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 Five

Conclusion

"There is only One God and He is Omnipresent. There is only One Language, the Language of the Heart. There is only One Caste, the Caste of Humanity. There is only one Religion, the Religion of Love" (Baba).

The concept of the New World can be understood only by evaluating the scope and limitations in invoking transformation of the present world. Otherwise, the very idea of a New World would merely be reduced to the representation of some impractical utopian world. Every step towards up-gradation of society need not be overshadowed by the predicaments of social reformation. Predetermined fixation on dystopian and pessimistic thought processes prove equally determined as the blind belief in utopian notions of society. Re-reading the Narnian series as a text of Ayyavazhi destabilizes the binaries of utopian/dystopian, real/ideal and possible/impossible, by foregrounding values of hope and practical compatibility of life. The issues of the real world reflected in the fantasy work are analysed and solutions are sought out by the protagonists. Ayyavazhi redefines the issues in the cultural context of readers which is common not only to Indians but have universal relevance. Human Values have an explicit role in finding solutions to the issues haunting humanity.

Contextualizing the Research

Reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a text of Ayyavazhi reveals renewed insights into the socio-spiritual discourses embedded in fantasy. The impact of this study can be understood by analysing the relevance of Narnian novels in the contemporary world. It is an interesting fact that the popularity of the Narnian series has remained and even increased over time. The contemporary world impregnated with

digital culture has witnessed the emergence of new and experimentative genres. Despite these rapid changes, people have accepted the Narnian series especially in book form, which was written in the previous century. This can be verified from the survey conducted by OnePoll on behalf of eBay in Britain, which enlists the top ten books of 2019. The survey analyses the opinions of two thousand adults regarding their favourite novel. The following is the list of these top ten novels as published by Simpson George in Express on August 8, 2019.

1. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

2. *The Da Vinci Code*

3. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

4. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

5. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*

6. *Harry Potter and Goblet Fire*

7. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

8. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*

9. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

10. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*

The Harry Potter Series which is supposed to have been the most popular children's novel is surpassed by *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Simpson). Except for two, all other books belong to the category of Children's Fantasy and reveal that along with the children, adults are equally receptive to this genre. Of these eight books, six of them belong to the Harry Porter Series and the seventh one is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. Even though *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is the most popular book, none of the other Narnian series has found a place in the list of top novels. Even though this survey does not cover globally, it

reveals the changing aesthetic inclination of many ethnic groups. The result of the survey also reveals that the Anti-Narnian campaign unleashed by critics and intellectuals did not have a sustaining effect on the readers. This also proves that the readers read and appreciate the Narnian books beyond the religious themes and their receptivity demystifies the polarized accusations fabricated upon these novels.

The Chronicles of Narnia has been influencing the popular culture since the time of its creation in the mid-twentieth century. These novels have become popularised through television and film adaptations. Toys, video games and cartoons related to the Narnian narratives have become an inseparable part of the euro-centric culture. The following films have received the attention of the global audience and revitalised the fan following of Narnian series.

1. *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* released in 2005 by Walt Disney and Walden Media, directed by Andrew Adamson.
2. *Prince Caspian* released in 2008 by Walt Disney and Walden Media, directed by Andrew Adamson.
3. *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* released in 2010 by Walt Disney and Walden Media, directed by Michael Apted

Andrew Adamson's film *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe;* realistically portrayed the characters and themes of the storyline. The film efficiently balances mythic and allegorical elements and systematically synthesizes aesthetics and pragmatic elements to directly influence the audiences. Sabrina Karlin highlights the inclusive nature of the film in "Where Reality and Fantasy Collide: A Critical Analysis of The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe". The film transcended the generic limitations of Children's films and was

widely accepted by young adults as well as adults. The Christian believers could identify the underlying religious elements in it and in general, it catered to the popular aesthetics of viewers. Representation of intrinsic conflicts of siblings and exploration of different strata of human psyche, increased the public acceptance of the film (35-36). The commercial success of the film is determined by addressing the aesthetic sensibility of the public which covers all age groups. More than confirmation to the religious theme, the film created an impact on a wider range of secular audience by adopting familiar themes. The film was successful and achieved a great fan following even amidst the release of other Children's Fantasy films like The Harry Porter. Increase in readership and promulgation of book culture has increased through the intervention of digital culture. Books are now available in formats like pdf, Epub and Kindle, which can be read in mobile phones. Mobile applications and audiobooks of the Narnian series have become part of popular culture. Websites, forums, blogs and social media networking has created platforms to discuss, like, share and comment on the aesthetic and critical dimensions of the text.

