CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The extensive contributions of Arnos Padiri, the German Jesuit missionary, in the formation of the socio-cultural identity of Kerala cannot be dissociated from history; his share in the field of linguistics too has been equally perceptible as well as commendable because of the way he boosted its growth into the classical stage. Arnos Padiri is a name that has become integrated into the very constitution of Kerala culture in an essentially unique manner. Arnos Padiri influenced the innermost recesses of the Kerala’s own psyche delineating changes in the very nature of its identity through his untiring efforts as a missionary, theologian, cultural activist, poet, grammarian, and linguist and also as an advocate of acculturation as well as an exponent of cultural synthesis. The eclectic contributions of Arnos Padiri to the refined socio-cultural milieu of Kerala in the eighteenth century have to be highlighted in the context of the successive three centuries of Kerala’s development.

Born in 1681, at Ostercapplan near Osnabrueck in Germany, Johannes Earnest Hanxleden or Arnos Padiri, as he was called later, did his studies in Philosophy at the age of 18. It seems that Fr. William Weber recruited Hanxleden to Jesuit Missions in India. Accordingly in 1699, Hanxleden undertook the journey with Fr. William Meyer, Fr. William
Weber and his friend Kasper Schillinger to Kerala. After withstanding an arduous and tiresome journey, he reached India in 1700 and joined the College of St. Paul at Goa to complete his novitiate. He was a man of high spirituality, intellectual calibre and his teachers and friends were impressed with him. On completion of his studies, Johannes Earnest Hanxleden went to Ambazhakad in Malabar. Hanxleden’s aspiration was to spread the gospel like St. Francis Xavier and he dedicated himself to a life of devoted service to the Indian missions.

Even though Arnos Padiri had to face the wrath of the weird political, social and religious barriers prevailing at that time, he never became disheartened, having decided to study the vernacular language and Sanskrit to complete his mission. Arnos Padiri kept a deep and friendly relationship with the Namboodiri Brahmins and he appropriately used this healthy friendship and association to study these languages. His discourses with the learned Brahmins improved his learning and vocabulary which helped him to use both Sanskrit and the vernacular languages easily.

Like most of the European missionaries of different Orders in Kerala prior to his arrival, Arnos Padiri also put under close scrutiny all socio-cultural relations and societal structures and maintained a stiff opposition to age old traditions and orthodox practices of the natives, including the caste system, untouchability, unapproachability, slavery, devadasi system and the like. Arnos Padiri played a crucial role in bringing about an
awakening and enlightenment in the society of Kerala. With regard to the faith and practices of worship of the natives, Padiri maintained an absolute tolerance. However, Arnos Padiri had to face more problems associated with the Kerala Church than those of indigenous faiths or socio-cultural and political matters. Here too Arnos Padiri’s aim was to establish harmony rather than sow discord or conflict. He was strongly committed to the concept of indigenization in socio-cultural issues, faith and worship.

The missionary scholar had comprehended the political and social tribulations in the Kerala society and had also researched and analysed the various Christian denominations, Churches and faiths, etc. The Christian faith in Kerala at that time was in a situation of instability and schism. The lack of leadership, division, fight for positions and power had led to a deterioration of faith in the community. He realised that the segregation of the Kerala Christians from the Hindu culture may invite unhealthy disruptions in the society. Therefore, Arnos Padiri encountered the situation intelligently and he took faith formation in the community as an essential aspect. For presenting this idea, he exploited the medium of folklore interpreting the Bible for the people of Kerala in a relevant and meaningful way. His works focused on the joy of communion and the harmony of living together. Consequently, in his works Arnos Padiri chose the concept of indigenization of Christianity in India. Though these activities were against the Decrees of Synod of Diamper, Arnos Padiri
applied his vision with determination as he envisaged it to be inevitable during an epoch of tumult.

In Medieval Period i.e. prior to the arrival of Arnos Padiri, the Malayalam written language was only at an early stage of its development. It was understood only by the elite minority. Due to the impact of many socio-cultural factors the language was not developed in a derived form, even though many new attempts and approaches had been introduced. As a result, Malayalam literature went through different stages such as Manipravalam, Koothu, Koodiyattam, Chambus, Message Poems, Bhakthi Literature and so on. Many poets and scholars have contributed a lot to the upgrading of the language. Amongst them the prominent ones were the Niranam poets, Cherussery, Ezhuthachan, Melpathur Narayana Bhattathiri and Poonthanam Narayana Namboodiri.

