

Harikrishnan M.P. “New world philosophy of Narnia: Recognition and resolution of crisis.” Thesis. Centre for Research and Postgraduate Studies in English, St. Thomas’ College (Autonomous), Thrissur ,University of Calicut, 2021.

Chapter Three

The Chronicles of Narnia: A Text of Ayyavazhi

“Whenever this world of ours, on account of growth and of additional circumstances, requires a new adjustment, a wave of power comes; and as a man is acting on two planes, the spiritual and the material, the wave of adjustment comes on both planes” (Vivekananda).

The Chronicles of Narnia by C. S. Lewis occupies a significant place in Children’s Literature. This series along with the works of Tolkien was instrumental in creating a space for Children’s Fantasy among the mainstream literature. The Narnian series consists of seven novels: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Prince Caspian*, *The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’*, *The Silver Chair*, *The Horse and His Boy*, *The Magician’s Nephew* and *The Last Battle*. These narratives deal with the experiences of four British children in the secondary world of Narnia, followed by other child protagonists. Following titular significance, the characters can witness and involve in the chronological developments of Narnia from the time of its creation until its dissolution. This is a boiling pot of diverse cultures and character types, which in many cases are contrasting ones. Lewis characterises a plethora of landscapes following the romantic tradition and tries to represent the medieval world through the narrative. Transformations of landscape and mindscape are inevitable recurring themes in all the novels which have social and spiritual dimensions.

Evaluating Narnia and C. S. Lewis

Despite the critical disparities regarding Lewis, it is an undeniable fact that he has been and is still known for his remarkable works in fantasy and science fiction. It is also a well-known fact that Lewis was a Christian apologist and often referred to as

a right-wing fundamentalist by some of the critics. Apart from explicit propagation of faith through oral and written forms, religious undercurrents are also found in fantasy sequels like *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Science Fiction series like *The Ransom Trilogy*. This explicitly makes way for a dichotomy not only among critics but for the common readers. Kath Filmer-Davies in *Scepticism and Hope in Twentieth Century Fantasy Literature*, analyses Narnian series like *Prince Caspian* and *The Last Battle*. Tragic events including separations and death are depicted with the vividness of imagination. He points out that the religious-minded readers comprehend the narratives as optimistic, whereas the same narratives are conceived as tragic by the non-religious (43). This implies that the fantasy works of Lewis stand apart among his other creations. Fantasy works like *The Chronicles of Narnia* bring out the scope for multiple and contrastive readings, which are less possible in the case of his evangelic non-fiction literature.

Lewis utilized religious belief as an aid to address the sufferings faced throughout his life. His transition from the earlier period of atheism to a Christian believer greatly influenced writings. This is explained by Michael Ward in the study, "On Suffering". The transformation of Lewis as a religious believer marked a sharp shift in his perspective towards life. Previous escapism from sufferings of life paved the way for accepting the dark realities with a perspective of hope. He believed in the final redemption in a Christian way, by correlating his suffering with that of Christ. His later works including fantasy narratives recurrently deal with the theme of suffering (207). This makes it evident that his literary works including the fantasies have little to do with escapism. Even though the solutions are proposed from a religious perspective, these works faithfully reflect and try to address human problems.

The Narnian series is often viewed as a religious narrative with propagandist intentions by the author. Hence, Lewis is criticized by several critics and writers who have analysed Narnia as a religious fantasy. Writers like Philip Pullman and J.K. Rowling have accused *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a harbinger of racial discrimination and misogynist ideologies. It is also an undeniable fact that many supporters of Narnia and Lewis often entertain vested interests of religious propaganda. Very few among the critics have tried to re-examine the works from perspectives different from these groups of opposers and supporters. Any analytical approach towards the Narnian series becomes valid only after understanding the criticism raised against it.

From Alice to Harry Potter: English Fantasy in England by Colin Manlove, analyses the growth and development of Children's Fantasy Literature. Here, Manlove criticizes Lewis and his intent behind the creation of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. He accuses Narnia to be a Christian Fairyland isolated from the real world when compared to the "other fantasies" of the writer. Narnian narratives are deemed to be spiritual, which contests with the materialism of empiricism and scientific temperament. He accuses Narnia for imposing threats on "secular reality" through its events and characters. Moreover, Manlove observes that all narratives of the Narnian series revolve around the centrality of Aslan the lion who represents God or Christ. He observes that individual freedom, growth and expansion are tarnished through the presence of a Divine agency in these narratives. There is also an accusation that the morality exhibited by the child characters in Narnia is established by "indirection". It is also observed that the calamities caused by World War II had a direct impact on the fantasy works of Lewis and Tolkien. These writers of fantasy created secondary worlds to escape from their familiar real worlds. The first five among the Narnian series is cited as an example for this. Narnia is also seen as an attempt to evoke stagnation in

the readers by confirming and confining them in the past (83-89). The demerits of Lewis and the aberrations in the creation of *The Chronicles of Narnia* are highlighted by Manlove in comparison with other authors and works of the 1950s. This provides a cross-section of the critical views which disapproves C. S. Lewis as a writer of Children's Fantasy.

Following the tradition of Manlove, Peter Hunt in *Alternate Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* questions the intent of Lewis in the creation of Narnian fantasy. He points out that Narnia is a mystic Christian world, where the characters are devoid of free will. These novels were banned in many places on account of religious blasphemy. It is also pointed out that Narnia is the representation of the author's ideology and the narrative is favoured against the characters which he dislikes. Lewis is accused of racism and sexism, as he imposes Euro-centric and patriarchal ideologies in Narnian novels. The writer further tries to create complexity by amalgamating different cultures in this work (9, 34-35). Following the views of Hunt, some of the later critics of fantasy claim that discourses of racial and sexual discrimination are visible in Narnian fantasy. *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature* by Margery Hourihan sheds light on this topic in detail. Hourihan states that Lewis has followed the western trend by describing the antagonist Calormen race as dark-skinned, while the virtuous are fair in complexion. The stand of Lewis is compared with that of Ursula Le Guin, who deliberately portrayed a dark-skinned hero Ged in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Attempt to subvert euro-centric racial ideology by Le Guin remained unsuccessful as the publishers insisted on portraying a white-skinned hero on the book cover. Hourihan further remarks the Lewis look down upon female sexuality and the girls imitate the chivalry and warfare of males. Susan in *The Last Battle*, is unable to enter the "Real Narnia" of Aslan just because she is obsessed with invitations, nylons

and lip-sticks. This is explained as an antithetical attitude of Lewis towards female sexuality, which indicates the inherent male-dominant ideology of the writer. Lewis is also accused of justifying violence in the form of hatred, conflicts and wars. Moreover, these acts of violence by the good against the evil is encouraged and supported by Aslan who represents Christ. The culture of violence represented in these narratives is compared to that of contemporary James Bond movies. Hourihan points out that the works of Tolkien and Lewis have gained massive popularity among children, especially because of their unawareness of inherent religious symbolism in these works. Lack of knowledge about the intrinsic religious symbolism in the Narnian series can negatively affect the youth. This can create an inclination towards violence as factually represented in the narratives (60-67, 101-105). Observations of Manlove, Hunt and Hourihan summarizes the criticisms raised against C. S. Lewis and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The trend of opposing the Narnian series was later continued by writers like Philip Pullman and J. K. Rowling. Criticisms against Narnian narratives create the necessity of making a refined reading of the texts. This becomes helpful in understanding the perspective of the writer and the affective relevance of textual discourses on readers.

Resolving Ambiguities in *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Admitting the validity of studies conducted on Narnia by the aforementioned critics, certain contradictions can also be observed in their findings. Manlove, on one hand, describes Narnia as a God centred world, but also states that the moral values of characters are governed by “indirection”. This proves that even though the narrative revolves around the God figure of Aslan, he never authoritatively imposes set values on the characters. The characters intrinsically acquiring human values is different from the typical characteristic of dogmatic religion. Manlove's claim that the

secondary world represented an escape from the stark realities of World War II, should be read along with the statement of Hourihan who accuses Lewis as a promoter of violence and war culture. A close reading of these novels reveals that warfare and fighting scenes highlight chivalry, enthusiasm and competence; rather than foregrounding and celebrating bloodshed. Manlove's predeterminism of scientific logic and "secular reality" provides little space for the creation of Fantasy Literature. Confirmation to the scientific thought process is applicable in the case of science fiction and not for fantasy which may be secular or spiritual. The standpoint of Hourihan becomes a biased one while comparing Narnia with the culture of violence, especially by comparing with contemporary action movies. Critics who accuse Lewis of violence often fail to criticize, or even comment upon the trend of violence unleashed in many Young Adult narratives. The latter is hailed as a genre that has defied social taboos, whereas Narnia is still a subject of contempt. A close reading of the Narnian series reveals that Lewis himself is aware of the social restrictions imposed on children by the adults. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* a popular one among the Narnian novels, Lewis speaks to the child readers about his inability to overcome taboos imposed by the adult world over children's books. "... whom I won't describe, because if I did the grown-ups would probably not let you read this book ..." (Lewis *The Lion, the Witch* 180). His statement reflects the gravity of control imposed by the adult world over juvenile readers. This gives a glimpse of Lewis as a writer who dreamt of changes in Children's Literature, and probably anticipated the emergence of Young Adult fiction.

The charges of misogyny and racism on Lewis are more serious charges which need to be closely examined. The repeatedly cited case of sexism is that of Susan, one of the protagonists who is banned from entering 'Real Narnia' just because of her

femininity. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, analyses various perspectives of critics about the Narnian series in *A Sword between the Sexes?* Leeuwen clarifies that Lewis deliberately uses a pair of male and female children as rulers of Narnia as if intended to equalize gender disparity. Moreover, it is pointed out the most celebrated character throughout the novels is Lucy the youngest girl and not any of the male figures. The case of Susan is analysed from a different perspective in the light of original passages from *The Last Battle*. Social acceptability became more important for Susan than the inner relation with siblings and she distanced herself from Narnia too (51). Misinterpretations about Susan are further clarified by Brian Carnell who explains that the accusations of Pullman and Rowling are baseless. Like Leeuwen, he proves this by quoting passages from 'Through the Stable Door', Chapter 12 of *The Last Battle*.

"Yes," said Eustace, "and whenever you've tried to get her to come and talk about Narnia or do anything about Narnia, she says, What wonderful memories you have! Fancy your still thinking about all those funny games we used to play when we were children."

"Oh Susan!" said Jill. "She's interested in nothing nowadays except nylons and lipstick and invitations. She always was a jolly sight too keen on being grown-up."

"Grown-up, indeed," said the Lady Polly. "I wish she would grow up. She wasted all her school time wanting to be the age she is now, and she'll waste all the rest of her life trying to stay that age. Her whole idea is to race on to the silliest time of one's life as quick as she can and then stop there as long as she can." (Lewis *Last Battle* 741)

Carnell explains that the downfall of Susan is her fixation over things that have no lasting value. Characters like Reepicheep, Caspian and Shasta always try to move beyond the set boundaries and sustain vividness of imagination. Susan like other characters Miraz and Lady of The Green Kirtle is fixating on visible realities and things which have no lasting value. Lipsticks and nylons are not bad in any sense, but fixating on them is a trap. Lady Polly wishing that Susan would grow up indicates that someday she would recover from such a narrow vision of life. Thus, the concept of being grown up as indicated by Lewis is not related to sexual maturity. This is further clarified by Carnell where he highlights the opening dedication of Lewis before beginning *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. This is addressed to his godchild Lucy Barfield, to whom the writer dedicates this Narnian book.

TO LUCY BARFIELD

MY DEAR LUCY,

I wrote this story for you, but when I began it I had not realized that girls grow quicker than books. As a result you are already too old for fairy tales, and by the time it is printed and bound you will be older still. But some day you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again. You can then take it down from some upper shelf, dust it, and tell me what you think of it. I shall probably be too deaf to hear, and too old to understand a word you say, but I shall still be

your affectionate Godfather,

C. S. LEWIS. (Lewis *The Lion, the Witch 110*)

Here it is clear that the growth which is intended by the author is that of the potential imagination and not related to the physical body. This is expressed by Lewis, where he hopes that Lucy would grow old enough and regain the freshness of her mind. That is why there is a hope for Susan like Lucy Barfield to regain the youthfulness of imagination and once again enter the space of fantasy (Carnell). This proves that accusations of sexism against Lewis are biased and prejudicated, even if they are made by eminent writers and critics. It has already been mentioned by Hunt that the Narnian series has been banned in many places on charges of blasphemy. The aforementioned facts reveal that both secularist critics and religious community have condemned *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Therefore, it is an undeniable fact that Lewis is renowned as an exceptional fantasy writer who has been twice marginalized.

Studies conducted on Lewis and his works find a comprehensive analytical expression by Devin Brown, where he minutely examines the charges against the author and his works. The keynote address given by Brown during the 12th Annual Conference of The C. S. Lewis and Inklings Society, created a free space to re-examine the Narnian series through an integral approach. Brown reminds that criticisms have always been companions of fantasy writers like Tolkien and Lewis and this has little affected the increase in readership of their works. The debate between the supporters and opposers of Lewis seem to be a never-ending one. Yet, he questions the attitude of writers like Pullman, Ursula Le Guin and Laura Miller who leave out other writers and reserve the accusations of misogyny and racism exclusively for Lewis. He cites the examples of Kargs in *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Le Guin and Gyptians in *The Golden Compass* by Pullman, which overtly reflect racist representations of the white-skinned and Asian races respectively. It is ironical that accusers of Lewis themselves overtly portray racial discourses in their works. From the Narnian series, Brown cites

the examples of interraciality of Doctor Cornelius in *Prince Caspian* and interracial marriage of Shasta and Aravis in *The Horse and His Boy*. This weakens the accusation of Lewis as a racist, especially when the latter book is cited as a case of depicting the dark-skinned Calormenes as malicious. The White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Miraz in *Prince Caspian* and Uncle Andrew in *The Magician's Nephew* are only a few among the examples of white-skinned antagonists from Narnian series. Similarly, Brown disproves the accusations on Narnian series through textual quotations, verifiable citations and elaborate analysis of critical materials. He also points out that major apathetic attitude of writers like Pullman and Laura Miller towards Lewis arises from their aversion towards supernatural elements and the Christian religion. Adding to this, he explains that their confirmation to negative comments would receive better attention and circulation than positive ones (Brown, "Are The Chronicles"). The speech by Brown has clarified many ambiguities by resolving the misconceptions regarding the Narnian series. Such re-readings provide scope for understanding the narratives beyond secular cynicism and religious fundamentalism. This also inspires individual readers to analyse textual material without pre-determinism and even question the popular notions propagated by intellectuals.