Digitalization and cyberculture have extended the fan following of Narnian narratives beyond the cultural boundaries of Europe and America. Apart from the film versions, the Narnian novels have also been able to influence non-European cultures through their printed form. Along with nations like Britain and the United States of America, the Narnian series has gained popularity in third world nations too. Reading Narnian series as a text of Ayyavazhi creates the necessity to evaluate its popularity and receptivity among Indian readers. Garima Sharma reports in *The Economic Times* about marketing of Narnian films in India and the impact of their fan following in India. It is pointed out that *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of The 'Dawn Treader'* is the second Hollywood movie released in India preceding its release in the

United States. Sharma, on account of various sources, affirms the fact India has been a leading market place for Hollywood movies, especially related to the genre of Children's Fantasy. Early release of films in India becomes necessary, as downloadable digital copies will be available soon after their release in the US. Franchise of Narnian films belongs to the top five all-time franchisees of Hollywood in India, which is evident from the success of the previous Narnian film *Prince Caspian*. The film collected 27 crore rupees in India and is counted among the top ten of Hollywood movies with all-time gross collection in the nation. Sharma concludes by citing the data from the international website of Narnia, which reveals that India has the second-largest number of fan-following of Narnia. This is substantiated by the fact that more than one and a half crore copies of *The Chronicles of Narnia* have been sold in India (Sharma). The aforementioned data reveals that the Narnian series has catered to the tastes of Indian people through film adaptations and their book form. Even though Narnia cannot be recognized as an inseparable part of Indian popular culture, the reading culture and fascination for fantasy have created many fans of it. Despite the cultural gap between India and England, the elements of fantasy in the narratives and animation in the film versions have created a receptive ambience among Indians.

Re-interpretations and re-readings of *The Chronicles of Narnia* in the cultural context of India can further increase the popularity of the text. Among the various such possibilities, this study has focused on reiterating the narrative as a text of Ayyavazhi. Ayyavazhi is a social reformation movement which has made a tremendous impact in South India by triggering renaissance movements. Unlike Narnia, this movement is practically unknown to global citizens and has not been a subject of study at the international level. As mentioned in Chapter II, Ayyavazhi shares many features of NRMs, but it has not spread out as a global cult throughout different nations. This

confirms to values upheld by its founder Ayya Vaikundar who never intended to create a new religion or a cult in the form of Ayyavazhi. Vaikundar worked for uplifting the downtrodden by uniting the entire humanity through Love and Compassion. The movement has undergone many changes in the past two centuries and continues to be relevant in the present context.

Today Ayyavazhi and Ayya Vaikundar are usually associated with the *Nadar* community, the caste into which Vaikundar was born. This trend is common to other social reformers like Sri Narayana Guru and Chattampi Swamikal who are now hailed as the prominent figures of their respective communities. Ironically, all of them worked for unity beyond restrictions of any caste, creed, community or religion, and yet they are now depicted as the patrons of specific communities. Vaikundar has been a subject of political debate and historical interpretation, especially after the issue of censorship on *Nadar* history in NCERT textbook of History prescribed for Class IX. The issue began by S. Ramdoss, the leader of the Pattali Makkal Katchi, issuing a letter to the central government pointing out the distorted representation of the history of *Nadar* communities in the textbook. This letter issued in October 2012 was backed up by J. Jayalalitha who was then the leader of All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi from Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. A central premise of the letter also dealt with the inclusion of the contribution made by Ayya Vaikundar in launching upper cloth revolt. M.S.S. Pandiyan vehemently opposes this trend in his article "Caste in Tamil Nadu: A History of *Nadar* Censorship", published in *Economic and Political Weekly*. He firmly believes that the trend of censoring upper cloth revolt and the degraded history of the *Nadar* communities is an agenda of manipulating right-wing Hindutva for political benefits. Pandiyan makes his arguments based on three historical facts:

1. *Nadar*s were originally referred to as Shanars. The name *Nadar* was attributed to the *Shanar* community by non-brahmin Justice Party in Madras Presidency in 1921.

2. Ayya Vaikundar did not play any significant role in the upper cloth movement. The *Shanar* women won the rights to cover their breasts in 1812 from the Government of Travancore. This happened only when Vaikundar was four years of age and proves that the movement was launched by the Christian missionaries.

