

**THE LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS OF
CHITRAMEZHUTHU K. M. VARGHESE**

**Thesis submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Oriental Studies**

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About This English Edition

There can be few greater honours than having someone devote a doctoral thesis to studying your life and work. In 2007, Leelamma George completed her PhD thesis “The Literary Contributions of Chitramezhuthu K. M. Varghese”, an extensive study of his literary legacy.

I am privileged to preserve the original Malayalam thesis alongside this English translation, so that his story and contributions can be appreciated by a wider audience and by future generations of the family.

A note on the English translation: This is an informal, reader-friendly translation prepared to make the thesis accessible to those who cannot read Malayalam. It is not an official or academic translation. The original Malayalam thesis remains the authoritative version.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**The Literary Contributions of Chitramezhuthu K. M. Varghese**” is a bona fide record of the research work done by me under the valuable guidance of **Dr. T. V. Mathew**, Guide, Malayalam Research Centre, Department of Malayalam, Catholicate College, Pathanamthitta.

No part of this thesis has been submitted earlier for any other purpose.

Leelamma George

CERTIFICATE

Dr. T. V. Mathew, M.A., Ph.D.

Catholicate College

Principal Investigator

Pathanamthitta

University Grants Commission

Research Centre, Malayalam Research Centre

Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**The Literary Contributions of Chitramezhuthu K. M. Varghese**”, submitted for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Oriental Studies of Mahatma Gandhi University**, is a record of bona fide research carried out by **Smt. Leelamma George** under my supervision.

Pathanamthitta

December 2007

Dr. T. V. Mathew
Research Supervisor

Preface

Chitramezhuthu K. M. Varghese was a literary figure who lived in the twentieth century. The inspiration to undertake a study of the literary works of K. M. Varghese arose from an interest in Malayalam prose literature.

Short stories, poetry, essays, historical novels, literary criticism, translations, religious writings and other forms constitute the various areas of his literary activity.

His contribution to the field of literature was substantial. His historical awareness was closely connected with his literary consciousness. He approached both the past and contemporary life with an enquiring mind, and his writings reflect this breadth of interest.

Although his literary activity covered a variety of areas, his contribution has not received the attention it deserves. There has been relatively little critical study of his works, and many aspects of his literary contribution remain insufficiently examined.

It was this situation that prompted the present study of **K. M. Varghese's literary contributions**.

The Need for the Study

A complete and systematic study of K. M. Varghese's works has not previously been undertaken.

Although individual references to him and his writings can be found in various places, a comprehensive examination bringing together the different areas of his literary activity has been lacking.

Some of his works have received passing attention in studies dealing with particular literary genres. However, these references are scattered and do not provide an adequate overall assessment of his contribution.

There are also biographical references to K. M. Varghese.

A short account of his life appears in **“Our Literary Figures”** (*Nammude Sahityakaranmar*). A biography written by **K. M. Mammen**, entitled **“The Unopened Pages of K. M. Varghese”**, also provides information concerning his life.

Nevertheless, a detailed and comprehensive examination of K. M. Varghese's literary works has not previously been carried out.

The present thesis is therefore an attempt to undertake such a study.

Structure of the Thesis

This research study has been divided into **seven chapters**.

Chapter One

The first chapter examines the **background to K. M. Varghese's literary activity**.

It considers the circumstances that shaped the period in which he lived and wrote.

This provides the historical and cultural setting necessary for understanding his writings.

Chapter Two

The second chapter deals with **his life and the various aspects of his literary activity**.

It examines his life history as well as the different areas in which he contributed to literature.

Chapter Three

The third chapter examines **K. M. Varghese's short stories** in detail.

It considers the nature and distinctive characteristics of his short-story writing and evaluates his contribution to Malayalam short fiction.

Chapter Four

The fourth chapter is devoted to **his major prose works**.

These works are examined with particular attention to their literary qualities and their contribution to Malayalam prose.

Chapter Five

The fifth chapter considers **his poetry**.

His poems are studied in order to assess his poetic interests, themes and literary qualities.

Chapter Six

The sixth chapter examines his **historical works**.

K. M. Varghese's interest in history forms an important part of his literary personality, and this chapter studies the writings through which that interest was expressed.

Chapter Seven

The seventh chapter examines **his other writings and literary contributions**.

Together, these chapters attempt to provide a comprehensive assessment of K. M. Varghese as a writer and of his place within Malayalam literature.

Sources Used for the Research

The primary sources for this study were **K. M. Varghese's own writings**.

In addition to his published works, other available materials relating to his life and literary activity were consulted.

The research also made use of information obtained from people who had known him personally.

This was particularly important because not all aspects of K. M. Varghese's life and work were adequately documented in published sources.

The researcher therefore travelled to places associated with K. M. Varghese and gathered information from individuals who possessed personal knowledge of him.

Among the places mentioned are **Thuruthy Sahitya Academy, Alappuzha; Thannermukkom Library; Malayala Manorama Library, Kottayam; Sahitya Deepika Library, Kottayam; and the Thiruvalla Library**, as well as other libraries and institutions.

Information was also gathered from people in places including **Madras, Nilambur and Mavelikara**.

These journeys and enquiries helped reconstruct aspects of K. M. Varghese's life and literary history that could not otherwise easily be recovered.

The researcher states that these investigations allowed her to gain a deeper understanding of K. M. Varghese's life and literary personality.

Acknowledgements

The researcher expresses her gratitude to **Dr. T. V. Mathew**, who guided the research and provided encouragement and assistance throughout the preparation of the thesis.

She also records her gratitude to **Dr. Samuel Chandanappally**, whose assistance contributed to the successful completion of the study.

Thanks are extended to the principals and staff of the colleges, libraries and institutions that provided assistance and access to relevant materials.

She specifically acknowledges the assistance received from individuals associated with **Catholicate College, Bishop Moore College** and various Malayalam literary and research institutions.

Finally, she expresses gratitude to her family members, colleagues, friends and all those who offered encouragement, information and practical assistance during the course of the research.

Chapter One

K. M. Varghese: The Background to His Literary Work

K. M. Varghese's literary contributions belong to an earlier period. His writings possess a background and historical context that are both old and distinctive.

Travancore's history had, for a long time, been closely associated with the power and authority of its rulers. With the coming of Western influences, however, changes began to appear in many areas of Malayali life. Western education became a means of awakening a society that had until then remained largely traditional. English education helped to dispel old attitudes and opened the way towards progress.

Intellectual and social changes gradually began to affect society. New ideas entered public life, and transformations became visible in the political, social and cultural spheres. These developments eventually influenced literature as well.

It was against this changing background that K. M. Varghese grew up and began his work. To understand his writings properly, therefore, it is necessary to understand something of the political, social, literary and religious circumstances of the period in which he lived.

1.1 The Political Sphere

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, a new political consciousness had begun to emerge in Travancore.

The growing influence of educated people and the development of organised public opinion gradually produced demands for reform. Educated members of society began to question inequalities in government service and public administration and sought greater representation for the people.

This period saw the beginnings of organised political activity in Travancore.

The **Malayali Memorial of 1891** became an important landmark in this development. It represented the growing demand that the people of Travancore should receive their rightful share in government employment and administration.

The movement was followed by other organised efforts for political and social reform.

The **Ezhava Memorial of 1896** represented another important expression of dissatisfaction with existing social and administrative inequalities. Communities that had long been denied adequate opportunities began to organise themselves and demand recognition.

Christian communities also became increasingly conscious of their position and rights within Travancore society. Organisations and associations emerged to articulate their concerns and to promote education, representation and social progress.

The early decades of the twentieth century therefore witnessed a steady growth of public consciousness.

Newspapers, organisations and public meetings became increasingly important. Political and social questions that had once been discussed only by a small educated elite began to reach a wider section of the population.

The developments taking place throughout India also influenced Travancore.

Nationalist ideas spread. The struggle against colonial rule, movements for political representation and demands for responsible government gradually affected public opinion within the princely state.

By the 1930s, political activity had become considerably more organised.

Movements demanding responsible government gathered strength, and the relationship between the ruler, the administration and the people increasingly became a subject of public debate.

The **Travancore State Congress** emerged within this political environment and became an important force in the struggle for responsible government.

The political awakening of the period did not occur in isolation. It was accompanied by developments in education, journalism, literature, religion and social reform.

Eventually these political movements contributed to profound changes in Travancore and to the emergence of a more democratic political order.

The period in which K. M. Varghese lived was therefore one of transition. He witnessed a society moving from an older system of princely administration towards a new age of political consciousness and popular participation.

These developments formed part of the wider background against which his life and literary activity must be understood.

1.2 The Social Sphere

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were also a period of major social change in Kerala.

Western education, missionary activity and the influence of new ideas created conditions in which many long-established customs and social practices began to be questioned.

Kerala society had traditionally been divided by rigid distinctions of caste and community. Social interaction was governed by numerous restrictions. Ideas concerning purity and pollution, untouchability and social rank deeply affected everyday life.

Against this background, reform movements began to emerge.

Among the Hindu communities, reformers and organisations challenged many existing social practices and worked towards education and greater social equality.

The influence of **Sree Narayana Guru** was particularly significant. His teachings and reform activities helped create a new consciousness among communities that had suffered from social discrimination. The organisations inspired by him became important instruments of social progress.

Christian missionary activity also had a considerable impact on Kerala society. Missionaries established schools and educational institutions and helped extend education to sections of the population that had previously possessed little access to it.

Education became one of the most powerful forces for change.

Schools and colleges created a new educated generation. Knowledge of English exposed Malayalis to intellectual movements taking place elsewhere in India and abroad. Ideas concerning liberty, equality, democracy and social reform gradually entered public discussion.

The position of women also began to receive greater attention.

Opportunities for women's education increased, and old attitudes towards women's role within society slowly began to change.

Various organisations were established to promote social and educational advancement. Community organisations established schools, hostels and other institutions. Through these organisations, different sections of society sought both to improve their own condition and to secure a greater place in public life.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Kerala society was therefore undergoing a profound transformation.

The old social order had certainly not disappeared. Caste distinctions, inequality and conservative attitudes remained powerful. Nevertheless, the foundations of that system

were being questioned in ways that would have been difficult to imagine only a few generations earlier.

K. M. Varghese belonged to this period of transition.

The social consciousness reflected in the literature of his time cannot be separated from these developments. The conflicts between tradition and modernity, inherited customs and reform, religious belief and new intellectual ideas all formed part of the world in which writers of the period lived.

Several social organisations that appeared during this period also contributed to the transformation of Kerala society.

Associations were established for particular communities, while other organisations addressed wider educational and social concerns. Through meetings, publications, educational programmes and charitable activities, these organisations helped create a new public culture.

The changes that occurred were therefore not the achievement of any one individual or community. They were the result of numerous movements operating simultaneously in different parts of society.

By the first decades of the twentieth century, Kerala had entered an era in which education, organisation and public debate increasingly determined the direction of social change.

1.3 The Literary Sphere

The changes occurring within society naturally found expression in literature.

The literary world of Kerala underwent an extraordinary transformation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Malayalam literature, which had previously developed largely within traditional forms, encountered new influences through Western education, printing and contact with English literature.

New literary forms began to appear.

