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Chapter Two

Fantasy and the New World

“As a literary term a fantasy means any narrative that deals with impossibles and preternaturals” (Lewis *An Experiment* 50).

Fantasy bears a legacy as old as human civilization. It is an undeniable fact that literary and cultural discourses all over the world have incorporated fantasy in various ways. Fantasy is often comprehended and defined by relating it to the idea of reality. Reality and fantasy are mostly viewed as contradictory to one another. Imagination marks the beginning of fantasy, whereas imagination comes to halt with reality. The degree of imagination determines the generic difference between the factual description and literary creation. Therefore, fantasy as a literary creation can be understood in detail only by analysing the concept of reality. Before going further deep into the realms of fantasy, it is necessary to understand the relevance and nature of reality in the contemporary world.

Conceptualizing Reality

Rationality and logical thought process are considered as the parameters which determine whether a text or context is real or not. Readers, as well as critics, unanimously equate logic with reality. Jacques Derrida, the exponent of deconstruction theory questions the existence of absolute reality and the preconceived notion of fixed meaning. He explains reality through retrospection of the concept of mimesis put forward by western philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. Derrida states that there is a logical factor which creates a certain order and also makes a distinction between the imitated and the imitator. “Logic” thereby foregrounds the imitated as more real than what imitates it. In spite of the numerous apparent challenges faced by this logical

order, Derrida affirms that no system has ever been able to make an explicit distinction between the imitator and the imitated. Nor has the imitator been successful to assert its superiority over the imitated (Derrida, "The First," 140). This provides a vision of how the real and the logical have been considered as central factors even in cultural forms of art, literature and philosophy. But the advent of digital age and technological boom has unveiled the anti-logical potential of the logical science. As a result, the conception of reality has now become heavily problematized. Derrida observes that this is not only present in the literary and cultural realms, but in the personal and professional lives of individuals. He also observes that contemporary age bears witness to an upheaval in science and technology which has blurred the notion of reality and profession by creating a virtual platform through global networking (Derrida, "The Future," 47). Globalization and digitalization have intervened and hijacked the conscience of each global citizen. Now it is quite common that an individual is unable to come to conclusions on what is real and what is deceptive. Like Derrida, this phenomenon has been deeply analysed by the writer and critic, Umberto Eco. The essay collection entitled *Travels in hyperreality* provides a close reading of the artistic and cultural institutions established by the United States of America. Here, Eco calls it as "The Industry of Absolute Fake", which is established by consistent activity through which the organic is replaced by artificial replications and imitations of the real. The fabricated reality exudes a deathless halo which is made to resemble the truth (56). Coincidentally this provides a cross-section of the contemporary globalized world. This is the reason why Jean Baudrillard calls the contemporary period as the age of digital simulation, where the real entities are replaced by their multiples which are seemingly more real than their originals. The binary of real/imaginary is highly problematic and irrelevant, due to the intervention of technological innovation which

disseminates simulation. Jean Baudrillard explains simulation as a process which inhibits every real function, by replacing the real with reduplicates that contains all finite insignia of the real. Thus, the binary of real/imaginary become highly problematic and irrelevant with the advent of the hyperreal. Hyperreality is insulated from the imaginary and it destabilises the difference between the real and the imaginary. Any kind of such distinction is created through simulation and continuous cyclical repetition of models (Baudrillard *Simulations* 4). This affirms that hyperreality created from simulation thwarts the necessity to produce the real itself. Especially when there is an abundant flux of reality, it is logical to think that disintegration of reality provides room for the replenishment of fantasy. However, in this fast-moving world, the “Death of reality” cannot be termed as the birth of fantasy. Baudrillard also observes that the contemporary world is tending towards a point where everything fantasy and open-ended thought process will be annihilated. People can actively engage with all such ideas and these conceptualizations will be spontaneously fulfilled virtually. Aspirations, imaginations and ideal conceptualizations will have no place in the future world. According to Baudrillard, such an endeavour to create an absolute defectless future world without any imperfection is a “Perfect Crime” (Baudrillard *The Vital* 66-67). This proves that literary critics like Baudrillard express their concern about the nature and evolution of our future world. It is also thereby emphasised that of the reality/fantasy paradigm, the latter has a prominent role in affecting the cultural consciousness of the entire human race. Hence the concepts of new world and fantasy become relevant topics of discussion in the contemporary age.

Fantasy in its literary and cultural forms has been lately recognised as part of the academic and critical study by the western world. Along with the artistic and aesthetic values attributed to it, fantasy has now emerged as an independent genre of

literature. This new trend proposes retrospections and re-readings of folk tales, epics and oral narratives of various cultures around the globe. Literary and critical theories are often used as tools of interpretation for works of fantasy and Children's Literature. Theorists and critics have interpreted and evaluated the nature and scope of fantasy in the contemporary world. Therefore, interpretation and analytical study of fantasy has become textually and contextually relevant.

Defining Fantasy

Fantasy has been defined in various ways. Almost all the definitions are based upon the relative nature of fantasy, by comparing it with the notion of experiential reality. Following this tradition, Kathryn Hume defines fantasy in *Fantasy and Mimesis*; "Fantasy is any departure from consensus reality, an impulse native to literature and manifested in innumerable variations, from monster to metaphor" (21). This definition acknowledges the fact that the innate nature of literature itself is fantasy in the form of imagination. Each literary genre exhibits variation in the degree of its fantasy content. From the marvellous fairy tales to the realistic biographical accounts, fantasy remains the undercurrent of literary creation. Literature without the element of fantasy would be simply factual reporting of information. The definition by Hume provides an answer to the classification of fantasy into watertight genres of high fantasy and low fantasy.

Contrary to theoreticians like Tzvetan Todorov, Eric S. Rabkin makes a distinction between Fantasy and the fantastic. In *The Fantastic in Literature*, Rabkin states that the fantastic is a powerful instrument used by the author who reverses the ground rules to create fantastic worlds. He explains the fantastic as the wonder experienced by readers when the basic rules governing the narrative experience are

spontaneously and directly inverted. Quantity of the fantastic varies along with different literary genres. Among them, Fantasy is a genre which expresses the fantastic in the highest degree and explores all its possibilities (Rabkin *The Fantastic* 41). This approves the fact put forth by Hume that, Fantasy shares its space with all literary genres. The fantastic is recognized as a literary device which has been used by creators as well as critics of fantasy. The theoretical foundation of Fantasy Literature can be understood from systematized studies conducted on this subject.

Origin of Fantasy

Origin and evolution of fantasy are correlated to the evolution of human civilization. In *Fantastic Worlds*, Rabkin traces the origin of the fantastic through three consecutive genres: myth, folk tale and fairy tale. He explains that the myth evolved into the folk tale and the latter later evolved into the fairy tale. The instinctual necessity of the people is identified as the source behind the creation of these genres. A deeper understanding of these genres is necessary to understand the fantastic in detail.

Myth: Myths bear their origin since prehistoric time. Myths define and determine the consciousness of specific cultures that gave shape to them. They were originally in the form of oral narratives which were later written down. The concept of worlds parallel to the real was incorporated by all cultures through myths. The initial forms of myths were meant for aesthetic purpose and explanations were later added to them.

Folk Tale: Along with the evolution of cultures, myths too incorporated more complex shapes and explanations, which lead to the birth of folk tales. Unlike the sanctified nature attributed to myths, they are considered to be of human origin. Initially, they originated in the form of songs, especially work songs.

Fairy Tale: As the degree of sophistication increased the canon of folk tale got reshaped into the category of narratives known as fairy tales. This genre has a limited number of audiences, mostly children. The narratives are comparatively more conventional and are more complex. Symbolic significations are given more importance than the literal meaning.

In all these genres the fundamental issues addressed are the same. Rabkin also points out that myth continues to be the most popular among people. The folk tale has a lesser number of followers and in the case of the fairy tale, the number becomes still narrow (Rabkin *Fantastic Worlds* 27-29). Significance of the fairy tale and its contribution to Fantasy Literature is acknowledged by critics and writers of fantasy. The core concepts related to fantasy and the rules governing its creation has not changed even after the advent of various theories and creative experiments made in Fantasy Literature.

Theorizing Fantasy

Conceptualizing and theorizing abstract concepts like fantasy is seemingly a difficult task. In spite of this, definite frameworks and recurring patterns have been observed by writers of fantasy. Writers of Children's Literature extensively employed fantasy in their works. Thus, the early studies on fantasy were primarily by writers of Children's Fantasy. Later studies observed fantasy as a concept beyond generic restrictions. In spite of extensive studies and theories made on fantasy, they are very less used as interpretative tools by scholars and academicians. It is rather curious to observe that texts of fantasy are analysed by literary and critical theories, rather than by fantasy theories.

“On Fairy Stories” by J. R. R. Tolkien is considered as a classical work in the field of the Fantasy Literature. Through this work, Tolkien opposes the predetermined notion of marginalizing fairy tales as trivial literature merely meant for the entertainment of children. He argues that fantasy surpasses the limitation of age restrictions and provides an aesthetic platform for everybody. Tolkien says that fantasy is the instinctive activity of human beings. Fantasy is considered as an almost pure form of art, as it utilizes the power of imagination to its highest possibilities. He reveals the nature and scope of fantasy from the creative and critical points of view. Through this work, Tolkien proves that fantasy is a higher form of art and one of the most powerful literary form.

He observes that fantasy provides a sense of freedom which is indeed beneficial and not a harmful or escapist one. Fantasy helps the readers to look beyond the restrictions imposed by canonical ideas and dogmas of the real world. Tolkien notes that fantasy introduces and depicts the concept of a world parallel to the real world. So he refers to the real world as the “primary world” and the parallel world of fantasy as the “secondary world”. Creators of art forms rearrange the materials and rules of the primary world. Creators of fantasy are termed as sub-creators, as they employ a higher degree of imagination to induce the experience of strangeness to the readers. He calls the creator of fantasy as a “wordsmith”. This wordsmith uses words to create images and expressions to effectively narrate and vividly project parallel worlds.

Rules true to the secondary worlds are unique and strange when compared to that of our real world. The readers are able to enter into and experience the secondary world with the secondary belief. The readers can interact with and experience the secondary world if they can outlive the restrictions imposed by logical thinking and believe in the existence of secondary worlds. Unlike the temporary enjoyment through a

willing suspension of disbelief, the secondary belief enables readers to obtain a vivid experience of imaginative power. This differentiates fantasy from other forms of art. The creator of fantasy initially creates and enters the realm of the secondary world through an extended faculty of imagination. The readers find this vivid sense of imagination as the key to re-enter into that world. Everything in the secondary world can be enjoyed and appreciated only in comparison with the primary or real world. Therefore, Tolkien emphasizes that the aesthetics of fantasy does not destroy but improves human reason which governs our real world.

Tolkien identifies four elements of fairy stories. These explain the psychological impact of Fantasy Literature on the readers.

Fantasy: Fairy stories invoke a sense of strangeness, which the readers experience in comparison with the facts of the real world. The presence of enchantment and magic invokes the effect intended by the creator, which induces wonder in the minds of readers. The element of wonder is passed on to the readers through the efficiency of expression and narrative techniques.

Recovery: The readers can perceive things more distinctly. Situations and narrative act as stimuli to the readers. Fantasy defamiliarizes the concepts and issues from the real world to approach them with fresh perspectives. The readers can look beyond the restrictions of social canons and their psychological frameworks.