An unbiased and inclusive perspective is necessary for any study, which is equally true in the case of the Narnian series. Whether secular or spiritual reading of the texts should be given importance is a debatable topic, which needs disambiguation. This is relevant in the case of fantasy texts like the Narnian series which are renowned for depicting religious themes. "Secular or Spiritual: Re-reading Anne of Green Gables" by Ann F. Howey discusses the concept of secularizing religious narratives. She reflects on the discussions to purge and secularize Narnian series. This is undoubtedly seen as a reaction against the interference of institutionalized religions

over common people. On the other hand, she also questions the ideological neutrality of the term “secular”. Following the perspectives of postmodern theories like feminism, the possibility of an ideologically-free standpoint is impossible. It is clarified that the concept of secularism is no exception to this and it is not an unbiased standpoint. Secular readers generally avoid religious texts, while the religious readers opt for a wider readership of both religious and the secular. Therefore, the works with inherent spiritual discourses need not be side-lined, as they reflect the cultural identity of people and are instrumental in individual development (395-411). Thus, Narnian series like any other narrative, should not be subjected to restricted ideologies and all possible re-readings should be encouraged. Fixation on either secular or religious readings of texts can afflict the open nature of critical studies.

Sophie Masson, an author of Children’s Literature shares her opinions on the influence of Narnian series on readers, in “Going to Narnia”. The readers who have identified themselves with the Christian belief system need not necessarily interpret or become aware of the embedded religious discourses in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. This fact is affirmed through her personal experiences. Masson mentions that even though she was associated with Catholicism since childhood, the idea of reading Narnian series as a Christian text never occurred to her. She was introduced to such a perspective much later in her life. Nevertheless, she was able to evaluate the work independent from religious perspective (146-151). Reading experience of Masson affirms that even people with a religious background are not aware of religious discourses in the texts unless they are reminded of it by critics. It has been earlier pointed out by Hourihan, that the immense popularity of Narnian fantasy is a result of the unawareness about inherent religious discourses. Therefore, it is clarified that the majority of

the readers enjoyed the novels not as a religious text, but as interesting tales of fantasy.

Religion has a different and unconventional role to play in the Narnian series. In his study *Children's Multiple World Fantasy Fiction and the Journey Home Structure in the Light of the Escapism Debate*, Mecu Ginting points out that *The Chronicles of Narnia* made a turning point in the history of Children's Fantasy. In fantasy narratives before the 1960s, depicting child protagonists as the central and powerful entities was an unacceptable notion. He speculates that this was mainly due powerful influence of dogmatic religion over literature. Aslan the lion who personifies Divinity wants the support from children for anything to happen. Lewis created the Narnian series as a trendsetter through the creation of powerful child-protagonists with central importance (11). This clarifies that Narnian narratives involve in the decentralisation of religious dogmatism and simultaneously confirm to spirituality. Any reader can make out that there are no overt references to any form of belief system in the novels. Nor do the fantasy series promote, acknowledge and standardize any sort of rituals. As Masson had earlier pointed out, recognition of religious discourses in the Narnian series depends upon the perspective of the individual reader. Resolving the ambiguities regarding transcendental discourses in the Narnian series creates space for a better understanding of the text. This is inevitable before re-reading the textual narratives without considering the pre-determined notion about the author's intentions.

***The Chronicles of Narnia* and C. S. Lewis: An Overview**

Familiarising with the text and the author can be helpful, before commencing any analytical study. Conceptualizations and ideologies of the text in many instances can be seen as reflection of the experiences of the creator. Interconnecting and

repetitive themes can be understood and evaluated by comparing the plot of each book within the series. An overall view of the Narnian series can be made only by knowing the interconnections between the themes and narratives of each novel.

Summarizing *The Chronicles of Narnia*

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: It is the first book among the seven Narnian novels and has been since the most popular one among them. Lewis took almost ten years from 1939 to 1949 to conceive and complete it. The book was published in 1950 and was well received by the public. Four siblings of Pevensie family, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy come to stay in the countryside house of Professor Kirk, to escape the air raids of London during World War II. There, Lucy the youngest accidentally steps into a wardrobe where she visits the parallel world known as Narnia and meets a faun Mr Tumnus. Nobody believes her except the Professor and later she visits Narnia again unknowingly followed by Edmund. Edmund meets Jadis, the White Witch who serves him enchanted Turkish Delight and asks him to bring his siblings to Narnia. On their return, all including Edmund chide Lucy for making up stories again, but all the Pevensie children reach Narnia through the wardrobe. There they know that Mr Tumnus is arrested by the secret police of Jadis, who has usurped the throne of Narnia and has caused eternal winter there for a hundred years. They meet Mr and Mrs Beaver who reveal the evil intentions of Jadis and together they set off to meet Aslan the lion who is camping near the Stone Table. Edmund meets Jadis who imprisons him and asks Maugrim and other wolves to kill the children and Beavers. The Beavers and children meet Aslan and asks him to save Edmund. Aslan asks them to fulfil the prophecy of being enthroned as the rulers of Narnia and wage war against the Witch. Peter kills Maugrim and Aslan rescues Edmund. Jadis visits Aslan and lawfully asserts her claim over Edmund, who was a traitor. Aslan, in turn, makes

a pact with Jadis and willingly accepts death to save Edmund. Aslan resurrects himself and revives all the people who have been turned into stone by the Witch. Peter and the Narnians fight with Jadis and her evil army. Jadis is killed by Aslan, in the ongoing battle. The four Pevensie are enthroned in Cair Paraval as rulers of Narnia and Aslan quietly leaves. They rule the land for many years and matures into adulthood when all accidentally re-enters the real world through the wardrobe and find that they are all children again.

Prince Caspian: This book was written by Lewis in 1949 and was published in 1951. The four Pevensie children are unexpectedly transported into Narnia, from a railway station. They understand that a thousand years have passed in Narnia. Later all of them search the ruined castle and find their magical instruments except Susan's horn. They rescue a dwarf Trumpkin, who reveals that Narnia is being ruled by the usurper King Miraz of Telmarine race and all old Narnians have been killed or driven away. He narrates that Miraz, the assassin of his brother King Caspian IX now intends to kill Prince Caspian to secure the throne to his own newly born son. Caspian flees to the forest as per the warning of his tutor Doctor Cornelius, who later joins him there. It was Caspian who summoned the Pevensie children and he is now staying with the badger Truffle hunter and the dwarfs, Nikabrik and Trumpkin himself. They proceed to help Caspian, but get deviated from the path when Aslan appears to the sight of Lucy and the others fail to believe her. Later all of them follow Lucy to meet Aslan and all receive his instructions. They reach Aslan's How, in time to prevent Nikabrik, a werewolf and a hag, who were persuading Caspian to awaken the White Witch. Nikabrik, the werewolf and the hag were killed in the fight and later Peter invites Miraz for a duel. Miraz falls during the combat and his lords Glozelle and Sopespian cry out that the king was killed treacherously by the Narnians. Glozelle stealthily kills

Miraz and the enraged Telmarines attack the Narnians. Lucy travels into the forest and meets Aslan, who revives the forces of nature. Bacchus and Silenus, along with moving trees attack and defeat the Telmarines. The Telmarines surrender themselves to the Narnians and Aslan proclaim Prince Caspian the king of Narnia. Aslan allows all willing Telmarines to go back to the human world from where they had arrived. The Pevensies leave Narnia through the doorway created by Aslan and the Telmarines are thereby assured of their safe journey. Before leaving Narnia the Pevensie children are informed by Aslan that Peter and Susan cannot enter Narnia, as they have grown up. The children reach back safely in time to board their train.

The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader': Lewis wrote this book in 1950 and it was published in 1952. Edmund and Lucy are spending their holidays with their Aunt Alberta and Uncle Harold and their son Eustace Scrubb who was a self-centred bully. Edmund, Lucy and Eustace are magically transported to Narnia through a ship's painting, when they reach a ship in Narnian ocean. Prince Caspian who is now the King of Narnia welcomes them to the ship named Dawn Treader and narrates that he is on a mission to find out the seven lords exiled by his uncle Miraz. Eustace becomes irritated and is pranked by Reepicheep, the valiant mouse. The latter expects to reach Aslan's Country at the utter East, which is the goal of his life. The ship reaches Lone Islands where Caspian and friends end the slave trade of governor Gumpas and replace him with Lord Bern, who is the first of the missing Lords. After a terrible storm, they reach an island where Eustace reaches a dragon's cave, sees a dragon dying, wears a bracelet from its treasure and gets transformed into a dragon. The dragon Eustace painfully convinces everyone about his true identity and they recognize his bracelet as belonging to Lord Octesian. Aslan later restores Eustace into his original form and he becomes a better person. They later narrowly escape from a sea serpent

and arrive in an island of Deathwater with a lake containing the golden statue of a missing Lord. In the next island, Lucy revives Dufflepuds from invisibility using the spellbook of Magician Coriakin, who welcomes the Narnians. They know that the golden statue was Lord Restimar. Later they arrive at “the island where Dreams come true”, where they meet Lord Rhoop. In the following island, they see a table with feasts, where the Lords Argos, Revilian and Mavramon have been sleeping for years. They meet the daughter of Star Ramandu and later her father, who asks them to sail to the utter East and leave one of their crew to break the spell of the lords. Edmund, Lucy Eustace and Lucy sail to the world’s end where Reepicheep sails towards the country of Aslan. Aslan receives them and reveals that now only Eustace can reach Narnia. The spell is broken, Caspian sails back and Eustace with the Pevensies return home.

The Silver Chair: This Narnian book was written in 1951 and got published in 1953. Eustace Scrubb and Jill Pole are chased by the bullying gang of students in their school, Experiment House when they are transported into the Country of Aslan. Eustace falls off the cliff when he tries to prevent Jill from falling due to her vanity. Aslan appears, safely transports Eustace to Narnia and asks Jill to atone her misdeed by performing the task of finding the missing Prince Rilian. She was to remember four signs and Aslan makes her memorize them before sending her to Narnia. Eustace and Jill see a frail old king boarding a ship, but fail to recognize him as an old friend King Caspian X and greet him. They know about it later from an owl Glimfeather who soon takes them to the parliament of owls. There all are informed that Prince Rilian went in search of the green serpent which killed his mother and himself became absconded. As per owls’ advice, they go to search Rilian along with a Marshwiggle named Puddleglum, to the ruined city of giants in the north, as per the second sign.

On the way, they encounter the Lady of the Green Kirtle along with a silent black armoured knight and as per her advice, they meet the “gentle giants” of Harfang city. Comforts and leisure make Jill forget the signs and she dreams of the third sign “Under Me” under the ruined city. Later as they know the giants’ plan to cook them as a meal, all of them stumble down into earth during their attempt to escape. They meet the Earthmen who work for the Queen of the Deep Realm and later talks to the young man whom they saw as the knight. They release him from the bondage of the Silver Chair as he appeals so in the name of Aslan, which was the fourth sign. The young man reveals himself as Prince Rilian and the queen is recognized as the Lady of the Green Kirtle who wanted to conquer the Overworld. The Queen soon arrives and tries her spell on them, when Puggleglum stamps on her magical fire and disenchant the charm. She becomes a giant green serpent which is killed by Rilian and the Earthmen are released from her spell. The protagonists return to Aslan who revives the dead King Caspian and they all reach the Experiment House to threaten the bullies. Jill and Eustace feel relieved, as the misconducts of headmistress are exposed and she is expelled from the school along with the bullies.

The Horse and His Boy: This book was written by Lewis in 1950 and was published in 1954. Shasta the son of fisherman Arsheesh suddenly knows that he is a foster child and the latter plans to sell him to a Calormen warlord Anardin. He flees on the back of Anardin’s warhorse Bree who is really a talking horse from Narnia captured by Calormenes in its childhood. Coincidentally they meet Aravis who is a wealthy aristocrat, also travelling on her talking horse Hwin. Aravis was escaping from a forced marriage to the aged Ahoshta who was the grand vizier of Tisroc. Together they reach the city of Tashbaan to eventually reach their common destiny Narnia. In Tashbaan, the Narnians take away Shasta mistaking him as Prince Corin of

Archenland. Meanwhile Edmund and Susan plan and escape from the Tashbaan city to avoid the marriage proposal of Prince Rabadash with Queen Susan. Prince Corin secretly arrives and Shasta who is his replica leaves to the Tombs of the Ancients awaiting the others. Aravis sees her friend Lasaraleen with whom she finds a secret way out of the city and she overhears the conversation between Tisroc, Rabadash and Ahoshta. Rabadash plans to attack Archenland, intending to conquer Narnia and take Susan forcibly. Shasta, Aravis, Bree and Hwin meet at the tombs and decide to inform King Lune about the invading enemies. They start quickly when Aravis is attacked by a lion and they reach a hermit. Aslan meets Shasta and reveals that the latter has been guided and protected by him, since the time of his birth. Shasta later reaches King Lune, warns him of Rabadash's attack and reaches Narnia to warn them too. Aslan appears to Bree and Hwin, to inspire them and rectify the former. Shasta and Corin join Edmund, Lucy, the Narnians and Archenlanders in the battle against Rabadash and Calormen army. The Calormenes are defeated and Rabadash is captured. Aslan arrives and transforms Rabadash into a donkey who can regain his original form at the Temple of Tash, but should not move ten miles off it. Shasta is identified as his lost son by King Lune of Archenland and proclaims him as the heir of his throne. Shasta and Aravis later gets married and they become the parents of Ram the great. Bree and Hwin marry separately and live happily in Narnia with their kinsmen.