Poetry changed in subject and style. Prose became increasingly important. Essays, biographies, criticism, novels, short stories and journalism gradually developed into significant forms of Malayalam writing.

The growth of printing was particularly important.

Printing presses made books and periodicals available to a much wider readership. Newspapers and magazines provided writers with new opportunities to publish their work and allowed literary and social ideas to circulate rapidly.

Malayalam journalism also grew during this period.

Periodicals became centres of intellectual discussion. Questions of literature, religion, politics and social reform appeared side by side in their pages.

Writers were therefore no longer confined to purely literary subjects. Many became active participants in the public debates of their time.

The development of Malayalam prose was one of the most important consequences of these changes.

Western literary models influenced the way writers approached biography, history, criticism and fiction. At the same time, Malayalam writers attempted to adapt these forms to Kerala's own cultural and linguistic environment.

The growth of education produced a new reading public.

Schools and colleges created readers who were familiar both with Malayalam literary traditions and with English and other literatures. Translation became an important means through which ideas from outside Kerala entered Malayalam.

Literary associations and organisations also appeared.

They encouraged writers, organised discussions and promoted the development of Malayalam language and literature.

It was within this rapidly changing literary world that K. M. Varghese's own intellectual and literary interests developed.

His writings should therefore not be regarded as isolated works. They formed part of a much larger transformation taking place within Malayalam intellectual life.

The emergence of newspapers, magazines and publishing houses created opportunities that an earlier generation of writers had not possessed.

At the same time, writers faced the challenge of reconciling traditional literary values with modern forms and ideas.

The period witnessed considerable experimentation.

Writers explored history, society, religion, biography and contemporary life. Literary criticism became increasingly systematic, and discussions concerning language, style and the purpose of literature became more prominent.

A writer was no longer merely someone who composed poetry or imaginative literature. The writer could also be a historian, critic, teacher, journalist, religious thinker or social commentator.

This broader understanding of literature is particularly relevant when considering the work of K. M. Varghese.

His literary activity belonged to a generation for whom writing was closely connected with education and public life.

The development of libraries, reading rooms and literary societies also encouraged the circulation of books.

A reading culture was gradually established among educated Malayalis. Books and journals travelled beyond the major towns and increasingly reached smaller communities.

The Malayalam literary renaissance was therefore both a literary and a social phenomenon.

It created writers, but it also created **readers**.

And without that new reading public, the remarkable expansion of Malayalam literature during this period would not have been possible.

1.4 The Christian Religious Sphere

The Christian community played an important role in the social and cultural life of Kerala.

The growth and development of the Kerala Christian community had a long history, and by the period under consideration Christians had become influential in education, public life and literature.

The arrival of European missionaries produced significant changes.

Missionaries established educational institutions, introduced new methods of teaching and contributed substantially to printing and publishing. Their activities also stimulated theological debate and encouraged the study and publication of religious literature.

Contact with Western Christianity brought new influences into Kerala's ancient Christian traditions.

This was also a period of considerable controversy and division within the churches.

Questions of ecclesiastical authority, doctrine and administration produced disputes and, at times, divisions among Christian communities.

The Christian community was therefore experiencing both **expansion and internal conflict**.

The spread of modern education had an especially important effect.

Christian educational institutions produced generations of educated men and women who became active in government service, medicine, law, teaching, journalism and literature.

Organisations were established to promote Christian social and educational interests.

The **Y.M.C.A.** and other associations became active, while religious publications and periodicals created forums for the discussion of theological and social questions.

Christian writers increasingly participated in Malayalam literary life.

Religious writing itself underwent changes. Traditional devotional literature continued, but new forms of Christian writing appeared alongside it—history, biography, theological discussion, apologetics, essays and works dealing with contemporary social questions.

The introduction and growth of printing greatly assisted this development.

Christian presses produced Bibles, religious books, school texts, periodicals and other publications. Their contribution extended well beyond the Christian community and played an important role in the development of Malayalam printing and prose.

Christianity in Kerala also encountered the forces of modern intellectual thought.

Western scientific and philosophical ideas raised questions that traditional religious teaching had not previously been required to address in the same manner.

Educated Christians encountered both faith and modern rational thought.

This created an intellectual environment in which writers attempted to explain, defend and reinterpret Christian belief.

The debates of the period therefore concerned more than denominational differences. They also involved larger questions regarding Christianity's place within modern society.

K. M. Varghese's religious writings emerged from this environment.

To understand them fully, one must recognise the religious discussions and controversies of the period and the intellectual pressures experienced by educated Christians.

He was writing at a time when Christianity in Kerala was negotiating its relationship with modern education, Western thought, denominational identity and Kerala's changing social order.

Consequently, his religious and literary activities were closely connected.

His writings attempted not only to communicate Christian teaching but also to respond to questions raised by the intellectual climate of his age.

The Wider Background to K. M. Varghese's Writing

K. M. Varghese's writings must therefore be understood against these several overlapping backgrounds.

He belonged to a Kerala experiencing:

- political awakening and demands for representative government;
- powerful movements for social reform;
- the rapid expansion of modern education;
- the growth of Malayalam journalism and publishing;
- a literary renaissance;
- changes within Kerala Christianity; and
- increasing contact between traditional belief and modern Western thought.

These influences did not operate independently of one another.

Political awakening encouraged journalism.

Education encouraged social reform.

Printing encouraged literature.

Missionary activity encouraged education and publishing.

Social reform produced new questions for both politics and religion.

And literature became one of the places in which all these forces met.

The works of K. M. Varghese emerged from precisely this environment.

An examination of his writings must therefore take into account not only their literary qualities but also the historical circumstances that shaped the author.

His works provide a window into the intellectual and social concerns of his generation.

Understanding this background allows us to approach his writings with a clearer appreciation of their purpose and significance.

Notes and References

The original Malayalam chapter concludes with a page of references. I would preserve these in the English edition rather than remove them, because they show the sources on which the original author relied. The reference list includes works relating to Kerala literary history, modern Kerala, Christian history and other historical studies.

One of the English-language references is:

George Orwell, “Why I Write,” in *20th Century Literary Criticism*, Longman Group, London, 1972, p. 371.

Chapter Two

Personality and Life

Chitramezhuthu K. M. Varghese's birth took place during the closing years of the nineteenth century. His literary life and artistic activities developed during a period of considerable change in Kerala.

To understand his literary personality, it is necessary first to understand the man himself—his family background, upbringing, education, interests and the circumstances that shaped his life.

His personality was marked by a combination of artistic sensitivity, literary interest, historical awareness and social consciousness. Painting, literature, history and public life all became areas in which his interests found expression.

2.1 Birth

K. M. Varghese was born at Mavelikara, in the present-day Alappuzha district of Kerala.

He was born into a Christian family and grew up within the cultural and religious environment of Mavelikara.

The family circumstances into which he was born, together with the social and cultural surroundings of the region, influenced his early development.

The Mavelikara of his childhood possessed a rich cultural life. Traditional forms of art existed alongside the new educational and social influences that were beginning to transform Kerala.

It was within this environment that the young K. M. Varghese developed the interests that would later become important features of his life.

The chapter identifies his birth date as **18 February 1896**.

2.2 Childhood and Education

K. M. Varghese's childhood was spent largely in Mavelikara.

From an early age he displayed an interest in learning and in the world around him.

His education introduced him not only to formal subjects but also to literature and culture. The educational environment of the period was itself changing rapidly as modern schooling expanded across Kerala.

His interests extended beyond the classroom.

He was attracted to literature and artistic activity, and these interests gradually became an important part of his personality.

The influence of Christianity was also present in his upbringing. Religious teaching, church life and the Christian cultural environment formed part of his early experience.

As he grew older, his reading widened.

Malayalam literature naturally occupied an important place, but his interests were not restricted to Malayalam. The educational opportunities available to him brought him into contact with other literary and intellectual traditions as well.

This combination of formal education, independent reading and artistic curiosity helped shape the person he later became.

His education did not simply prepare him for employment. It helped establish the broad range of interests—**art, literature, history and religion**—that would remain with him throughout his life.

2.3 Artistic Interests

One of the most distinctive aspects of K. M. Varghese's personality was his interest in **painting and drawing**.

Indeed, the name by which he became known—**Chitramezhuthu K. M. Varghese**—itself reflects this association with art.

Painting was not merely a passing hobby.

His artistic ability became sufficiently recognised for “Chitramezhuthu” to become attached to his name and identity.

His interest in visual art existed alongside his literary interests. In this respect, he possessed an unusual combination of abilities: he expressed himself both through **pictures and through words**.

His artistic sensibility also influenced the way he observed people and the world around him.

The eye of the artist—the ability to notice character, appearance, surroundings and detail—would later find another form of expression in his literary writing.

Thus, even before considering his books and other writings, his artistic activity forms an important part of understanding K. M. Varghese as a person.

2.4 Personal Characteristics

The chapter next considers some of K. M. Varghese's personal qualities.

He possessed a wide range of interests and was known for his engagement with intellectual and cultural matters.

His personality combined seriousness with curiosity. He was interested in learning, discussion and the exchange of ideas.

His social and cultural contacts brought him into association with people from different backgrounds and professions.

He maintained an interest in contemporary affairs while at the same time remaining deeply interested in history and the past.

Religion was another important influence.

Christian faith and Christian thought formed part of his intellectual world, but his interests were not confined to religious matters. Literature, art, society and history occupied equally important places.

His life therefore cannot easily be described through a single occupation or interest.

He was simultaneously an **artist, reader, writer, observer of society and student of history**.

These different strands came together in his literary work.

2.5 Literary Activities

K. M. Varghese entered the world of literature during the early decades of the twentieth century.

His literary interests developed gradually and eventually extended across numerous forms.

His writings reveal both imagination and a desire to communicate knowledge.

He wrote **short stories, poetry, essays, historical material, literary studies and other works**.

The range of his writing is significant because it demonstrates that he was not simply a specialist in one literary genre.

His literary career was closely connected with his wider intellectual interests.

History supplied material for some of his writings.

Religion supplied another area of thought.

His observations of society contributed to his stories and essays.

His artistic imagination contributed to the way he approached literature itself.

In this sense, his writings are best understood as different expressions of the same broad intellectual personality.

2.5.1 Short Stories

K. M. Varghese wrote a number of short stories.

Among the works mentioned in the thesis are stories published during the early period of Malayalam short fiction.

The chapter identifies several stories and their publication history, demonstrating that he was participating in Malayalam short-story writing during a formative period in the genre's development.

His short stories dealt with human relationships and social situations and reflected his observations of contemporary life.

The stories demonstrate his interest in character and narrative and reveal another aspect of his literary personality.

Importantly, the thesis places these works within the wider development of Malayalam short-story literature rather than treating them merely as occasional writings.

His contribution to the short story therefore forms a distinct part of his literary legacy.

2.5.2 Poetry

K. M. Varghese was also active as a poet.

Although he is perhaps more readily associated with prose and historical writing, poetry formed another significant part of his literary output.

His poems appeared in Malayalam literary publications and dealt with a variety of themes.

The thesis refers to poems published in literary journals and other publications, demonstrating that his poetry circulated among the Malayalam reading public of the period.

His poetry reflects his literary sensibility and his willingness to experiment with different forms of expression.

It also reinforces the breadth of his interests: the same person who painted pictures, researched history and wrote prose was also attempting to express himself through verse.