Escape: Readers of fantasy do not avoid or flee from life situations. Fantasy offers a healthy escape from them, only to return after gaining renewed experiences. This empowers the readers to escape from negativities of real-life like pain, poverty, terrorism, injustice, war, sorrow, exploitation and marginalization. The temporary

escape helps them to acquire skills and return to face real-life situations more efficiently.

Consolation: Fantasy narratives always have a positive and hopeful ending. Tolkien refers to it as “Eucatastrophe”, which is the subversion of catastrophe. The reader reaches a sense of accomplishment and finds solutions to the problems faced. The reality of life is spontaneously revealed in the mind of the reader and the search which began comes to fulfilment. This proves that, remediation and empowerment of human psyche is the prime motive of fantasy (32-72).

The aforementioned observations by Tolkien influenced the later theoreticians of fantasy. It was earlier mentioned that Rabkin recognises the presence of a secondary world as an inseparable element of fantasy as it evolved from myths. Farah Mendlesohn’s classification of fantasy is also based on the interaction between the primary and secondary worlds. In the Theory of fantasy narrative by John Clute, the stages of recognition and healing are correlated to the aspects of recovery and consolation by Tolkien. Apart from them, many more theoreticians have influenced and enriched the field of fantasy.

Classification of Fantasy

Fantasy has been classified into many subgenres which in many cases share common spaces. Hence the attempts to classify fantasy into watertight compartments have remained unsuccessful till now. Nevertheless, fantasy has been classified into different categories by theoreticians for making a systematic study of the subject. Among the earlier theoreticians, Tzvetan Todorov makes an attempt to classify fantasy into interconnected categories. In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a*

Literary Genre, Todorov classifies fantasy into primarily three subgenres: The marvellous, the fantastic and the uncanny.

The Marvellous: The narratives that are based upon transcendental phenomenon and magic, falls into this category. Events and characters are experienced by confirming to the existence of supernatural phenomena. The marvellous can be explained only through the unique laws of the supernatural. Myths, legends and folklore are often included in this genre. The marvellous is explained as the supernatural.

The Uncanny: The uncanny is characterized by experiences undetected but existing in the experiential world of readers. It is characterized by hesitation to move beyond the realms of the logical and rational mind. The experiences provided by the uncanny narratives can always be explained by laws of the real world. Gothic and horror narratives are included in this genre. The uncanny is explained by the term, the natural.

The Fantastic: The fantastic narratives are suspended between the marvellous and the uncanny. Thus, it can be described as: the unnatural, which lies in-between the natural and the supernatural. No explanations are possible to describe the happenings of the fantastic world. This genre of the fantasy highlights the limitations of reason and challenges realism. Feelings of wonder and strangeness predominate the narratives.

Todorov further expands these categories by classifying intermediate genres which share common features. Thus, he classifies fantasy into Pure Uncanny, Fantastic Uncanny, Fantastic Marvellous, and Pure Marvellous. Pure Fantasy is considered to be located in between Fantastic Uncanny and Fantastic Marvellous. Through this classification, he tries to analyse the vast genre of fantasy in terms of referential scales

and tries to logically establish these genres with suitable examples. The tales of Edgar Allan Poe are included in Pure Uncanny. Works like *Saragossa Manuscript* by Jan Potocki are considered as Fantastic Uncanny. Fantastic Marvellous is substantiated through works like *Vera* by Villiers de l'Isle Adams. Fairy Tales and Science Fiction are considered to be Pure Marvellous (41-57).

Although the aforementioned classification has been questioned by theoreticians like Rosemary Jackson, the study by Todorov exists as a relevant reference. Lewis Carroll who falls into the category of a writer in Pure Marvellous has significantly influenced Todorov to make this classification of fantasy. In the Preface to *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, Carroll comments on three states of consciousness in readers who approach a text of fantasy.

Ordinary State of Mind: The readers are unable to have an experience of supernatural characters.

Eerie State of Mind: In this state of psyche, the person is conscious of the external situations of the real world and at the same time can experience and interact with supernatural beings.

Trans Like: In this state of mind the person is not conscious of the actual world. The person interacts with supernatural beings in an imaginary world. The imaginary world, in this case, maybe a recreation of real-world scenario or maybe purely an otherworldly one (Carroll).

Here, the Ordinary State of Mind is remarkably related to the Uncanny, Eerie resembles the Fantastic and Trans like is related to the Marvellous. Carroll as an established writer of Children's Fantasy, points out that the Trans Like State of mind, enables the readers to enjoy and experience Fairy Tales. It is thus clarified that

Todorov was influenced by classification of Carroll and secondary world is a fundamental factor behind these classifications. Todorov partly accepts the presence of a secondary world but is reluctant to completely immerse in it. On the other hand, Carroll calls for an unrestricted experience of the secondary world. He emphasizes on the proliferation human of imagination to its highest possibilities.

Monitoring the modes of interaction with the secondary world, Farah Mendlesohn classifies Fantasy Literature into four categories. This classification is based on the rhetoric elements, strategies of narration and the resultant effects of fantasy texts on readers. *Rhetorics of Fantasy* is considered as the primary text in which Mendlesohn explains each of these categories in details. Through the following taxonomy, the theoretician challenges the preconceived compartmentalization of fantasy as children's/adults and light/dark, which thrive as a part of commercialization. Fantasy is classified as Portal Quest, Immersive, Intrusive and Liminal. Apart from these a fifth category of The Irregulars is also identified. They comprise of in-between genres with common properties and many of which work beyond the patterns of classification.

The Portal-Quest Fantasy: Characters enter the fantasy world through a gateway or a portal. Portal-Quest need not be a one-way journey from the real world to the fantasy world. The portal is an opening in between the primary and the secondary worlds for interaction. This type of fantasy is goal-oriented like a programmed game, with detailed descriptions. The characters undertake a journey linearly, to achieve a particular goal. In many cases, irrational activities are elaborately explained logically. The readers and the protagonist share the journey and gain experiences together. At a particular instance in the narrative, the protagonists recognize the fantasy world in a better way which enable them to reshape it. In this kind of fantasy, the narrator

describes the story through the eyes of the protagonist. Thereby, readers are familiarised with the vision of the author through subjective interpretations of the fantasy world. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) by C. S. Lewis is undoubtedly cited as a fine example for the Portal-Quest Fantasy.

The Immersive Fantasy: In this type of fantasy, the story is devoid of any explanations by the narrator and the readers make assumptions based on the sense of reality. Readers gain experiences and travel along with the progress of the protagonist. They understand the context through the perspective of the protagonist in the form of hints and speculations. Mendlesohn states that an evolved form of Immersive Fantasy becomes indistinguishable from Science fiction. The element of fantasy is assumed and, in many cases, the plot contains the least degree of fantasy. The characters themselves feel that they are immersed in the supernatural or magical. The readers too are endowed with an experience of magic all around them and there is no possibility of escape from it. *Titus Groan* (1945) by Mervyn Peake and *Ash* (2000) by Mary Gentle are examples of the Immersive Fantasy.

The Intrusion Fantasy: This kind of fantasy is characterized by breakage into the danger zone, from a safe and familiar space. Fantastic is always distinguished from reality and the former may enter the primary or the secondary world. The contextual changes after the departure of fantasy can be predicted. The fantastic element in many cases is only visible to the protagonist. The intrusion of fantasy employs an investigative mode with deep levels of description. The descriptive language used in this fantasy is coherent with its structure and reflect the element of wonder. In many cases new protagonists appear along with each intrusion of the fantastic and different varieties of wonder or dreadfulness are described. The protagonist becomes

competent by continuously contesting with the intrusion and overcoming it. *A Scattering of Jades* (2002) by Alexander Irvine is given as an example of the Intrusion Fantasy.

The Liminal Fantasy: This is considered as the rarest form of fantasy. The narrative which is apparent to be normal is assumed to be fantastic by the readers. Fantasy is continuously maintained in the narrative and the readers are unable to demystify fantasy from reality. Liminal fantasy is rooted in the real world and the fantastic is unexpectedly spontaneous. The magical elements cannot be guessed by the readers and protagonists do not exhibit amazement. This genre and its narrative context are established by how the characters react to the magical elements. The protagonists are familiarized with the presence of fantasy while the readers are left with the sense of strangeness. Liminal Fantasy is the least fantastical among all categories of fantasy and is a threshold genre. It is comprised of fuzzy sets and subsets of which many share common spaces. Armitage family stories by John Aiken and "I did It" (2001) by M. John Harrison are cited as fine examples of the Liminal Fantasy (xix-xxv).

Theory of fuzzy set by Brian Atteberry marked a turning point in Fantasy Literature, which solved many inherent ambiguities. As mentioned earlier this theory influenced theoreticians like Farah Mendlesohn and has since become inevitable in the analysis of fantasy. This theory is based on the concept of the fuzzy set as used in mathematics. *In Strategies of Fantasy*, Atteberry explains his theory of fuzzy sets in fantasy. Here, the narratives which contain similar tropes that exhibit impossible experiences are arranged towards the centre. As it moves to the periphery the narratives with lesser fantastical elements are arranged. At the very edge, the readers are always in an ambiguity, whether they are reading fantasy or not. The narratives are arranged in such a way that those with common properties intercede and those with similar

properties are arranged near to one another (12-13). The classification represents an effective model for critics as well as readers of fantasy.

Theorizing Fantasy Narrative

Theoretical developments in the field of fantasy would remain incomplete without referring to the Theory of Fantasy Narrative by John Clute. Like some of the aforementioned theoretical formulations, this theory does not evaluate certain categories as efficient and others as deficient. This theory by Clute works as an instrument that evaluates the progress of fantasy narrative and its impact on the readers. In *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, John Clute traces the narrative development through the steps of Wrongness, Thinning, Recognition and Healing. These stages are identified as cardinal reference points in the evolution of the narrative, which constitute what Clute refers to as “Grammar of Fantasy”.

Wrongness: In a fantasy narrative, Wrongness is characterized by a disorderliness created through outside intervention. Even though it is possible to send back this intrusion, it is not initially sensed by the characters and considered as something trivial. It is characterized by changes in the landscape, alteration of the entire world, the victory of tyrant lord, and aberration in the dimensions of time. Bondage faced by characters and changes in their form by mistake or as a punishment is also the feature of Wrongness. As a result of this, a thinning process begins in the world. According to Clute, Wrongness is the important core factor feature of the secondary world, in Pure Fantasy.

Thinning: Thinning can be detected when disorderliness increases in the world and time has been tampered. Diligent measures are made by characters to check this activity, with the hope that a redeemer would emerge to bring back order in the afflicted world. The alternate world is mostly threatened by a narrowing effect, in High

Fantasies. Often the characters feel the effect of Wrongness and they mourn over it. Fertile earth is degraded into its parody. This is often through the agency of an envious and malicious lord. In cases such as Low Fantasies, thinning is characterized by the gradual loss of magic, exploitation of humans; and the emergence of class difference and conflicts. Massive death through secular or technological agencies; and the triumph of authoritative religions penalizing other forms of worship, also amounts to Thinning. Time becomes distorted, in narratives concerning time travel and parallel universes. If fantasy is at a crossover point, then Thinning becomes the focus of attention.