The Magician's Nephew: Lewis wrote this book in 1954 after the completion of *The Last Battle* and it was published in 1955. Digory Kirk a boy living in London during the twentieth century enters into the house of Polly Plummer through the connects attics. They become friends and accidentally enter the attic room of Digory's uncle Andrew. He was a utilitarian and selfish magician who makes Polly vanish to an alternate world when she picks up a yellow ring. Digory is forced to go and bring

her back, with green rings which can help a person to return. He touches the yellow ring and reaches the wood between the worlds, where he meets Polly and a Guinea Pig. They try jumping into the several pools and find out that touching yellow ring transports them to these woods and touching the green ones gives entry into any of the parallel worlds with pools as openings to them. They mark the pool of their world and later reaches the ruined world of Charn. There they reach a hall with statues of several monarchs. Digory forcibly resists Polly and ring a brass bell, which awakens Jadis a wicked queen who had destroyed Charn with “The Deplorable Word”. She asks about their whereabouts and stealthily reaches London along with their return. Even though her magic is ineffective there, she subdues Uncle Andrew and creates havoc in the city, with the aim of conquering it. Polly and Digory transport her along with Uncle Andrew, the cab driver Frank and his horse Strawberry to a void world. They witness the creation of Narnia a new world created by Aslan the lion through his song and the witch tries to ineffectively attack him a lamppost. He is unharmed and she flees of fear. Digory approaches Aslan to cure his mother afflicted with an incurable illness, but the latter asks him to atone for bringing evil into the new creation. As per Aslan’s direction; he reaches the garden on Strawberry who is now a metamorphosed into a flying horse named Fledge, by Aslan. There he secures a Silver Apple, overcomes the temptation of Jadis who had already consumed the apples and returns back to Aslan. Aslan plants it in Narnia, where it grows into a tree to keep off Jadis for the span of a century. Frank and his wife Helen become the first rulers of Narnia. Digory’s mother is cured by the Silver Apple and its core grows into an apple tree with which he later builds a wardrobe.

The Last Battle: This was selected as the best Children’s Literature book which made Lewis the recipient of Carnegie Medal. The book was written in 1954

and was published in 1956. An ape named Shift gets a lion skin from Cauldron Pool and dresses his simpleton subordinate Puzzle, the donkey to pretend as Aslan. Shift becomes a mediator of the false Aslan and convinces most of them that Aslan has returned to Narnia. Assisted by the talking cat Ginger, he exploits them by extracting money and makes a pact with Calormenes headed by Rishda Tarkaan who ruthlessly deforest Narnia. King Tirian receives complaints of this from an injured Centaur and a Dryad who dies immediately before him. While trying to expose Shift Tirian along with Jewel, his unicorn; are bound by Calormenes. Tirian calls Aslan for help, sees dream visions of seven friends of Narnia and Eustace along with Jill arrives there. They release him and Jewel who collect arms and an army of remaining faithful Narnians. They free Puzzle and wage battle with the Calormenes. The dwarfs who remain neutral kill the good horses of Narnia and Caloremens kill the Dwarfs. Rishda Tarkaan who claims that the evil god Tash and Aslan are the same, claims that this "Tashlaan" is staying in the stable. Emeth a Calormene soldier enters and vanishes after killing the hidden assassins in the stable. Ginger the cat enters and returns dumb when Rishda offers Shift who is eaten by Tash. One by one Rishda throws all his enemies into the stable and finally he is captured by Tash who goes away, while all others have reached the Country of Aslan. Aslan appears and reveals that all the Pevensies except Susan have died in a train accident. He later summons all Narnians, and the eligible ones into his domain, while the rest go into the wilderness. Aslan awakens Father Time who destroys the entire creation of Narnia, and finally ends up as a frozen evacuated land. All the chosen ones go "Further Up and Further In" into the Real Narnia, which is a magnificent model of Old Narnia. Aslan meets Emeth a Calormen believer of Tash and conforms his honest inquisition as the criteria to enter there. All

the old friends unite and live joyfully in the Real Narnia, where each chapter is better than the previous one.

Life of C. S. Lewis

The book entitled *C. S. Lewis* by John C. Davenport provides a comprehensive analysis on the life, ideology and influences of C. S. Lewis. Tracing back the roots of the writer is helpful in understanding the nature of his social and spiritual outlooks, which are reflected in his works. The development of his psyche and transformation of perspective provide relevant information for this study.

Clive Staples Lewis was born on November 29, 1898, at Belfast of Northern Ireland. He was born as the second son of Albert James Lewis a legal practitioner and his wife Flora Augusta Hamilton Lewis. C. S. Lewis had an elder brother Warren Hamilton Lewis, who was three years elder to him. Following a lack of cordial domestic environment, the childhood of Lewis was mostly spent in the company of his nurse, Lizzie Endicott. It was from Lizzie that Lewis was introduced to the world of fantasy and folk tales. She was instrumental in familiarizing him with Irish oral narratives and instigating religious fervour through her staunch Protestant background. Lewis was bold and held a unique identity since his childhood. He renamed himself Jacksie which later got abridged to Jack. Albert and family moved to a new residence named Little Lea outside Belfast. This badly constructed house was the place for exploration and adventure for Jack and Warren. From this location, Lewis received the building blocks of his fantasy narratives like corridors, antiques and wardrobes. As the parents were voracious readers, Lewis had ample opportunity to read a variety of books, during his growing years. Warren and Jack used the attic place as the venue to create imaginary fantasy worlds and characters. They named the attic space as “Little

End Room". This bore witness to the first literary creation of Lewis known as Boxen.

In May 1905, Warren was sent to England for education and Jack became lonely in the company of his mother. Much time was utilized by Jack for proliferating the imaginary world of Boxen and he created new narratives in the form of short stories. His mother Flora was diagnosed with cancer and after desperate attempts of treatment, she died on August 23, 1908. Suffering and death of his mother made a lasting impact on Lewis, which can be conceived from his later writings. Death of his wife made Albert move to a secluded life, which distanced him from his children. Thus, Lewis was sent to Wynward in September 1908 to study along with Warren. Corporal punishments and mental tortures in the school created a sense of lasting bitterness in the mind of Lewis. Warren graduated to Malvern College in 1909, which made Lewis more remorse and lonely. Apart from the ill-treatments, he acquired an aversion to organized religion. This was due to strict and compulsive stand made by school authorities over the religious sentiments of students. Despite his disinterest towards Catholicism, Lewis read the Bible for its literary content and was influenced by its variegated imagery.

When the Wynward school was closed in 1910, Lewis returned to Ireland and continued his education near his home for a brief time. Later he was sent to a boarding school in Cherbourg which was near to Malvern College. Thus, he regained the company of Warren and continued the pursuit of literature, unlike the latter. He excelled in the subject of classical literature and developed a unique style of writing, beginning with scholastic essays. G.E. Cowie the matron of Cherbourg influenced his idea of spirituality and created a wider inclusive space of mysticism that included

eastern and western schools of thought. Richard Wagner was equally a powerful influence on Lewis during this period, which shaped his mystical and mythical interests. He had a special interest in Norse mythology and its obsessions with good-evil conflicts. In 1913, Lewis moved to Malvern College where he continued the pursuit of Scandinavian literature and mythology. For private studies, he spent extensive time in the library and within a year became completely exhausted. Albert allowed his son to return home after repeated pleas and a threat of suicide. Albert appointed William Kirkpatrick his former teacher as the private tutor for his son. Under the mentorship of Kirkpatrick, Lewis became proficient in five languages including Greek and German. Lewis also acquired the skills of argumentation and logical debating. Following the influence of his tutor, he became a confirmed atheist and completely rejected Christianity which was a familiar form of organized religion.

After completing the studies under Kilpatrick in 1916, Lewis joined Oxford University the following year after passing the entrance examination. World War I was in full swing and laid pressure on all citizens of England, including the youth of University. Along with many other students, Lewis got enrolled in Officer Training Corps to join the English army to fight the war against France. He made a special relationship with Janie Moore, who was the mother of his friend cadet, Paddy Moore. Lewis served as a second lieutenant in Somerset Light Infantry from November 1917 to April 1918. He fought the war in trenches and captured German soldiers until he was wounded by a shell. He discontinued fighting and returned to London in May 1918. Paddy Moore died fighting in France and Lewis developed an intimate relationship with Janie. Meanwhile, Albert distanced himself from Lewis, where latter found affection and inspiration from Janie. Lewis compiled his poetry from 1915 and published the collection *Spirits in Bondage* under the pseudonym "Clive Hamilton". After

returning to his home in Ireland, He re-joined Oxford in 1919. Janie and her daughter Maureen moved to a residence near Oxford and their monetary needs were supported by Lewis. He obtained a bachelor's degree in August 1923 and after two years became a fellow of Magdalene College at Oxford. Albert was diagnosed with cancer and underwent surgery in 1929. He died the very year which made Lewis deeply reflect upon his relationship with the deceased father. This also awakened his consciousness towards spirituality and a deeper understanding of the soul.

In October 1930 Lewis and Warren along with Janie moved to a new residence which they named "The Kilns". This venue served as a meeting place for discussing creative literature, where Lewis often entertained writers like J.R.R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson. In September 1931 all the three had an elaborate discussion on religion and faith in the Christianity. Tolkien encouraged Lewis to maintain a spiritual faith based on personal experience rather than relying on external manmade doctrines which were later incorporated as religion. Dyson tried to convince him about the healing nature of Christianity and its role in the personal growth of individuals. After nine days of deep reflections, Lewis returned to the Christian belief system by accepting Jesus Christ along with the concept of God. This was the result of an epiphanic experience, when Lewis along with Warren were walking towards the zoo. The former officially declared his belief by visiting the church and adopting Christian lifestyle on December 25, 1931. Thus, Christianity became a central premise of his later writings which include fiction and non-fiction writings.

His work *Pilgrim's Regress* was published in 1933, which reflects the return of the protagonist John from disbelief to faith. He and Warren sold their residence Little Lea and the amount was utilized for the development of The Kilns. Lands were purchased and new staff were appointed, while ownership was conferred to Janie.

Lewis along with Tolkien established and extended their friends circle which was named Inklings. The group consists of writers with similar literary interests who held discussions, shared, commented and criticized their literary works. Weekly meetings were held on Thursday nights from 1934 to 1949 when the Inklings read aloud their creations and evaluated them. His science fiction *Out of the Silent Planet* was published in 1938, which was developed into a trilogy popularized as *The Ransom Trilogy*. These narratives portrayed the experiences of the protagonist Ransom and incorporated covert religious discourses. During World War II, Warren was selected to serve the army for a short period in France and got relieved in 1940. Lewis delivered speeches on air to inspire the Royal Air Force members to instil courage and patriotism. Due to bombing threats in major cities of Britain, children were evacuated to safer places in the countryside. Lewis too accommodated evacuated children in his residence, which inspired him in the creation of later fantasy novels like *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. This finally culminated in the completion of the fantasy series renowned as *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

The Problem of Pain by Lewis was published in 1940, which was a successful experiment by using common language to describe abstruse philosophical concepts. His outlook on the concept of suffering is described in the work which is conceived from a religious perspective. Another popular work *The Screwtape Letters* appeared in the weekly journal *The Guardian* from May 1941 and later published as a book in 1942. The publication was a great success and the outpour of funds was utilized for charitable purposes under the Agape Fund. Lewis began to address British citizens through BBC radio broadcasts on Christian topics, which became popular among the public including supporters and opposers of religion. The science-fiction trilogy which began with *Out of the Silent Planet* was completed with the publication of

Perelandra in 1943 and *That Hideous Strength* in 1945. Raging war did not deter publications like *The Abolition of Man* in 1943, *Beyond Personality* in 1944 and *The Great Divorce* in 1945 which was an extension of *The Screwtape Letters*. Speeches delivered on BBC radio were published in 1952 as *Mere Christianity* and its success increased his popularity among readers. Janie fell off the bed in 1950 and was hospitalized where she died in 1951. Lewis was still busy with his writings and published his most popular fantasy book for children *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in 1950. This marked the beginning of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which consists of seven novels among which the aforementioned became the most popular one. He intended to convey his religious ideology to people of all age groups, for which Children's Literature proved an effective medium. The following Narnian series was completed in seven years and published in the following order *Prince Caspian* in 1951, *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* in 1952, *The Silver Chair* in 1953, *The Horse and His Boy* in 1954, *The Magician's Nephew* in 1955, and *The Last Battle* in 1956. Contemporary writers including the Inklings were apathetic of them and his best friend J.R.R. Tolkien vehemently criticized the series. Depiction of religious themes in Children's Literature was an unacceptable and unreliable trend according to Tolkien. Such speculations were proved wrong by the unexpected popularity gained by *The Chronicles of Narnia* in Britain and America among children. The books were enlisted among the bestsellers for almost fifty years and have been favourites of adults along with the juveniles.

Joy Gresham an American writer met Lewis in 1952 and made a deep impression on the latter. She stayed with Lewis and Warren at The Kilns for almost two weeks and developed an intimacy with Lewis. Her husband later divorced her to marry her cousin, which allowed her to strengthen her relationship with Lewis. Joy

began to stay in England and Lewis moved from Oxford to Cambridge University. Very soon the latter became a victim of writer's block and Joy tried to infuse new ideas into his mind. Joy along with her two children Douglas Gresham and David Gresham moved to a residence in England which was monetarily supported by Lewis.