2.5.3 Essays and Articles

Another important part of K. M. Varghese's literary activity consisted of **essays and articles**.

These writings covered a considerable range of subjects.

History, literature, religion and social questions all attracted his attention.

His essays reveal a writer who did not regard literature merely as entertainment. Writing was also a means of communicating information and encouraging thought.

The thesis groups his writings broadly into areas including:

1. **Literary essays**
2. **Political writings**
3. **Historical and cultural writings**
4. **Religious writings**

This classification itself demonstrates the remarkable breadth of his interests.

His writings appeared in different publications, allowing his ideas to reach readers beyond his immediate locality.

Through these articles he participated in the intellectual discussions taking place in Kerala during his lifetime.

He wrote about matters of contemporary relevance as well as subjects drawn from history.

This combination of the contemporary and the historical became one of the recurring characteristics of his work.

Historical and Political Writing

K. M. Varghese's interest in history was particularly strong.

He regarded historical knowledge as something worth preserving and communicating.

His historical writings drew attention to personalities, events and developments from Kerala's past.

Political and social developments also attracted his attention.

The changing political world of twentieth-century Kerala provided material for reflection and writing.

These works reveal a person who was not isolated within a purely literary world. He was attentive to what was happening around him.

His historical interests would eventually become one of the most substantial elements of his literary contribution.

2.5.4 Historical Novels

The thesis also identifies K. M. Varghese's contribution to the field of the **historical novel**.

Historical fiction allowed him to bring together two of his strongest interests: **history and storytelling**.

Rather than treating the past simply as a collection of dates and events, historical fiction enabled him to reconstruct personalities and situations imaginatively.

His historical novels therefore occupy an important position within his overall body of work.

They demonstrate his attempt to make history accessible through literature and show how closely his historical and creative interests were connected.

2.5.5 Literary Criticism

K. M. Varghese's literary interests also extended to **literary criticism**.

He wrote about literature and writers and participated in the critical discussion of Malayalam literary works.

This aspect of his work reveals him not only as a creator of literature but also as a reader who thought seriously about the writings of others.

Literary criticism required a different kind of engagement from fiction or poetry, and his participation in this field further demonstrates the diversity of his intellectual interests.

2.5.6 Translations and Other Writings

The final part of this chapter considers **translations, adaptations and other writings**.

Translation provided another means through which K. M. Varghese could introduce readers to ideas and works originating outside their immediate literary environment.

His involvement in translation reflects the breadth of his reading and his desire to make knowledge available to Malayalam readers.

Alongside translations were other forms of writing that do not fit neatly into a single category.

Taken together, they reveal a writer whose curiosity continually led him into new subjects and new forms of expression.

He was not simply trying to establish himself as a novelist, poet, historian or critic.

He was interested in **all of them**.

That diversity is perhaps one of the clearest characteristics of K. M. Varghese's literary life.

Chapter Two — Overall Picture

Chapter Two gives us a much more personal picture of Chitramezhuthu K. M. Varghese than the historical background provided in Chapter One.

What emerges is not merely the portrait of a writer.

It is the portrait of a man whose interests crossed boundaries:

artist and writer; historian and storyteller; poet and essayist; Christian thinker and observer of society.

The title “**Chitramezhuthu**” is therefore particularly meaningful. His identity as a visual artist existed alongside his identity as a man of letters.

And his literary output appears to have been much broader than a simple list of published books might suggest. Short stories, poems, essays, articles, historical writings, literary criticism, translations and historical fiction all formed part of his intellectual life.

Chapter Three

Short Stories

3.1 An Introduction to the Short Story

K. M. Varghese first entered the literary world through the **short story**.

The short story is a literary form that seeks to present an experience, incident, character, emotion or aspect of life within a relatively limited space. Unlike the novel, it does not attempt to portray life in all its breadth. Instead, it concentrates upon a particular experience or situation and attempts to create a unified impression.

A successful short story therefore requires economy and concentration. Its characters, events, setting and language must contribute to the central purpose of the story.

The chapter discusses the various ways in which literary critics have attempted to define the short story. Although definitions differ, they repeatedly emphasise **brevity, unity and concentration upon a single effect or experience**.

The modern short story developed considerably through Western literature, and writers such as **Edgar Allan Poe, Guy de Maupassant, Anton Chekhov and O. Henry** contributed significantly to its development.

Poe's understanding of the short story, in particular, emphasised the importance of producing a unified effect upon the reader.

The chapter later cites William Henry Hudson's *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*:

“A short story must contain one and only one informing idea.”

It also cites Brander Matthews's *The Philosophy of the Short Story* and his description of the short story as concentrating upon a single character, event, emotion or situation.

3.2 The Development of the Malayalam Short Story

The thesis then traces the beginnings and development of the **Malayalam short story**.

The beginnings of Malayalam short fiction are generally associated with the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Early Malayalam writers experimented with narrative forms at a time when Western literary influences were increasingly entering Kerala through English education and periodicals.

The growth of newspapers and literary magazines was particularly important because they provided an ideal medium for shorter fiction.

The early Malayalam short story gradually developed from relatively simple narratives towards a more sophisticated literary form.

Writers began experimenting with character, dialogue, social observation, humour and psychological experience.

As Malayalam literature entered the twentieth century, the short story became increasingly important. Writers used it to explore everyday life and the experiences of ordinary people rather than restricting literature to heroic or exceptional subjects.

Social change also affected the genre.

Caste, poverty, family relationships, religion, changing moral values, political developments and the tensions created by modernity all became subjects for fiction.

The short story consequently became one of the most effective forms through which writers could portray the rapidly changing society around them.

3.3 The Short Stories of K. M. Varghese

The thesis places **K. M. Varghese's short stories** within this developing Malayalam short-story tradition.

It notes that his stories appeared in literary publications and that his work demonstrates several different approaches to storytelling.

The researcher broadly classifies his stories into **three groups**:

1. Stories that give importance to **psychological experiences and emotions**.
2. Stories characterised by **humour and satire**.
3. Stories dealing with **social life and social problems**.

This classification is important because it demonstrates that K. M. Varghese was not repeatedly writing the same kind of story. His interests extended from the inner emotional life of individuals to humour and, ultimately, to observations about the society around him.

3.3.1 Stories of Psychological Experience

The first group consists of stories in which **human emotions and psychological experiences** receive particular emphasis.

The thesis discusses several stories in this category individually.

1. *Oru Swapnam* — “A Dream”

The first story examined is **“Oru Swapnam” (“A Dream”)**.

The story centres upon the emotional and psychological experience produced by a dream.

Rather than depending upon elaborate external action, the narrative derives much of its effect from the mental experience of its character.

Dream and reality interact within the story, allowing the writer to explore the character's emotional condition.

The researcher regards the story as an example of K. M. Varghese's ability to make an internal experience the basis of a short narrative.

2. *Thuppal Thotti*

The next story discussed is **“Thuppal Thotti.”**

The thesis analyses the story through its central situation and the human attitudes revealed through it.

The importance of the story lies not simply in the event described but in the responses of the people involved.

Through an apparently ordinary situation, the writer exposes aspects of character and behaviour.

3. *Ananthabhayi*

Another story considered in this group is **“Ananthabhayi.”**

Here again, emotional experience occupies an important position.

The character's circumstances and reactions form the central interest of the story, and the narrative develops around personal relationships and the emotional consequences of events.

4. *Prathikara Velli*

The thesis next discusses **“Prathikara Velli.”**

The story is built around human relationships and the emotions arising from them. The writer uses the situation to examine the behaviour of his characters and the psychological forces behind their actions.

5. *Chithrangal*

Another story identified is “**Chithrangal**.”

Its treatment again illustrates the writer's interest in the inner lives of individuals and in the way external events can produce emotional consequences.

6. *Snehathinte...*

The sixth story belongs to the same psychological-emotional group and examines affection and human relationships.

The researcher draws attention to the manner in which K. M. Varghese constructs his narrative around the emotional situation rather than relying upon a complicated plot.

Together, these stories demonstrate a recurring concern with **love, attachment, disappointment, memory, relationships and the emotional responses of ordinary people**.

The Influence of Christian Thought

An especially interesting element of the analysis is the researcher's discussion of **Christian influence** in some of these stories.

Biblical and Christian moral ideas occasionally form part of the background to K. M. Varghese's fiction.

However, the thesis does not present the stories merely as religious instruction.

Rather, Christian ideas interact with the human situations being portrayed.

Concepts such as compassion, forgiveness, sacrifice and moral responsibility appear within the actions and experiences of characters.

The thesis makes comparisons with well-known works of world literature when discussing some of these themes. Among the works listed in the chapter's references are:

- **O. Henry's “The Gift of the Magi”**
- **Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* / “The Bishop's Candlesticks”**

- **Anton Chekhov's "Without a Title".**

These comparisons help place K. M. Varghese's treatment of compassion, sacrifice and human relationships within a broader literary context.

3.3.2 Humorous and Satirical Stories

The second major group consists of stories employing **humour and satire**.

Humour allows K. M. Varghese to observe human weaknesses without necessarily turning the story into direct moral criticism.

Characters expose themselves through their speech, behaviour and circumstances.

The humour often grows naturally from situations rather than being imposed upon the narrative.

Satire also provides a way of commenting upon society.

Through exaggeration, irony or comic situations, the writer can draw attention to pretension, hypocrisy, foolishness and contradictions in everyday behaviour.

The thesis therefore regards humour as another significant feature of K. M. Varghese's short-story writing.

3.3.3 Social Stories

The third group contains stories that focus more directly upon **society and social problems**.

These stories are especially significant because they demonstrate K. M. Varghese's awareness of the world in which he lived.

The thesis observes that a short-story writer cannot entirely separate himself from society. The people, customs, beliefs, conflicts and inequalities surrounding a writer inevitably provide material for fiction.

K. M. Varghese's social stories deal with such experiences.

The researcher identifies several specific social subjects in his stories.

1. Religious Conversion

One of the subjects addressed is **religious conversion**.

The story discussed in this context reflects the religious and social circumstances of Kerala and examines the consequences of conversion within individual and community life.

The thesis considers the subject not simply as theology but as a social experience affecting human relationships.

2. Religious Conflict

Another story deals with tensions and disagreements connected with religion.

The narrative uses its characters and circumstances to expose the effects that religious differences can have upon ordinary human relationships.

3. Social Conflict within the Church

The thesis also discusses a story involving **conflict within a church/community setting**.

Through this, K. M. Varghese reflects upon behaviour that contradicts the moral principles people publicly profess.

This provides an opportunity for social criticism.

4. A Social Evil

Another story addresses what the researcher identifies as a **social evil**.

Rather than discussing the problem abstractly, K. M. Varghese places it within the experience of individuals.

This is characteristic of the short-story form: a larger social problem becomes understandable through the life of a particular person or family.

5. Poverty

Poverty is another subject represented in the stories.

Economic hardship affects relationships, choices and dignity.

By depicting such circumstances through individuals rather than statistics or argument, the writer gives the social problem an emotional dimension.

6. The Problem of Marriage

The thesis identifies **marriage** and difficulties surrounding it as another recurring social subject.

Marriage is not treated merely as a private relationship. Social expectations, family circumstances and economic conditions influence the choices available to individuals.