Recognition: Clute relates the term recognition with the concept of anagnorisis by Aristotle. He points out that fantasy being non-mimetic literature, gives utmost importance to this scenario of transformation. Recognition is a moment of revelation, where both artistic creativity and the plot become visible in their highest grandeur. Irresolvable mysteries in the plot are unveiled and the characters can shed their ignorance. The way out of chaos becomes visible and it has yet to be practically undertaken. Clute says that Recognition is a point in the fantasy narrative, where the plot becomes meaningful by itself. In many fantasy narratives, the protagonists become aware of their own experiences and their presence adds meaning to the narrative. The characters, especially the protagonists recognize that solution has already been revealed, which they now come to realize. It is considered as the point of transformation, where dual realities play in a single instance.

Healing: Clute equates Healing with the concept of Eucatastrophe by Tolkien. Thus, it conveys a sense of consolation and hope. It precedes the most dreadful experiences and subjugation under tyrannical rule. Healing is characterized by the revival of the protagonist from forgetfulness, transformation into original form, escape from

the imprisonment of a tyrant lord, the fertility of barren landscape (Clute and Grant). Clute later replaced the term Healing with Return (*Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997) – *Healing*). Return is characterized by the transformation of the land and social order into its previous form, similar to the context before the intrusion of Wrongness had taken place.

The aforementioned theoretical formulations are effective in the interpretation of Fantasy Literature and scaling down of its ambiguities. The attempt of theoreticians to fit the trans-logical fantasy into the framework of logic, is helpful to understand and appreciate the creative nuances of fantasy. The classification by Mendlesohn explains a fifth category of The Irregulars, which gives a picture of new trends emerging in Fantasy Literature. This confirms that it is not an easy attempt to classify the latest works of fantasy when the creativity of writers surpasses theoretical studies.

Mendlesohn considers Portal-Quest as the least significant form of fantasy, as the author speaks through a third-person narrator. She points out that authoritative ideas are superimposed on readers. On the other hand, the Liminal Fantasy is termed as the most distilled form of fantasy, considering the highest degree of rhetoric used in theme and structure of this category. But it is equally true that the Portal-Quest Fantasy is the most simplistic in structure due to its linear nature. This category is also identical to the storytelling form of narration often traditionally ascribed as grandmas' tales. Such a type of narration is the typical characteristic of Children's Literature, which is least complex in structure. This category of fantasy can be understood and enjoyed by readers of all age groups, including the youngest. Therefore, this genre can be seen as an intersection of fantasy and Children's Literature. Tolkien's and Rabkin's theories on Fairy tales, foreground and analyse this category of Children's Fantasy Literature.

Children's Fantasy Literature

In the western cultural context, the children writing for children is quite unusual. Children's Literature is always a bipolar interplay between the children and the adults. In the study entitled "Intertextuality and the child reader", Christine Wilkie-Stibbs points out that in Children's Literature, the relationship between the writer adult and the reader child is characterized by an imbalance of power. The adults think, evaluate and execute things on behalf of children. The authors who write for adults as well as the children, are themselves adults. It is a well-known fact that the children are controlled and stimulated by the adults, through their literature. Wilkie-Stibbs, points out that the authors of children's books are also in turn influenced by their childhood experiences and books familiarized in their childhood (179-188). Children's Literature provides an intertextual space where the two polarities of adulthood and childhood mutually interact. This literary genre provides a space for the grown-ups to actively operate between their real identity as grownups and their ideal conceptualization of childhood.

The term Children's Literature is not as obvious as it seems to be. To define it as a literary genre concerned with books exclusive for children is a misleading definition. The books written for children of the youngest age can be read and appreciated by people of all ages. This means that Children's Literature is a more expansive literary genre than those genres made exclusive for the adults. It is equally an obvious fact that the categorization of literary works into Children's and Adults' are intentionally done by the adults themselves. In the study entitled "Theorising and theories", David Rudd identifies that the notion of the child is a problematic one and Children's Literature is a hybrid concept. He denies the concept of a 'universal child' and points out that it is a product of cultural construction. Adults can identify essentially an inherent

child within, with predictable characteristics and cravings. This is referred to as “constructive child”. The other position is termed as “constructed child”, which is created by the adult world. He positions Children’s Literature as a threshold genre that exists between identities of the “constructed child” and the “constructive child”. The writers who create these texts and the adults, who read them, engage with discourses of the intrinsic child (15-26).

Having understood that Children’s Literature is a threshold genre with many ambiguities, it is easy to analyse Children’s Fantasy Literature. It is a well-known fact that fantasy has been incorporated in oral narratives and later in the written narratives for children. It is also well-acknowledged fact that fantasy narratives constitute the major quantitative and qualitative plethora of this genre. We have already seen that in the process of theorizing, fantasy bears its roots from children’s narratives. This is evident from the theories of Tolkien and Rabkin, who trace a generic journey from myth to modern fantasy. Children’s Fantasy has been analysed and appreciated through the formulations of later theoreticians like Mendlesohn and Clute. Systematic studies on this specific genre reveal the significance of its crossover nature.

In *Fantasy Literature*, Pamela S. Gates identifies the features that distinguish Children’s Fantasy from Adult Fantasy. The presence of an alternate world and the central role attributed to children is the uniqueness of the former. Children’s Fantasy contains characters with which children can organically identify; like the presence of adults, anthropomorphic animals or animated toys and fantastic beings. The most important feature is the presence of a child protagonist. Gates also identifies two criteria for evaluation of Children’s Fantasy. The narrative should be able to create an effect of wonder and strangeness that arrest the attention of readers. Fantasy is typically characterized by subversion of rules governing the physical world. Efficacy of

Children's Fantasy depends on the ability to create internalized logical order of its own. The fantasy creates its unique rules upon which the narrative relies upon and functions.

Apart from this, Gates identifies the following as six characteristic qualities of Children's Fantasy. These characteristics describe the uniqueness and potentials of this genre.

1. Fantasy is mimetic by innate nature and it borrows images from the real world.
2. Creation of fantasy is unique and original as it recombines the pre-existing elements into new formats. Hence each fantasy creation is original and unique.
3. Fantasy is termed as a power of conservation, due to its ability to re-construct by deriving from previously stored memory.
4. Fantasy is free and it ensures freedom. It is not restricted by time or limitations of the material world. It spontaneously creates the impossible and opens up the possibilities for multiple futures. Fantasy destabilises canonical establishments and restrictions imposed by traditional fundamentalism. Thus, it acts as a medium of revival and transformation.
5. Fantasy is unfettered by the finiteness of the real world; it can desire for the infinite, transcendental and divine experiences. Thereby, fantasy can express and inculcate religious discourses.
6. Fantasy is a subversive form of literature that operates beyond social taboos and conventions. It questions traditional norms and the underlying hidden agenda, thereby making the objectives clearly visible (5-9).

The aforementioned formulation by Gates seems to incorporate characteristics which are seemingly contradictory and yet are factually verifiable as true. Fantasy, on

one hand, subverts traditional establishments and challenges orthodoxy. On the other hand, it fosters religion and transcendental aesthetics. It is indeed paradoxical that religion which is often associated with orthodoxy and traditional canons is enriched by the subversive genre of Children's Fantasy. To resolve this ambiguity, the concept of religion by Gates has to be closely analysed. In this context, religion is not to be confused with spirituality, which is transcendental by nature. Alike the common masses, even some of the academicians use the terms religion and spirituality interchangeably. The correlation and difference between the aforementioned concepts can be understood from studies by experts on religion and spirituality and their effect on children.

Spirituality in Children's Literature

Religion and spirituality are always subject to variations according to cultural differences across the world. Social, political and historical factors have to be considered to analyse religions which are often subject to changes along with time. Hence a comprehensive outlook is necessary to make a systematic analysis of these phenomena and their affective significance on juveniles. "Difference between Religion and Spirituality in Children and Adolescents" by Friedrich Schweitzer tries to effectively address and evaluate the interrelationship between spirituality and children. He observes the literary creations by both the juveniles and the adults can describe the spiritual experiences of children. Analytical studies on these texts show that individual spiritual experiences are not limited by social or domestic influences, and these experiences reshape their consciousness and perspectives. The youngsters of the western world disapprove all institutional, authoritarian and dogmatic forms of religion; as the latter is unable to approve or address spirituality based on individual needs and experiences of the transcendental (121-122). Individual spiritual experiences have been a subject of study from a psychological perspective. Contrastive and complementary

nature of spirituality and religion can be verified by an analytical study of individual experiences.

In *Religion in Personality Theory*, Frederick Walborn examines the formulations of various psychologists on religion and spirituality. The book examines the therapeutic value of religion, spirituality and mysticism in the development of human psychology. Among the psychologists, Walborn describes the changes in the conception of Abraham Maslow that happened during the studies conducted in his lifetime. Maslow began with religion as a set of practices. As his studies matured along over time, Maslow identified spirituality as an essential inherent content of religion. Religion and spirituality are indistinguishable in many cases. Mysticism which is an amalgamation of these two can be more distinctly identified. He does not approve the concept of religion for the masses, which has been criticized by psychologists like Freud and Skinner. Maslow, on the other hand, formulated the theory of Self-actualization, where the individuals can refashion their identity from self-centeredness to other-centeredness. Spiritual experiences enable Self-actualizers to expand their limited identity and create inclusive space for fellow beings. They gain the ability to understand and appreciate diversity, without being judgemental (263-277). This verifies the fact that spirituality is an expansive and inclusive phenomenon which can reshape human consciousness. From the perspective of psychologists, spirituality is relevant due to its therapeutic value, rather than logical proof of an existing God.

It can be inferred from the former studies that spirituality is an expansive body of experience which may or may not overlap with traditional forms of religions. Spiritual discourses lay a powerful, reformative and therapeutic influence on children, especially through the medium of Children's Literature. Following up the formulations of Gates, Children's Fantasy not only ascribes the transcendental, but it destabilises

conventional canons of society through its subversive nature. Social issues are addressed by writers of Fantasy through texts which are conventionally referred to as Social Fantasies. Similarly, critics express their social concern through re-reading of fantasy through literary and critical theories. In most of these cases conscious or unintended attempts are made to purge fantasy texts of their spiritual discourses. The reason behind this trend of secularization has already been highlighted by Schweitzer, where the western world has lost credibility in organized and dogmatic forms of religions. From Walborn, we can understand that the transformation of human psyche makes the role of spirituality relevant in the contemporary world. Hence it would be a justifiable attempt to re-read Fantasy texts through the perspective of spiritual movements with social significance, instead of traditional organized religions or literary theories.

Conceptualizing the New World

The idea of an ideal new world is common to almost all fantasies and many of the spiritual movements. The contemporary world is prolific with certain spiritual movements which are termed as New Religious Movements. New Religious Movement is abbreviated as NRM, which originated in the 1960s in the western world as a reaction against dogmatic religions. Both fantasy and the NRMs have another common feature, which is the subversion of traditional canons. Their socio-cultural relevance has to be examined in correlation with an alternate reality of the secondary world. It has already been mentioned that secondary belief and the secondary world are the basic components of fantasy. It is also evident from Clute that fundamental design of fantasy narratives is intentional in the transformation of society. His coinage of Healing [Return] suggests the establishment of a new social order after disorderliness or Wrongness has been recognized and alleviated. Similarly, the central concern

of many New Religious Movements is the creation of a New World, often a post-apocalyptic one. A close examination of NRMs can reveal their potentials and limitations in the transformation of the contemporary world.