3. Both Christian and Hindu *Nadar* women were legally allowed to cover their breasts in an order issued in 1869. This was eight years after the death of Vaikundar and hence cannot be considered as the result of his effort.

According to Pandiyan anti-Christian, Anti-conversion and affinity with Brahminism are identified as the reasons behind the clamour for re-writing the past of *Nadar* community. Citing the examples of politicians ranging from J. Jayalalitha and Sharad Kumar to P. Thanulingam and Pon Radhakrishnan, Pandiyan identifies the hidden agenda of Hindutva and Right-wing politics, in reclaiming the past of *Nadar*s. To substantiate his views Pandiyan foregrounds the contributions made by Rev Robert Caldwell and oppositions faced by him in representing the lowly status of *Nadar*s. Samuel Sargunar and Y. Gnanamuthoo *Nadar* issued petitions to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the British Government which lead Cadwell to withdraw the writings degrading the status of *Nadar*s. The former claimed the origin of their community to a warrior race of India and their protest reflects a tending upsurge in the identity of the community. Pandiyan sites the examples of overt Hindutva agenda of Aravindan Neelakanthan and Rajiv Malhotra who foreground the contributions of Vaikundar in the social reformation (12-14). The formulations of Pandiyan reflects the political

implications associated with Ayya Vaikundar and the *Nadar* community. It can be primarily understood that he opposes Vaikundar and his contributions mainly because of the intervention and manipulation of political entities. The fear of Right-wing politics utilizing Vaikundar as a pawn in establishing their political power is a major concern for intellectuals like Pandiyan. The easiest way to destabilized such political upheavals is to defame and neglect the contributions of Ayya Vaikundar. Beginning from the three historical facts enlisted by Pandiyan, it is clear that the intentions of Christian missionaries were evangelization and conversion of the natives into their religion. Hence only the Christian *Nadar* women were allowed to cover their breast as per the order of 1812. Pandiyan fails to recognize the narrow intent of excluding the non-Christians from such a social privilege. The posthumous impacts of Vaikundar have been analysed by researchers like R. Ponnu and G. Patrick. Patrick belonging to the Christian evangelical circle completely acknowledges the contributions made by Vaikundar as a social reformer. Intellectuals like Pandiyan often fail to make a deeper study of reformers like Vaikundar before publishing their propagandist research works. Such studies would claim more authenticity by analysing the manipulative agendas of political parties as separate and contradictory to the contributions made by the social reformer.

The eighteen castes unified by Vaikundar consists of the so-called non-Hindu religions like Christianity [*Nachurani*] and Islam [*Thulukkan*]. His aim was the unity of the entire humanity which he depicted through the concept of *Dharma Yugam*. Vaikundar never restricted himself to any particular religion or community including the *Channar* [*Nadar*] caste into which he was born. The life history of Vaikundar holds testimony to this fact, where he tore the agreement of the King of Travancore, which intended to restrict his activities withing his native community. Like other

spiritual leaders who were also renowned as social reformers, Vaikundar too was later patronized by a particular community. It is not a strange fact the universal teachings of Vaikundar are often restricted within the Hindu religion and mainstream cult of other religions seldom incorporates or even acknowledge him. Such facts should be understood along with the socio-political stance of governments in issuing restricted holiday on the birthday of Ayya Vaikundar. Tamil Nadu and Kerala governments have declared the birthday of Vaikundar as a restricted holiday exclusively for the *Nadar* community. Such declarations marginalize the universal message and contributions of the reformer to the narrow framework of a community. Restricting Vaikundar to the *Nadar* community can increase the entropy of communalism in Indian society and this, in turn, will widen the gulf between communities. Such a trend is antithetical to the fundamental ideology of unity fostered by Ayyavazhi and will hinder the culture of social harmony propagated by the movement. Another discrepancy lies in the change in the birth dates of Vaikundar as issued by the Tamil Nadu and Kerala governments. The former follows the Tamil calendar which fixes this date as *Masi* 20 or March 4th, and this will fall on March 3rd on leap years. This date commemorates the declaration of his incarnation by Vaikundar from the sea of Thiruchendur. Apart from the spiritual connotations, this date marks the beginning of the eighteen-year span of the social reformation movement undertaken by the leader. In Kerala, on the other hand, the birthday of Ayya Vaikundar is fixed on the date of his birth according to the Gregorian Calendar which falls to be March 12th. The reason for choosing a more secular date of birthday may be due to the lack of religious nucleus of Ayyavazhi in Kerala. Swamithope, the birthplace of Vaikundar lies in Tamil Nadu where his birthday celebrations are organized every year. Processions from various places, lead by thousands of participants reach Swamithope on the Tamil month of *Masi* 20. Thus,

considering the religious sentiments of the masses, the Tamil government officially declared as the birthday of Vaikundar as a restricted holiday in Tamil Nadu. Governments thus ensure their political stability to win the confidence of the *Nadar* community.