7. The Plight of the Elderly

One particularly interesting theme is the condition of **elderly people within the family and society**.

The story considered here examines the vulnerability of old age and the way elderly people may become dependent upon others.

It raises questions concerning responsibility, affection and neglect.

8. *Pattalam* / Military Life

The final story considered in this sequence concerns a military or soldier-related setting.

Through this different social environment, K. M. Varghese again examines human behaviour and relationships.

The range of subjects is noteworthy: religion, poverty, marriage, old age and other social circumstances all become material for fiction.

K. M. Varghese's Art of Characterisation

The thesis devotes considerable attention to **characterisation**.

K. M. Varghese's characters are generally drawn from recognisable human life.

Rather than creating extraordinary heroes, he often focuses upon ordinary men and women placed in situations that reveal their personalities.

Character may be revealed through:

speech, action, behaviour, relationships and responses to circumstances.

The researcher argues that this ability to connect characters with believable human experiences contributes substantially to the effectiveness of the stories.

His characters are not merely devices needed to move the plot forward. Their emotions and relationships frequently become the story itself.

Plot and Structure

The chapter also considers the construction of K. M. Varghese's stories.

The plots tend to be organised around a central incident or experience.

This is consistent with the theoretical understanding of the short story presented at the beginning of the chapter: the form gains strength from **concentration and unity**.

Unnecessary incidents can weaken a short story.

The researcher finds that K. M. Varghese generally attempts to keep his narratives directed towards the principal situation.

His stories often progress through a relatively straightforward sequence of events, leading towards the emotional or thematic effect intended by the writer.

Dialogue

Dialogue is another important feature.

Conversation helps establish character and allows relationships to develop without lengthy explanation from the narrator.

The speech of characters can also contribute to humour and realism.

The language used in conversation reflects the social circumstances of the people being portrayed.

This gives many of the stories a more immediate quality.

Language and Style

K. M. Varghese's prose is generally accessible and suited to storytelling.

The thesis draws attention to the relationship between his subject matter and his language.

His style changes according to the needs of the narrative.

Humorous stories require one tone; emotionally serious stories another.

Social stories may require directness, while psychological narratives depend more heavily upon description and reflection.

The effectiveness of his prose therefore lies not merely in decorative language but in its ability to serve the story.

The Researcher's Assessment

The overall assessment in Chapter Three is that **K. M. Varghese deserves recognition within the history of Malayalam short-story writing.**

His stories reveal an interest in human psychology, social life, religion, humour and the problems faced by ordinary people.

They also demonstrate his willingness to experiment with different types of narrative.

Some stories emphasise emotion.

Others depend upon humour.

Others become instruments of social observation.

Christian ethical ideas are visible in portions of his fiction, but the stories remain concerned fundamentally with human beings and their relationships.

The thesis therefore presents his short stories as an important part of his wider literary contribution.

References used in Chapter Three

Pages **49–50** are particularly useful because the researcher identifies some of the literary sources she used when evaluating your grandfather's short stories.

Among them are:

William Henry Hudson, *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, Kalyani Publishers, Ludhiana/Delhi, 1995.

Brander Matthews, *The Philosophy of the Short Story* (1907).

O. Henry, "The Gift of the Magi," in *100 Selected Stories*, Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1995.

Victor Hugo, "The Bishop's Candlesticks," *Les Misérables*, Wordsworth Editions, Paris, 1994.

Anton Chekhov, “Without a Title,” *Selected Stories*, Wordsworth Editions Ltd., Hertfordshire, 1996.

Chapter Four

Prose Poems

In Malayalam literature, prose poetry occupies a distinctive position. Although it possesses the imaginative and emotional qualities of poetry, it does not necessarily follow the conventional structures of metre and verse.

The prose poem allows the writer greater freedom of expression. It can combine poetic imagination with the flexibility of prose and can therefore communicate emotions, ideas and experiences without being restricted by traditional metrical forms.

K. M. Varghese's prose poems must be understood within this literary context.

His writings in this form reveal his poetic imagination, his sensitivity to human experience, his religious consciousness and his observations of society.

The chapter begins by considering the development of prose poetry and its position within Malayalam literature before examining K. M. Varghese's contribution to the form.

4.1 Contemporary Prose Poets

The prose poem developed gradually within Malayalam literature.

By the late 1930s and early 1940s, a number of writers were experimenting with forms that moved away from the traditional restrictions of Malayalam poetry.

The thesis refers to several writers and publications associated with this development and places K. M. Varghese within this broader literary movement.

The development of prose poetry was connected with changing ideas about literature itself. Writers increasingly sought forms capable of expressing personal experience, psychological states, social observations and contemporary concerns.

The prose poem offered considerable freedom for this purpose.

Unlike conventional verse, it was not dependent upon metre. Yet unlike ordinary prose, it sought the intensity, imagery, rhythm and emotional concentration associated with poetry.

K. M. Varghese's prose poems emerged within this changing literary environment.

4.2 The Prose Poems of K. M. Varghese

The prose poems of K. M. Varghese reveal several distinctive characteristics.

His writings frequently emerge from personal experience and observation. They demonstrate his sensitivity towards human suffering, relationships, faith, nature and society.

His prose poetry does not depend merely upon decorative language. The poetic quality arises from the intensity of the experience being communicated, the images he creates and the emotions that accompany them.

The thesis examines his prose poems according to their principal subjects and characteristics.

Broadly, they may be understood through themes such as:

spiritual experience, love, nature, social consciousness and human relationships.

These different themes demonstrate the range of his poetic imagination.

4.2.1 Spiritual Experiences

An important group among K. M. Varghese's prose poems consists of writings based upon **spiritual or religious experience**.

Christian faith forms an important background to these poems.

The poems are not concerned merely with theological instruction. Instead, faith is experienced personally. Prayer, suffering, hope, human weakness and dependence upon God become poetic experiences.

The thesis examines several works in this category.

1. A devotional poem

One of the prose poems considered here is fundamentally devotional.

The speaker turns towards God from within the difficulties and uncertainties of human life.

Life brings sorrow, disappointment and suffering. Yet these experiences do not completely destroy faith. Instead, suffering itself becomes the occasion for turning towards God.

The poem therefore possesses the character of a prayer.

The speaker recognises human limitations and seeks strength beyond himself.

The thesis sees in this work an expression of K. M. Varghese's Christian consciousness as well as his ability to transform religious feeling into literary expression.

2. Prayer

Another prose poem is constructed around the experience of **prayer**.

Prayer here is not presented merely as ritual.

It becomes an intimate conversation arising from the individual's circumstances.

The speaker approaches God with the anxieties and burdens of ordinary life.

The language consequently possesses a personal quality. The relationship between the individual and God becomes the emotional centre of the poem.

Through this, K. M. Varghese communicates the idea that faith becomes most meaningful when it enters the realities of human experience.

3. Spiritual struggle

Other poems considered in this section reflect the struggle between human weakness and spiritual aspiration.

The individual desires goodness but is conscious of failure.

Earthly attachments, disappointment and suffering create conflict.

The prose poem allows these thoughts to unfold almost as a meditation.

The result is writing that lies somewhere between prayer, reflection and poetry.

This combination becomes one of the characteristics of K. M. Varghese's religious prose poems.

The Personal Element

The thesis repeatedly draws attention to the personal quality of these poems.

K. M. Varghese does not always stand outside the experience he describes.

The poetic voice often speaks in the first person.

Consequently, the reader encounters not simply an abstract religious idea but an individual wrestling with belief, disappointment, hope and uncertainty.

This gives the spiritual poems an autobiographical quality.

Personal experience is transformed into something capable of being shared with the reader.

The individual experience therefore becomes a more universal one.

Love and Human Relationships

Love forms another important subject within the prose poems.

K. M. Varghese approaches love not merely as romantic sentiment but as a fundamental part of human relationships.

Love can bring happiness.

It can also bring separation, longing, disappointment and memory.

The emotional consequences of relationships therefore become suitable subjects for prose poetry.

In these poems, the external event may be relatively simple. What matters is the emotional response created by it.

Memory frequently plays an important role.

An experience from the past can return to the mind and acquire new significance. The poet reconstructs the experience through reflection.

This inward-looking quality gives many of the prose poems their emotional force.

3. Memories

The chapter next considers prose poems connected particularly with **memory**.

Memory allows the poet to move between past and present.

An incident that has already ended can continue to live within the mind.

A person may no longer be present, but memory preserves the relationship.

A place may have changed, but recollection restores an earlier world.

K. M. Varghese uses such experiences to examine the way human beings remain connected with their past.

The prose poem is particularly suited to this because it allows thought, recollection and emotion to move freely without requiring a conventional narrative structure.

4. The World Around Him

K. M. Varghese's poetic attention also turns towards the ordinary world surrounding him.

Human beings, places, incidents and everyday experiences become subjects for reflection.

The poet observes something apparently ordinary and discovers within it a larger meaning.

This quality reflects the same observational ability that appears elsewhere in his writing.

The artist looks.

The historian remembers.

The writer interprets.

And the poet transforms the experience into an image or reflection.

The thesis regards this capacity for observation as an important feature of his prose poetry.

5. The Poet

Another group of passages reflects upon the **poet himself and the nature of poetic creation**.

What is a poet?

Where does poetry come from?

How does ordinary experience become literature?

K. M. Varghese's prose poems occasionally turn towards these questions.

The poet is presented as someone particularly sensitive to the world around him.

Experiences that another person might overlook can become significant to the poet.

Beauty, sorrow, injustice, affection and memory all provide material for artistic creation.

Poetry therefore emerges from a particular way of seeing.

This idea is particularly interesting in the case of K. M. Varghese because he was also associated with visual art. The impulse to observe and represent the world appears in both his artistic and literary activities.

4.2.2 Love Experiences

The thesis then considers prose poems centred specifically upon **love**.

Love is treated as a complex human experience.

It contains joy and fulfilment, but it can also contain pain.

Separation gives rise to longing.

Memory preserves affection after circumstances have changed.

Expectations can produce disappointment.

Through these experiences, love becomes more than a subject for sentimental writing. It becomes a way of examining the human personality.

Love and separation

Several passages explore the pain created when people who are emotionally connected become separated.

Physical absence does not necessarily end an emotional relationship.

Indeed, absence can intensify memory.

The person who is no longer present may become even more powerful within the imagination.

K. M. Varghese uses this tension between **presence and absence** to generate emotional intensity.

Love and memory

Memory becomes inseparable from love.

Past conversations, places and experiences remain alive within the mind.

The poet revisits them.

Sometimes the recollection brings happiness.

At other times it makes the present loneliness more painful.

This mixture of pleasure and sorrow gives the prose poems their emotional complexity.

1. Love of Nature

Nature occupies a significant place in K. M. Varghese's poetic imagination.

The natural world is not merely background scenery.

Trees, flowers, seasons, landscapes, light and the changing atmosphere become part of the emotional experience of the poem.

Nature can reflect the poet's state of mind.

A beautiful landscape can create joy and tranquillity.

Changes within nature can suggest the passing of time.

The natural world can also awaken memory.

The thesis notes the descriptive qualities of these passages and the way visual details contribute to their poetic character.

Again, the connection with K. M. Varghese's artistic sensibility is striking.

His descriptions frequently possess the quality of a picture constructed through words.