Change in the religious orientation of the western world and their contact with eastern systems of spirituality has been observed as a result of globalization. Intercultural confluence through the invention of global networking and digitalization has created a steady increase in the number and members of NRMs. This fact has been verified by Peter Clark in *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*, which explains that the concept of NRM originated as a euro-centric coinage. This term was attributed to rapidly growing newly established minority religions in contrast to the official or mainstream religions. The term NRM is not to be confused with the NAM or New Age Movement. The latter constitute a category of globally widespread NRMs which are often attacked by dogmatic religious authorities like the Catholic Church. Similarly, many NRMs face oppositions from traditional religious groups, on the ground of destabilizing their religious canons and decreasing the number of their believers. Yet it is a mistake that all NRMs are rapidly growing. Some of them have disintegrated and others can sustain several members. Generally, all NRMs are more open and secular systems, with lesser canonical impositions. They endow special freedom to people who can practice traditional religions and simultaneously be a practitioner of NRM. This is because the generally the NRMs do not condemn traditional belief systems, but propose a change in perspective towards religious canons. Clark says that the expected degree social change prophesied by NRMs has yet to be verified in most of the cases. NRM is no longer a phenomenon that is exclusive to the western world. Ethnic NRMs have emerged in many countries across the world. NRMs act as mediums to spread globally accepted techniques like yoga and lifestyles. They play a vital

role in reshaping public consciousness and re-conceptualizing social well-being (Clarke).

The concept of New World has a significant role in defining the ideologies and functions of NRMs. *New Religious Movements: A Documentary Reader* identifies the following features which define the distinct nature of NRMs and emphasize the necessity for new changes. These characteristics also portray sharp deviations from traditional dogmatism, intending to create more free space for individual experiences. Each NRM many incorporate one or more of these features with ethnical and cultural modifications.

New Understanding: The concept of the universe is renewed in which each individual has a significant role. Individuals can find their path towards development and fulfilment of life. By understanding the spiritual dimension within the physical world, people can understand cosmic harmony. These movements are influenced by eastern spirituality which became popular through earlier sects and organizations that got rooted in the western world.

New Self: Human birth is seen as a privileged position with which spiritual potentials can be achieved. The mundane physical bondages can be transcended through practices and individual gains psychological stability. The movements which follow this path are influenced by eastern systems like yoga and hence they are used for the treatment of ailments.

New Family: The NRMs are oriented as an intrinsic family where the members interact and construct their alternate pattern. Some of them have elders who are consulted by others, while the latter are referred to as children. In many cases, these

movements face opposition from the public who feel them as a threat to existing family systems.

New Society: They are in endeavours to transform the society by providing justice to the underprivileged people and work for changes in existing institutions. Often, they are related to Biblical allusions and the members believe that their movements would make a global change. Social resurgence and human values are divinely inspired. Most of them have their roots from Africa and the movements are reciprocations against oppressions faced in the past.

New World: Many of these movements are inspired by *The Book of Revelation* and Gaia theory, where the members expect a total transformation of the world after the apocalypse. Biblically inspired groups predict that the creation of a new earth and a new heaven will happen at psychological and physical levels. Total transformation of the earth is expected by supporters of Gaia ideology, which mostly is expected through the medium of new evolved races. It is also observed that these five characteristics are interlinked both sequentially and cyclically (Daschke and Ashcraft 11-13).

As far as primary importance is given to complete resurgence of society, the most important among the aforementioned will be the New World. The others are primary steps towards total transformation or imply partial and temporary changes. Even though NRMs have proved themselves in subverting traditional religious canons, as previously mentioned, critics like Clark have questioned their role in executing social reformation successfully.

New World Movements

The New Religious Movements that foreground the concept of a New World can be conveniently termed as New World Movements. Practical relevance and possibilities of the New World Philosophy inherent in New World Movements can be understood by closely examining them. Here, the term New World Philosophy is used to designate the common characteristics which determine the nature of the New World and the interrelationship of humans to it. New World Philosophy can be understood from the following features, which can be traced from NRMs, by understanding their spiritual and social insignia.

1. An egalitarian world which integrates and unifies all dimensions of human life like, social, political, economic, cultural and religious.
2. The world devoid of violence, suffering and hypocrisy.
3. Harmony fostered among not only human beings but, established through the unity of all forms of creation.
4. All are endowed with qualities like self-reliance and self-respect.
5. Specific issues faced by individual beings and the society, in general, are recognized and they are effectively addressed through the implementation of proposed solutions.
6. Massive destructive and cataclysmic events are expected to happen, which instigates human beings to outlive them through proper measures.
7. Spiritual discourses are practically incorporated and human values form an integral part of each individual.

Each movement may vary its emphasis on the social or spiritual aspects in different degrees and incorporate the aforementioned in different permutations. It is near to an impossible task to examine all New World Movements which may include

NRMs and spiritual reform movements. I have chosen the following New World Movements to examine the discursive content of New World Philosophy. Rastafarianism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Sathya Gnana Sabai and Santhigiri are chosen based on the cultural background of the researcher. The first two have their roots in cultural contexts different from India and have made a global impact on nations like India. The other movements have their base in South India and have made an influence on comparatively limited groups from foreign nations. Similarities and variations in the conceptualization of New World Philosophy can be understood by analysing these movements. This would be helpful to get a clear perspective about the New World and its intricacies, as reflected in New World Movements.

Rastafarianism

Rastafarianism is a socio-religious movement that originated in the 1930s in Jamaica. The movement is a reaction against British colonization, which is characterized by social mobilization of Jamaican subaltern tribes. They consider the Bible as their authentic text which is re-read and interpreted in an Afro-centric way. Rastas or the followers of Rastafarianism consider Haile Selassie, the former Emperor of Jamaica as a divine incarnation as promised in the Bible. They believe in Singular Divinity who is referred to as Jah, and the African subcontinent or Ethiopia is considered to be "The Promised Land". The National Flag of Ethiopia is used as their Religious symbol, signifying the Biblical allusion of rule under "The Lion of the Tribe of Judah". Reggae music and Bob Marley made this movement famous throughout the globe, as Marley was a staunch follower of the movement. Belief systems of each Rastafarian school are different due to variations interpretation of scriptures. Three major Rastafarian sects are popular in the contemporary world, The Nyabinghi Order, The Bobo Shanti and The Twelve Tribes of Israel, apart from other ethnic community

groups in Africa. Yet many of the Rastas are not confined to any particular order. Rastafarianism also exhibit affinity with eastern belief systems and the concepts like reincarnation.

Apart from uniting people, this movement demands active participation in socio-political resonances around them. "Towards a New Map of Africa through Rastafari "Works"" by Jahlani Niaah, traces the historical significance of this movement. Rastafarianism rose as a nationalist movement that created a momentum in common people to study the historical and cultural legacy of African continent. Niaah points out that the political movements like the Battle of Atwa and Italo-Ethiopian War were interpreted by Rastas through Biblical scriptures. Hegemonic communities of officials and corrupt systems of government were termed as Babylon, which is rooted in the spread of falsehood. Hence, Haile Selassie, the Black emperor became the saviour Christ figure who is contrasted against the diabolic white British monarch and the Dictator Mussolini. Decolonization of African subcontinent and repartition movements are heavily indebted to Back-to-Africa movement lead by Rastas like Mortimer Planno. Rastafarian movement played an important role in the revival of African symbolism and cultural lifestyle (189-192). Stand against oppression and subversion is relevant in the present world, which highlights the significance of this movement. Reggie music and Rastafarian ideologies are often recognized as expressions against social marginalization. This may be the reason behind the widespread of Rastafarianism even in non-black communities.

The belief systems and ethnic features Rastafarianism is a subject of study on various levels. This is socially and medically relevant from controversies arising from the use of Marijuana by followers. *Challenges Faced by the Rastafari Community* is a systematic study of various Rastafari groups made by CRL Commission of South

Africa, which gives an overview of the characteristics of Rastafarianism in contemporary Africa. Smoking of the herb marijuana is the part of rituals like nagging and reasoning. The latter is characterized by reciting prayers by sitting in a circle and transferring pipe for smoking among participants. The followers use this intoxicant herb for ritual based on various interpretations of biblical scriptures. Another distinguishable feature of Rastas is the wearing of dreadlocks which some of them cover with turbans. The ethnic spirit of African origin, affinity with nature, and biblical allusions of prohibiting hair cutting bear the reasons behind this feature. The colours red, gold or yellow, green and black have special connotations in this religion. This is an influence of the national flag of Jamaica since the reign of Haile Selassie, which also depicts the biblical symbol the Lion of Judah. The lion is an interconnecting symbol of African power and biblical description of Jesus Christ. This is also a reason why Rastas wear dreadlocks which indicates a lion's mane. This helps the individuals to reaffirm their connection with Divinity. Each individual is considered as the representation of divinity and no one is superior to another. This is evident from the term "I and I", which equalizes social status and divisions under the rule of Singular Divinity, Jah. Most of the followers adopt the rule of Ital for their diet. They stick on to natural organic food and avoid synthetic and chemical produces. Alcohol is considered as an intoxicant which is unnatural and harmful to the human system. Marijuana is considered as a natural herb which instigates reasoning, whereas coffee and milk are categorized as unnatural. Rastas usually prefer a vegetarian diet and many are pure vegans (11-13).

This belief system is influenced by eastern schools of thought like Buddhism and Vedanta. Rastas' belief in re-incarnation and innate existence of Divinity in each individual, confirm the above-mentioned fact. William David Spencer explores the occidental influence of Rastafarian ideology, in *Dread Jesus*. He confirms that,

Hinduism has influenced the movement although not in its entirety (73). Cultural plurality and underlying unity within cultural diversity are also the common features of Rastafarian and Indian spirituality. This reveals that the movement is mosaic and incorporates intercultural modifications. Similarly, the passage of time since its origin, Rastafarianism too has become subject to many modifications.

Following the time of the earliest preachers of Rastafarianism like Leonard Howell and Marcus Harvey, this movement has incorporated many changes in the present global context. Change of global situations from slavery and colonization to globalization has affected the perspectives of this movement. “Rastafari in a Global Context” by Richard C. Salter examines the contemporary relevance of the movement through textual resources and case studies. In spite of the presence of elders in many Rastafarian communities and the centrality ascribed to Biblical scripture, Rastafarianism cannot be categorized as an orthodox system or a dogmatic religion. Salter describes the movement as “orthognostic”, which gives freedom to the followers to create their views using the process of reasoning. Apart from “mystical revelation” experienced by the believers, all the descriptive rituals are superfluous. Therefore, this system is not based on religious conversion and the members are held together by the commonality of experiential beliefs. Reinterpretation and redefining individual identity is characterized by Rastafarian “I”, which is the path to salvation. This is necessary in the contemporary globalized world where concepts like a global citizen and global community compel individuals to re-evaluate their restricted notion of identities (19-25). Such analytical works bring out the dimension of self-transformation which results in the transformation of the world. Here spirituality is synthesized with the social resurgence, which provides the scope of liberating oppressed sections on global level.