Nadar community and the Ayyavazhi movement have now become interlinked with politics and play a decisive role in the power politics of state governance in Tamil Nadu. The movement which was intended to carry out an apolitical reformation seems to be polarized in and manipulated for political motifs in many cases. The current religious head of Balaprajapathi Adigalar has raised the demand for endowing the position of a unique religion to Ayyavazhi, which carries implicit political connotations. The political intent underlying this demand is examined in an article by PTI published in *The Economic Times*. Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department's involvement and control over Swamithope, is seen as the triggering factor which prompted Adigalar to make this demand. The interest of the department to administer non-spiritual activities is seen as an attempt to exert control over Swamithope which is the main worship centre of Ayyavazhi. The denomination of the Hindu religion to the followers of Vaikundar should be replaced by a unique religious denomination. Adigalar claims that his demand is supported by Union Minister Pon Radhakrishnan, while it is reported that none of other BJP leaders commented on this matter. The report by PTI analyses various viewpoints which deny the influence of the religious head of Ayyavazhi in the political power of Kanyakumari district. It is equally an undeniable fact that many political leaders are constant visitors of Swamithope, but the separate religious status attributed to Ayyavazhi will not affect the political elections according to many Right-wing intellectuals. It is interesting to note that Adigalar tries to highlight the differences of Ayyavazhi from the mainstream

Hindu religion and his influence over the majority of the Hindu community is questionable. PTI also reports that according to followers, Adigalar is known for resolving interreligious conflicts like the Mandaikadu riots between Hindus and Christians in 1984 (PTI). From the aforementioned report, it is clear that the religious head of Ayyavazhi demands separate religious status and non-intervention from outsides organizations. It is also obvious that Ayyavazhi as an organization and Swamitope as its religious centre are approached by politicians especially from the Right-Wing for their political benefits. Even though the influence of Ayyavazhi cannot be still proved as a criterion of success in political elections, the movement has invited hostility from Left-Wing intellectuals. The latter from their ideological disparity from the Hindutva and the BJP, seem to marginalize the contributions of Vaikundar and Ayyavazhi which on the other hand may fall beneficial to the Right-Wing politicians. This is a triggering factor for leftist intellectuals like Pandiyan to foreground the reforms of minority religions organizations and to devalue the contributions of Vaikundar, who does not even identify himself with any particular religion.

The socio-political scenario of Kerala is quite contrary and different from that of Tamil Nadu. Ayya Vaikundar is unanimously accepted as an important social reformer by almost all political entities. Recent years show a new fervour in Left-Wing parties who have incorporated all social renaissance leaders including the spiritual masters like Sri Narayana Guru, Chattampi Swamikal and Ayya Vaikundar. The party meetings and programmes display flex boards and hoardings of these renaissance leaders who had been earlier unnoticed by the mainstream Left-wing parties of Kerala. The change in their outlook mostly can be seen as a political stance against recent upheavals in the Right-Wing parties like BJP and organizations like the RSS. It is not a curious fact that the latter has incorporated social reformers like Vaikundar for

propagation and socio-political activities. This is different from the political polarization and conflicts of Tamil Nadu where one group vehemently oppose the other by completely negating the value of social reformers like Ayya Vaikundar. A major reason for such a shift of approach in Kerala is probable due to the lack of a religious centre of Ayyavazhi in the state. It is a known fact that Swamithope carries along with it the prospect of political vote banking that tends to create conflicts and tensions between parties. Ayyavazhi as an organization with a definite leadership opens up the possibility of securing votes based on community. It is a positive sign that the political conflicts in Kerala have not devalued social reformers like Vaikundar or negated the possibilities of the teachings. Many leftist intellectuals in Kerala have foregrounded the contributions made by Vaikundar in upholding the solidarity of the working class and uplifting the labourer class of society. This is evident from books by Chintha Publishers which stand as the official publication wing of the Leftist political parties like CPI and CPM.