In 1956, Joy was diagnosed with bone cancer and the couple wanted to spend time together until the impending death. He married Joy twice, where the first was an official procedure at Oxford on April 23, 1956. This was done in a haste to avoid legal issues preventing the prolonged residence of Joy who was a foreigner in England. The couple underwent a marriage procedure again according to Anglican Christianity defying the consent of the bishop on March 21, 1957. This was performed in the hospital bed of Joy, by a priest who was Lewis's friend. J.R.R. Tolkien could not agree or accept their marriage, as he was against remarriage of widowers. During short spans of recovery, Lewis and Joy stayed for a while in Ireland and went for a vacation in Greece. On their return, Joy became seriously ill, underwent a tumour surgery and was advised to go home. On July 13, 1960, Joy was hospitalized again and passed away after consoling her husband. Going through the immense experience of grief, Lewis published his new work *A Grief Observed* in 1961. This was an attempt to find relief from the sorrows of human life by reconnecting with their spiritual implications. After a year his health conditions began to deteriorate and had to go through a series of blood transfusions. Despite renal failure and cardiac arrests which threatened his life, Lewis made a quick recovery after an anointment ceremony. Even though without complete recovery, he returned to The Kilns and resumed his routine. He was mentally prepared to welcome his death. Lewis passed away on November 22, 1963, which was one week before his sixty-fourth birthday (Davenport).

In the above-mentioned biographical facts, Davenport traces the influences on Lewis which moulded his psyche and the peculiarities of his religious outlooks. G.E. Cowie who had incorporated eastern and western mysticism instigated a unique spiritual outlook in Lewis. This can be the reason why Lewis incorporated trans-Christian mythology and imagery in his fantasy works. The liberal attitude of Lewis, especially in the case of widow re-marriage, contrasts him from conservative religiosity of Tolkien. Lewis married Joy Gresham by defying the disapproval of Anglican bishop and still followed the religious customs. These facts reveal that Christianity followed by Lewis is a liberal form of religion which is inclusive and does not alienate other cultures. That is why the Narnian series incorporate a conglomeration of various images and myths, like the Greco-roman and Norse.

Retracing the Spiritual Discourse of Narnia

It is a known fact that the literary career of Lewis commenced with the creation of Boxen and this laid an unconscious influence on later creations like the Narnian books. Both Boxen and Narnia depicts a mythic land with talking animals. The former satirizes social issues, whereas the latter provides solutions to them through self-initiative of characters. An unconscious affinity to India and its culture can be inferred from the Boxen. Allan Bates explains in *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C. S. Lewis*, that Boxen was a fusion of Animal-Land and India. Lewis was influenced by the stories of Beatrix Potter who had created an imaginary land of talking animals through her narratives. Warren his elder brother created imaginary narratives based on Indian setting as an influence of Rudyard Kipling. Lewis combined both of these imaginary spaces into Boxen which he continued to develop even after Warren left him and went for Wynward. Lewis himself was unaware of any connection between Narnia and Boxen apart from anthropomorphic Characterization. The Narnian

fantasy narratives represented political interactions and incorporated cross-cultural mythical figures. The spiritual outlook of Lewis outlived oppositions of conservative Christians like Tolkien, who could little approve of synthesizing Christianity and paganism. Jacobs concludes that inclusiveness had been an integral part of Lewis since his earlier days and it continued to find expression through spiritual discourses in his works (12-13). Thus, Narnian series cannot be compartmentalized as texts of any conservative religion, apart from its overt resemblance to Christianity. Syncretism displayed in the Narnian novels bears a close resemblance to Indian spirituality. The fantasy land always sustains unity in diversity, which quite resembles Indian culture.

Davenport had already mentioned that Lewis embraced Christianity as an influence of Tolkien and Dyson. Allan Bede Griffiths who was a student of Lewis in Magdalene College, Oxford recalls his experiences with the master. He sheds light on the spiritual outlook of Lewis in his essay "The Adventure of Faith" which summarizes the discussions held between them. Lewis perceived Divinity as a concrete Personal God and could not comprehend transcendental Divinity beyond the limitations of forms and concepts. He cites a letter written by Lewis which describes similar outlooks fostered by both of them who were once atheists. Lewis along with Griffiths was in the quest of a complete religion which he found in Christianity and Hinduism. The former had little opportunity to make a deep study of the Indian spirituality and therefore was unable to understand the concept of Impersonal Divinity. Griffiths clarifies that if Lewis had an opportunity to comprehend Indian spirituality, he surely wouldn't have made intellectual arguments against Hinduism as he had done so in *Surprised by Joy*. He perceives that, Lewis would have also accepted concepts like mysticism and pantheism (93). This makes it evident that Lewis had a hidden inclination towards expansive and inclusive concept of spirituality. Griffiths on the other

hand created an interreligious space by tracing the interconnectedness of Vedanta and Christianity. He is renowned for establishing Christian Ashram Movement which combined Hindu and Christian systems of spirituality.

In spite of Lewis unacknowledging the fact, he had an unconscious inclination towards Indian spirituality. Many dimensions of this can be found in his works. Jessica Frazier in *Hindu Worldviews: Theories of Self, Ritual and Reality* points out that Medieval European world described by Lewis bears resemblance to Indian culture. The indistinct similarity between the individual entity or microcosm with the outward cosmos is the common premise; yet Hinduism is different from the medieval European school of thought. Hinduism is characterized by the inclusiveness of diverse traditional practices and different schools of thought (18). The choice of the Medieval world as the background for Narnian narratives shows not only Lewis's overt love towards medievalism; but the inherent acknowledgement of an inclusive religion. It is also an undeniable fact that Narnia is a fantasy land of diversities and contradictions which owes much to Indian culture. It has already been mentioned that critics like Manlove had questioned Lewis for depicting the past in medieval European setting and created an anti-progressive attitude in readers. These arguments become irrelevant when Narnia is re-read as a text of Indian spirituality.

Like the secondary world of Narnia, Indian culture has been and is still known for unity in diversity. Stephen Knapp in *The Power of the Dharma: An Introduction to Hinduism and Vedic Culture* traces the perspective of Lewis on Hindu culture. Lewis was well aware of the fact that the growth of Hinduism is characterized by accepting and incorporating ideas from all outward sources. Knapp explains the fact through an example, that Indian culture fosters all schools of thought and religions. Hinduism has provided space for the growth of non-Hindu religions like Islam. India has the largest

variety of Islamic sects which are banned in many other parts of the world. All religions are seen as pathways towards Absolute Truth and personal spirituality is emphasized. Hence Sanatana-*Dharma* also known as Hinduism is not an organized religion, but an all-inclusive culture without fixations (3-5). It is a clear fact that Indian spirituality defies the conventional format of organized and dogmatic religions. By itself it is a conglomeration of various doctrines, cultures and diverse traditions.

Aslan, the lion is portrayed as a representation of Divinity in the Narnian books and the character exhibits the qualities of a natural leader. Analysing this character can reveal a clear picture into the general and specific dimensions of spiritual discourses embedded in the text. Gary K. Wolfe in *Evaporating Genres: Essays on Fantastic Literature* highlights the scope of reading the Narnian text beyond the pre-determined fixation on Christianity. He emphasizes on the necessity of analysing the universal values exhibited by Aslan such as kindness and strength (77). Identifying the identity of Aslan is inevitable before beginning any specific reading of Narnia. Aslan being the central character acquires various connotations according to the approach towards the text. There can be multiple possibilities to visualize the spiritual content of the text and the re-reading can create a plethora of meanings. The comment made by Liam Neeson about his perspective on Aslan widens space and extends the scope to approach the Narnian series. This Bollywood actor had been the voiceover of Aslan in the three Narnian films. Neeson reflects his thought on the open-ended nature of this character created by Lewis: “He hasn't just made Aslan "Christ-like". He has made him Muslim. He is Mohammed, He is Buddha. He is the figurehead of all the religions in the world” (Neeson). The comment was made by Neeson in an interview conducted by Stevie Wong in STAR Movies VIP Access. The actor’s views

shed light on re-reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* as texts of spiritual movements like Islam, Buddhism etc.

The inclusiveness and cultural plurality of Narnia extend the scope of divergent readings of the text. Sarah Zettel traces the unity of spiritual discourses in Narnian series and Hinduism in the study entitled “Why I Love Narnia: A Liberal, Feminist Agnostic Tells All”. Lewis highlights the underlying goodness within all beings and transcends the boundaries imposed by differences in belief systems. *The Last Battle* reflects this view, where Aslan accepts the Calormene soldier Emeth into the Real Narnia. Emeth was the worshipper of the evil deity, Tash; contrary to Aslan who was the personification of goodness. Aslan declares that all good acts done or oaths kept in the name of even a false God like Tash will be accepted and rewarded by Aslan himself. Contrastingly, the cruelties committed in Aslan’s name will be accepted by Tash and such evildoers cannot be the worshipers of Aslan who personifies true Divinity. False forms of worship and corruption of belief system are condemned in Narnia and it does not matter who is the subject of worship. Zettel concludes that Narnia reflects the Hindu concept of action-oriented result and accepts multiple belief systems. Honesty, sincere search for truth, good path and commitment to action are considered as the criteria for emancipation (188-189). This opens up the scope of reading the Narnian texts through belief systems other than Christianity. It has already been observed that the spiritual discourses of the text bear close resemblance to Indian spirituality, instead of prescriptive and dogmatic religions.

The aforementioned studies and observations conform to the fact that the Narnian series can be identified and analysed as a text of Indian spirituality. Among the various traditions and schools of thought within Indian spirituality, the selection of any specific one is a tedious task. Renewed traditions and movements have been

appearing in India during different periods, like Buddhism, Jainism, Sufism, Bhakti movement, Sikh tradition, Alwar and Nayanar traditions. Among a plethora of spiritual movements in India, Ayyavazhi stands out as a perfect choice due to intricate similarities with the Narnian narratives. As a New World Movement, Ayyavazhi addresses issues faced by humanity and it synchronizes spirituality with social progress. Transformation of the outward world and that of the inner consciousness is the common fundamental thread that runs through Ayyavazhi and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Before re-reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a text of Ayyavazhi it is necessary to understand the impact of this movement and the contributions made by its founder.

Familiarizing Ayya Vaikundar and Ayyavazhi

Ayyavazhi is renowned as a social renaissance movement of the early nineteenth century in South India. The movement was envisioned by Ayya Vaikundar who is known as a social reformer and spiritual leader. Ayyavazhi synthesized spirituality and social welfare, by working for the freedom of oppressed sections of society. Even though the movement originated in Travancore it made a lasting impact on later reform movements of South India. Exploitations of Colonial rule and the local government was questioned by Ayyavazhi. Social reformers like Chattampi Swamikal, Sri Narayana Guru and Mahatma Ayyankali in Kerala extended the impact of the movement and practically implemented many ideas of Ayyavazhi for the eradication of social evils. Similarly, Arul Prakasa Vallalar in Tamil Nadu instigated reform movements and uplifted the marginalized sections of society.

Resources of Ayyavazhi

Readers and scholars can understand and evaluate Ayyavazhi through the available textual resources. Study of the origin, spread and contextualization of this

two-century-old movement is possible only through the resource materials which are known as sacred texts of Ayyavazhi. Apart from the spiritual contents, they describe the historical, social and political reverberations of South India. Exploitations faced by the downtrodden sections of society and details of tyrannical judicial systems employed can also be inferred from them. The following are the major resources of Ayyavazhi, which describe the life and teachings of Ayya Vaikundar.

1. *Akhilathirattu Ammanai* written by Sidar R. Harigoplan
2. *Arul Nool* compiled by Arulalarkal

Akhilathirattu Ammanai is considered as the primary text of Ayyavazhi, which was written by R. Harigoplan. The author who is also renowned by the name Sahadeva Sidar was one among the main five disciples of Ayya Vaikundar. This is an epic poem composed in the local Tamil vernacular, which could be easily understood by the common masses. This work is composed in the traditional Tamil performative ballad form of “Ammanai” and metrical styles of “Nadai” and “Virutham” are employed, along with the use of prose passages. This work contains more than 15000 verses and is regarded as the longest work in Ammanai form. *Akhilathirattu Ammanai* was composed by Harigopalan in 1840 as per the instruction of Vaikundar himself and was completed the following year. The original text is in the form of a palm leaf manuscript and it's first printed form appeared in 1933. Apart from depictions of spiritual discourses and biography of Ayya Vaikundar, the text includes relevant information on mythography, philosophy, anthropology, history and geography. Different versions of *Akhilathirattu Ammanai* are available at present, which include *Swa-mithope version*, *Saravanantheri version*, *Panchalakurichi version*, *Nariyan Vilai version*, *Varampetran Pantaram version* and *Kottangad version*. These were made into printed books based on their original manuscript versions and apart from them, there

are other modern versions like *Vivekanandan version*, *Kalaiilakkiyaperavai version*, *Thirukudumbam version*, *Sentrathisai Ventraperumal version* and *Palaramachandran version*. There are also printed versions like the *Ambalapathi versions* which were published after cross-examination of the existing printed versions and manuscripts.

Arul Nool consists of the verses expounded by Vaikundar on different occasions and were written down by his disciples who were commonly referred to as Arulalarkal. The work is recited as the part of daily and occasional prayers by devotees and it also includes a few hymns sung by Arulalarkal. The work is an anthology of subtexts like “Pothippu”, “Uchippathippu”, “Vazha Padippu”, “Uga Padippu”, “Chattuneettolai”, “Thirumana Vazhthu”, “Panchadevar Ulpathi”, “Thinkal Padam”, “Sivakanda Adhikara Pathiram” and “Naduthirvai Ula”. The verses were originally compiled and stored in the form of palm-leaf manuscripts. The first paper print version of *Arul Nool* was published in 1927 and has been later translated into Malayalam. In *Arul Nool* there are many passages and ideas which have been borrowed from *Akhilathirattu Ammanai*. Hence the latter is considered as the primary resource of Ayyavazhi, even though there also autobiographical references regarding Vaikundar in “Chattuneettolai” of *Arul Nool*.

Ayya Vaikundar

To understand the inherent values and potentials of the Ayyavazhi movement, a brief glimpse into the biographical account of its founder is helpful. There are slight variations in opinions among scholars regarding the exact dates of birth and demise of Vaikundar. This may be due to the dual system of calendars: Tamil era and the *Kolla Varsham* followed in the state of Travancore during the nineteenth century. The following biographical details of Vaikundar is primarily based on the study of R. Ponnu

entitled *Vaikunda Swamikal: Oru Avatharam*. Ponnuru is renowned as the first researcher who introduced Ayyavazhi movement and highlighted the contribution of Ayya Vaikundar in the social renaissance of South India.