New World according to Rastafarianism will be a post-apocalyptic one, following the descriptions of *The Book of Revelation*. Unification and equalization of the entire human race are expected without any traces of racial, religious, political and social discrimination. The world will be an Afro-centric one, which will bring back the lost privileges of the natives who will find their Promised Land. The latter is not a geographical entity but a state of mind according to many Rastas. The world will become a single political entity under the rule of Messiah who may or may not be Haile Selassie in his second coming. Jesus Christ is given central importance as the saviour sent by Jah the Singular God. But these concepts are much different from orthodox Christian ideas of euro-centricity. The centrality of leaders or leader is unimportant as personal reasoning process governs the decisions and actions of the individual. The New World will thus be free both within and outside. There is no question of any kind of violence, dominance and exploitation. Following the concept of “I and I”, all persons will have equal social importance and status. The natural way of life will come to prominence by replacing artificial and inorganic ones. There will be complete harmony of entire humanity with nature, like the pre-colonial time of Africa. The rule of Haile Selassie marks a beginning step in the total transformation of the world, which unites social and political awareness. Thus, a deep understanding of social and political context is emphasized along with spiritual experiences like mystic revelations. Systematic adherence to these values will enable Rastas to find their existence in the forthcoming world.

Jehovah’s Witnesses

Jehovah’s Witnesses is a movement which originated from Bible Students’ Movement in Pennsylvania during the 1870s. This group was led by Charles Taze Russell who was also the founder of Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society in 1881. The

organization was named as Jehovah's Witnesses under the presidency of Joseph Rutherford Franklin after Russell. Franklin refined many views including his previous conceptions and reinterpreted the biblical scriptures. This society undertakes the publication of literary materials related Jehovah's Witnesses, which includes books, pamphlets, brochures and the official journal *The Watchtower*. www.jw.org is the official website of this movement, which allows access to resources in multiple languages. The movement has a centralized governing body with its organizational headquarters in Warwick, USA. The organization is run by a hierarchy which consists of elders, ministerial servants, students, publishers and associates. The movement holds the Bible as the scriptural authority and believes in Singular God, Jehovah. This rejects the doctrinal notions of Christianity, like the Holy Trinity and permanence of human spirit. Interpretations of Biblical scriptures are based on their symbolic relevance rather than factual ideas, whereby subverting the ideas like "Hellfire" and the "Heavenly Kingdom of God". The movement is renowned for religious activities like preaching and baptism, even though social works like disaster relief programmes are also organized.

To understand the belief systems of Jehovah's Witnesses, a comparative study with traditional Christian belief will be helpful. Both of them adhere to the scriptures of The Holy Bible but interpret it differently. Jehovah's Witnesses consider *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* as the authentic translation of the Bible. This translates and interprets the scriptures as per the vision of the organization. In the scholarly work *Reasoning with Jehovah's Witnesses*, Kevin R. Quick compares the variations in scriptural interpretations and distinguishes the characteristics of Jehovah's Witnesses. Unlike Christians, they do not believe Christ to be God and have no faith in the Holy trinity. Christ is the foremost creation and son of Jehovah, the only

God. The only one worthy to be worshipped is Jehovah, the almighty God and not his son Christ. The latter should be approached as the medium to reach God. Human soul or spirit is perishable and will disintegrate along with the death of the physical body. Christ was not resurrected in body but spirit, and faith in him without good actions is insufficient for salvation. The advent of Christ in invisible form happened during 1914 when the Kingdom of God was established. God has promised an Earthly Paradise for human beings and not an otherworldly heaven. All will be resurrected and judged for their deeds on earth and the unfit will not be tormented in Hellfire, but will just be non-existent. The term “Witnessing” is denoted by preaching work which is ought to be done regularly by followers. The message to be preached is that the Kingdom of God is now established on earth, everlasting life will be granted to humanity and earth itself would be the aspired paradise for all (100-106). This has been a challenging thing to many traditional believers of Christianity, who consider the movement as blasphemous. Especially when Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that they are the only channel through which the Word of God is being revealed, invites hostility from other religions as well.

This movement has faced numerous persecutions throughout history due to stands taken by the followers in social, political, medical and religious fields. The most notable one is the opposition faced by the Third Reich of Adolf Hitler during the Second World War. Studies reveal the Nazi movement persecuted the Jehovah’s Witnesses as they too opposed other religions. In *Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics Under Persecution*, M. James Penton tries to find out the reasons behind the hostility by tracing historical background of this religious movement in Germany during the reign of Hitler. Penton argues that numerous persecutions were faced by the followers of this group, which had already received hostility

from the public even before the advent of Hitler. The then-president of this movement J. F. Rutherford initially tried to negotiate with Hitler, by supporting their attack on the League of Nations including the Jews. On the negative response from the Nazi parties, Jehovah's Witnesses openly unleashed propaganda against the Third Regime. It is noted that the persecutions were the result of such policies and ended along with the breakdown of the Nazis. Penton points out that the Jehovah's Witnesses are least interested in the study of their history or acknowledging their own mistakes. He concludes that the reason for hostility towards this movement is the result of their policies and change in stands (236-239). Following the tradition of their past, the movement still faces challenges, especially due to commitment to their ideologies. Abstinence from blood transfusions, disregard to armed forces and non-commitment to patriotic events has led to legal issues affecting the movement. Non-corporation with other religious beliefs has also created a social gap between Jehovah's Witnesses and the rest of society.

There are criticisms against the movement from Christian as well as secular groups. The change in their prophetic statements regarding the advent of the New World is a major reason for this. For example, various dates have been predicted by Jehovah's Witnesses which prophesied the end of the world and all proved to be incorrect. The official website of Jehovah's Witnesses tries to explain to this through scriptural authority. There have been misunderstandings of Jehovah's words among followers since the time of Moses, which was later corrected and clarified by God himself. Thus, the organization claims to acquire more insight from their erratic interpretations of the Bible through the grace of God and thereby gain a clearer view of his words (JW.ORG). However, it is hard to prove the authenticity of the movement in predictions and beliefs which are subject to constant change. The movement always

attributes their views as guided by God and yet it is paradoxical that mundane errors creep in. Taking personal responsibility for such ideological fluctuations is helpful to a great extent in creating authenticity and avoiding criticisms of false prophesying.

The growth of this movement into a well-structured organization, from a humble beginning, indicates the increasing acceptability in spite of persecutions and criticisms faced. The followers, especially in the present world, face challenges from nations with state religions and secular governments. *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Secular World* by Zoe Knox examines the role of Jehovah's Witnesses in subverting and influencing sectarian state policies. It is observed that as a result of the unique lifestyle adopted by the followers and employment of public ministry system devoid of the clergy; increased the popularity of the movement. Leaving aside the spiritual interpretation of the followers, Knox affirms that the growth of this movement was equally the result of legal and illegal oppositions faced on a worldwide scale. This organization unconsciously unleashed a campaign against the marginalization of minority religious communities. Attacks on non-militant and socially insulated communities like Jehovah's Witnesses reveal the underlying hegemonic state policies and hidden agendas of orthodox religious groups (3-6). The study is relevant especially when there is a steady increase in the number of followers of Jehovah's Witnesses, in contrast to the receding public interest in mainstream religions. Thus, the movement which represents a minority religion is often subjected to scrutiny by changing policies of governments, especially when the latter is renowned for its apolitical stance.

New World is a concept which has primal importance for Jehovah's Witnesses, which is evident from their scriptural translation titled *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. The followers indulge in spreading the word of Jehovah as the procedure to transform the present world. Though social service programmes

and disaster relief activities are conducted, the spiritual aspect of the movement seems to be predominant. This movement subverts traditional notions of Hellfire and Paradise, revealing its rational side. The belief in the mortality of the human soul normalizes human beings with other creatures. A forthcoming world which is devoid of all human sufferings like ageing, disease and death, creates a sense of hope in the believers. By conceptualizing Kingdom of God on earth under the rule of Jesus Christ, the movement tries to harmonize the spiritual and material dimensions of life.

Sathya Gnana Sabai and *Sanmarga* Philosophy

Sathya Gnana Sabai was an institution established in 1872 at Vadalur, by the renowned social reformer and spiritual leader, Ramalinga Swamikal [Arul Prakasa Vallalar]. He simultaneously formed an organization named Samarasa Suddha *Sanmarga* Sathya Sangam, which still continues to function by providing social service activities. Vallalar is recognized as a pioneer in social renaissance movement in Tamil Nadu, who played an important role in the eradication of caste discrimination and other social malpractices. He is also known as a poet and musician who created a new genre of lyrical poetry known as *Vallal Padalgal*. The movement pioneered by Vallalar synthesized spiritual experiences and social welfare, which worked on all levels of social strata. Sathya Gnana Sabai continues to serve the poor and needy with food on a daily basis. The organization also works for eradication of social evils and malpractices. The followers of Vallalar adopt a vegetarian lifestyle, adhere to non-violence and worship the Singular Divinity in the form of Arul Perum Jyothi [Supreme Grace Light]. The major teachings of Vallalar are available from resources like *Thiruvartupa* and *Jeeva Karunya Ozhukkam*.

The movement subverted colonial canons as well as traditional hegemonic stances. Therefore, Vallalar condemned caste system and the apartheid philosophy of racial discrimination. The historical significance of this movement is analysed by S. P. Annamalai in *The Life and Teachings of Saint Ramalingar*. The religious reforms undertaken were explicitly against all institutions of discrimination, thereby upholding the necessity of a Universal Religion. Samarasa Suddha *Sanmarga* Sangam functioned as an organization that undertook the reform activities and social service programmes as per the injunctions of Vallalar. He explicitly criticized the affluent and elite sections of society for the unsympathetic attitude towards the poor and desolate. Sathya Gnana Sabai at Vadalur was established to foreground not only an all-inclusive spiritual outlook but also to practice charity work through poor feeding. Vallalar put forth his teachings through discourses, poems and essays with firm conviction, and never resorted to forceful standards of preaching (40-45). The philosophy influenced and resonated among the common masses. *Sanmarga* Philosophy of Vallalar aimed in the complete development of individual beings. This inspired the common masses to undertake activities of social and religious refinement. *Sanmarga* Philosophy is essentially a New World Philosophy which works for the transformation of individual consciousness beginning with the transformation of society. Universal fraternity and Global Harmony were concepts unheard in the 19th century, which were propagated through this movement.

Teachings of Vallalar were against polytheism and caste system of Hinduism. The movement anthropocentric and exploitative culture of colonial Christianity. Even though this movement subverted traditional religions, it was not antithetical to them. Modification and reformation of existing cultural systems was the major aim of *Sanmarga* Philosophy. This has been the subject of systematic studies like that made

by G. Vanmikanathan, who enlists core features of this movement, in *Makers of Indian Literature: Ramalingar*.

1. Worship of Singular Divinity.
2. Divinity should be worshipped in the form of Light through the medium of pure devotion.
3. Worship of minor deities and other godheads should be avoided.
4. All should refrain from violent modes of worship which involve harming or killing living beings.
5. Avoid the consumption of meat to stop others from killing living creatures.
6. All discriminations based on gender, race, caste and class should be avoided.
7. Understand the equality of all forms of life, as all are equal in the view of Divinity. Unlike the western concept of Universal Fraternity within human beings, this movement believes in the brotherhood of all living creatures.
8. Feeding the impoverished and appeasing their hunger is the path towards salvation or God's Kingdom.
9. Dead people are not to be cremated but buried.
10. All kinds of superstitious ideologies and practices are to be avoided.