The innovations of Cherussery, such as the Gaadha style and the presentation of Dravidian metre in Malayalam poems became a turning point in Malayalam literature. The contributions of Ezhuthachan, (the greatest poet in the new phase) towards Kilippaattu and Bhakthi Literature and his ability to combine Sanskrit and Dravidian streams in Malayalam brought an evolution in Malayalam literature. The result was a synthesis of language and culture. He appropriately used bhakthi in his literature to dispose of social inequalities and to advise the higher-class people to turn away from the immoralities that surrounded their life. Because of his
contributions Ezhuthachan is respectfully called the ‘Father of Modern Malayalam Language and Literature’. Ezhuthachan worked as an instrument of cultural change in the society striving hard to modernize the language and culture of Kerala.

The devotional poems of Melpathur Narayana Bhattathiri and Poonthanam Narayanan Namboodiri spawned an era of fresh intellectual cognizance in seventeenth century Kerala. The celebration of life in their poems impacted the contemporary society tremendously. Poonthanam depicted real life in simple and pure Malayalam in his poetry. *Narayaneeyam* and *Njnanappana* became popular among the Keralites and many pursued the poetical style of Poonthanam during that period. The literary pieces of Melpathur and Poonthanam are held in high esteem in the genre of devotional literature in Malayalam even at present. They were able to fashion an atmosphere of devotion and piety in the land, a thread taken up by indigenous as well as foreign poets which has continued into modern times.

Arnos Padiri reached Kerala, in this new literary environment of devotion and expansion of Malayalam language and literature. He was overwhelmed with the component of *bhakthi* in Poonthanam’s poems. Padiri knew that the ‘magic’ of *bhakthi* shall bind the people together and turn them away from decadence and corruption. Hence, Arnos Padiri continued the tradition of *Bhakthi* literature in Malayalam. Thus,
vernacular literature became an effective media through which he could disperse his vision of a devout society. In addition to this, the most basic and vital elements of bhakthi and his own concept of humanism which he employed in composing both prose and poetry, helped Arnos Padiri to rise above the limits of the insular and rigid boundaries of caste and religion. The element of devotion to the Almighty introduced a new philosophy of love, amalgamating different cultures, in his works.

The innovations introduced by Arnos Padiri into Malayalam literature such as elegies, personification, picturisation, biographical sketches and devotional Christian lore in Malayalam all enriched the cultural heritage of Kerala advancing it to greater heights. Incorporation of modern notions like humanism, gender equality, feminism, and integration of different cultures in Arnos’ writings triggered off a cultural synthesis and paved the way for a reawakening in Kerala society. Arnos Padiri’s heroines are suffused with the spirit of immense dignity and self-respect. His poetry, especially poems like Genoa Parvam are infused with his modern views. Hence, each poetical work in itself is a fit subject for research and study and they can contribute much to the contemporary notions regarding many burning issues in today’s world.

Like poetry, the prose language of Malayalam was also at an early stage of its growth and development in the seventeenth century. At the beginning, it was a blend of Tamil and Malayalam and it passed through
different stages such as *Manipravalam*, *Nambiar Tamil*, and *Padiri Malayalam* etc. to reach a comparatively modern form. The early prose works failed to satisfy the majority of the readers as they lacked mass appeal. Therefore, the need for a simple and suitable style of prose was indispensable on the literary scenario.

The arrival of missionaries and their educational activities played a major role in modernizing Malayalam prose. Introduction of printing press and writing of books in the vernacular language gave a much needed impetus and momentum to its development. The prose style adopted by these missionaries came to be known as Padiri Malayalam. Early missionary prose works like Decrees of the Synod of Diamper and *Niyamavali of Rose*, etc. furthered a new kind of prose writing in Malayalam. To most of the later scholars, these Decrees became the first and foremost model for prose writing in the modern style. Later this missionary prose was gathered, codified and offered as a modern prose form by Kerala Varma Valia Koyil Thamburan. He made it literary and collated it to suit the style of a modern prose form. Thus, with their unbounded passion and inexorable hard work, the multi-lingual missionary scholars have contributed much to enrich contemporary Malayalam literature.

