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www.keralasahityaakademi.org
editorial@keralasahityaakademi.org

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Of womens' theatre, Khasak , and more...

The latest issue of the Malayalam Literary Survey presents an insightful examination of two fascinating topics in Malayalam literature. The first article delves into the evolution of women's theatre in Malayalam, tracing its journey from its early days to the present. The piece is a tribute to the trailblazing women who have contributed to the growth and development of this unique art form. It carefully goes down history's memory lane to record every movement that created a solid women's theatre of the state.

Another important article in the issue is an engrossing account of O.V. Vijayan's publication history of Khasakkinte Ithihasam. The book went on to become a critical and commercial success, cementing Vijayan's position as one of the most prominent writers of his time. The article by Dr Kishore Ram explores the digitisation of Malayalam works, addressing technical as well as cultural aspects.

Overall, the latest issue of the Malayalam Literary Survey is a must-read for anyone interested in the fascinating world of Malayalam literature. It celebrates the language, its history, and the many voices that have contributed to its growth and evolution over the years.

C.P. Aboobacker



CONTENTS

6 Finding 'Her Space':
(R)Evolution of Women's Theatre in Kerala
Vijayalakshmi C.S., Dr Sreedevi K. Menon

14 From Manuscript to Modern Classic :
Tracing the Publication History and
Canonical Journey of *Khasakkinte Ithihasam*
Jain Mary Sajeev, Dr Rajesh M

27 The Rhizomatic Nature of Poorakkali:
Recovering Non-Hierarchical and
Dynamic Aspects
Anju A.

41 Translation as Confluence: A Case of
English Translation of Ganga Sati's *Soni Vani*
Dr Hemang A.

51 Synergies of Space and Identity Erasures in
Narratives of Diasporic Women
Dr Mallika A. Nair

62 Digitizing Malayalam Literary Heritage:
Preservation, Accessibility, and Cultural
Enrichment
Kishore Ram

CONTENTS

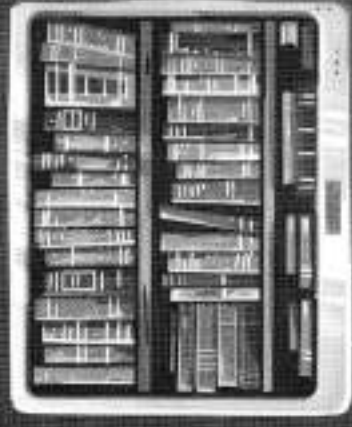
71 Intersecting Anthropologies:
A Comparative Study of
Cultural Oppression and Trauma in
Nooru Simhasanagal and Celestial Bodies
Kavitha P.K., Dr S. Kalamani

79 The Chronicle of Memories Untold:
Analyzing the Narratorial Voice of *Aa*
Maya Venugopal

87 *Stand Up: From a Victim to a Survivor*
Saraswathi Binoj, Dr Sruti Ramachandran
Poems in Translation

95 Two Naked Poems
Kureepuzha Sreekumar
Translated by **Lekshman Madhav**

97 Impressions
D. Yesudas
Translated by **Ammu Ashok**





Digitizing Malayalam Literary Heritage

Preservation, Accessibility,
and Cultural Enrichment

Kishore Ram

Malayalam literature, a multi-layered cultural treasure trove including novels, drama, poetry, and short stories, reflects Kerala's cultural heritage. As the world hurtles into the digital age, the need to safeguard, propagate, and share this literary wealth has spurred the digitalisation of these literary gems, accompanied by strategies to extend Kerala's culture to the global stage.

The digital transformation of library collections fundamentally reshapes the landscape of information retrieval and research practices. Libraries are increasingly tasked with the responsibility of guaranteeing worldwide access to their digital repositories, a demand emanating from both the general public and the academic community.

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economic disparities, political divisions, and cultural nuances, thereby ushering in an era of unparalleled accessibility to information resources.

Researchers are venturing into uncharted territories, frequently driven by the potential of state-of-the-art technologies to blend resources from diverse domains and origins and creatively manipulate digital texts and images. Significantly, digitisation profoundly influences how rare and unique collections are uncovered and utilised, surpassing its impact on general library materials. When these collections are digitised and made accessible, they assume an irreplaceable role as invaluable resources, emerging from the shadows of obscurity.

Malayalam, a classical language, boasts a collection of ancient texts of immense value. It is imperative to digitise these texts for their preservation. With the Malayalee population dispersing to various regions, the digital accessibility of Malayalam texts becomes increasingly necessary. The global fascination with Malayalam has been evident since ancient times, as exemplified by Herodotus's study of the Malayalam language and the creation of the first Malayalam dictionary. Preserving Malayalam literature for future generations is imperative; otherwise, this language's invaluable texts may be consigned to oblivion.