Ayya Vaikundar was born as the second son of Veyilal Ammaiyar and Ponnuru on March 12, 1809, at Agastheesvaram Thaluk of Kanyakumari District. Kanyakumari was at that time the part of the State of Travancore and the exact place of his birth was Poovandanthopu. Poovandanthopu was land owned and named after Poovandar who was the umbrella bearer of the King of Travancore. Vaikundar was born in the *Channar* caste which followed the tradition of Palm tree climbing and sale of its produces. The child was initially named as Mudichoodum Perumal which literary meant “King wearing a Crown”. This was vehemently opposed by the upper caste authorities and the child was called renamed as Muthukutty. Muthukutty took the profession of a palm tree climber but was sensitive to the injustices faced by lower caste people. They were doubly marginalized under the tyranny of the British colonial and rule and that of the local government. He was unique in spiritual outlook since childhood and defied the rules of traditional religiosity. He made a pedestal in his residence and worshipped Lord Narayana, which was against his caste norms of worshipping evil spirits and Brahminical norms of temple worship. Even without acquiring any formal education, he was able to instruct his fellow beings and exhibited the quality of a natural leader.

In 1825 he married Paradevathai a lady from the neighbouring village of Puviyoor. Later he was afflicted by a severe skin disease and became bedridden. In spite of various treatments, this condition continued for a year. His mother had an epiphanic dream where Lord Narayana instructed her to bring her ailing son to the *Masi* Festival of Thiruchendur Temple. Following this, he was carried in a large cradle by

his relatives, accompanied by his mother. Unexpectedly Muthukutty ran and disappeared into the sea of Thiruchendur. On the third day which is March 1, 1833, he emerged out of the sea as a renewed personality. Muthukutty declared that he was Vaikundar the offspring of Narayana and had incarnated to destroy the aeon of Kali. He declared that the present aeon of misrule and injustice will give way to *Dharma Yugam* which is characterized by global unity. *Akhilathirattu Ammanai* describes the instructions given by Lord Narayana to his progeny Vaikundar, before sending him for his mission. Vaikundar travelled on foot to his birthplace Poovandanthope where he began a penance for six years. The first phase of two years is known as *Yuga Thavasu*, which was undertaken to destroy the present age of *Kali Yugam* and for creation of *Dharma Yugam*. During this period, he sat in a six feet deep pit and partook only liquid food for survival. The second phase of two years is known as *Jathi Thavasu* which was intended for alleviating the suffering of caste discrimination and for creating unity among all the people. In this phase, he ate only fruits and milk as food. People from all walks of life and belonging to all castes approached Vaikundar for healing and blessings.

The fame of Vaikundar spread far and wide as a spiritual leader who instructed the people to procure their rights and stand against the tyrannical advances of the oppressors. His instructions and teachings created self-respect and confidence in the downtrodden sections of society, who began to strongly disagree with injustices like unethical taxation and forced labour. This enraged the authorities as they were no longer able to impose their oppressive power over the subaltern sections. They raised accusations against Vaikundar and formally complained against him to the ruler of Travancore, Swathy Thirunal Ramavarma, who had arrived at Suchindram temple. Vaikundar assuming the title of Divine incarnation and his stand against traditional

norms were pointed out as accusations. The king approached the traditional astrological divination which confirmed that Vaikundar was the incarnation of Lord Narayana. Adhering to the caste hierarchy of society he concluded that Divine incarnation is not possible in lower castes like the *Channar*. Poovandar the umbrella bearer of the King reminded him of the omnipresence of Divinity beyond restrictions of caste and creed. This was unheeded by the king who succumbed to the malicious advice of courtiers and sent orders to bring Vaikundar before him. Armed forces of the king were resisted by devotees of Vaikundar who assumed a violent stance. Vaikundar asked them to curb their anger in intelligence by upholding courage and fortitude. Vaikundar was ruthlessly thrashed and dragged from the pacified mob by the king's soldiers. Even when he was pelted stones and spat by opposers, Vaikundar pacified the helpless devotees who were mere onlookers of this scene.

Vaikundar was brought before the King in Suchindram temple, where the interrogation was conducted. The king was dissatisfied with Vaikundar and ordered him to be taken to Singarathope prison at Thiruvananthapuram. The latter was subjected to severe tortures and life attempts including poisoning, burning in a lime kiln and suffocating with burned chillies. The final test of Vaikundar was to confront a hungry wild tiger in a cage, where the former was unharmed and instead caused the accidental death of an onlooker brahmin. This was taken as an ill omen by the King who was again advised by Poovandar to release the accused. King asked Vaikundar to sign a palm leaf document stating that the latter would confine his teachings and services within the *Channar* community. Vaikundar tore the palm leaf with his fingernail and threw it aside, affirming his all-inclusive stand on unity. The king was finally forced to release Ayya Vaikundar from prison unconditionally and never interfered in any of his later activities. After 112 days in prison, devotees carried back Vaikundar to

Poovandanthope where the social reform activities began with full fervour. Social evils, political tyranny and religious anomalies were questioned and rectified by him through the commencement of Samathuva Samajam. Social mobilization process was achieved to a great extent through the construction of *Muthiri Kinaru* the scared well, common meal system, wearing of ritual headgears, launching upper cloth revolt, initiating social service activities, the abolishment of devil worship and condemning animal sacrifice. Tremendous changes were achieved by Vaikundar within his eighteen years of social reform activities. On June 2, 1851, before leaving his mortal frame Vaikundar consoled the devotees, asked them to foster unity and work with the stability of mind (Ponnu *Vaikunda Swamigal* 52-84). The inherent values and ideologies of Ayyavazhi are directly proportional to those exhibited by Vaikundar in his life sojourn. Examination of each activity of movement reveals that they were by no means accidental and were perfectly planned for a better future by Ayya Vaikundar. Direct involvement of the leader among the common masses along with disciples lead to changes in the social structure from the grass-root level.

Ayyavazhi

In *Religion and Subaltern Agency* G. Patrick summarizes the fundamental values of Ayyavazhi which were based on the teachings of Vaikundar. Awareness was created among the common masses who inculcated these values for subverting the oppressive canons imposed upon them. Empowerment of individual consciousness is considered as the pathway for transformation and progress of society. As per the study of Patrick, following are identified as the cardinal values of Ayyavazhi.

Dharmam: Righteousness is a rough translation of *Dharmam* in Sanskrit and the word denotes charity in Tamil. Ayyavazhi incorporates both these

concepts of *Dharmam* which inspires the followers to follow social service activities and foster spiritual values. The movement foregrounds the value of *Dharmam* which is summarized by Vaikundar as uplifting the downtrodden.

Courage and fortitude: People are motivated to develop fearlessness against all agencies, whether human or supernatural. The teachings of the preceptor are considered as a powerful voice against all powers of oppression. There is little space for fear of oppression from authorities and exploiters, as fortitude is itself considered as the source of power and courage. Fortitude represents a practical dimension and courage is the by-product value that goes along with it.

Living with dignity: Total annihilation of the evil aeon is possible through human agency and not a supernatural one. Dignified life is considered as the instrument which will cause evil to undo itself. The spiritual discourses of Ayyavazhi and the related rituals were created to instil a dignified lifestyle in people.

Subversion of socio-religious evils like caste discrimination, political oppression, economic exploitations, religious monopoly, ritualization, offerings and demonolatry (112-116).

Dharmam is the fundamental value which fosters and sustains all other principles of Ayyavazhi. Courage and fortitude constitute the internalized expressions of *Dharmam*, while the establishment of a dignified life is its practical implication. Ayyavazhi aims in the abolishment of social, political, economic and religious exploitations, through reformative practices based on *Dharmam* as a human value. This value is foreseen as a unifying force which enables people to grow beyond the restrictions

of caste, creed, race, gender, religion and social status. *Dharmam* stands as an inclusive power that would lead to the advent of the egalitarian world of *Dharma Yugam*.

Reformation initiated by Vaikundar has been the subject of study by scholars like R. Ponnu and G. Patrick. The reform activities influenced and included multiple dimensions of human life including, the social, political, economic and religious spheres. Kadavil Chandran in *Ayya Vaikuntar: Jeevithavum Sandesavum* analyses the changes made by Ayyavazhi in society and its later influences. “One World, One Aeon, One Language, One God, One Caste, One Religion, One Community, and One Government”. This is the declaration made by Ayya Vaikundar and is the quintessence of his vision for the present and the future of humanity. For achieving this ideal condition, he redefined the existing concept of *Dharmam* as: “Upliftment of the downtrodden is *Dharmam*”. The concept of a unified global identity was emphasized by Vaikundar who integrated social service with spirituality. In 1838 Samathuva Samajam was established for ensuring rights of the working-class in society and their unification. Chandran points out that the concept of global solidarity of proletarian class was envisioned in Ayyavazhi, even a decade before the publication of *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx. Samathuva Samajam destabilized the divide and rule policy of British colonial power which was adopted by the Travancore government to exploit the subaltern communities through segregation. Vaikundar unified the eighteen castes which include all religions and communities in his contemporary society. This highlighted his stand against all institutions which separated human beings based on caste and religion.

Pathis, the places of worship served as venues for the education of the illiterate majority of subaltern communities. They functioned as night schools for the labouring class who were denied formal education. Caste discrimination and untouchability

were inseparable anomalies of Indian society. Caste hierarchies were existing in the society where the upper caste people marginalized the castes lower to them. As a remedy for this, Vaikundar transformed a spiritual ritual into a procedure of social gathering. Common meal system was initiated in the centres of worship by Vaikundar which later on took the name and form of Sama Panthi Bhojanam. People irrespective of their differences in caste and religious beliefs gathered in Pathis and partook meals together. This pacified inter-caste hostilities and helped to create a sense of unity and fraternity among them.

Followers of Ayyavazhi wear headgears, especially during the time of worship. This custom was introduced by Vaikundar to create self-esteem and dignity to oppressed classes of society. The headgear is a symbol of the crown and proclaims that all the people are themselves the rulers and no one is inferior to another. In Travancore, the lower caste people were not allowed to wear clean white clothes, nor were they permitted to cover their knees. This was an oppressive custom followed since centuries, where the lower caste was forced to follow an unhygienic lifestyle and an undignified lifestyle. Vaikundar insisted that people should wear clean clothes, follow a hygienic lifestyle and wear clothes covering their ankles. There was also an age-old practice where the women lower castes were not allowed to cover their breasts. The representatives of the king treated women as sex symbols and taxes were levied from women to wear upper cloths. The upper cloth revolt was launched by Vaikundar who insisted that the women should wear upper cloths and cover their breasts. After many decades of struggle, the common citizens procured their right to clothing through the success of Upper Cloth Revolt or *Channar* Revolt in 1859 July, 26. Chandran notes that the followers of Ayyavazhi had achieved their freedom of clothing as the king and his allies dared not confront Vaikundar or interfere with his followers (76-90). It

is a notable fact that social reforms and spirituality cannot be categorized as binary paradigms in the case of Ayyavazhi. Every ritual or custom has a social connotation and enables people to evolve individually and socially.

Religious reforms of Ayyavazhi is interconnected with other dimensions of human life and has been a subject of systematic study. In *Sri Vaikunda Swamigal and The Struggle for Social Equality in South India*, R. Ponnu explains the rituals of Ayyavazhi and sheds light on the religious reformation undertaken by the movement. He points out that the teachings of Vaikundar made a tremendous impact on the reformation of Hindu society by necessitating changes in traditional customs. There were separate water resources like ponds and wells for people of upper and lower castes. The latter were prohibited from taking bath in temple ponds and public wells, which were exclusively reserved for the higher caste. Vaikundar created and consecrated a sacred well in Swamithope, where all the people took a ritual bath before worship. The same was used for drinking purpose, which united different sections of society and alleviated them from discrimination. Apart from beginning a system of inter-dining, Vaikundar helped the people of various communities to share, cook and partake meals together. People brought the necessary items and cooked using the water from the sacred well. This ritual obliterated the untouchability and caste discrimination, by creating a bond of fraternity among them. It was mentioned earlier that Vaikundar established Pathis as places of worship. He also built numerous Nizhalhangals or Inathangals for worship, where people gathered for common worship. The lower castes who were denied entry into temples found spiritual solace in Nizhalhangals. These places were utilized to spread the teachings of unity among the masses and they acted as venues for social service activities. Feeding the destitute and poor sections of society was conducted as a discipline along with biannual or thrice a year festival known

as *palvaipuvizha*. Ayyavazhi creates a ritualistic union of spirituality and society, where spiritual discipline is inseparable from the concerns of society.

People of the lower strata of society usually lead an unhygienic lifestyle and were addicted to intoxicants. Vaikundar made the people perform a spiritual austerity known as *Thuvaiyalpanthi* [*Thuvaiyal Thavas*], near the seashore of Muttapathi. Their routine life and personal outlook underwent significant changes. The followers of Ayyavazhi regularly bathed and washed their clothes. They adopted a vegetarian lifestyle, abstained from intoxicants like liquor and tobacco. People thus began to develop personal cleanliness and imbibed spiritual values. People of the lower class were not allowed to build storied houses nor were they permitted to build houses on roadsides. Vaikundar instructed people in matters like planning and building of residences like: maintenance of proper ventilation, the necessity of adequate rooms and proximal distance to neighbouring houses. It was observed that his instructions influenced the lower sections of society to maintain their houses and premises clean. To develop social unity among people and instruct them in human values, Vaikundar hoisted *Anbukodi* or the Love Flag. This ochre-coloured flag had a white trident mark which signifies the values of purity peace and love. The central spike of the trident is in the shape of a lamp flame which signifies the light of knowledge. Ochre colour of the flag is related to mental strength and the quality of sacrifice. Even today the flag is hoisted in worship centres of Ayyavazhi. Followers of Ayyavazhi are also known as *Anbukodi Makkal* which connotes with the name of this flag. This name signifies the value of all-inclusive love which unites the entire humanity. The followers wear a mark on their forehead in the shape of lamp flame, which is known as “*Namam*”. This mark by white soil is directly smeared on the forehead of devotees and also given

directly in their hands. This ritual by Vaikundar stood against caste discrimination and untouchability.