Therefore as in poetry, Arnos Padiri’s contributions are substantial in the area of prose literature too. The dictionary and grammatical works
of Malayalam written by Arnos Padiri brought revolutionary changes in the development of Malayalam prose. Arnos Padiri’s Malayalam grammar *Arte Malavar* and Malayalam dictionary, *Vocabularium Malabarico Lusitanum* were pioneering attempts in the field of Malayalam lexicon and grammatical studies. They initiated an awakening in Malanyalam literature and instigated a consequent rejuvenation of the Malayali culture. In addition to explaining the compendium of words, these works offered glimpses of the historical and cultural background of Kerala. From the explanations provided as word-meanings one can elicit precious information about the socio-economic life of Kerala. These works also throw light on the typical form of Malayalam words in the eighteenth century. Hence, it is of immense use to scholars and students of language and history alike. Thus the corpus of literature produced by Arnos Padiri and his innovative attempts in the language of science were powerful to make changes in the direction in which Malayalam prose was expanding and contributed a new stream of literature in the language.

Like the earlier prose literature, the grammatical and lexicographical works also had not developed much in Malayalam literature and missionaries became the pioneers in this literary arena also. Archbishop Angelo Francis of Verapoly made the first attempt to write a Grammar work in Malayalam. Arnos Padiri followed in his footsteps and his Malayalam grammar *Arte Malavar* contributed to this entirely new stream
of literature in Malayalam. His dictionary *Vocabularium Malabarico Lusitanum* became the first endeavour in lexicography in Malayalam thus making him the forerunner of many later lexicographical attempts to follow. Thus, Arnos Padiri gave a fruitful contribution to the prose literature and to the grammatical and lexico-graphical studies also.

Arnos Padiri’s contributions are not only limited to vernacular literature but to Sanskrit studies too. His elegant dictionaries and grammar works in Sanskrit set in motion a new initiative in the field of Indology. *Grammatica Grandonica*, the first elementary grammar of Sanskrit and *Dictionarium Sanscradamico-Lusitanum* (Portuguese-Sanskrit Dictionary) reveal ample proof to his proficiency in Sanskrit. These laudable attempts in the Vedic language coupled with the commendable efforts he made in spreading the language in Europe makes him deserve the title, the pioneer of Sanskrit in Europe. Arnos Padiri initiated a novel mode of writing on Indian culture and literature which later developed into Indology. Prof. Toon Van Hal who rediscovered *Grammatica Grandonica* of Arnos Padiri recently assures the position of Arnos Padiri as the first European Sanskrit scholar and if it is so, he can be identified as the first Indologist. In addition to this, Arnos Padiri can be credited for his praiseworthy achievements in trying to fuse the Oriental and the Occidental and also for is attempts in popularizing the Latin and the Portuguese languages in India.
Padiri’s devotional Malayalam poems *Puthen Pana*, *Chadurantyam Ummade Dukham*, *Vyakulaprabandam*, *Ummmaparvam* and *Genoa Parvam* filled the lacuna of Christian lore in Kerala and played a decisive role in the spiritual reawakening of the Kerala society. *Puthen Pana* consists of 14 cantos. It deals with the creation of Earth, ‘Fall of the first Parents’ and consequent human suffering and the promise of the second coming of the saviour. Arnos Padiri’s intention was to create devotional poems for the Christians in Kerala to support their spirituality, integrity and ethics and so he continued his writings in the *Bhakthi* tradition in Kerala. Hence, he chose the title, tone, and metre of Malayalam devotional poem, *Njanapana*.

*Chadurantyam* deals with ‘Four Ends of Man’, the last four experiences of man in life - death, judgment, salvation and hell. It gives the messages of judgment to come and poses a warning about the ordeals in store for the wicked. Arnos Padiri here speaks about universal principles and philosophical doctrines on eternal realities like death, hell, heaven, soul, salvation, destiny and the ultimate end of human beings. The objective of this poem is purification of the human mind. Arnos Padiri urges people to keep away from sin and advises them to do good deeds. The presentation of Judas gives a horrible picture of hell and the plight of its inhabitants. It provides a powerful message to the people. It is the first
poem in Malayalam literature which depicts direct experiences of death and dying.