Vaikundaswamiyum Samoohika Navodhanavum by Joy Balan Vlathankara is a fine example where the contributions of Vaikundar is comprehensively subjected to study. In the foreword for this book, P. Govinda Pillai reveals the fact that Vaikundar was the initial inventor of many ideals that were popularized in the later periods. It is also pointed out that the later renaissance leaders were greatly influenced by the teachings of Vaikundar, from whom they learned and propagated many values. The lineage of social reformers is examined by Vlathankara in this work, where he traces the influence of Ayya Vaikundar on them. Thycaud Ayya [Subbaraya Panikkar] and Shanmukha Vadivel Swamikal [Athmananda Swamikal] are identified as the disciples of Vaikundar, who themselves became social reformers and also moulded the lives of later reformers. Social Reformers like Chattampi Swamikal, Sri Narayana Guru,

Mahathma Ayyankali and Raja Ravi Varma are renowned as the disciples of Thycaud Ayya. Athmananda Swamikal was also the preceptor of Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru. At the age of twenty-five, Thycaud Ayya met Vaikundar at Singarathopu prison where the former had been employed as an officer. Having familiarized with the teachings and social activities of Vaikundar, he persuaded the Travancore government for releasing Vaikundar. It is also observed that Thycaud Ayya was a regular visitor of Swamithope. He participated in the common meal system of Vaikundar and worked for the Samathuva Samajam. After the demise of Vaikundar, he propagated the values and activities of Vaikundar through his disciples. Another disciple of Vaikundar was Athmananda Swamikal who was also known as Shanmukha Vadivel, Shanmukha Vadivel *Nadar* and Kumaravelu. He lived in Swamithope Pathi and later moved to Maruthva Malai where he imparted the teachings of Vaikundar to Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru. This influence can be understood from the social outlook and activities undertaken by these reformers. Arattupuzha Velayudha Panikkar made significant contributions in the upper cloth revolt and nose-stud revolt by demanding equal rights for lower caste women in clothing and ornamentation. He also worked for cultural equality to participate in art forms like Kathakali and right for worship for the marginalized sections. Raja Ravi Varma popularised the aesthetics of painting by incorporation of realism and helped in securing equal rights of worship by the lower caste people. The pictures of Hindu deities were made available for the public on a large scale with minimal price. Chattampi Swamikal became the disciple of Athmananda Swamikal and learned about the reforms of Vaikundar from him. The former stayed for many years in Maruthva Malai and directly observed the influence made by Vaikundar on society. Chattampi Swamikal also familiarized himself with the values of Ayyavazhi through his long stay and association with Thycaud Ayya.

Swamikal later worked for the social integrity by opposing the matriarchal system in Nair community, illegal marriages, pre-mature marriages and untouchability in society. Apart from upliftment of the Nair community, he worked for the equality of entire society and wrote many literary works to ensure equality of education, to promote cultural dignity and to oppose forceful religious conversions. He emphasized on non-violence through his writings and introduced the common meal system after Vaikundar to subvert untouchability. Chattampi Swamikal introduced Sri Narayana Guru to Thycaud Ayya, who imparted to them yogic wisdom and social reformative values of Ayya Vaikundar. Years of travels during later years and penance done by Guru in Maruthva Malai made Guru aware of the socio-cultural anomalies and the impact made by Vaikundar in resisting them. His reformation work began with the consecration of Siva Temple at Aruvippuram, which challenged the taboo of untouchability and ensured the right of worship to lower caste communities. His dictum "One Caste, One Religion, One God" reflects the influence of Vaikundar who proclaimed "One World, One Aeon, One Language, One God, One Caste, One Religion, One Community, and One Government". Similarly, Guru too consecrated mirror at Kalavankode Temple in 1927, which resembled the ideology of Ayyavazhi. Guru established various temples throughout Kerala, where people of all religions and castes including the marginalized sections were permitted to worship. Apart from working for the equal right of worship, he opposed many social evils and relentlessly worked for establishing unity in society. Mahatma Ayyankali through his discipleship with Thycaud Ayya and inspired by Sri Narayana Guru and Chattampi Swamikal made immense contribution in the social resurgence of lower castes, especially the Pulaya community. He mobilized society and resisted the illegal taboos imposed by upper caste people, including the right of using public roads and the freedom of clothing for