Pure devotion is the same as pure wisdom with which the individual can attain Divinity. This path is known as *Sanmarga* which views no distinction between individual life and the life of other living beings. Vallalar reinterprets traditional concepts of devotion in *Sanmarga* Philosophy. Human devotion to Divinity is possible only through devotion to fellow living creatures. Being a slave of all living beings, living as a good offspring of all beings, friendship with them and understanding one's own life as inseparable from them; constitutes the quintessence of this path (62–63). This movement considers social and spiritual dimensions as complementary and not

contradictory to each other. Non-violence is foregrounded to its highest possibilities where the individual makes an organic evolution from social to spiritual dimensions.

Sanmarga Philosophy also is unique regarding the evolution of human consciousness which affects the human body. The changes in the human body as a result of spiritual practice are commonly related to the yogic system. Such systems defy boundaries of religion and nationality. Harry Holloway in *Christian Yoga* compares the eastern systems of spirituality with western religious belief systems like Christianity. Holloway visited and examined the institution of Vallalar at Vadalur, where it was observed that social service activities are being conducted in an effective manner by volunteers. Apart from organizational centres, many individuals have made service as part of their daily routine and personal lives. The lifestyle of non-violence and adherence to spirituality are being followed by many who are inspired by *Sanmarga* Philosophy. Experiences of devotees reveal simple spiritual practices followed by Vallalar which summarizes the essence of his spiritual experiences. Devotees have witnessed Vallalar swiping aside seven sheets of cloth hung before him and then his bright reflection was seen in mirror (76-80). The seven veils of illusion have to be transcended to visualize the innate divinity which is referred to as Arut Perum Jyothi [Supreme Grace Light]. The lamp is used as a consecrated symbol of Divinity which is installed in centres of worship established by Vallalar. The use of mirror and lamp for worship can be seen as an influence of Ayya Vaikundar, a social reformer and spiritual leader who commenced the social renaissance movement in South India.

New World is a central aspiration of Vallalar and an inspiration for the followers of *Sanmarga* Philosophy. Even though he does not explicate and elaborately prophesise the dawn of a New World, many hints on the subject can be deciphered from his verses. *English Renderings of Thiru Arutpa* by A. Balakrishnan sheds light

on the subject through English translations of verses from *Thiruvavutpa*. Vallalar says that the time is coming near when Supreme Grace Light will endow Everlasting Bliss and deathless life to human beings on the physical level. For securing this experience, human beings must work on the path as expounded by Divinity. Vallalar testifies the inefficacy of scriptural knowledge and racial taboos which will result only in conflicts and argumentation. He invites the attention of entire humanity to embrace the path towards absolute perfection as the Supreme Lord is going to reveal his magnificent glory abundantly. He asks everyone to cultivate unity, as everlasting justice, enlightenment and bliss is going to be granted through direct experience by The Supreme Lord. For this Vallalar suggests an action plan that involves individuals to follow the path towards eternal compassion, by eradicating all kinds of sufferings from fellow beings. By imparting joy truth and peace to them, each individual transform themselves into embodiments of compassion. Along with this, Vallalar demonstrates to sincerely pray and sing the glory of Supreme One, who transcends the denominations of gender (144-146). As Divinity is referred interchangeably as Mother and Father, Vallalar envisions the same in the concept of a New World where entire cosmos is united beyond restrictive identities of gender, caste and religion.

Santhigiri

Santhigiri is an organization that works on behalf of Santhigiri Asramam established in Pothencode, Thiruvananthapuram by Navajyothi Sri Karunakara Guru. Asramam or the hermitage consists of residents who consist of renunciates as well as householders. Karunakara Guru is renowned as a spiritual leader who worked for social welfare through spiritual awareness. This institution found by Guru is deemed as a Social and Scientific Research Organization by the Government of India. Empowerment for women and the revival of cottage industries are undertaken as part of

economic activities. However, the major activities are categorized as *Annadanam*, *Atmabodhanam* and *Athurasevanam*. Offering food to visitors daily at various centres is referred to as *Annadanam*. Redirection and orientation of spiritual experiences in spiritual aspirant is referred to as *Athmabodhanam*. *Athurasevanam* is service of sick people through health camps and medical institutions run by the organization. Guru refers to the ideology of the organization as a universal spirituality beyond religion, which is relevant to householders and seekers of truth. Worship of Singular Divinity or Brahman through the medium of Guru and devoid of scriptural authority, is its peculiarity. Personal spiritual experiences in the form of *Darsanam* [Spiritual Insight] is the path adopted by followers, who also perform service activities within and outside hermitage voluntarily.

The *Asramam* was established by Guru to materialize his vision and action plan for humanity. The intention behind the establishment of this organization has been published in *Santhigiri: Spiritual Magazine*, entitled “Asramoddesyam” [Purpose of the Hermitage]. This summarizes the proclamation made by Guru in 1968 when Santhigiri Asramam was formally established.

ആശ്രമോദ്ദേശ്യം

ആദ്ധ്യാത്മികാനുഭൂതി കട്ടികളിലും മുതിർന്നവരിലും ഉണ്ടാകുന്നത് തെറ്റുകൂടാതെ മുൻപോട്ടു നയിക്കുക.

അവരിൽ ഉണ്ടാകുന്ന അനുഭൂതികൾ എങ്ങനെ ലോകത്തിനു പ്രയോജനപ്പെടണം, എക്കാലവും അവ എങ്ങനെ നിലനിർത്താൻ സാധ്യമാകും, അതിനു സാധ്യമാകുന്ന മാർഗ്ഗം സ്വീകരിക്കുക. ഇതിൽ സ്നേഹം ഏറ്റവും പ്രധാന ഘടകമാണ്. സഹജീവികളോട് മാത്രമല്ല ഒരു ജീവിയോടും ദ്വേഷം തോന്നാതെ മനുഷ്യരോടൊന്നപോലെ എല്ലാ ജീവികളോടും ഹൃദയാനുഭവയുജ്ജ്വലമായിരിക്കുക. എല്ലാവരോടും മിത്രഭാവം, കരുണ, ക്ഷമ, അഹങ്കാരമില്ലായ്മ, സുഖിത്തിലും ദുഃഖത്തിലും ഇളകിപ്പോകാത്ത മനഃസ്ഥിതി ഇവ ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കുക. ഇത്രയുംകൊണ്ട് നിങ്ങൾ നിങ്ങളെയും ഇൗശ്വരനെയും സ്നേഹിക്കുന്നവരായി മാറും.

മനസ്സ്, വാക്ക്, പ്രവൃത്തി ഇവ മൂന്നിലും പരിശുദ്ധി നേടാൻ ശ്രമിക്കുക. ഇതിന്റെ ഫലം ഈശ്വരനിൽ നിങ്ങൾക്കും ഈശ്വരന് നിങ്ങളോടും സ്നേഹമുണ്ടാകും.

അതിയായ സന്തോഷം, അസൂയ, ഇവ ഭയപ്പെടേണ്ട വസ്തുക്കളായി സൂക്ഷിച്ചുകൊള്ളുക. എന്തെന്നാൽ അവ നിങ്ങളെ ഈശ്വരനിൽ നിന്നും അകറ്റും.

ശത്രുവിലും മിത്രത്തിലും മാനത്തിലും അപമാനത്തിലും സ്തുതിയിലും നിന്ദയിലും ഉല്പൃരായിരിക്കുക. ഈ ലോകം തന്നെ തറവാടെന്നു കരുതുക.

ആതുരശുശ്രൂഷയും സേവനസന്നദ്ധതയും നമ്മുടെ വ്രതമായിരിക്കണം.

ലോകഗുരുക്കന്മാരും അവരുടെ വാക്കുകളും നമുക്കെന്നും ആദരണീയമായിരിക്കണം.

ഈ കാര്യങ്ങൾ എല്ലാ ദിവസവുമുള്ള അനുഷ്ഠാനങ്ങളിൽ ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കണം. ഈ സംഗതികൾ ഇവിടെ പ്രസ്താവിക്കുന്നത് ഈ പരമ്പരയിൽ എക്കാലത്തും ആത്മീയ അനുഭൂതിയുള്ള ഒരു ഗുരു ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കുമെന്ന് ബ്രഹ്മത്തിൽ നിന്നുള്ള അറിയിപ്പിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിലാണ്.

Purpose of the Hermitage

To guide forward the spiritual experiences manifesting in children and adults.

To undertake the methods to sustain their experiences forever and make them useful to the world. Love is the most important factor among them. Not only to be compassionate towards fellow human beings but to similarly have compassion towards all living beings from the core of heart and to have no hatred towards any living creature. Be un-egoistic and be unwavering in pain and pleasure. To have a mentality that sustains: friendship with all, compassion, forbearance and abstinence from arrogance. Having all these you should be able to love yourself and God.

You should strive to acquire the purity of these three: mind, word, and action.

Beware of and guard against extreme joy, and jealousy; because they will distance you from God.

Find equanimity in foe or friend, pride or insult, praise or blame. Consider the world as your ancestral home.

Our steadfastness should be in caring for the diseased and readiness for service.

World Teachers and their words should always be respected by us.

These things should be in daily practices. These things have been declared here because there will always be a Guru with spiritual experience in this lineage; as it is revealed from Brahman. (Guru, “Asrammoddesyam,” my trans.; 83)

These factors are prescribed as guidelines for the followers of Guru and are repeated in publications of Santhigiri, for more social outreach. The lifestyle and outlook of the followers are determined by these values, which exhibit the interconnectedness of the human mind with society.

According to Guru, spirituality and human society are inseparably interconnected. Change in social outlook is made possible by a change in spiritual values and practices. Santhigiri undertakes the continuation of social reformation lead by Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru. This is clarified by O. V. Usha in an interview published in the magazine *Guruprabha*, entitled “Kavithayile Athmiyasugandham”. Guru affirmed the faith in Singular Divinity which is the eternal spiritual path of India. This is against the procedure of worshipping ancestors, deities and other aberrations of worship. Worship involving the killing of animals or humans, blood sacrifices, flesh, and intoxicants creates a massive impact on the human mind. These lead human life into complexities rather than towards peace. Guru attempts to revive the long-forgotten tradition of the path of sages which is oriented towards Brahman. Usha refers to *Gurugita* by Sage Veda Vyasa, which emphasizes that aberrations of worship inflicting human consciousness can be removed in the presence of a true Guru.

Material and spiritual benefits can be achieved in this path revived and propounded by Karunakara Guru. This proves to be an eye-opener for the majority of the population which is still caught up in the mesh of restrictive ideologies and actions (22-23).

Santhigiri is known for its social welfare activities and voluntary service activities, which have been in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental agencies. The service activities undertaken by Santhigiri are described in “The Vision and Mission of Navajyoti Sri Karunakara Guru” by P. R. Mukundan. Human values and reformatory culture are instigated through outlets like Viswa Samskarika Navodhana Kendram for adults. Santhimahima for youth and Gurukanthi for children are organized for the development of life skills and inherent potentials. Value education of women is initiated through Gurumahima and Mathrumandalam which provides job opportunities through various professional units for the economic development of women. Organic farming and animal husbandry are organized with proper waste management where the residue materials are used in the production of organic manure and biogas. Numerous colleges and research centres are established by Santhigiri to promote Ayurveda and Siddha forms of medicine. Mobile medical camps and other free services are provided to residents of rural areas. Manufacture of traditional medicines and maintenance of herbal farms are undertaken by healthcare units. Through educational institutions, and publications Santhigiri tries to disseminate the culture of knowledge and values (Mukundan). This clarifies that, apart from women empowerment and value education, preservation of natural and environmentally friendly lifestyle is the essential values upheld by the organization through social activities. Transformations of social establishments are evoked through changes in human perspectives by the practical application of human values.

