Oxford University Press.

Sastri, K. A. Nilakanta.1972.*Sangam Literature: Its Cults and Cultures*. Madras: Swathi Publications.

Unni, N. P. 2006.*Tantra Literature of Kerala*. Delhi: New Bharati Book Corporation.