Shruti Dixit, a researcher at the University of St Andrews, notes that "the advantage of digitisation in India lies in the availability of rare, precious and incomparable manuscripts without hampering the original manuscripts and their fragile existence." In her essay "What We Hold and What We Must Pass On: A Review of Digitization of Manuscripts at IGNC in India," published in digitalorientalist.com, she points out that Indian institutions are increasingly digitising ancient manuscripts to preserve and make them accessible.

Kishorilata

The National Mission for Manuscripts (NAMAMI) aims to safeguard these treasures for future generations, boost access for researchers, establish a digital library, and set digitisation standards. However, she asks, "Why are Indian cultural centres investing time and resources in digitising these invaluable manuscripts that have graced their shelves for centuries?" Because, despite these efforts, digitised manuscripts often remain restricted to library premises due to property rights issues. Dixit says, "The digitised manuscripts are not accessible publicly and can only be accessed at the concerned libraries or organisations."

Dixit feels that while digitisation improves accessibility, complete online access for all is a long-term goal, which could revolutionise research and save time for scholars. The initiative has protected these invaluable manuscripts from further decay while opening new avenues for their study and exploration, echoing the sentiment of the original text that emphasised the importance of digitisation in preserving India's rich cultural heritage.

Gokulnath B, in "6 Factors to Consider while Digitizing Books at Scale," notes that by digitising texts, the reach of the book is made available to a whole new audience, "primarily the millennial generation that accesses all its content and information on their mobile devices, tablets, and laptops." He further says that Publishers and organisations are increasingly digitising their physical books, primarily in ASCII format, to enhance distribution and accessibility. This process employs image scanners, which can be manual or automated, to capture the content.

Gokulnath further says that digitising books serves multiple purposes, including saving space, preventing damage, restoring damaged books, and providing easier access for readers. It also enables easy sharing and cost efficiencies. Two methods, unbound/destructive and bound/non-destructive book scanning, are employed for large-scale digitisation, with the latter gaining popularity for preserving valuable content. He explains the digitisation process of creating master files with specific parameters like image resolution and colour management. Editing and quality control play a crucial role, with manual error checks. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is used for data entry and indexing, while taxonomy, metadata, and classification enhance accessibility.

While digitisation of text is important, an article that appeared in The Hindu dated 2 February 2023 underscores the need for digital.

ing inscriptions. According to the article, in the Union Budget, the Bharat Shared Repository of Inscriptions (Bharat SHRI) was introduced, focusing on digitising 1 lakh inscriptions in its initial phase. The Directorate of the Epigraphy branch, a part of the Archaeological Survey of India, is located in Mysuru and has jurisdiction over ancient languages, including Malayalam. This endeavour gains significance as epigraphy and inscriptions form the core of historiography. Undiscovered inscriptions containing valuable historical information are at risk due to unchecked urbanisation and development across the country. A group of scholars, including numismatist A.V. Narasimhamurthy, underscores "the importance of epigraphy without which all history would be reduced to fables."

Digitisation transcends mere replication; it is a contemporary safeguard for our cultural heritage. Beyond copying, it serves as a shield against the wear and tear caused by continuous handling, ensuring the preservation of texts. This accessibility ensures that these highly delicate, culturally rich, and irreplaceable texts remain intact for future research. In essence, digitisation acts as a modern guardian, protecting and preserving our culture for future generations.

The roots of Malayalam literature stretch back to ancient folk songs celebrating the heroes and legends of Kerala. The 13th-century epic poem "Ramacharitam" marked the emergence of literary composition in Malayalam, setting the stage for a literary tradition that would evolve over the centuries. Classical poets like Ezhuthachan and Kunjan Nambiar enriched Malayalam literature in the 18th century, and the 19th century witnessed the transition to modern prose with Chandu Menon's "Indulekha."

This rich literary tradition continued to evolve through the works of modern writers like O.V. Vi-

jayam and Vaikoom. Muhammad Hasheer, who challenged conventional storytelling, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai and Kamala Das left indelible marks, delving into the socio-cultural shades of Kerala society. Poets like Sugatha Kumari and Ayyappa Paniker addressed pressing issues, demonstrating the dynamic nature of Malayalam literature. Contemporary writers are adding to this rich tradition.

As Malayalam literature embarks on its digital journey, it gains unprecedented avenues for global dissemination. E-books, online libraries, and digital archives transcend linguistic and geographical barriers, inviting readers worldwide to explore Kerala's literary heritage. Collectors like Europeana and Google Art Project act as virtual stages where Malayalam literature intersects with diverse narratives worldwide.

Digitising ancient and modern Malayalam texts is a meticulous process with multiple steps aimed at preserving these literary and cultural artefacts in digital form. In "Digitalization: An Overview of Issues," Prof. Harsha Parekh discusses this topic from a library perspective. This article borrows ideas from Parekh and other scholars to outline the processes of digitising ancient Malayalam texts.