The concept of the New World is of primary importance to Santhigiri which endows responsibility to the followers to work towards this goal. Transformation of the present world should be in a progressive way and transformation of perspective is deemed necessary. For this purpose, Guru draws interconnectedness between the social and spiritual aspects of human life. *Guruvani* [Word of Guru] published in *Santhigiri Magazine* entitled “Vritam and Prayer” reveals the idea of New World and the action plan to achieve it, as per the vision of Karunakara Guru. The present age of *Kali Yugam* is considered as the right time for rectification of mistakes that have been committed by our ancestors, which have been blindly followed by the contemporary generation. Humanity will be able to enter the perfect and egalitarian age of Sathya Yuga only on correcting these aberrations. The present generation should learn from the purpose, limitations, and contributions of great personalities who had worked in the direction of uplifting humanity. Mere faith in Guru can be hazardous, whereas faith with the right perspective and action in proportion to one’s ability are necessary to invoke the transformation of the world. The lineage of Santhigiri including monks and householders is directed to work on this standard, to attain liberation through action. For this purpose, children should be made competent from their early ages through the universal spiritual practice of prayer. Education without inner illumination will hamper the growth of individuals and thereby distort the world. Hence, Santhigiri must share its spiritual benefit for redirection of children within and outside the lineage (Guru, “Vritam,” 5-7). Individual human beings are themselves seen as the reason for the progress and decay of humanity. Therefore, individual beings are endowed with the responsibility to transform the world, rather than leaving things in the care of Divinity. Transforming and elevating the quality of life is the quintessence of vision proposed by Karunakara Guru.

Common features of New World Movements have already been enumerated, by observing the nature of New World Philosophy in them. The concept of the New World can be better understood by identifying its relation with the present world. Rastafarianism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Sathya Gnana Sabai and Santhigiri are movements that can be subjects of study on various levels. Here, these four have been analysed as New World Movements to have a deeper perspective on the concept of the New World conceptualized by them. Along with the common characteristics, the contrastive features of these movements determine the criteria for evaluating the New Worlds represented through them. Despite common features among the four, Rastafarianism and Jehovah's Witnesses have been categorized as NRMs. The role of *Sanmarga* Philosophy has been recognized as pivotal in the renaissance of Tamil Nadu. Apart from spirituality, Santhigiri is renowned for its contributions to traditional medical systems. A close examination of these movements based on the following features reveals that these very features can be utilized as criteria for evaluating New World Movements in general.

Scriptural Authority: New World Movements may or may not be based on traditional scriptural authority. In the case of Rastafarianism and Jehovah's Witnesses, the Holy Bible is adopted as the central scriptural authority, where the latter emphasizes on routine readings. In both cases, re-readings and interpretations of the scriptures make their spirituality different from traditional Christian schools of thought. *Sanmarga* Philosophy and Santhigiri are not based on any scriptural source but follow the path laid down by their founders. Yet, their spirituality is based on the spiritual values common to traditional religions, without confirming or adopting their ritualistic and dogmatic dimensions. Approach of inclusiveness towards traditional religions,

while sustaining their own uniqueness, can be useful in most cases. This facilitates the expansion of New World Movements, which become less insolate and more open.

Subversion of orthodoxy: Subversion of dogmatic and authoritarian forms of religion is common to almost all these movements. Rastafarianism challenges euro-centric Christianity and identifies afro-centric roots of the scriptures. Jehovah's Witnesses questions doctrinal beliefs like Hellfire and otherworldly paradise, through rational interpretations of the Bible. *Sanmarga* Philosophy simplifies the contradictions and hypocrisies of world religions, by reflecting upon human values like Non-violence and Compassion. Santhigiri proposes inclusiveness of teachings from world teachers and religions, which are spiritually analysed to avoid their inherent errors. New World Movements which provide a universal space for all belief systems will be more acceptable to followers of traditional religions. Thus, dogmatic religions can make necessary changes in their belief systems and ideologies through self-evaluation.

Conformity with nature: Followers of these movements give less importance to extravagant lifestyle, by relating themselves to their ethnic native culture. This is often due to their affinity with nature, which is a practical expression of the inherent spiritual values. Rastafarians strictly avoid synthetic products and chemicals, by adopting an organic lifestyle. They promote traditional African systems of healing and manufacture native products through cottage industries. Jehovah's Witnesses lead a natural, modest way of life and avoid blood transfusion as it is considered as against natural law. Followers of *Sanmarga* also lead a simple lifestyle with an emphasis on Compassion and Non-violence. Thus, they refrain from causing death and suffering to any creature. Santhigiri is known for organic farming, animal husbandry and production herbal pharmaceuticals. The organization is known for research and propagation

of Ayurvedic and Siddha systems of natural healing. In these movements, compassion towards all living beings, foregrounds post-humanist values which are interconnected with spirituality. This is the reason why followers of Rastafarianism, *Sanmarga* and Santhigiri adopt a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. Variation in the practice of human values like Compassion and Non-violence determines the degree of inclusiveness in each New World Movements.

Nature of Apocalypse: It was already mentioned that most of the New World Movements prophesize catastrophic events as precursors of the total transformation of the world. Descriptions and severity of apocalypse vary according to movements. It is almost uniformly recognized that the series of destructions lead to the purification of the present world and selects the people who are eligible to enter the ideal New World. Rastafarians believe in the biblical Book of Revelation and emphasize on post-apocalyptic glory rather than on impending disasters. Jehovah's witnesses do not believe in the total annihilation of the earth as they negate the concept of Hellfire. Unsuitable entities for the ideal world simply cease to exist, where eternal torment and damnation are irrelevant. *Sanmarga* Philosophy by Vallalar does not give an explicit idea about the apocalypse. His teachings encourage everyone to follow the suitable path towards perfection, as the right time is near ahead. Followers of Santhigiri believe in the prophetic statements of Karunakara Guru, which foresees certain cataclysmic events but denies the possibility of total annihilation before the advent of the new aeon. In many New World Movements, fear of mass destruction acts as the driving force to ardently strive for individual and social transformation. A balance between fear of apocalypse and hope of a post-apocalyptic world creates a comfortable space for the followers to act freely and diligently. Movements that foreground a sense of

hope, instead of emphasizing on disastrous dimensions of the transition will be more acceptable to the followers and the public in general.

Entry into New World: It is a well-acclaimed fact that only selected people do find a place in the New World. Each movement describes the criteria of selection and the methods which enable the followers to achieve self-perfection. Rastafarianism does not claim that only by embracing their belief system, can the individual can find place in the ideal future world. They believe in the doctrine of “I and I”, where all are equal and embodiments of divinity. This initiates the practice of basic human values as the pathway to the ideal way. Though Jehovah’s Witnesses are tolerant towards other faiths, they advocate the necessity to embrace their system for salvation. Unlike them, followers of *Sanmarga* are least concerned about scriptural knowledge, but emphasize the practice of values like Compassion and Non-violence which serve as the tools of self-transformation. This process of transformation help the individuals towards perfection, which is a precursor to the total perfection expected in the future world. Santhigiri adopts the path put forth by Guru which leads, corrects and transforms individual beings to become perfect. The rectification process is given prime importance which is the key towards a perfect world. New World Movements which propagate that individuals can enter the perfect world only through their medium, tend to be less open. More open and less prescriptive movements are more likely to be recognized and approached by the public.

Nature of the New World: Despite similarities, most of the movements mark their difference through variation in conceptualization and description of the New World. Ideal nature is determined on different standards of inclusiveness, culture and inherent ideology of each movement. Rastafarians believe in the biblical descriptions of the New World, but they do not restrict it as a world owned by believers of a

particular religious dogma. They are however sure that Africa, particularly Ethiopia will become the centre of that world and the black race will return to cultural prominence. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the whole of the earth will be converted into an ideal paradise and the selected beings will find a place there. Unlike the Rastafarians, they emphasize and preach that the ideal world will be devoid of ageing, death, disease and suffering. *Sanmarga* based on the teachings of Vallalar does not explicitly state but gives a hint that the ideal time for acquired utmost perfection is at hand and everyone should derive benefit from it. Vallalar prays and aspires that through Divine Grace, the entire humanity shall achieve the state of physical deathlessness. Followers of Santhigiri believe that the present aeon of *Kali Yugam* will end and the ideal age of Sathya Yuga will arrive soon. They do not recognize physical immortality but believe that that the entire human race will become spiritually evolved and absolute peace will dawn all over. Despite the dissimilarities, these movements all agree on the evolution of human consciousness and achievement of ideal state on a global level. Subversion of the current social order is expected as a precursor of the establishment of an egalitarian world. Transformation of landscape and mindscape are often interconnected, where the latter is given prime importance.

Presence of a Leader: New World Movements are usually centred on a leader figure which may or may not be the actual creator of the movement. Rastafarianism and Jehovah's Witnesses do not have a particular founder figure but arose as mass movements. Rastafarian communities have a group of elders who instruct the other members of the group, whereas Jesus Christ or in many cases his reincarnation Haile Selassie is considered as the Messiah and true leader of the world. Similarly, Jehovah's Witnesses consider Christ as the ruler of the World, but the organization is governed by leadership on various levels. The presence of leadership is less authoritarian

in Rastafarianism which is evident from the presence of many ethnic groups and individual followers. On the other hand, Jehovah's Witnesses have leadership on various levels which exert explicit control on followers and have powers to excommunicate them. Sathya Gnana Sabai established by Vallalar has a head monk who serves as a spiritual instructor and makes decisions on matters concerning the organization. Yet, the head has comparatively lesser subjective authority over devotees and visitors. Santhigiri established by Karunakara Guru has separate heads for spiritual and managerial purposes, where the former serves as the representative of Guru, who directly holds influence over and makes decisions concerning the followers. Followers of Rastafarianism worship their leader Haile Selassie or Jesus Christ, whereas Jehovah's Witnesses do not worship Christ. Followers of *Sanmarga* Philosophy only worship Divinity in the form of Supreme Grace Light, whereas followers of Santhigiri worship Brahman through the spiritual form of Karunakara Guru. In the case of New World Movements, there is always ambiguity between the creator of the movement and the central figure of worship, which may or may not be the same. Centralization of power can be, or need not be vested in representatives of the founder. Non-authoritarian leadership with the least restriction are often preferred by the followers. Abstract and inclusive forms of worship, are suitable for people with diverse spiritual orientations. Worshipping the founder leaders as representations of Divinity becomes more acceptable through abstractness and inclusiveness attributed to their identity.