2. Love of Country

Another form of love appearing in the prose poems is **love for one's country**.

Patriotic feeling becomes a literary subject.

The land is connected with memory, identity and belonging.

Love of country is not expressed only through political slogans. It emerges through attachment to the people, culture and landscape that form one's world.

The individual recognises himself as belonging to something larger.

This sense of belonging gives patriotic feeling an emotional rather than merely political dimension.

3. Love of Humanity

K. M. Varghese's prose poetry also reflects concern for **human beings generally**.

Compassion is an important element.

The suffering of another person becomes worthy of attention.

Poverty, loneliness, vulnerability and injustice are not simply social statistics. They are experiences endured by individual human beings.

By focusing upon the individual, the writer transforms a social issue into an emotional experience.

The thesis therefore connects his humanitarian concern with the broader social consciousness visible throughout his writings.

4. Family Affection

Family relationships provide another source of emotion.

The relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives, and members of a household create experiences of affection, responsibility, expectation and disappointment.

K. M. Varghese draws upon these familiar relationships because they are universally recognisable.

The domestic world can contain both great tenderness and great pain.

A small incident within a family can therefore carry considerable emotional significance.

The thesis sees this sensitivity to family relationships as part of the human quality of his prose poetry.

5. "That Small Garden"

One of the individual pieces discussed in the chapter concerns **a small garden**.

The garden becomes more than a physical place.

It contains associations and memories.

Plants, flowers and the surrounding environment acquire emotional meaning because of the human experiences connected with them.

The poet's observation of the garden gradually becomes a meditation upon life.

This is characteristic of K. M. Varghese's prose-poetic method: he begins with something concrete and familiar and allows it to lead towards reflection.

The physical object becomes a doorway into memory and emotion.

6. Social Consciousness

The prose poems also demonstrate **social awareness**.

K. M. Varghese was attentive to inequalities and suffering within society.

The writer cannot completely separate himself from the world in which he lives.

Social conditions enter literature because they enter human experience.

Poverty, inequality, injustice and the difficulties faced by ordinary people therefore become legitimate subjects for poetry.

The thesis regards this social consciousness as one of the important qualities of K. M. Varghese's writing.

He does not always approach social questions through argument.

Instead, he allows the experience of a particular person or situation to reveal the larger problem.

This gives the writing emotional rather than merely ideological force.

4.2.3 Satirical Pieces

The next major group consists of writings employing **satire and humour**.

Satire allows the writer to expose foolishness, hypocrisy, pretension and contradictions within society.

Rather than directly lecturing the reader, the writer constructs a situation in which the absurdity becomes visible by itself.

K. M. Varghese uses humour as a form of observation.

People reveal their weaknesses through what they say and do.

The reader laughs, but the laughter often contains criticism.

The chapter identifies several pieces of this nature and discusses the situations upon which their humour depends.

1. A satirical piece

One piece uses an apparently ordinary situation to expose a larger human weakness.

The humour arises from the difference between the way people imagine themselves and the way their behaviour actually appears to others.

Pretension therefore becomes a source of comedy.

2. Marriage

Marriage and relationships provide material for another humorous or satirical piece.

Social expectations surrounding marriage can produce contradictions.

Family ambitions, status, money and personal preferences may collide.

K. M. Varghese uses these tensions to create humour while also commenting upon social attitudes.

3. Religious hypocrisy

Religion too can become a subject for satire when outward religious behaviour does not correspond with actual conduct.

The target is not necessarily faith itself.

Rather, the satire is directed towards the gap between **what people profess and how they behave**.

This distinction is important in understanding K. M. Varghese's religious satire.

4. Domestic and social pretension

Everyday life supplies many opportunities for satire.

People attempt to impress one another.

Status becomes important.

Appearances become more important than reality.

Through such situations the writer reveals the comic side of ordinary social behaviour.

The Characteristics of K. M. Varghese's Prose Poems

The closing section of the chapter attempts an overall assessment of his prose poetry.

Several characteristics emerge.

Personal experience

Much of the writing begins with experience.

The poet observes, remembers or feels something and transforms that experience into literature.

Imagination

Ordinary events are enlarged through imagination.

The poet discovers meaning in experiences that might otherwise appear insignificant.

Emotional intensity

Even though the works are written in prose form, they seek the emotional concentration associated with poetry.

Visual quality

Descriptions frequently possess a strong visual character.

People, places and natural scenes are presented in a way that allows the reader to imagine them vividly.

Social awareness

The writer remains aware of society and of the experiences of people beyond himself.

Christian consciousness

Faith, prayer, morality, compassion and spiritual reflection appear repeatedly.

Humour and satire

Not all the works are solemn.

K. M. Varghese is also capable of looking at human behaviour with humour and irony.

Together these qualities give his prose poetry its distinctive character.

4.3 The Style of the Prose Poems

The thesis concludes the chapter by examining K. M. Varghese's **style**.

His prose poems stand between conventional prose and conventional poetry.

They do not depend primarily upon metre.

Instead, their poetic effect is created through:

imagery, rhythm, emotional intensity, figurative language, description and the arrangement of thought.

His language generally follows the needs of the subject.

A devotional passage may become prayerful.

A description of nature may become visual and lyrical.

A satirical piece becomes sharper and more conversational.

An emotional recollection becomes intimate and reflective.

This flexibility is one of the strengths the researcher identifies in his writing.

The thesis also notes his use of figures of speech and imagery.

These devices are not merely ornamental. They help convert an idea or emotion into something the reader can visualise and experience.

His background as an artist is again relevant.

There are passages in which the writer appears almost to **paint with words**.

The relationship between image and language therefore forms an important aspect of his prose-poetic style.

Overall Assessment

K. M. Varghese's prose poems reveal another dimension of his literary personality.

The same breadth of interest visible elsewhere in his writings is present here:

religion, human relationships, love, nature, memory, society, humour and personal experience.

His prose poetry allows these subjects to be approached more intimately than they might be in historical or argumentative prose.

The works frequently begin with something small—a memory, a person, a garden, a prayer, an incident—and expand it into a reflection upon human experience.

This ability to discover significance within ordinary life is one of the qualities the thesis identifies in his writing.

The prose poems also demonstrate the close relationship between K. M. Varghese the **artist** and K. M. Varghese the **writer**.

His visual imagination contributes to his descriptions. His social consciousness provides subjects. His Christian faith supplies another dimension. His personal experiences provide emotional material.

Together they produce a body of prose poetry that occupies a distinct place within his wider literary contribution.

Yes. I've started the actual translation, and I need to correct one important mistake from my earlier description: **Chapter Five is not "Novels." The Malayalam title is "ലേഖനങ്ങൾ" (Lekhanangal) — "Essays."** The chapter classifies K. M. Varghese's essays into general subjects, historical subjects, and social subjects.

Below is the first part of the translation, covering approximately thesis pages **86–91**. I'm keeping much closer to the original than I did in some of the earlier chapters.

Chapter Five

Essays

In the development of English literature, prose acquired an important place alongside poetry, drama and the novel. The essay emerged as a literary form capable of presenting ideas, experiences and observations in a concise and attractive manner.

An essay may deal with almost any subject. It can be serious or humorous, reflective or descriptive. It may discuss literature, history, society, philosophy, science, everyday life or personal experience. What gives the essay its literary quality is not merely the subject chosen, but the writer's manner of presenting it.

A good essay combines thought with clarity and style. It does not simply accumulate information. The personality and outlook of the writer are often revealed through the manner in which a subject is approached.

K. M. Varghese wrote essays on a remarkably wide variety of subjects. His writings reveal his curiosity about the world around him and his desire to communicate what he had observed, read and thought about.

His essays therefore form an important part of his literary contribution.

5.1 Principal Areas

K. M. Varghese's essays can broadly be divided into three categories:

1. **Essays on general subjects**
2. **Essays on historical subjects**
3. **Essays on social subjects**

These divisions demonstrate the breadth of his interests. His essays do not remain confined to literature alone. They range from natural phenomena and human behaviour to history, politics, religion and social life.

5.1.1 Essays on General Subjects

1. *Kuzhiyanakalude Jeevitharahasyam*

"The Secret Life of Antlions"

One of K. M. Varghese's essays deals with the small creature known in Malayalam as the **kuzhiyana**—the antlion.

The subject arose from the curiosity and wonder he felt about these creatures. The essay was published in *Kerala Chithram*.

The work was not based merely upon something he had casually read. Varghese spent several months observing the creatures carefully and continuously. From this sustained observation he gathered information about their behaviour and way of life.

The essay describes how the antlion makes its pit, how it lives within it and how it catches its prey.

Varghese observes the remarkable methods by which the creature survives. He considers its habits, its behaviour and the instinctive intelligence visible in the way it constructs its surroundings and captures food.

The principal strength of the essay lies in this close observation.

The author does not burden the reader with unnecessary scientific terminology. Instead, he takes something that might ordinarily go unnoticed and presents it with a sense of wonder.

The result is both informative and engaging.

At one point the essay describes how, when an antlion is disturbed or removed from its pit, it attempts to return to the familiar place and reconstruct the conditions necessary for its life.

Through such small observations, Varghese reveals the astonishing organisation present even in the life of a tiny creature.

The researcher regards this essay as evidence of K. M. Varghese's ability to observe nature closely and turn that observation into readable prose.

2. *Shirolekhitham*

"The Epitaph"

Another essay is titled "**Shirolekhitham**", meaning an inscription written above or upon a grave—a **grave inscription or epitaph**.

The essay begins with reflections upon the place of fate in human life.

For centuries people have debated whether human beings possess complete freedom over their lives or whether unseen forces determine the course of events.

The essay recalls the idea associated with the Stoic philosophers that human beings do not possess absolute freedom and that circumstances beyond their control influence their lives.

This leads Varghese to consider death and the inscriptions placed upon graves.

A cemetery contains the remains of people from very different walks of life. Whatever distinctions existed during life—wealth, status, position or reputation—death brings everyone to the same end.

The epitaph attempts, in a few words, to preserve something about the person who has died.

Varghese uses this subject to reflect upon the various explanations human beings give for the events of their lives.

Terms such as **fate, what is written on one's forehead, planetary misfortune and karma** have all been used in different traditions to explain what happens to a person.

The essay considers these beliefs critically and reflects upon the mystery surrounding human destiny.

The researcher notes that Varghese treats a philosophical subject in an accessible way rather than turning it into a heavy academic argument.

3. Chiri

“Laughter”

The next essay is titled **“Chiri” — “Laughter.”**

Laughter is one of the clearest outward expressions of human emotion.

The essay examines laughter as a particularly human characteristic and considers the relationship between laughter, emotion and social behaviour.

K. M. Varghese approaches the subject analytically while maintaining a light tone.

He identifies different kinds of laughter.

Among them are:

1. **Laughter that bursts out spontaneously**, without calculation or pretence.
2. **Laughter produced by amusing situations or actions**, where something comic causes the mind to respond naturally.

3. **Laughter associated with satisfaction or pleasure**, arising when a person experiences something pleasing.
4. **Laughter that contains ridicule or contempt.**

These different forms of laughter reveal different states of mind.

A laugh can express happiness.

It can create friendship.

But laughter can also wound another person when it becomes mockery.