Text Acquisition: Initiating the digitisation journey starts with acquiring the original Malayalam texts. These texts may be in university libraries, archival repositories, private collections inherited from writers' descendants, or cultural institutions. Procuring convincing owners of these ancient texts can be challenging. Conservation is crucial.

Document Preparation: Cleaning and Restoration: Manuscripts, often aged and fragile, require meticulous care and restoration. Addressing physical damage like tears, fading, or mould is essential to ensure legibility for digitization. Sometimes, the original text is irreplaceable, making the digitized version invaluable.

Sorting and Cataloguing: Organizing and cataloguing materials and noting provenance and metadata are crucial for digital archiving.

Scanning: High-resolution scanners with 1200 dpi capture digital images of manuscript pages. Care must be taken to avoid further harm to the original texts. Two common types of scanners mentioned by *SecureScan* are overhead scanners, ideal for fragile or

bound materials, and book scanners, designed for bound volumes. (securescan.com)

OCR (Optical Character Recognition): as per TechTarget is a technological method employed to differentiate printed or handwritten text characters found within digital images of physical documents, including scanned paper documents. It involves analyzing the text and translating characters into a machine-readable code. OCR systems use hardware (scanners) and software, sometimes incorporating AI techniques for Intelligent Character Recognition. OCR is commonly used for transforming hard copy historical documents into editable and searchable digital formats like PDF. (libguides.mst.ed)

Manual Transcription: For exceptionally fragile or deteriorated texts, manual transcription is necessary. Experts well-versed in the ancient Malayalam script and language undertake the precise task of transcribing the text to preserve it digitally.

Encoding and Markup: To ensure structured and searchable text, it should be encoded using markup languages like XML or TEI. This markup includes information about headings, paragraphs, chapters, and other structural elements.

Translation and Annotation:

Translation: Translating archaic or less-understood forms of Malayalam into modern Malayalam or English can make the content accessible to a broader audience. This is especially useful for texts with obsolete vocabulary or dialects.

Annotation: Adding explanatory notes, comments, or glosses alongside the text provides context and aids comprehension, especially for culturally specific references or historical events.

Metadata Creation: Comprehensive metadata creation includes author information, title, date,

mat, language, source, provenance, rights, and access information. Metadata ensures efficient cataloging, organization, and retrieval of digital content.

Quality Control: Quality control involves verifying text representation, image quality, and metadata correctness to ensure the accuracy and completeness of digitized content.

Storage and Preservation: University of Michigan Library website gives details about storage and preservation of digital documents. Proper storage in secure repositories and preservation strategies, such as data migration and format standardization, safeguard digital documents against loss and technological obsolescence. By prioritizing these practices, we preserve our heritage and guarantee the accessibility and usability of these digital resources for research, education, and future generations, bridging the past with the present and beyond. (apps.lib.umich.edu)

Access and Dissemination: Facilitate access through digital libraries or websites with user-friendly navigation and search functionalities. Librarians play a crucial role in ensuring these resources reach a wider audience.

Copyright and Licensing: Determine copyright status and apply appropriate licensing for use. For ancient texts, copyright may have expired, but legal rights should be clarified before dissemination.

User Engagement and Outreach: Promote digitized texts through workshops, seminars, and online campaigns to attract scholars, researchers, and the general public. Fostering curiosity and exploration unlocks the full potential of digitized treasures.

Digitizing Malayalam texts is a vital act of cultural preservation and global accessibility. This process transcends linguistic and geographical boundaries, safeguarding Kerala's literary treasures for future generations. These texts become invaluable resources by developing digital libraries, ensuring preservation, and promoting engagement. Copyright considerations further enable responsible access and use. Digitization bridges the past with the present, allowing a global audience to explore Kerala's rich literary and cultural traditions, enriching our global heritage.

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Intersecting Anthropologies

A Comparative Study of Cultural Oppression and Trauma in *Nooru Simhasanangal* and *Celestial Bodies*

Kavitha P.K.,
Dr S. Kalamani

B.

Jeyamohan is a writer who has always wielded his pen to voice the existence of the oppressed and the subjugated. Though he is prolific in Tamil, his works in Malayalam are not many. However, his Malayalam novel *Nooru Simhasanangal* disturbed the consciousness of the intelligentsia as it addressed the psychological trauma of the marginalised poignantly. Dharmapalan, the protagonist of the novel *Nooru Simhasanangal*, is an educated youth and an IAS officer. He is from Nayaadi Caste, a Dalit community and suffers humiliation and neglect in his career and social life because of his caste. He is insulted by his seniors; his juniors never took instructions from him, and they ridiculed him at every opportunity they came across.

Kishore Ram | Professor of English, NSS College
Pandalam, Pathanamthitta-689501 | 9446652727 |
kishkrjpa@gmail.com