the lower caste people. Ayyankali organized Villuvandi Revolt in many places. Accompanied by several people he travelled in a bullock cart through public roads banned for lower caste people, wearing dignified attire which was also not permitted by the higher castes. The first peasant revolt was made by Ayya Vaikundar and Ayyankali followed his path by becoming pioneer of the first organized peasant revolt. Through this, he secured the right of education to children of lower caste communities, who were not allowed to attend public schools despite legal sanction. He established an organization known as Sadhujana Paripalana Yogam, which procured rights of the marginalized communities to use public roads, to obtain public education and to secure increment in labour charges for workers. Like Vaikundar, Ayyankali too was devoid of formal education and made significant changes in society by deriving inspiration from the principles of the former. Sahodaran Ayyappan was another reformer who worked on the principles of social equality as put forth by Ayyavazhi. He established the organization Sahodara Sangham to root out caste system and organized inter-dining and inter-caste marriages. Vlathankara notes that Brahmananda Sivayogi too has been influenced by the impact created by Vaikundar in the form of Channar Revolt. He too worked for the destabilization of the caste system, discrimination against women, and idolatry. Sivayogi questioned the scriptural authority, idol worship and rituals of Hinduism. He raised voice for education of women, widow re-marriage, changes in the matriarchal system and de-addiction from alcohol (7-9, 101-119). The aforementioned facts trace the influence of Vaikundar on later reformers of Kerala society.

Such studies reveal the general outlook of Leftist intellectuals and parties who recognize Vaikundar as an iconic figure and validate his contributions for society. In Kerala Ayya Vaikundar and Ayyavazhi are exalted by both Right-Wing as well as

Left-Wing intellectuals and political parties on both sides instrumentalize Vaikundar for propaganda and campaigning purposes. This is contrary to the socio-political scenario of Tamil Nadu, where Ayyavazhi is made a pawn of political conflicts and polarizations. Ayyavazhi being treated as a separate religion undoubtedly deepens communal feelings and reveals the inherent political agenda of vote banking. This reaffirming the demographic binary of Religious Majority/Religious Minority in society.

It is an irony that endowing Ayyavazhi with the position of an independent religion will separate itself from the mainstream religion of Hinduism and in turn, will lead to sectarianism which confutes with the fundamental principle of unity fostered by Vaikundar. It is a well-known fact that Ayya Vaikundar tried not only to unite different castes withing the so-called Hindu religion but intended to unite all belief systems and manifest the concept of "One Religion". This seemingly politically unimportant issue related to Ayyavazhi points out into the fault of default religious denomination in post-independent India. Even though democratically elected governments belonging various political ideologies ruled India after colonial reign, none of them tried to deconstruct the religious denominations legally established by the colonial masters. The divide and rule policy of Britishers continued to thrive in a different format in the nation by endowing different laws and privileges on religious demographics and castes. In Chapter III the findings of intellectuals like Frazier, Knapp and Griffiths reveal the fact that classifying Hindu as a religion instead of a culture, has been and still continues as an uncorrected mistake. As Knapp points out Hinduism, better defined as Sanatana-dharma, is an inclusive culture which accepts and fosters different religions and belief systems. The system of reservation based on caste and religion in post-independent India, intended to uplift the underprivileged sections has now fostered sectarianism and created space for the vested interest of political

parties. The concept of uplifting the downtrodden as put forth by Vaikundar does not conform to any sort of reservation or privileges based on caste or religion. Reservations based on the economic and educational background of individuals is foreseen as the solution to discrimination and marginalization in society. This is substantiated by the activities undertaken by Samathuva Samajam which includes socio-spiritual activities like the common meal system and education imparted to the underprivileged people through Pathis. Vaikundar stood for and propagated the concept of equal rights for all people and never clamoured for special privileges either for the upper cate or the lower caste sections of society.

Significance of the Research

A close study of Ayyavazhi as a movement can unravel new methods of addressing issues concerning various dimensions of human life including social, economic, religious and political. The recurring concerns of humanity beyond specific synchronic approach are addressed through the reform movement. K. Maheswaran Nair in his work *Ayyavaikundar*, explains the significance of Ayya Vaikundar in the present world. Ayya Vaikundar and his contribution in invoking reformation have not been recognized or even noticed by spiritualists and Dalit intellectuals including progressive stalwarts like Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati, V.T. Rajshekar and Kancha Ilaiah. Nair points put that the Leftists in India have confined themselves merely into Left-Wing Politics which is devoid of serious visions or discussions about ideologies. Dalit revolutionaries have put forth various ideologies and there are also plural opinions on the nature of revolution needed in the society. Nair observes that little attempts have been made to implement the concept of "Counter-hegemony" put forth by Antonio Gramsci. Nor do the leftists have a strong cultural organization at the national level. Cultural revolution and counter-hegemony have been effectively employed by Ayya

Vaikundar through his procedures like *Thuvaiyal Thavasu*. Vaikundar was initially

forbidden by upper caste groups to be named as Mudichoodum Perumal [Lord with a

crown] and his parents were forced to call him Muthukutty. The later revolutionary

works of Vaikundar compelled them to addressed him as the Lord [*Ayya*] Incarnate.