Social Relevance: Spiritual movements are often evaluated by the public, on how far they have contributed to society. Most of the New World Movements have a social dimension which is organically interconnected their spiritual discourse. Rastafarianism is known for cottage industries and production of herbal medicines. These activities are in conformation with their lifestyle. Jehovah's Witnesses is known for

participation in relief activities and impartment of value education. They are more renowned for spreading of the gospel than social activities due to their belief in Divine agency as the primary source of transformation. Sathya Gnana Sabai has continued its legacy in providing food and health care for impoverished sections of society, which is done a daily basis. The followers of *Sanmarga* are steadfast in social activities involving compassion as they adhere to the teachings of Vallalar. Santhigiri is known for a variety of service activities related to healthcare, education of life skills and empowerment of women. The followers of Santhigiri follow the action plan and holistic design of activities as per the design of Karunakara Guru. Therefore, the social endeavours of New World Movements are the products of their ethnical cultural background like the Rastafarians or they are influenced by teachings of scriptures in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, or by the value system ingrained from the spiritual leaders as in the cases of Sathya Gnana Sabai and Santhigiri. Whatever may be the case, unless spiritual movements can make contributions in all dimensions of human life their inclusiveness becomes restricted. Spiritual movements which tend to become restricted end up being ritualistic and religious like the orthodox belief systems.

Social Relationship: The movements which interact with other groups and the general public tend to be more acceptable by society. Involvement in social causes and development of a healthy relationship with the public can help in unrestricted growth of these movements. Rastafarians are not only free mingling with society but have received global attention through the trend of dreadlocks and Reggae music. On the other hand, Jehovah's Witnesses are known for social insulation due to their unique belief system. They do not participate in celebrations and political events, nor do they revere any symbols including national and religious ones. Yet, they constantly interact with the public through the door to door preaching. Followers of *Sanmarga*

are known to participate in social works by collaborating with other groups and organizations. Like the former, Santhigiri also conducts inter-religious conferences and indulge in social works in association with government agencies. Service works are done by volunteers through this organization, and the activities are usually confined within the devotee circle. The amount of interaction and social impact created by these movements makes them more acceptable to the public. Creation of free interactive spaces within society helps to influence and transform society.

Selection of the Text and the Tool

Reading fantasy texts through literary and critical theories are attempts to locate discursive patterns that support or oppose each theory. Theoretical re-reading also is subject to ideological restrictions, where an integral approach to all dimensions of life is not possible. Theories try to invoke changes in parts and this is the relevance of integrating social reformation and spirituality, which aims in a total and integral transformation of the world. This approach has been formerly addressed through the terminology of the New World. Reading fantasy in the perspective of socially oriented spiritual movements can destabilize both religious and social canons embedded in the text. Even if the text is generically classified as religious fantasy, such re-readings can even subvert textually inherent religious canons and reveal new dimensions of spirituality.

After examining the possibilities of fantasy and New World Movements, it can be inferred that re-reading fantasy texts can reveal new levels of meaning. As it was examined earlier, the total transformation of the present world and the advent of a New World are common to both of them. Moreover, it was also revealed that both fantasy and New World Movements are committed to address the issues prevailing in

the society. It was also identified that both of them subvert social canons and at the same time incorporate transcendental discourses. Therefore, reading texts of Children's Fantasy in the light of New World Movements opens up the possibility of social reformation through spiritual awareness. Before making such an attempt it is necessary to examine the possible drawbacks of such a reading.

There is always a disparity between the real world and the secondary world represented in fantasy texts. Ideal worlds are modelled on the real world by considering its limitations and by extending its potential possibilities. The void space in the real world is filled in the ideal one, according to the aspirations and expectations of the readers. Studies on fantasy reveal that it is an inherent nature of fantasy which leads to the creation of ideal worlds similar to the real world. Lucas Rabaey points out the limitation of ideal worlds represented through fantasy texts. The readers clearly understand that transformation which is possible in the secondary world cannot expect to happen in the primary world. Through their endeavours, the protagonists transform the secondary world into an ideal world. This is unlikely to be expected to happen in the real-world context, through human agency (Rabaey 49). From a practical point of view, this is a serious limitation of fantasy. Due to this very reason, numerous re-readings of fantasy become relevant, which analyses social discourses embedded in the text. Still, the idea of total transformation is far away from credibility and such a transformation is considered as a representation of unfulfilled human aspiration of perfection.

Such a limitation explores the possibility to read fantasy texts through New World Movements, where the latter expect a total transformation of the world. Such a reading becomes convincing only when the movement has proved itself in making significant changes in society. Those spiritual movements which have created social

renaissance are relevant in this context. Such movements have influenced social values and endowed the followers of traditional religions with a wider outlook towards society. In an interview published in *Church Times*, Alastair McIntosh the co-author of *Spiritual Activism* clarifies that spiritual movements can transform the world and have done so in many aspects. He reveals that spirituality is twice marginalized from contemporary humanity. Secular and religious groups are disappointed with spirituality as it does not fit into their predetermined framework. He also points out the reformative movement launched by Basava, Julia “Butterfly” Hill and Khudai Khidmatgar as fine examples of spiritual activism. This contradicts many traditional groups who preach regressive discourses of God-ordained violence and just-war theory (48). Spiritual activists like McIntosh sustain an interreligious outlook and tries to expand the religious dimensions into spirituality. They derive inspiration from social renaissance movements launched by spiritual movements. This is mainly due to the impact created in society through these movements and the inclusive outlook fostered through their spirituality. Therefore, it can be concluded that New World Movements which have contributed to social renaissance are most suitable to analyse fantasy texts.

On analysing various factors, I have selected *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis as the text of my research. Among the seven books included in this collection, central importance is given to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Following the classification of Mendlesohn, the Narnian series fall under the category of Portal-Quest Fantasy, which adopts the style of a third-person narrative which is an extended form of traditional storytelling. This genre of fantasy is linear with less complexity of rhetoric and can be read and appreciated by children as well as adults. This approves the categorization of Narnian books as Children’s Fantasy, which provides readability

over a wide range of age groups. Critical situations in the fantasy texts can be identified by and analysed through *The Grammar of Fantasy* by Clute. This is useful to evaluate the quality and the quantity of Healing process in each one of the Narnian series. Secular and religious studies are being conducted on the Narnian series, as the text provides ample scope for both these dimensions of life. Lewis is renowned as a defender and propagator of Christian faith, and many of the scholars consider *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a text of theological importance. Yet, the author is equally criticized for blasphemy and heresy by conservative religious groups. This is mainly on the fact of blending pagan themes and imagery, along with the Christian ones. It is thus revealed that the author consciously or unconsciously subverts traditional religions and still foregrounds spiritual values in the text. Total transformation of the world through the human agency is the common theme reflected in the seven books of Narnian series. Among the books of Narnia, an organic transformation of the world is presented in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The other six books of the series which were later written can be seen as extensions and elaborations of this text.

To make an effective reading of the text, I have selected the Ayyavazhi Movement as an analytical tool. Ayyavazhi is not strictly a New Religious Movement, but it can be termed as a New World Movement. It was established by Ayya Vaikundar who is recognized as a spiritual leader and social reformer of 19th century in South India. Ayyavazhi is also recognized as a movement which marked the beginning of the social renaissance in South India. The movement has influenced later renaissance movements of Kerala and Tamil Nadu and made significant changes in the social order. Ayyavazhi has made hallmarks in the resurgence of subaltern sections of society and eradication of social anomalies. The concept of the New World is of core importance to Ayyavazhi, which can be understood from the teachings of Vaikundar.

The present aeon of *Kali Yugam* is expected to give way for *Dharma Yugam*, where an egalitarian world will be established. Transformation of society and the evolution of human consciousness are necessary for the creation of such an ideal world. It is a well-known fact that *The Chronicles of Narnia* was written by a British writer after World War II and Ayyavazhi was a movement that originated in colonial India more than a century before it. Reading the former text through the latter movement makes it necessary to address the existence of cultural differences and time gap between them. These differences turn out to be superfluous through a close reading which reveals many similar traits between the two.

Reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a text of Ayyavazhi can reveal several layers of similarities between them. They are identical in many respects like the representation of imagery, social issues addressed, spiritual values, mythology and conceptualization of New World. Moreover, the life of Aslan the central character of the Narnian series and the life history of Ayya Vaikundar bear close resemblance in many factors. It was previously explained that the following criteria are inevitable in the evaluation of New World Movements: scriptural authority, subversion of orthodoxy, conformity with nature, nature of apocalypse, entry into New World. nature of the New World, the presence of a leader, social relevance and social relationship. Apart from being a renaissance and spiritual movement, Ayyavazhi stands out as a unique New World Movement, which can be verified through the aforementioned criteria. The concept of leadership is ambiguous in Ayyavazhi. The teachings of Ayya Vaikundar, the spiritual leader, have been practised by followers. However, he is worshipped and not worshipped at the same time. As per Ayyavazhi tradition mirror and lamp are consecrated symbols of worship, which reflects the physical form of the worshiper. In this case, even if the spiritual leader is considered as a manifestation of

Divinity, this is inseparable from the innate Divinity in every individual being. Apart from this, there is a spiritual head for the movement who guides the followers but does not function on authoritarian standards. This is evident from other individual establishments of Ayyavazhi which function independently and work in harmony with the spiritual head. The teachings of Ayya Vaikundar which foreground the value of *Dharmam*, are practised by the followers of this movement. Spiritual values are incorporated from traditional spiritual legacy the native culture, but no scriptural sources are followed. Hegemonic canons of orthodox religions and politics are subverted, to establish equal priority and equal justice for all. This movement has made revolutionary changes in social structure and has pioneered renaissance movements in South India. Spiritual practices and ideologies of Ayyavazhi reflect human values like compassion and show affinity towards the environment. This is the reason why most of the followers adopt, vegetarian and organic cultures of lifestyles. Institutions and organizations of Ayyavazhi are open to the public and many welfare activities are done in collaboration with other organizations. A series of cataclysmic events are expected before the dawn of the ideal aeon of *Dharma Yugam*, though the concept of total annihilation of the present world is not emphasized. All those individuals who practice *Dharma* are considered eligible to enter the New World and following the path of Vaikundar is not deemed as the singular criterion towards salvation. The egalitarian world in the aeon of *Dharma Yugam* will be devoid of all kinds of sufferings and not only human beings, but the entire creation is expected to live in harmony.

The aforementioned facts present a brief outlook of Ayyavazhi as per the evaluative factors of New World Movements. This confirms that Ayyavazhi movement imposes least authoritarian control over followers and has proved its social relevance through the changes invoked on society. It can also be inferred that spirituality of the

movement is universal, inclusive and practically significant. Analysing Narnian series following these criteria of evaluation helps to explore the social and spiritual relevance of the study. This helps to identify various aspects of the crisis that has dawned upon humanity and proposes ways to resolve them.

The aforementioned facts provide a general outline of the study and these dimensions are to be explored in detail through a close reading of *The Chronicles of Narnia* in the light of Ayyavazhi. The study reveals the relevance of re-reading Children's Literature in the contemporary world, especially when ideal and real are indistinguishably problematic. Inherent reformative discourses in the text can be identified only by analysing it through a reform movement. Similarly, the transcendental discourses embedded in the text can be unravelled by re-reading it with the spiritual movement. Conceptualization of New World in the fantasy text, its practical scope and relevance in the real world can be understood by reading it through a New World Movement which incorporates transcendental, social and practical significance. Considering the aforementioned facts, Ayyavazhi becomes a perfect choice as it is a social renaissance movement and a spiritual movement which has proved its potential in transforming society. Re-reading Narnian series through the New World discourse of this movement foregrounds the concept of transforming the existing world into a New World. Such a reading examines the metamorphosis of the secondary world as described in the text, and tries to figure out its suggestive implications in the primary world.