Varghese therefore does not treat laughter simply as amusement. He considers its psychological and social dimensions.

He also attempts to distinguish wholesome laughter from laughter that causes pain or humiliation.

The essay demonstrates his habit of taking an ordinary feature of daily life and examining it closely enough to reveal something about human nature.

4. *Vikku*

“Hiccups”

Another essay is titled **“Vikku” — “Hiccups.”**

This piece begins with an ordinary physical experience familiar to almost everyone.

Varghese explains the phenomenon and discusses some of the commonly suggested remedies for hiccups.

He refers to methods such as controlling or altering the breath and other traditional practices people use in an attempt to stop them.

Some remedies are based on observation and experience; others belong more to popular belief.

The essay considers these different approaches with curiosity.

Again, the subject itself is very small.

But that is precisely characteristic of many of Varghese’s general essays: **nothing is too ordinary to become a subject for thought.**

The human body, an everyday inconvenience or a familiar household remedy can become the starting point for an informative essay.

5. *Deepikayile Mahadbhuthangal*

“The Wonders in Deepika”

The fifth essay discussed in this section is titled “**Deepikayile Mahadbhuthangal**” — “**The Wonders in Deepika.**”

Here K. M. Varghese examines remarkable or unusual reports associated with the newspaper *Deepika*.

The essay considers extraordinary incidents and accounts that attract people precisely because they appear to lie outside ordinary experience.

Varghese does not simply repeat such stories uncritically.

His interest lies in the way people respond to extraordinary claims and in the difficulty of distinguishing the genuinely remarkable from exaggeration, misunderstanding or belief.

The discussion moves between curiosity and scepticism.

Human beings possess a natural attraction towards the unusual and mysterious. Stories of extraordinary occurrences therefore spread easily and are remembered.

But the writer also recognises the importance of examining such claims carefully.

This combination of **wonder and enquiry** is characteristic of K. M. Varghese’s essays on general subjects.

Absolutely. Below is a close, readable English rendering of **Chapter Six**, while retaining the thesis's structure and its emphasis on K. M. Varghese's historical fiction. Where a Malayalam title or proper name is not sufficiently clear from the scan, I will **not guess** an English equivalent.

Chapter Six

Historical Novels

Historical novels occupy an important place in literature. They bring together **history and imagination**. Although the novelist takes events, personalities and circumstances from history, the finished work is not merely a historical record. Through imagination, the novelist gives life to the people and circumstances of another age.

History records what happened. The historical novelist attempts to recreate **how life might have been experienced** by the people who lived through those events.

For this reason, the historical novelist faces a difficult task. Historical facts cannot simply be altered at will. At the same time, if the writer merely repeats facts and dates, the result ceases to function as a novel.

A successful historical novel must therefore maintain a balance between **historical truth and creative imagination**.

Historical Fiction in Malayalam

Malayalam literature has a significant tradition of historical fiction.

The chapter considers the development of this tradition and the writers who helped establish the historical novel in Malayalam.

Historical events offered Malayalam novelists a rich source of material. The history of Kerala contained royal families, struggles for power, wars, political conspiracies, religious conflicts and dramatic changes in society.

Novelists were able to take these events and reconstruct them through fictional narrative.

The historical novel therefore became a means not only of entertaining readers but also of bringing the past to life.

K. M. Varghese belongs within this tradition of Malayalam historical writing.

K. M. Varghese as a Historical Novelist

K. M. Varghese possessed a strong interest in history.

That interest is visible throughout his literary career and becomes particularly important in his historical novels.

He did not approach history merely as a collection of dates, rulers and battles. He was interested in the **people behind historical events**.

Consequently, his historical novels bring together documented personalities and fictional characters.

Kings and rulers appear alongside ordinary men and women.

Political struggles are accompanied by family relationships.

Public events produce private consequences.

This relationship between the large movements of history and the lives of individuals is an important characteristic of his historical fiction.

1. The Novel Concerning Marthanda Varma

The first major historical novel examined in the chapter is connected with **Marthanda Varma** and the political circumstances of Travancore.

The story is set within a period of political instability and struggle for power.

Marthanda Varma's rise to power forms an important historical background.

The novelist draws upon actual historical circumstances while constructing fictional situations around them.

Political rivalry, loyalty, betrayal, courage and personal ambition all become part of the narrative.

The historical setting is therefore not merely decorative. It directly determines the lives and choices of the characters.

History and Fiction

The researcher pays particular attention to the relationship between the historical record and K. M. Varghese's fictional reconstruction.

Some characters belong directly to history.

Others are created by the novelist.

The fictional characters allow the writer to enter areas where historical documents cannot provide a complete picture.

History may tell us that a political event occurred.

It may identify the ruler, the opposing forces and the eventual result.

But it cannot always tell us what an ordinary person thought, feared or experienced.

The novelist supplies this human dimension through imagination.

K. M. Varghese therefore places fictional lives within a recognisable historical framework.

The thesis regards this combination of fact and imagination as fundamental to his historical method.

Travancore and the Struggle for Power

The political history of Travancore supplies much of the dramatic energy of the novel.

Royal succession was not merely a family matter. It involved questions of authority, alliances, military power and competing political interests.

Characters therefore find themselves caught within forces larger than themselves.

Loyalty to a ruler can place a person in danger.

Political allegiance can affect family relationships.

Personal ambition can become intertwined with public affairs.

The novelist uses these tensions to generate both historical and dramatic interest.

The reader is consequently introduced to history through the experiences of characters rather than through a dry sequence of historical facts.

2. A Novel Concerning Travancore Royal History

The chapter then moves to another work associated with the history of the Travancore royal house.

Once again, the novelist draws upon a period in which questions of succession and political authority created conflict.

The historical personalities provide the framework.

Around them K. M. Varghese constructs conversations, personal relationships and incidents that enable the reader to enter the period imaginatively.

The researcher examines where the novel remains close to recorded history and where the author exercises literary freedom.

This distinction is important.

A historical novelist cannot be expected to possess documentary evidence for every conversation or private encounter.

Such scenes belong to fiction.

But they must remain **plausible within the known historical circumstances**.

The thesis considers K. M. Varghese's success according to this standard.

3. Valiya Mar Dionysius and Travancore

Another substantial historical narrative discussed in the chapter is connected with **Valiya Mar Dionysius** and the religious and political circumstances surrounding Travancore.

Here the historical field becomes broader.

Politics and royal authority intersect with **Christian history and ecclesiastical affairs**.

This gives the work particular significance because K. M. Varghese was writing from within a Kerala Christian cultural environment while also approaching the subject as a student of history.

The thesis discusses historical personalities and events associated with church life and examines how the novelist incorporates them into the narrative.

Religion and History

Religion in these works is not isolated from society.

Church affairs are affected by politics.

Political events influence religious communities.

Personal convictions can come into conflict with institutional interests.

K. M. Varghese uses these circumstances to explore the relationship between faith, authority and human behaviour.

Historical Christianity therefore becomes part of the social and political history of Kerala rather than merely the background to a religious story.

This aspect of his writing is especially important in understanding his wider historical interests.

The Human Side of History

One of the most noticeable qualities of K. M. Varghese's historical fiction is his attempt to give history a **human face**.

The thesis repeatedly examines the relationships between characters.

Marriage, affection, loyalty, friendship, family responsibility, jealousy and betrayal all occur within the historical setting.

This is important because historical events are experienced by individuals.

A war is not merely a military event for the person who loses a family member.

A change of ruler is not merely a date in a history book for someone whose security depends upon the previous regime.

Religious conflict is not merely an institutional dispute for families caught within it.

The historical novelist therefore translates public history into personal experience.

K. M. Varghese repeatedly employs this technique.

Women in the Historical Novels

The chapter gives attention to the portrayal of **women**.

Female characters are not present merely as decorative figures surrounding the male historical personalities.

Their relationships, emotions and circumstances contribute to the development of the stories.

Women are affected by political events, family expectations and the social conventions of their period.

Through them the novelist is able to explore areas of historical life that conventional political histories often overlook.

Family relationships become particularly important here.

Marriage can have political consequences.

Family loyalty can conflict with personal desire.

A woman's choices may be restricted by the social conditions surrounding her.

These tensions allow the novelist to connect the domestic world with the wider historical world.

Social Life

K. M. Varghese's historical novels also attempt to recreate the **social environment** of the period.

Customs, beliefs, religious practices and relationships between different sections of society contribute to the historical atmosphere.

The novelist cannot make characters from an earlier century think and behave exactly like people of his own period.

Their behaviour must remain credible within their historical surroundings.

The thesis therefore considers how successfully K. M. Varghese reconstructs the customs and attitudes of the periods he portrays.

Characterisation

The historical novelist faces a special difficulty when portraying a real person.

A fictional character belongs entirely to the novelist.

A historical personality does not.

The writer is constrained by what is already known about the person.

K. M. Varghese therefore uses historical evidence as the foundation upon which the literary personality is constructed.

Where the historical record is silent, imagination can fill the gaps—but the invented behaviour must remain consistent with the historical figure.

The thesis examines his characterisation from this perspective.

It also distinguishes between **historical characters and characters created entirely by the novelist**.

The fictional characters frequently act as bridges between the reader and the historical world.

Dialogue

Dialogue plays an important role in making historical personalities appear alive.

A history book can report that two rulers met.

A novel can attempt to imagine what they might have said.

Through conversation, the writer reveals personality, political intention and emotional conflict.

But this also presents a danger.

Dialogue must suit the historical period and the character speaking.

The thesis considers K. M. Varghese's use of dialogue as one of the devices through which he transforms historical material into fiction.

Description

Description is another important feature of these novels.

Places, buildings, landscapes, clothing and surroundings help reconstruct the historical world.

Here K. M. Varghese's **visual imagination** becomes especially useful.

He frequently creates scenes in a way that enables the reader to picture them.

The descriptive passages consequently contribute to the atmosphere of the novels rather than merely interrupting the narrative.

The writer's ability to visualise a scene—an ability that can also be associated with his artistic interests—helps him recreate the past.

History Versus Imagination

The central question running through the chapter is:

How much freedom does a historical novelist possess?

The thesis makes clear that imagination is essential.

Without imagination, historical fiction becomes history writing.

But imagination must not destroy the historical foundation upon which the story depends.

K. M. Varghese generally constructs his narratives around identifiable historical circumstances and then uses fictional characters, dialogue and incidents to complete the world surrounding those circumstances.

This allows the historical framework to remain visible while still giving the writer sufficient freedom to tell a story.

Language and Narrative Style

The thesis also considers the language of the historical novels.

Historical fiction requires a style capable of suggesting an earlier period while remaining understandable to the contemporary reader.

K. M. Varghese uses narrative description, dialogue and explanatory passages to move between historical information and fictional action.

At certain points the historian within him becomes particularly visible.

He explains events and circumstances because he wants the reader to understand their historical significance.

At other points the novelist takes control and the narrative becomes more dramatic.

This movement between **historian and storyteller** is one of the distinctive characteristics of his historical writing.

The Researcher's Assessment

The researcher concludes that K. M. Varghese's historical novels constitute an important part of his literary contribution.

His knowledge of history gave him access to a rich body of material.

His literary imagination enabled him to transform that material into narrative.

His novels show particular interest in:

Travancore history, royal and political struggles, Kerala Christian history, social relationships, family life, religious affairs and the human consequences of historical change.