Ayyavazhi never alienates spirituality from society and its reformatory influence is inseparable from the Indian context. Ponnu points out that Ayyavazhi is different from established religions and occupies a significance in history. Like many other societies, in the province of Travancore, religion was utilized as an instrument of power over the kings by orthodox priests. The same religion was made instrumental in the process of reviving society by Vaikundar. He questioned the elaborate procedures and rituals which were traditionally followed in the places of worship. He condemned the patriarchal forms of exploitations like the devadasi system in temples and ensured equality of women. Ritual processions of unmarried girls with uncovered breasts was severely criticized by Vaikundar. Along with reforming Brahminical institutions, religious practices of the lower castes were also questioned. Killing animals or human beings in the form of blood sacrifice was severely condemned by Vaikundar, who stood for the value of compassion. He was against all forms of violence and cruelty. Worship of evil deities was discouraged by him and adherence to the worship of Singular Divinity was emphasized. As the representation of Supreme Divinity, Vaikundar practised a procedure of burning and destroying evil deities. His acts and teachings emphasized on fearlessness. In the procedures of worship, he replaced love in the place of fear.

Unity of entire cosmos is reflected through the concept of *Dharma Yugam*, put forth by Vaikundar. He declared that the present evil aeon of *Kali Yugam* will be replaced by *Dharma Yugam*, which is characterized by universal harmony. Instead of orthodox religious practices, *Dharmam* is foregrounded as the path to liberation. People are encouraged to indulge in service of the poor and needy to reach spiritual

fulfilment. Worship of any particular deity and following religious ceremonies are unnecessary according to Ayyavazhi. Vaikundar emphasized on adherence to *Dharmam* as a preparatory step towards the New World of *Dharma Yugam*. *Dharma Yugam* represents an egalitarian world, which is characterized by social, political and religious unity. Upliftment of the entire humanity, Singular Divinity, global harmony and prosperity are the concepts put forth by Vaikundar. These reflect the healing effect of his teachings which acts as practical solutions to social evils and criminal tendencies (Ponnu *Sri Vaikunda Swamigal* 53-70). The uniqueness of Ayyavazhi lies in the fact that it is not a propagandist religion and the founder Ayya Vaikundar himself practised what he preached. It is a spiritual movement that works for the transformation of human consciousness on the individual level through the acquisition of human values. It is renowned as a reformation movement which uplifted the marginalized sections and intends the complete transformation of the entire humanity.

The Chronicles of Narnia as a Text of Ayyavazhi

It was already mentioned that C. S. Lewis, the creator of the Narnian series was influenced by India since childhood. Creation of the fantasy animal land of Boxen, liberal religious outlook, inclusive spirituality and depiction of cultural plurality in Narnia have been discussed earlier. Apart from these characteristics, the Narnian series and Ayyavazhi share more intrinsic features of New World Movements. The following characteristics of New World Movements were identified in the previous chapter, which describe their unique identity:

1. Scriptural Authority
2. Subversion of orthodoxy
3. Conformity with nature

4. Nature of Apocalypse
5. Entry into the New World
6. Nature of the New World
7. Presence of a Leader
8. Social Relevance
9. Social Relationship

The last two criteria of Social Relevance and Social Relationship will be mentioned in the following chapters, as they are based on social impact and public receptibility. A comparative analysis of Narnia and Ayyavazhi through the first seven characteristic features is necessary to understand their intertextual quality. It also validates the credibility of reading *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a British Children's Fantasy novel as a text of Ayyavazhi, which is an Indian socio-spiritual renaissance movement. Along with this, a study of imagery and mythography is helpful to understand the degree of similarity exhibited by the Narnian series and Ayyavazhi. Understanding the similarities of the New World in the fantasy novel and the reformation movement further highlights the inseparability between the primary and the secondary worlds.

Scriptural Authority and Subversion of orthodoxy

Considering the attitude towards Scriptural Authority and Subversion of orthodoxy, Lewis makes his standpoint very clear by proposing his inclusive spiritual outlook. Even though he had the reputation of being a Christian apologist, Lewis had a broader vision about Divinity. This is explained by David C. Downing in *Into the wardrobe: C. S. Lewis and the Narnia chronicles*, where he cites the views made by Lewis in a private letter and compares it with his views expressed in *Mere*

Christianity. Lewis is sure that the knowledge of Jesus Christ and his gospel are not the criteria for salvation. Even if an individual has distorted or false notions regarding Divinity, his prayers will be accepted by God. People belonging to non-Christian religion or culture will be saved by Christ himself, despite their ignorance about him. To explain the point, Downing further cites the reply given by Lewis to the mother of Lawrence, a nine-year-old American boy. Mother of the boy expressed her anxiousness about her son replacing his devotion towards Christ with his love and fascination towards Aslan the Lion in Narnian novels. Lewis replied to the letter of this lady in a positive sense that the boy is more devoted to Christ through his adoration towards Aslan. This is because the actions indulged and values exhibited by the fantasy character Aslan and the real-life spiritual leader Jesus Christ are very much similar to one another (85-86). This once again reflects the depth of inclusive spirituality fostered by Lewis. Even though Lewis does not explicitly acknowledge it, his standpoint is a subversion of orthodox Christianity and its scriptural authority. This could be the reason why Lewis did not directly include any Christian doctrines into the Narnian novels. Such an approach brings forth the scope of multiple re-readings other than Christian ones.

It has already been mentioned as per the studies of R. Ponnu, G. Patrick and Kadavil Chandran, that Ayyavazhi subverted orthodox religious canons and reformed Hindu religion. This movement does not rely on the authority of traditional scriptures and the teachings of Ayya Vaikundar are considered as the guideline. The textual resources of Ayyavazhi, *Akhilathirattu Ammanai* and *Arul Nool* are the available resources of the master's teachings. Direct statements made by Vaikundar and values he stood for are given importance instead of mere ritualization. As previously mentioned by Patrick, the values of *Dharmam*, courage and fortitude, and living with dignity

form the cardinal values of Ayyavazhi. Earlier cited explanations by Chandran and Ponnu reveal that the movement stood against caste discrimination, political oppression, economic exploitations, religious monopoly, ritualization, offerings and demonolatry. Thus, Lewis unconsciously and the Ayyavazhi movement consciously subvert orthodox religious canons for the creation of a New World.

Conformity with nature

Both Ayyavazhi and Narnia confirm to nature and exhibit affinity to the natural environment. It has been previously stated that the followers of Ayyavazhi adopt a vegetarian lifestyle and follow the principle of non-violence. Spiritual practices like *Thuvaiyal Thavasuvu* tries to create an intimacy between human beings and nature. The life history of Vaikundar bears testimony to his love and commitment to all living creatures which includes humans as well. *Akhilathirattu Ammanai* relates the inseparable bond between Vaikundar and nature. After the emergence of Vaikundar from the ocean, “*Maabhutham*” the Great Devil along with his party meets him to offer their service. Vaikundar rejects their service and proclaims that he has *Panchavar* as his five attendants. This is followed by descriptions of the five elements who worship and welcome Vaikundar during his journey. On the way, he is confronted by many living creatures who had been hiding in the forest in fear of being killed by the evil ruler *Kaliyan* [Personification of *Kali Yugam*]. They share their love towards him and pray for the redemption of the world. The ocean along with its living creatures and precious jewels pay obeisance to Vaikundar. The Good Deities later meet him and express their happiness, as the time of good-minded people soon replace the evil time (Harigopalan *Akhilathirattu* 237-240). This anecdote reveals that the evil aeon of *Kali Yugam* is characterized by exploitation of nature and its resources. The arrival of

Vaikundar is welcomed by the creatures of the physical environment and deities who are the forces of nature.

Another fine example is the episode of “*Kaduva Sodana*” which testifies the intimate bond between Vaikundar and the animal world. The evil ruler Kalineechan decides to testify the genuineness of Vaikundar by putting him into the cage of a hungry tiger. Having known this fact, the fear-stricken devotees approach Vaikundar and express their anxiety. The latter consoles them and reveals that he is the azure hued Narayanam who has created the birds, beasts and all living creatures. He is the life of all living beings and even if these wicked ones do not recognize him the animals which are his creations will not fail to do so. The narrative later testifies that Vaikundar was unharmed by the hungry ferocious tiger who lied down prostrating like a tame animal. The repeated attempt to instigate the animal, caused the accidental death of an onlooker brahmin (Harigopalan *Akhilathirattu* 282-285). Similarly, Narnia is full of anthropomorphic characters like Fauns, Centaurs, Unicorns and other talking animals. There are also supernatural agencies Dryads [Tree Women], Naiyads [Well Women], from folk tales and those from classical narratives Bacchus and Silenus. Human children, who are the protagonists get the opportunity to interact and develop intimacy with nature through their contact with the secondary world of Narnia. Nicole M. DuPlessis in his study ‘ecoLewis: Conservationism and Anticolonialism in *The Chronicles of Narnia*’ unravels the role of C. S. Lewis as an environmentalist and anticolonialist. He cites the examples of the rule of Narnia under Pevensie children as contrasted with that of the Telmarines and Calormenes, where the latter ones ruthlessly exploit nature following the colonial model. Social stratification portrayed is compared with the food chain and the fantasy land provides space for interaction with nature. Human beings try to associate with the living and non-living entities of nature

and the fantasy land proposes an ideal model for this harmonious lifestyle. Unethical experimentation on animals is condemned by Lewis in *The Magician's Nephew*, where Uncle Andrew is cited as an example of utilitarianism and exploitation. Deforestation by the usurper King Miraz in *Prince Caspian* and the Telmarine race is answered by nature retorting back. Tamarines are defeated by the trees of Narnia who acquire mobility and the peaceful rule of Caspian is established. *The Last Battle* describes the exploitation of nature to its maximum extent, which is carried out by Calormenes. DuPlessis cites the example of a Dryad describing the death of her fellow beings before King Tirian and while doing so she falls down dead. This exemplifies anthropomorphic imagery of nature raising voice against human cruelty. Many such examples prove that Lewis was an environmentalist and animal rights activist even before ecocriticism as a theory was established and recognized by critics (195-206). It is a notable fact that *The Last Battle* is the Narnian novel which describes total annihilation of the planet through an impending apocalypse caused by extensive environmental exploitation. Impending dangers like global climatic change, global warming and environmental pollution at various levels are often followed by predictions of cataclysmic occurrences. Here, Lewis probably unknowingly uses the fantasy land of Narnia to highlight the future occurrences of the real world.

Nature of Apocalypse

Apocalypse and cataclysmic events are expected before the dawn of the New World as per Ayyavazhi and in Narnian fantasy. Both of them describe the destruction of unfavourable elements as an inevitable step before the upliftment of the entire world. According to Ayyavazhi, the entire obliteration of creation is not expected to happen before the dawn of the New World. "Thiruvachakam – 4" of *Akhilathirattu Ammanai*, describes the events before the commencement of *Dharma Yugam*. The

destructive process happens in different stages, through the passage of time and the forces of nature conduct the annihilation process. The arrival of eighteen Durga Goddesses in the nation of Maha Panchamirutham and heavy rainfall are perceived as forces of destruction. The destructive forces within the collective consciousness of human beings are also foreseen as the causes of massive annihilation. In between different periods of destructive processes, there are also hopeful junctures where people attain fulfilment of life and redemption from bondage. Each process of annihilation ends with the description that, those which are to be destroyed will be annihilated and the rest shall flourish (Harigopalan *Akhilathirattu* 252-253). The apocalypse described in Chapter 14 of *The Last Battle* by Lewis is based on Christian belief, where all characters have to die to reach Paradise. The Pevensie children die in a railway accident and subsequently bear witness to the total annihilation of Narnia. Destruction begins with the awakening of the father Time who blows a horn and all the stars fall to make the sky pitch black. All Narnians are judged by Aslan and the chosen find a place in the Real Narnia. It is worth to note that there is no hellfire to torment the unworthy who are unable to face Aslan and they simply run away into the wilderness. Later all the creations are eaten up by dragons and giant lizards, and the oceans overflow all the terrains. The enlarged sun becomes red hot along with the moon which fuses with the former and later squeezed by Father Time who discards his trumpet into the ocean. Finally, Narnia becomes frozen and void without any light (Lewis *Last Battle* 749-753). The similarity of this case with that of Ayyavazhi is that, the forces of nature cause destruction to the creation. It is also to be noted that Apocalypse of Narnia occurred after limitless exploitation of nature. The major difference is that in Narnia the New World is a parallel world which is inorganically a replica of the former. Ayyavazhi, on the other hand, proposes the transformation of the existing world itself

into the New World through a series of purgatory processes. The Golden Age described in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is very much similar to the New World of *Dharma Yugam* in Ayyavazhi. This Narnian book describes different stages of transforming the landscape and the mindscape of its inhabitants. Beginning with the end of the hundred years old winter and ending with the coronation of Pevensie siblings, the Golden Age is finally established through different stages of the refinement process. This case is similar to Ayyavazhi, where the inhabitants need not face death to reach the cherished New World.