Nair points out that this is the reason why his name becomes first and foremost among

the reformers. Thus, Vaikundar stands as an ideal even for the contemporary institu-

tions of revolution (115-119). Deeper readings of Vaikundar and Ayyavazhi are nec-

essary to understand the movement and the leader from an unbiased viewpoint. Practi-

cal application of Ayyavazhi to solve issues of the contemporary world becomes pos-

sible only by deeper understanding of the movement and its reverberations through

later reform movements.

Policies governing social life on state, national and international levels can be

analysed and effectively amended through their critical readings based on Ayyavazhi.

Understanding and reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a text of Ayyavazhi analyses

various issues of the contemporary world, through the aesthetically popular medium

of Children's Fantasy novel. The reading provides a renewed space for multiple and

contrary dimensions like material/spiritual, reality/fantasy, individual/community and

national/transnational. The aesthetic value of the fantasy work and practical relevance

of the reform movement problematizes all possible binaries by foregrounding the con-

cept of a New World. As previously observed the popularity of the Narnian series in

many parts of the world including India, is still on a hike. Re-readings and re-repre-

sentations of this fantasy work can influence people of all ages at a global level. This

can clear out the limitation of limited popularity of Ayyavazhi movement, which is

often confined within South India. Here, the ethnic culture of Ayyavazhi in South In-

dia is foregrounded to the mainstream global culture. The approach of the movement

towards social issues can reach people of all age groups and nations through the popular medium of Children's Fantasy.

The choice of Ayyavazhi as the tool of interpretation becomes relevant as the text itself has a high fan following in India. It has been earlier mentioned that India has the second-largest number of Narnia fans. The interpretation of Narnian series as a text of Ayyavazhi enables the fans as well as critics to identify multiple voices within the text. This re-reading can influence the admirers of these books to identify the fantasy text with their native culture and contextual issues. Which in turn can increase its popularity among Indian readers and renew our perspectives to approach and solve social issues. On the other hand, the cardinal values of Ayyavazhi are highlighted through this study and can be inculcated from local to global levels. The medium of Children's Fantasy can and should enable the religious heads, politicians and intellectuals to make self-reflection on their utilitarian and manipulative stance on the movement. De-contextualizing Narnia enables the global readers to affiliate the text with their ethnic cultural contexts, which in the case of Ayyavazhi is an Indian one. The universal message of Narnia and Ayyavazhi creates and widens spaces for all such re-readings. This can be appreciated by a wider group of people including the agnostic and atheistic groups, along with the religious. The multidimensional nature of Ayyavazhi opens up multiple interpretations in the text and the latter is prolific with multiple themes. Social, religious, political and economic issues in the Narnian series are explored through the application of Ayyavazhi. Plural and inclusive nature of the text and the tool has enabled the analysis of many contemporary issues like domestic violence, gender discrimination, human trafficking, terrorism and environmental exploitation.

Scope of Research

This research work can open up new approaches towards the reading of literary texts in series form. This study collaborates two ways of reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* and highlights the necessity for new approaches to reading literary texts. The seven novels of Narnian series are read as parallel texts without following their chronological order, publication order or the order of completion. Such an approach is helpful for theoretical analysis without predeterminism or prejudicated notions. The seven novels are analysed by John Clute's "Grammar of Fantasy" and the variation in the degree of Healing is mapped. Following the parameter of the Healing process, the second way of reading the texts becomes explicit, where *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is identified as the primary text and the other six novels are considered as its subtexts. The concept of the Golden Age in the book is subject to a comparative analysis by the notion of *Dharma Yugam* in Ayyavazhi.