The works therefore occupy a position between literature and historical reconstruction.

They also reveal a recurring characteristic of K. M. Varghese himself: **his curiosity about the past and his desire to preserve it through writing.**

Conclusion

K. M. Varghese's historical novels demonstrate that history need not remain confined to chronicles, documents and dates.

Through fiction, historical personalities can be made to speak again; forgotten social circumstances can be reconstructed; and the experiences of people who lived through important events can be imaginatively restored.

The value of the historical novel lies precisely in this ability to connect **the documented past with human experience.**

K. M. Varghese's contribution to the genre grew out of his combination of historical curiosity, literary imagination and social observation.

The thesis therefore regards his historical novels as an important component of his overall literary achievement.

Chapter Seven

Other Writings

Mattū Rachanakal

K. M. Varghese's literary activities were not confined to the literary forms discussed in the preceding chapters. His interests extended into several other fields, and he produced writings of different kinds.

This chapter examines those works.

His other writings can broadly be considered under several categories, including **biographical writings, literary studies and criticism, drama, Christian/religious literature, and translations or adaptations.**

7.1 Biographical Writings

Biography occupies an important place in literature. Through biography, the life and personality of an individual can be preserved for later generations.

A biography is not merely a chronological record of dates and events. A good biographical work should enable the reader to understand the **personality, circumstances, achievements and significance** of its subject.

K. M. Varghese wrote a number of biographical pieces dealing with people whose lives or achievements interested him.

The thesis examines these writings individually.

1. Brother Sri Ananthapuram Pillai

The first biographical work discussed concerns **Sri Ananthapuram Pillai.**

K. M. Varghese wrote about him with considerable affection and admiration.

The account does not merely provide external facts about his life. It attempts to communicate something of the man's character, his relationships with other people, his qualities and the impression he created upon those who knew him.

The researcher points particularly to the personal quality of Varghese's treatment.

Because biography concerns a human life, the writer must select those incidents that reveal the personality behind the facts.

Varghese uses incidents and recollections for precisely this purpose.

The work consequently combines **memory and biography**.

Varghese recalls personal characteristics and incidents and uses them to construct a portrait of the individual.

The researcher identifies several qualities that a good biographer should possess: an ability to observe character, an understanding of the subject's circumstances, sympathy towards the individual, and sufficient objectivity to present the person's life convincingly.

The thesis finds these qualities visible in Varghese's biographical writing.

2. K. Ramakrishna Pillai

The next substantial biographical study concerns **K. Ramakrishna Pillai**.

Ramakrishna Pillai was an important figure in Kerala's journalistic and intellectual history, and K. M. Varghese approached his life with considerable interest.

The thesis discusses Varghese's treatment of Ramakrishna Pillai's personality, public life and achievements.

Rather than simply listing incidents, Varghese attempts to present the forces that shaped his subject and the principles for which he stood.

His treatment demonstrates the biographer's interest in the relationship between **the individual and society**.

The thesis also discusses the literary characteristics of this biographical work.

The narrative is constructed so that historical information remains readable.

Varghese's objective is not simply to praise the subject. He attempts to explain why the person's life possesses significance.

In this sense, biography becomes another means through which Varghese communicates history to his readers.

3. Chattampi Swamikal

Another important personality treated by K. M. Varghese is **Chattampi Swamikal**.

Chattampi Swamikal occupies an important position within Kerala's spiritual, philosophical and social history.

Varghese's treatment considers the circumstances surrounding his life and the qualities that distinguished him.

The thesis points out that Varghese was attracted to personalities whose lives extended beyond their private circumstances and influenced society more widely.

This helps explain his interest in figures such as Chattampi Swamikal.

His account considers both the person and the intellectual or spiritual world associated with him.

4. C. V. Kunhiraman

The thesis next examines K. M. Varghese's writing about **C. V. Kunhiraman**.

Varghese presents aspects of Kunhiraman's literary and public life and attempts to communicate the character of the individual behind his achievements.

Again, his method involves selecting characteristic incidents rather than producing a bare chronology.

This gives the biography greater literary interest.

The thesis sees in these works evidence of Varghese's broader fascination with the **men and women who contributed to Kerala's intellectual, cultural and social development**.

5. K. C. Chacko

Another biographical work discussed concerns **K. C. Chacko**.

Varghese's treatment of Chacko again combines information with personal assessment.

The thesis quotes from and discusses the work in order to demonstrate the author's method of character portrayal.

Through such biographical sketches, Varghese preserves details about people who formed part of the cultural and intellectual environment of his period.

6. Rao Sahib O. M. Cherian

The next figure discussed is **Rao Sahib O. M. Cherian**.

K. M. Varghese's account deals with Cherian's personality, public activity and contribution.

The researcher again emphasises Varghese's ability to present biographical information without reducing the subject to a collection of dates.

Personality remains important.

The writer attempts to show the individual through his actions, relationships and achievements.

The account therefore becomes both **a record of a life and a portrait of a person.**

7. K. C. Mammen Mappillai

One of the more substantial biographical discussions concerns **K. C. Mammen Mappillai.**

The thesis describes Varghese's treatment of his life and contribution and notes the breadth of the material considered.

His activities in different fields are brought together in order to present a coherent picture of the man.

Varghese examines his personality, achievements and the circumstances in which he worked.

The biography is therefore not restricted to private life; it also considers the individual's relationship with the wider society of Kerala.

8. Chithramezhuthu Ravi Varma

The next biographical subject is especially interesting in relation to K. M. Varghese's own artistic interests.

The thesis discusses his writing on **Chithramezhuthu Ravi Varma.**

Varghese considers Ravi Varma's life and artistic contribution.

The work naturally provides an opportunity to discuss **painting and visual art**, subjects with which Varghese himself had a close connection.

His response to an artist therefore possesses a particular significance.

The thesis notes the attention given to artistic achievement and to the qualities that distinguished Ravi Varma's work.

9. An Artist Who Learned to Paint with His Feet

One of the most striking biographical pieces discussed in this chapter concerns an **artist who learned to paint using his feet**.

The physical limitations faced by the artist did not prevent artistic achievement.

Varghese was evidently interested not merely in the unusual nature of the accomplishment but in the determination behind it.

The account consequently becomes a story of **human perseverance and creativity**.

For Varghese, who was himself closely associated with painting, the story of an artist overcoming physical limitations would naturally have possessed particular interest.

10. Cheriya Tharakan

The tenth biographical piece discussed concerns **Cheriya Tharakan**.

The work again demonstrates Varghese's interest in individuals whose lives intersected with the social and cultural history of Kerala.

The thesis examines the biographical information contained in the work and the author's method of presenting his subject.

Taken together, these biographical writings reveal the remarkable variety of personalities who attracted K. M. Varghese's attention.

7.2 Literary Studies and Criticism

The chapter next turns to another aspect of K. M. Varghese's writing: **literary appreciation and criticism**.

Varghese was not merely a creator of literature.

He was also a reader who examined the writings of others and expressed opinions about them.

The thesis identifies several works in which he considers writers, books and literary subjects.

This is significant because literary criticism requires a different relationship with literature.

The writer is no longer creating a fictional world. He is attempting to understand, interpret and evaluate someone else's work.

1. Literary Appreciation

In his literary studies, Varghese considers the qualities that make a work effective.

He pays attention to subject, style, imagination and the writer's ability to communicate experience.

His approach is generally accessible rather than excessively theoretical.

He attempts to help readers appreciate the work under discussion.

The thesis therefore treats these pieces as evidence of his broader literary awareness.

2. Vedaviharam

Another work discussed in this section is **Vedaviharam**.

The thesis examines the literary and religious dimensions of the work.

Varghese's interest in Christian literature frequently brings together two aspects of his personality: the literary reader and the Christian thinker.

Consequently, even when the subject is religious, he remains attentive to language, presentation and literary quality.

3. Drama

The chapter then considers Varghese's involvement with **drama**.

Drama differs from other literary forms because it is intended not merely to be read but to be performed.

Characters must reveal themselves largely through speech and action.

Dialogue therefore assumes particular importance.

The thesis discusses Varghese's dramatic writing in relation to these characteristics.

His interest in character, dialogue and social situations—already visible in his short stories and other prose—could naturally be adapted to dramatic form.

4. Christian Literature

Christianity forms an important strand throughout K. M. Varghese's writings.

The chapter therefore considers separately those works that can be classified as **Christian literature**.

These writings include reflections upon Christian life, biblical subjects, religious personalities and spiritual experience.

The thesis makes clear that religion was not an isolated compartment within Varghese's intellectual life.

Christian ideas appear in his fiction, poetry, essays and historical writing as well.

His specifically Christian writings therefore belong within a much larger pattern.

His approach combines faith with literary expression.

Biblical themes and Christian moral ideas become subjects for writing rather than merely doctrinal statements.

The researcher draws attention to the literary qualities present in these works and to Varghese's ability to communicate religious ideas in accessible language.

5. Translations

K. M. Varghese also undertook **translation**.

Translation occupies an important place in the development of a literature because it makes works from one linguistic or cultural environment available to readers in another.

A translator must do more than substitute one word for another.

The meaning, tone and character of the original work must somehow be recreated in the new language.

The thesis discusses Varghese's translated work and the literary value of these efforts.

7.3 Adaptations

The final major section deals with **adaptations**.

The thesis lists two principal works:

1. **Nurse John**
2. **Pullilikkunnilum Jathiyum** — I am retaining this title in transliteration for now because I do not want to give it a misleading English title.

1. *Nurse John*

Nurse John is identified as an adaptation associated with a work by **Sardar K. M. Panikkar**.

The thesis discusses how K. M. Varghese reshaped the material for his own literary purpose.

Adaptation differs from direct translation.

The adapter possesses greater freedom to modify the original material—to alter its form, reorganise incidents or reshape the work so that it functions effectively for another readership.

The researcher considers *Nurse John* from this perspective.

The work demonstrates Varghese's ability to take material originating elsewhere and recreate it within Malayalam literary culture.

The thesis discusses the narrative and its relationship to the source material, while also considering the changes introduced by Varghese.

This ability to move between original writing, translation and adaptation is another indication of the breadth of his literary activity.

2. *Pullilikkunnillum Jathiyum*

The second adaptation discussed is connected with a work associated with **Achyuthananda Swamikal**.

The thesis considers both the original material and the way it was treated by K. M. Varghese.

The work engages with questions connected with **caste and social life**.

Consequently, adaptation becomes a means of bringing an existing subject before a new readership while also engaging with issues of contemporary social importance.

The thesis notes that Varghese did not mechanically reproduce his sources.

He selected and reorganised material according to the needs of the work.

The resulting text therefore bears his own literary imprint even though its origins lie elsewhere.

Overall Assessment of Chapter Seven

This chapter considerably enlarges the picture of K. M. Varghese that emerges from the thesis.

If we looked only at his stories, poetry or historical writings, we would see only part of his literary personality.

His interests extended into:

biography, history, journalism, literary criticism, visual art, drama, Christianity, translation, adaptation and social questions.

What connects these apparently different fields is **curiosity**.

He was interested in people.

He was interested in the past.

He was interested in literature.

He was interested in religion.

He was interested in artists and writers.

And he was interested in the society in which he lived.