Entry into the New World

The criteria to reach the New World as per Ayyavazhi and the Narnian narrative is not belief in any particular dogma or doctrines. As per Ayyavazhi, *Dharma Yugam* is the aeon of *Dharmam*, where all those who following *Dharmam* can evolve themselves and find a place in the New World. As each individual is responsible for one's own destiny, there is no divine agency for transportation to the New World. Similarly, Aslan merely acts as an agent in the judgement scene, where he neither punishes nor selects anybody. Those who are unable to look straight into his eyes do not find a place in the Real Narnia, as they are likely to be haunted by memories of past actions. This is similar to Ayyavazhi which emphasis on the acquisition of values like *Dharmam*, courage and fortitude, and living with dignity. This rules out possibilities of fear and guilty conscience in individuals, by intrinsically empowering them. Ayyavazhi has also incorporated the concept of judgement before the commencement of *Dharma Yugam*. Ayya Vaikundar judges *Kalineechan* who represents the collective consciousness of evil since the dawn of time. He is interrogated for committing crimes of corrupting the consciousness of all individuals and for unleashing all the evil deeds without any repentance. The epitome of evil is made to surrender all his

powers and is punished by his own forces of illusion who torment him in fire and finally dump him into worm pit (Harigopalan *Akhilathirattu* 369-377). Similar to Ayyavazhi, scholars reveal that the concept of evil is an impersonal one in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The epitome of evil, Tash in *The Last Battle* is closely examined by Lawrence Watt-Evans in "On the Origins of Evil". He points out that Tash arrives in Narnia only after people summoned it and is different from Aslan who appears only when needed. Aslan is the representation of Divinity who created individual beings and they, in turn, created Tash. Tash represents the collective consciousness of evil rather than any particular individual being or deity. The paramount of criminal activities, exploitation of nature, religious monopoly and subjugation together give rise to the advent of Tash (31-32). The collective and impersonal representation of evil is a common factor of Narnia and Ayyavazhi. Ayyavazhi uses terminologies like *Neechan*, *Kaliyan*, *Kailneechan* and *Venneechan* as various representations of evil without fixation of individual identities. As per changing situations, these epitomes refer to the corrupt local ruler, the tyrant coloniser, the evil counsellors or other beings who indulge and instigate evil activities in society. Vaikundar tries to point out oppression and intend to eradicate evil nature within the individuals who misuse power. Thus, he did not indulge in armed revolutions nor did he promote any forms of physical violence.

Nature of the New World

Description of the New World is an interesting fact in the case of Narnian novels, as the fantasy land itself represents an egalitarian and harmonious world. Chapters 15 and 16 of *The Last Battle* give elaborate descriptions of Real Narnia, where all are free from sufferings and exhibit their potentials to their maximum. This replicates the concept of a Paradise where people meet their lost ones and old friends. The readers

are familiarized with the selection process of judgement and the joy of uniting with all good beings fill the mood. The Golden Age in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is different from this, as it foregrounds the value of unity and harmony instead of the selection process. Here, a new social order is created without rooting out society and replanting it in a better setting. This exemplifies the organic transformation of the primary world through human agency, which is similar to *Dharma Yugam* of Ayyavazhi. Thaliyil Lakshmanan in *Bhagavan Sri Vaikunda Swamiyum Pravachanangalum* compiles the prophecies of Ayya Vaikundar from various sources of Ayyavazhi. Here it is pointed out that in *Dharma Yugam* the population of human beings will be very less, which is an aftermath of various cataclysmic events. Social progress will be immense and inexplicable bliss will be conferred by Divinity to the entire humanity. Vaikundar will appear again in the form of an ascetic and will rule the entire world along with another young ascetic under one umbrella. Vaikundar will transfer all his powers to that young ascetic who is described to be strong as an elephant (92-102). The young ascetic can be understood as the refined and redefined representation of *Dharmam*. Moreover, this scene confirms the unification process fulfilled by Vaikundar and later renunciation of his powers. Such a scene marks a stark resemblance in Chapter 17 of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, where Aslan wins back Narnia from Jadis and transfers powers to the four Pevensie siblings. Even being the supreme centre of power and the unifying force, Aslan relinquishes his claim over Narnia. After assuring the safety of the land and coronating the protagonists, he quietly slips away. As ideal rulers of Narnia, the four Pevensie children later became renowned for the values which they exhibited. Peter was entitled as “the Magnificent”, Susan as “the Gentle”, Edmund as “the Just” and Lucy as “the Valiant” (Lewis *The Lion, the Witch* 192-195). Creation of a unified New World and decentralization of power is the common theme

of Narnia and Ayyavazhi. In both of them, values are foregrounded instead of individual power centres and individual ruler is nothing but a representation of human values. Unification of the entire creation and decentralization of power equates the Golden Age of Narnia and *Dharma Yugam* of Ayyavazhi.

Presence of a Leader

The presence of a leader is a common characteristic feature of the Narnian narratives and Ayyavazhi. Parallel reading of the real-life spiritual leader Ayya Vaikundar and that of Aslan from a fantasy world can reveal different layers of similarity between the two. Aslan is the central figure which interconnects narratives of the seven Narnian books, who is portrayed as an epitome of Divinity. Aslan is an untamed lion who appears in Narnia during different periods and employs human agencies to provide solutions to various issues. This is similar to Vaikundar who is described as an advent of Divinity, who incarnates from age to age. Both of them work for the alleviation sufferings faced by the downtrodden sections of society and unification of various cultural groups. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* deals with a narrative which describes the unification of Narnian inhabitants, beyond their racial prejudices. A fine example can be found from the references to the Giant Rumblebuffin and the destruction of the tyrannical rule of the White Witch. The Narnians were always obsessed with the concept of race and considered specific races as evil. The righteous action of rescuing the Narnians by Giant Rumblebuffin cleared the century-old misconception of all giants being evil. There is also an instance where Aslan curbs the pride of another lion who was obsessed with the racial superiority of belonging to the lion family. After ending the misrule of Jadis all the Narnians were united beyond the restrictions of race and community, which is evident from the gatherings assembled for the coronation of the Pevensies. Narnians began to be judged only through

their actions as good or bad, which is evident from the terms such as “good centaurs” and “good dwarfs”. (Lewis *The Lion, the Witch 190-195*). This is similar to the struggle against the misrule of the ruler of Travancore led by Vaikundar, who united the eighteen castes. The various practices and activities of Ayyavazhi to foster unity and dispel discrimination have already been discussed. The Golden Age described in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* can be understood as the representation of *Dharma Yugam* in Ayyavazhi which is based on the idea of global unity: One World, One Aeon, One Language, One God, One Caste, One Religion, One Community, and One Government.

Vaikundar, like Aslan, is considered as the representation of Divinity and both of them lived as common individuals among the masses. Both of them exhibited extraordinary powers and were renowned as healers. They shared the experiences of the pain and sufferings like any common individual. Both of them were captured and tortured by their opposers, where the onlookers could evaluate and appreciate courage and fortitude exhibited these leaders. The case of Aslan has been analysed by Angie Dessi Witantri in her study “A Symbolic Character of Aslan the Great Lion”. The execution of Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is often related to The Passion of Christ, which is a misconception according to Witantri. Like Christ was betrayed by Judas, Aslan is not betrayed by anyone. Edmund was a traitor in the eyes of his family members but is in no way connected to or forces Aslan for his sacrifice. Without any external pressure, Aslan willingly allows himself to be executed by Jadis. The Narnians are all ever faithful to him and Susan and Lucy bear witness to his execution (10). Even though his scene has little likeness to the Christian narrative of crucifixion, it bears a close resemblance to the trial scene of Ayya Vaikundar as described in *Akhilathirattu Ammanai*. Ayya Vaikundar becomes aware of the king’s

intentions to interrogate and imprison him. Vaikundar runs into the ocean where he meets his father Lord Narayana and receives instructions from him which is renowned as “*Muttapathi Vinchai – I*”. Lord Narayana asks Vaikundar to bear fortitude and assures him about his successful return after imprisonment. *Muttapathi Vinchai* also summarized the events of the future when the evil rule of *Kalineechan* will end and *Dharma Yugam* will be established. Vaikundar returns and willingly allows the king’s soldiers to bind, drag and torture him. When the king interrogates him, he refuses to give explicate answers and was immediately imprisoned. After outliving various attempts to assassinate him, Vaikundar returns unharmed after the 112 days of imprisonment (Harigopalan *Akhilathirattu* 270-286). The resurrection of Aslan can be related to the unharmed return of Vaikundar after multiple attempts on his life. Like the latter, Aslan too was aware of his resurrection after the White Witch’s attempt on his life. This is explained by Aslan to Susan and Lucy, where it is hinted that he was present before the dawn of time and knew about the Deeper Magic which ensures his safe return from the clutches of Jadis (Lewis *The Lion, the Witch* 185). Aslan later enlivens the Narnians who were metamorphosized into stone statues by Jadis. Consequently, the Narnians win the battle over the forces of evil and Narnia is metamorphosized into a New World. Human agencies are entrusted to establish righteousness in society in both Narnian narratives and Ayyavazhi. Just as the four Pevensie siblings are destined by Aslan to rule out evil from Narnia, Ayyavazhi encourages people to live with dignity, to annihilate the evil aeon of *Kali Yugam*.

Apart from the physical persona of Ayya Vaikundar and Aslan, they are also similar in their spiritual identities. *Akhilathirattu Ammanai* describes Vaikundar as the offspring of Lord Narayana, who resides in the ocean. “*Muttapathi Vinchai – I*” stated before, describes one of the instances when Vaikundar, as a son receives

instructions from his father. Aslan too is referred to as the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the-Sea. Aslan expresses his desire to defy the Deep Magic established in Narnia at the time of its creation, but is bound by the rules established by his father. (Lewis *The Lion. The Witch* 175-176). Yet Aslan himself is described as the creator of Narnia in *The Magician's Nephew*, where he is the representation of Supreme Divinity. Aslan has undertaken the role of protector throughout the seven books of Narnia, where he arrives to set right the problems. He reveals himself to be the annihilator of creation in his conversation with Jill Pole in *The Silver Chair*. When she asks Aslan whether he has eaten girls, Aslan replies that "I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms" (Lewis *Magician's Nephew* 557). This is equivalent to the Indian concept of Divinity from which the entire creation emerges, is sustained by it and later get dissolved in it. Confirming to this principle of *Advaita Vedanta*, Vaikundar is described as the Supreme Entity by his father Lord Narayana in *Akhilathirattu*. "You are Sivan, You are Nathan, You are Mahavishnu. O My son! Yourself is penance, You are Brahma, You are the beginning of all varieties of the creation" 'சிவனும்நீ நாதனும்நீ திருமாலும் நீமகனே / தவவும்தீ வேதனும்நீ சங்கமுத லெங்கும்நீயே' (Harigopalan *Akhilathirattu*; my trans.; 210).

Vaikundar is not only described as the creator, the preserver and annihilator of creation, but as their primordial source of all creations. Brahman according to the Upanishads is the source of creation, which is Omnipresent and non-dual by existence. Ekam in Ayyavazhi is the synonym for Brahman, the Singular Divinity according to Indian spirituality. Lewis was aware of the underlying unity which problematizes the conceptions of polytheism and monotheism in India. He expresses his views on the Singular Divinity in *Allegory of Love*, which summarizes his exposure to the

concept of *Ekam*. “The principle, I understand, is well illustrated in the history of Indian Religion. Behind the gods arises the One, and the gods as well as men are only his dreams” (Lewis *Allegory* 57). Unconsciously Lewis has interwoven this concept of Singular Divinity underlying all pluralities, in his representation of Aslan. The observation of Zettel has been cited earlier where Aslan accepts Emeth, the worshipper of the evil deity Tash into the Real Narnia. Here, Lewis unknowingly transcends the limitations of names and forms, where he problematizes embodied Divinity in Aslan with the Transcendental. This is similar to Vaikundar who is considered as the manifestation of Singular Divinity, *Ekam*. In ‘Uchchippathippu’ of *Arul Nool*, Vaikundar is described as: “The One which remains as Singular even after being encompassing everything. Renowned throughout the cosmos as Lord of Illusion, Preceptor and Ascetic” ‘எங்கும் நிறைந்தவர் ஏகமாய் நின்றவர் / மண்டலம் புகழ்படைத்த மாயன் குரு சன்னியாசி’ (Vaikuntanathar *Arul Nool*; my trans.; 73).

Similarly, Aslan is a Lion with magical powers, he is a preceptor who guides the Narnians and is an ascetic who renounced his claim on the throne, in spite of being its sovereign creator.

Mythography and Symbolism

Akhilathirattu Ammanai is a mythographic narrative that interconnects history and myth while describing the biographical account of Ayya Vaikundar. He is described as an incarnation of Mayon [Lord Vishnu], who took birth as a human being as per predestined decision. The narrative of this epic is different from that of traditional Puranas, where the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu is highlighted and enumerated sequentially. They divide time into cyclical recurrences of four aeons, the *Chathuryugas*. On the other hand, *Akhilathirattu* describes a non-cyclical concept of

time comprising of seven aeons, which will culminate in the eighth and final aeon of *Dharma Yugam*. The episode of “*Natuththirppu*” from the epic summarizes the events of these seven aeons as narrated by Vaikundar.

Nitiya Yugam: During this aeon, Isvaran [Lord Sivan] replenishes his illumination in the cosmos, when the primordial evil from the collective consciousness of all the creations is manifested as Kroni with a gigantic figure and countless limbs. When he began to engulf the creation, the sage Bodhaggurumuni approached him and tried to prevent him from harming the living beings. Without paying heed to these words, this demon devoured the mountain Kailasam along with Lord Sivan, Goddess Sakthi, the divine entities and all its inhabitants. Mayon [Lord Vishnu] who was a resident of Kailasam at that time quickly escaped from being consumed by the demon and undertook penance in the physical world. Kroni later drank up the waters from all the oceans and started devouring the entire creation. Lord Sivan in the form of a mendicant appeared before Lord Vishnu and granted him the boon to destroy Kroni. As per the boon, Kroni was sliced by Lord Vishnu into six parts, which were to take re-birth in the form of six aeons. Latter had to incarnate in each aeon to destroy the primordial evil, sequentially.

Chathura Yugam: The first part of Kroni manifested in the form of Kuntomasali and other countless demons. Kuntomasali was like a gigantic leech with thousands of limbs, exceptional gravity and length. Out of immense hunger, he engulfed all the demons that were existing in that aeon. Still unappeased he intended to prey upon the creation when the sage Kopa Rishi approached him and instructed him against the destructive act. Neglecting the words of advice. Kuntomasali reached the realm of Thava Lokam and roared aloud. Alarming resonance of the roar awakened the sages from their penance and they prayed to The Divine for help. As per the

approval of Lord Sivan, Lord Vishnu travelled in a boat and hurled a noose which had divine being held on as bait. When Kuntomasali approached to eat the prey, he was killed in the noose along with all the demonic forces in his belly.