Writers of Children's Fantasy Literature usually follow the trend of secularism adopted by mainstream writers, who marginalize the spiritual and transcendental discourses. Re-reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a text of Ayyavazhi not only foregrounds the necessity to create spiritual genres but those with social significance. The study synthesizes materialism with spirituality and opens up a new space for socio-spiritual genres in Fantasy Literature. It also encourages critics and readers to analyse and re-read the existing texts of Children's Literature to identify socio-spiritual discourses embedded in them. The research also creates a new scope for reading Puranic, Semitic and other traditional literature belonging to the spiritual genre as texts of social reformation. Such an approach can be visualized in the mythographic narratives depicted in *Akhilathirattu Ammanai*. Deviating from the tradition of religious dogmatizing; the Divine entities, incarnations and prophets can be analysed as leaders of social reformation. This makes space for revisiting the social upliftment created by them

and reiterating their significance in the social context. Following this method, *The Chronicles of Narnia* which has traditionally been understood as a Christian text can also be analysed as a text of Pantheism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Saivism, Vaishnavism, Sakteyism, Ecofeminism and so on. This opens up wider interpretations of the identity of Aslan which can be as Nature, Buddha, Moses, Mohammad, Siva, Vishnu, Devi, Mother Nature and many others. Similar readings can unravel socio-cultural dimensions of ethnic communities and also reflect on issues implied at a global level. The case of Narnia may not be suitable to all sorts of re-readings, but approaching the text with various cultural hermeneutics enhances the spirit of experimentation. The cultural context depicted in other fantasy works also may be superficial and re-readings are potential in revealing the covert cultural content of these texts.

Finally, the question arises as to what extend *The Chronicles of Narnia* has incorporated *Ayyavazhi Dharmam*? The study proves that almost all the values of Ayyavazhi have been incorporated into the fantasy series through the exposition of their practical implication. Analysing the text from a cultural perspective different from the author's ideology can be seen as a result of the open space created by the author himself. Lewis never directly superimposed Christian imagery or theology in these narratives but created an inclusive and multi-cultural platform susceptible to diverse interpretations. Both the Narnian narratives and Ayyavazhi share the common property, where spiritual discourses are made use of social reformation and individual empowerment. This is to be distinguished from the positivist notion of religion as a means of oppression. *Ayyavazhi Dharmam* is identified as the New World Philosophy which initiates and instigates the action plan for social transformation and upliftment. The study further reveals that it is the human agency which corrupts religion and even restricts the value of socio-spiritual reform movements. The power politics and clamour

for unique religious identity associated with Ayyavazhi movement in the present context, marks a deviation from its cardinal principle emphasizing unity and harmony of the world. Futuristic perspective of Vaikundar has been recognized through the activities of Ayyavazhi. On the contrary, Lewis who is renowned as a Christian apologist is seldom recognized as a person who thought ahead of his times. His association with the Christian belief system attributed inclusiveness and openness to religion. Lewis probably unknowingly contradicted the dogmatic and conservative dimensions associated with it. The popular misconception about Lewis as a religious fundamentalist and evangelist, almost made his liberal ideologies unnoticed by western intellectuals and readers. Along with that, Lewis never was conscious of the subversive discourses in the Narnian series, nor did he speak or work for social upliftment like the character Aslan. Thus, Narnia continues to remain trapped in aesthetic and critical circles, without disseminating awareness in the recipients about the value of each individual in invoking social reformation.

The research foregrounds the Healing property of Eucatastrophe inherent in conceptualization of a New World in Fantasy Literature and the real world. This study highlights the element of heterotopia within the Healing process, which saves the text from improbable Utopian optimism and probable Dystopian pessimism. Transcendental and spiritual discourses are endowed with the potential of creating social transformation, which exemplifies the Healing process. Transformation of the landscape and that of the mindscape are the common characteristics of socio-spiritual reformation of the primary world of humanity and the secondary world of fantasy. Social reformation achieved through spiritual movements rarely highlights the concept of a New World, of which Ayyavazhi stands out as an exception. Re-reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a text of Ayyavazhi reveals the refinement of various dimensions of human life.

The reading justifies that the fantasy world is a reflection of the real world and hence addresses various anomalies inherent in human society. This study reveals the concept of an Egalitarian New World characterized by unity and harmony on a global level. *Ayyavazhi Dharmam* and the inherent values together constitute the New World Philosophy which provides solutions to critical issues faced by humanity. The approach sheds light on the necessity of socio-spiritual reformation, where human agency is endowed with the responsibility and potential in fulfilling the vision of: "One World, One Aeon, One Language, One God, One Caste, One Religion, One Community, and One Government"