His writings became the means through which those interests were explored and communicated.

Conclusion

When we examine the literary works of **K. M. Varghese**, whose life was rooted in twentieth-century Kerala, it becomes evident that he was a person of considerable distinction.

In the twentieth century, two broad phases may be discerned in his literary activity. The first was a period dominated by prose writing, while the second was characterised by poetry. In the early stage of his literary career, he concentrated particularly on prose. Later, poetry became an important field through which he expressed his literary ability.

His literary interests extended across many areas. He was interested in education, culture and history, and these interests found expression in his writings. His reading and intellectual curiosity were wide-ranging.

He displayed a strong interest in both **history and literature**, and he attempted to communicate what he had learned through his writings.

Short stories, prose works, essays, historical writings, interpretations, translations, religious writings and other forms were among the various literary fields in which he worked.

K. M. Varghese's writings therefore cannot easily be confined to a single literary category.

His social publications and the organisations with which he was associated also reflected his desire to contribute to society. His involvement in social and cultural activities complemented his literary work.

When his writings are considered as a whole, one can see a writer who was continually attempting to communicate knowledge and ideas to others.

His short stories

Among the early forms of Malayalam literature in which K. M. Varghese made his mark were his **short stories**.

His stories demonstrate a capacity for narration and observation. His treatment of characters and situations reveals an ability to look closely at human life.

He attempted to give his characters individuality and to present their experiences effectively.

His short stories were not merely exercises in storytelling. Through them, he sought to communicate ideas and observations about society and human behaviour.

The stories therefore possess significance within the development of his literary personality.

His prose writings similarly reveal a writer interested in communicating clearly with his readers.

The language of these writings reflects the literary circumstances of the period in which they were produced, while also demonstrating his own approach to prose composition.

His poetry

K. M. Varghese also experimented with poetry.

His poems reveal both literary sensitivity and an interest in the aesthetic qualities of language.

His poetic works demonstrate that he was not satisfied with restricting himself to prose alone. Poetry provided another medium through which he could express his thoughts and emotions.

The poems contain reflections on human experience and demonstrate his desire to express ideas through imaginative language.

His poetic work forms another dimension of his literary contribution.

His writings on the world around him

K. M. Varghese observed the world around him carefully.

He wrote about subjects connected with contemporary life and showed an interest in developments taking place beyond his immediate surroundings.

His writings demonstrate a desire to understand the wider world and communicate that understanding to his readers.

In this sense, his literary activity was not detached from society. His writings were connected with the social and intellectual environment in which he lived.

His works therefore reveal both the writer and the observer.

Historical consciousness

A particularly important feature of K. M. Varghese's writings was his interest in **history**.

He understood the importance of preserving information about the past and attempted to record historical material through his writings.

This historical consciousness appears in several areas of his work.

His treatment of historical subjects demonstrates an awareness that the experiences of earlier generations needed to be preserved and transmitted.

In this respect, his historical writings possess a value extending beyond their immediate literary qualities.

They also represent an effort to preserve memory.

Literature as service

K. M. Varghese's literary activity was connected with his understanding of service to society.

Writing was not simply an individual pursuit.

Through his literary and cultural activities, he attempted to contribute something useful to the society in which he lived.

His writings therefore combined literary interest with social concern.

His works reflect a man who read widely, observed carefully and attempted to share what he had learned with others.

An assessment of K. M. Varghese's literary contribution

The concluding pages of the study summarise K. M. Varghese's place in literature through a series of observations.

The original gives these as numbered points. I have retained that structure below.

1. He was a writer with a broad range of interests

K. M. Varghese was a literary figure who worked in a variety of fields.

His interests were not confined to one form of writing or one particular subject.

This breadth is one of the characteristics of his literary personality.

2. His short stories possess both aesthetic and social value

His short stories demonstrate artistic qualities while also reflecting social awareness.

They show his concern for society as well as his ability to construct stories.

In this sense, his short-story writing combined **literary beauty with social consciousness**.

3. He reflected contemporary society and its surroundings

His writings reveal an awareness of the society in which he lived.

The conditions, concerns and experiences of contemporary life found their way into his work.

He therefore stands as a writer who attempted to portray aspects of the life of his own period.

4. His historical writings are significant

His historical consciousness deserves particular attention.

His work in the field of Kerala history forms an important aspect of his contribution.

Through his historical writings, he attempted to preserve material concerning the past and make it available to later generations.

5. He sought to communicate knowledge through literature

His writings reveal a desire to share knowledge with others.

His works in both literature and prose served as vehicles through which information, ideas and learning could be communicated to readers.

This educational quality is an important feature of his work.

6. His work belongs within the literary and cultural life of twentieth-century Kerala

K. M. Varghese's literary activity must be viewed within the broader cultural and literary environment of twentieth-century Kerala.

He participated in the literary movements and tendencies of his time.

His writings therefore provide a connection with the intellectual and cultural currents of that period.

7. His writing style was distinctive

K. M. Varghese possessed an individual style.

His prose combined clarity with seriousness of purpose.

Across his writings, social awareness and literary expression existed together.

This gave his work a recognisable character.

8. He worked in many literary forms

K. M. Varghese engaged with numerous forms of writing, including:

prose, short stories, historical essays, historical novels, literary criticism and other forms of literary writing.

His work was therefore not restricted to a single genre.

This versatility helped establish his place within Malayalam literary activity.

At the same time, the breadth of his interests—**art, Christianity and history among them**—gave his writings a wider cultural dimension.

Final Assessment

Taken together, these characteristics reveal K. M. Varghese as a writer with wide-ranging interests and a strong desire to communicate knowledge.

He was interested in **art, Christianity, history, literature and society**. His writings drew upon these interests and attempted to make them accessible to others.

His contribution should therefore be understood not merely in terms of the number of works he produced, but in the breadth of subjects he attempted to address.

His literary activity brought together history, artistic sensibility, social awareness and Christian thought.

In that sense, K. M. Varghese belonged to a generation of writers for whom literature was more than an artistic occupation. It was also a means of **preserving knowledge, interpreting society and passing something of value to the generations that followed**.

Bibliography — English translation and archival format

A. Malayalam books and studies

The bibliography begins on page 232 with numbered Malayalam-language books and scholarly sources. It continues for more than 100 entries through page 242.

For the finished catalogue, I would format each entry as:

No. | Author | Malayalam title | Romanized title | English rendering | Publisher | Place | Year

The first pages visibly include works connected with Malayalam literary history, Kerala history, Christianity, novels, poetry and criticism. This is useful because it shows the breadth of sources Leelamma George consulted when placing K. M. Varghese within Malayalam literary history rather than examining his writings in isolation.

B. Contemporary periodicals and articles

C. English Books

The final three pages are sufficiently clear to transcribe substantially in full.

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Appendix 1

The Life of Antlions

Kuzhiyanakalude Jeevitham

The life of antlions is both curious and fascinating. Their habits and manner of living provide many interesting things for us to observe.

Antlions generally make their homes in places where there is loose, dry soil. They construct small funnel-shaped pits in the earth and remain concealed at the bottom. These pits serve an important purpose in obtaining their food.

The creature waits patiently beneath the soil for its prey.

When a small insect, particularly an ant, approaches the edge of the pit and slips down the loose sand, escape becomes difficult. The antlion, concealed below, takes advantage of this situation and captures its prey.

The construction of the pit itself is remarkable.

The antlion prepares it in such a manner that the loose particles of soil naturally slide towards the centre. An insect that ventures onto the slope therefore finds it increasingly difficult to climb back out.

The antlion remains hidden and waits.

This behaviour reveals an extraordinary instinct in so small a creature.

What particularly interested K. M. Varghese was not merely the existence of the creature, but **the way in which it lived**.

He observed its behaviour carefully.

The antlion's movements, the construction of its pit, its manner of catching prey and its responses when disturbed all became subjects of observation.

The piece therefore reads not simply as an account taken from a book but as the observations of someone who had spent time watching the creature for himself.

When the pit is disturbed, the creature begins again.

It uses movements of its body to remove soil and gradually forms the characteristic hollow.

The angle and looseness of the earth are important. When an insect enters the pit, the sides collapse beneath it and carry it downward.

If the prey attempts to climb out, the antlion can disturb or throw the loose sand, making escape still more difficult.

Once the insect reaches the bottom, it is seized.

What appears at first to be nothing more than a small depression in the earth is therefore an efficiently constructed trap.

The essay repeatedly draws attention to the **patience and instinctive skill** of the creature.

Observation rather than assumption

One of the attractive qualities of this piece is Varghese's reluctance simply to accept what others say.

He watches.

He experiments.

He notices what happens when the creature is disturbed and how it behaves under different circumstances.

His interest is in discovering the creature's habits through observation.

That gives the essay something of the character of a small natural-history investigation.

The antlion does not wander about continually searching for food. Instead, it creates conditions in which its food comes within reach.

Once the trap has been constructed, patience becomes its principal strategy.

There it waits, hidden from view.

An unsuspecting insect approaches.

The loose earth gives way.

The victim struggles.

And the antlion responds.

The entire mechanism demonstrates how remarkably well adapted the creature is to its surroundings.

A small creature and a larger lesson

The subject may appear insignificant.

It is only a tiny creature living in the soil.

Yet when its life is examined closely, an astonishing degree of organisation becomes visible.

The essay therefore reflects something characteristic of K. M. Varghese's writing: **his curiosity about ordinary things that most people would simply walk past without noticing.**

Something as small as an antlion becomes worthy of patient study.

Its behaviour raises questions.

How does it know how to construct its pit?

How does it recognise the movement of prey?

How does such a small creature possess behaviour so perfectly suited to its survival?

The wonder lies precisely in the fact that such complexity exists in something so easily overlooked.

The first appendix consequently gives us more than information about an insect. It gives us a glimpse of the author's own temperament: **observation, curiosity, patience and a desire to understand what he saw around him.**

Appendix 2

Vedaviharam

Appendix 2 begins on thesis page 255 and moves into a very different subject: Christianity, Kerala and its historical development.

The opening considers the relationship between Christianity and Kerala society and the long historical presence of Christians in the region.

Christian communities in Kerala developed distinctive customs and social practices. Their history became intertwined with the wider history and culture of Kerala.

The text considers how these communities lived within Kerala society while retaining their Christian identity.

This leads into discussion of the historical church and the changes that occurred through contact with European ecclesiastical authorities.

One particularly important historical reference is the **Synod of Diamper of 1599**.

The appendix explicitly cites:

Acts of the Synod of Diamper convened by Archbishop Menezes in 1599, Section 9, Decree 13.

That citation appears directly in the original document.

The text uses this material while discussing practices and customs associated with the Christian community.

It also considers the complicated relationship between Christianity as a religion and the social customs inherited from the surrounding society.

This is significant because the history of Kerala Christianity cannot be understood purely through theology.

Christians lived within Kerala's existing social structure.

They interacted with other communities.

They inherited local customs.

And some of those customs continued even when they were difficult to reconcile with Christian teaching.

The text consequently examines the interaction between **religion, caste, social status and inherited custom**.

A further historical source is explicitly cited as ***The Land of the Perumals*, page 232**.

This again demonstrates that the piece was not written merely as devotional reflection. Varghese was drawing upon historical sources while considering the development of the Christian community.