Netu Yugam: The second part of Kroni took birth in the forms of two demons, where each one had fifty heads, ninety-five hands and one hundred legs. They were asked by the divine beings to interrupt the penance of Sruthi Muni in Kailasam, to get their desired boons. They not only awakened Sruthi Muni but tried to assassinate him by throwing him into the ocean. Sruthi Muni unharmed reached the proximity of Lord Vishnu who by now had made ocean as his residence. Lord Sivan named them as Thillaimallalan and Mallosivahanan, who secured the boons of being invincible by The Trinity, all divine entities and their weapons. They subjugated all divine entities, enslaved human beings, employed unethical taxation and enforced forced labour. The sage Roma Rishi approached them and tried to dissuade them against the tyranny unleashed. Neglecting the words of the sage, they continued with the anarchical rule, assuming themselves to be immortals. Ignited by the angered curse of Sruthi Muni, Lord Vishnu assumed the form of a Primordial Arrow, which burnt out the Thillaimallalan and Mallosivahanan with all their allies.

Kretha Yugam: In this aeon, the third part of Kroni was born as the demons Suran with one thousand heads and Simhamukhavan. They performed austerities and the former sacrificed his life in a firepit, when Lord Sivan along with Goddess Sakthi appeared, revived him, named him as Surapadman and gave him the boons of invincibility. Surapadman occupied all the worlds including Kailasam and the givers of boons themselves left their abode to live with Lord Vishnu in the ocean. Surapadman ruled all the worlds, exploited every one and enslaved the divine entities as well as human beings. Tormented by his tyranny the divine entities, Devendran and The

Trinity appealed to Lord Sivan and Lord Vishnu to end the misrule. After the council with Lord Sivan, Lord Vishnu assumed the form of Lord Arumukhan and took Goddess Sakthi as his weapon Vel. He arrived at the seashore of Thiruchendur, tented there and sent his messenger Veerabahudevan to Surapadman. Veerabahudevan tried his best to dissuade Surapadman from exploiting and enslaving people. But the latter mocked the messenger and fought a fierce battle with the Lord. Lord Arumukhan destroyed the entire demon race, along with Simhamukhavan and Surapadman. Just before dying Surapadman accused the Lord of using Goddess Sakthi as a weapon to kill him, else it would have been impossible to defeat him. In the same aeon, the same fragment of Kroni was born again in the form of the demon Hiranyan, who obtained exceptional boons of invincibility. Along with the demonic clan he too established his terrible reign over all the worlds and compelled everybody to worship himself as God. He ordered to replace the recitation of Divine name with his own and laid control over the forces of nature. Lord Vishnu advised Hiranyan through the medium of his son Prahlanan, to stop exploiting people and divine entities. The demon king not only unheard the words of his son, but repeatedly tried to assassinate him. Lord Vishnu saved Prahlanan finally by assuming the form of Narasimham [Man-Lion] and killed Hiranyan by ripping him apart. Before his death Hiranyan accused the Lord of using His ten hills as nails to kill him, or else it would have been impossible to win him.

Thretha Yugam: The fourth part of Kroni was born as the demon Ravana and residual blood of Kroni became the race of demons. After intense penance to Lord Sivan, Ravana with ten heads and twenty limbs obtained three and a half crore boons from all divine entities, which was reduced to half a crore by the clever intervention of Lord Vishnu. As Ravana lost the strength of his penance by lustfully spying on Goddess Lakshmi who had arrived in Kailasam, Lord Sivan determined his death

through the chaste woman, Goddess Sitha. With the existing boons, Ravana evoked terror in all the worlds and conquered the realms of divine entities. He controlled the forces of nature and exploited human beings. Unable to bear this evil rule, all divine entities along with Lord Vishnu approached Lord Sivan. After consulting with the latter Lord Vishnu was born as Sri Raman, the son of Dasarathan who himself was an incarnation of Guru Muni. Sukhaseela Muni was born as Dinakaran who obtained Goddess Lakshmi in the form of Sitha from his ploughland. Rama had three brothers Bharthan, Lakshmanan and Sathrugnan; who were incarnations of the bed of Lord Vishnu, the serpent Anantha and the Lord's pillow, respectively. The divine entities were born as monkeys to help the Lord Vishnu. Along with Kumbhakarnan, Ravana had another brother Vibheeshanan who was a facet of Lord Vishnu. Sita was married to Raman and they along with Lakshmanan spent fourteen years of exile in the forest, as per the boon given by Dasarathan to his wife Kaikeyi. Sitha was abducted by Ravana as instigated by his envious sister Surpanakha and Raman took the help of the monkey king Sugriva to find her. Hanuman went in search of Sitha, met her and subsequently instructed Ravana to give her back to Sri Raman. Lord again through the medium of Vibheeshanan advised the demon king to repent for his misdeeds and return Sitha. The enraged Ravana drove Vibheeshanan away and the latter found a place in the proximity of Sri Raman. Lord Raman along with an army of monkeys built a bridge across the ocean, reached the city of Lanka, fought a fierce battle and killed Ravana along with his demonic clan. The Lord reminded him about the misdeeds in his previous births, but the dying Ravana failed to repent and in turn accused the Lord of using his brother Vibheeshanan to defeat him.

Dvapara Yugam: The fifth part of Kroni was born as Duryodhanan and his ninety-nine brothers, in the clan of Kuru. Lord Vishnu receiving permission from

Lord Sivan was born as Sri Krishnan the son of Devaki and Vasudevan. The three brothers of Sri Raman along with Jambavan and Vibheeshanan were born as Yudhishtiran, Bheeman, Arjunan, Nakulan and Sahadevan who were collectively known as the five Pandavas. Kumbhakarnan and the allied demonic armies were born as Kamsa and his comrades. Fearing his death by the eighth son of Devaki, Kamsa imprisoned her along with her husband Vasudevan. As soon Sri Krishnan was born, he was miraculously transported to Ayothai, where he grew up along with his elder brother Balaraman. Sri Krishnan later killed Kamsan, ending his tyrannical rule, and freed his parents and grandparents from prison. He killed many evil rulers like Kalayavanan and Sisupalan. Later he settled down in the newly built city of Dvaraka. Through the help of Sri Krishnan, the Pandavas were saved from several attempts on their lives made by Duryodhanan and other Kaurava brothers. Through the medium of Bheeshmar who was the grandsire of the Kuru clan, the Lord advised Duryodhanan and his brothers to stop their misdeeds and maintain harmony. They never paid heed to his words and even tried to strip off the clothes of Queen Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas. Even though Sri Krishna intervened to protect her, the Pandavas had to spend fourteen years in exile and incognito, as they were stealthily defeated by Kauravas in a game of dice. Subsequently, the Kauravas and their allies were annihilated in the war of Bharatha, by the Pandavas supported by Sri Krishnan. Duryodhana and his brothers were killed by Bheeman, and the former was reminded of his past misdeeds by Sri Krishnan. Yet, Duryodhanan refused to repent and accused the Lord of having killed him in treachery using his brother. The Lord replied that he will be given one more birth with all knowledge and skills, and even then, if he does not change his evil ways, it would be his total annihilation.

Kali Yugam: After completion of his incarnation as Sri Krishna, Lord Vishnu hid his causal frame under the mountain Pravatha Malai Uchchi and then proceeded to Sri Rangam. During the journey, he tested *Saptha Kanniyars*, the seven virgins and through his intervention seven sons, the *Santrors*, were born to them. They were later entrusted to Bhadrakali, who trained and fostered them. The celestial beings approached Lord Sivan and requested to give birth to the final part of *Kroni*. When the Lord asked them where Lord Vishnu was, they answered that he was lying dead in the nether world. The sixth and final fragment of *Kroni* was born as *Kaliyan* in an inverted male body from the womb of the earth, even before Lord Sivan intended it. He at first mocked and tested Lord Sivan, but later secured boons from him through Agatheesar, after his spouse *Kalichi* was created from his left rib bone. The boons comprised of all the powers, features and weapons of all divine entities to extend total control over everything, including the Trinity. The sages knowing the impending danger prayed to Lord Vishnu who appeared before them in the form of a *pandaram* [mendicant], and challenged *Kaliyan* for a duel. *Kaliyan* refused it out of shame and made a promise that if he would ever torture a *pandaram*, he along with all his kinsmen would perish. *Kaliyan* afflicted the collective consciousness of all living entities in the form of illusion [*Maikai*], which led to outburst of endless discrimination and oppression in society. Lord Vishnu had been staying in Thiruvananthapuram after he had left Sri Rangam. *Kaliyan* became *Kalineechan* the ruler of Travancore who mocked and sent away Lord Vishnu from his kingdom when the latter advised him to stop his tyrannical reign. When the atrocities committed by *Kaliyan* to the entire humanity including the *Santror* became unbearable, the divine entities and Lord Sivan requested Lord Vishnu to destroy him. Lord Vishnu and Lord Sivan sent a warning to *Kaliyan* as *Thiruvachakam*, which was simply neglected. Then Lord Vishnu

incarnated as Vaikundar from the sea of Thiuchendur sea, who in the form of a pandaram taught, spread and acted *Dharmam*. *Kalineechan* unjustly imprisoned Vaikundar who was a pandaram and tortured him, which violated the promise given to him earlier (Harigopalan *Akhilarathirattu* 369-376). Vaikundar judges and interrogates *Kalilyan* who is found guilty of all previous misdeeds and the latter is unable to reply. *Kalilyan* the personification of the evil aeon was annihilated to create *Dharma Yugam*, which would be devoid of crimes and exploitations.

Ayyavazhi too problematizes the concept of godhead after the advent of *Kali Yugam*, where Ayya Vaikundar is depicted beyond all names and forms of Divinity and is not confined to Lord Vishnu. Re-incarnation of Lord Vishnu is a recurrent theme throughout the narratives of Puranas, but Ayyavazhi conceptualizes it in a variant form. Usually, ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu are depicted in the Puranas and the aeons are cyclic and repetitive. Ayyavazhi describes seven incarnations of the Divine and here the aeons are linear, interconnected and non-repetitive. Parallel reading of the Narnian novels can conceptualize each one of them as narratives describing separate aeons. It is an obvious fact that the time in Narnian narratives is linear as described in *Akhilathirattu Ammanai*. Like that of Ayyavazhi, Aslan too appears in each aeon to restore order in society and establish the value of righteousness. Like the Divine incarnations in Ayyavazhi, Aslan too employs human agencies to carry out his mission rather than individually fighting the evil like a superhero. Aslan can be visualized as various incarnations of the same entity as he appears in different sizes in each Narnian novel. Devin Brown analyses this fact in *Inside Narnia: A Guide to Exploring The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. He observes that Lewis deliberately sustained ambiguity regarding the appearance of Aslan in different books. Aslan becomes magnanimous in size after resurrection in *The Lion, the Witch and the*

Wardrobe; he appears taller than a horse to Shasta in *The Horse and His Boy* and Lucy in *The Voyage of The 'Dawn Treader'* is not sure whether Aslan is the size of an elephant or a cart-horse (Brown *Inside Narnia* 207-208). Like Ayyavazhi, the purpose of Aslan in each novel is to uplift the downtrodden and to establish *Dharmam*. The conspicuous difference between narratives of Narnian books and the seven aeons of Ayyavazhi is that the former is a fantasy text modelled on European literary tradition, while the latter employs the mythographic tradition of Indian culture.

Pathis and Nizhalhangals are worship centres of Ayyavazhi, where they have a vertical mirror in the background and lamp flame is consecrated before it. Mirror and Lamp Flame have been the sacred symbols of worship since the time of Vaikundar and later the symbol of thousand-petalled lotus with a lamp flame was incorporated as the official emblem of Ayyavazhi. It is an interesting fact to note that both these symbolic combinations culminate in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The final chapter of *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* describes the journey of Caspian, Edmund, Lucy, Eustace and Reepicheep towards the utter East to reach the country of Aslan. When they almost reach their destination, water becomes sweet and shallow. They see countless water lilies covering the sea and the sea itself gets transformed into a Silver Sea. The Sun becomes brighter and ever radiant (Lewis *The Voyage* 536). This scene is followed by their meeting with Aslan when Reepicheep has already reached his destination. The ocean by itself is the largest reflector surface in the creation and the concept of Silver Sea indicates a magnanimous mirror. The countless water lilies in the sweet sea connote the thousand-petalled lotus. The sun which is naturally the cosmic lamp becomes enlarged and luminescent, indicating the lamp flame symbol of Ayyavazhi. Thus, the Narnian narrative incorporates the symbols of lamp flame in a thousand-petalled lotus and same the Lamp Flame with Mirror. The

situation also has a spiritual connotation where Caspian, Edmund, Lucy and Eustace benefit from the proximity of Divinity and Reepicheep realizes his long-cherished destination of reaching Divinity. Ayyavazhi and Narnia are impregnated with the love and dedication of people towards their master who represents Divinity. However, neither Aslan nor Vaikundar demand personal worship from their followers as they intend to uplift the consciousness of the people and make them self-reliant.

Through the aforementioned facts, *The Chronicles of Narnia* can be identified as a text of Ayyavazhi. Similarities exist in the inherent spiritual discourses, social outlook, imagery used, mythographic and biographical elements; which fill the cultural and diachronic gaps between Ayyavazhi and Narnian series. Analysing each text of Narnia series through Clute's "Grammar of Fantasy" reveals the inherent Healing process and the variation in the degree of its completion. A close reading of the texts reveals that practical application of the values of Ayyavazhi play vital roles in the Healing process described in the fantasy narratives. The Healing process in the secondary world is directly related to and represents the reformation process of the primary world. Instead of sequential reading, parallel reading of each Narnian book provides cross-sections of social transformation with qualitative variations. This approach towards *The Chronicles of Narnia* reveals seven cases of New Worlds with variations in the complete resolution of the crisis. The study brings out the social relevance of recognizing issues affecting humanity and thereby providing a complete solution for them. Incorporating Ayyavazhi as an analytical tool increases the credibility of this re-reading, as the movement has already proved its success in invoking social transformation.