*Ummade Dukham* portrays Mother Mary and her agony on losing her ‘Son’, presented in a heart rending tone. Its humanism makes this poem exceptional. It leads the readers into the depths of human nature and thereby the sorrow of Mother Mary becomes the burden of the readers too. Mother Mary is portrayed as a mother brimming with pain, anger and despair. It reflects Arnos Padiri’s unlimited love for motherhood. The reading of this work nurtures spirituality and promotes devotion and love for motherhood. It has the status of being the first elegy in Malayalam. The content of the poem influenced not only the Christian community but also others thus fashioning an atmosphere of *bhakthi* in the social milieu of Kerala.

*Vyakulaprabandam* is a soliloquy which is famous for its beautiful picturisation and apt similies. The poem is the lament of Virgin Mary. It is notable for having been written in the style of the Sanskrit poems. The style used in *Vyakulaprabhandam* is usually found in elegies in Indian literature. Like in *Ummade Dukham* the grief of Mother Mary is the theme of this poem too. The poem begins with a picturesque presentation of Mother Mary at the foot of the cross and it abounds in similies, metaphors and personifications.
*Ummarpavam* is the first biographical sketch in Malayalam literature. The poem reveals his deep devotion for Maria (Mother Mary) and narrates the story of Joseph too. Opening with the birth of Jesus Christ, his childhood and adolescent years, it narrates the whole life story of Christ. The Ascension of Holy Mary also finds depiction in *Ummarpavam*. The aim of this poetry was to put across biblical stories to the people narrated in an attractive way so as to provide them an individual spiritual experience ultimately. It also aims at creating an attitude of devotion among the Keralites towards the Holy Mother. Thus, devotion towards Mother Mary is the central theme of this poem too.

*Genoa Parvam* narrates the story of *Geniveve*, a pious German woman who had enormous faith in Mother Mary. Padiri presents the idea of eternal hope emanating from the divine kingdom offering protection of God to all the pious and the faithful. He emphasized gender equality and portrays woman as an equal life partner in this poem. He took amalgamation of the twin cultures as the mission of his sojourn in India and brings it in as the main agenda of this poem. He integrated Indian concepts and ideologies into the very fabric of the poem *Genoa Parvam* to create a new cultural dimension by synthesizing the essence of Indian literature from works such as *Neethi Sara, Bhagavat Gita, Ramayana*, the *Upanishads, Shakundalam*, etc. into his western sensibility which is amply displayed in this work.
Arnos Padiri presented words, similes and ideas from Indian classical literature and Malayalam literature copiously in his poems. He mostly used as a social linguist the language of the common people to make his ideas almost like a household artefact to the people. Padiri also followed the familiar tone and style of the common man in his literary works. He accepted Indian themes, concepts, and images and blended them with Christian ideology thus making over western ideas and themes into the vernacular.

As a missionary poet Arnos Padiri introduced Christian ideology along with a sense of humanism in Indian poetical literature in a novel way. Love for Motherhood presented in a suitable manner is a recurring theme in his poems. He showed the intrinsic value of faith and devotion in human life at the same time keeping his views very broad-minded. Flowing eloquence, purity of language, fluency and articulacy, simplicity of thought and clarity of presentation all enriched his language. The presentation of universal concepts in poetry like life and death, personal experience in death and dying and so on was a new experience to the Keralite.

During that period, colonialism impacted the society of Kerala in numerous different ways. One of them was the arrival of a group of eminent persons, basically missionaries, who influenced the culture, language and literature of the society significantly. They brought
revolutionary changes in the socio-cultural fabric of the society. It was the comprehensive and prolific activities of missionaries that led to a renaissance or reawakening movement in the social and cultural atmosphere of India. It was the changes introduced by the missionaries in the sixteenth century that were later popularised by the social reformers of the 19th century India. Thus, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr.B. R. Ambedkar and others led the social revolution against caste system, untouchability and such age-old irrational and disreputable practices in the country. The light which guided such great Indian social reformers was the same which was given to the country by western missionaries and Indologists of the earlier centuries such as Francis Xavier, Thomas Stephens, Robert De Nobili, John Britto, Beschi, etc. They began the acculturation process in India with a broad-minded view of secularism; they learnt the local languages and attempted to communicate matters of faith in the vernacular. Thus, these missionaries became exponents of Indology and linguistic acculturation as well.

In Kerala, Arnos Padiri, an ardent advocate of cultural synthesis continued the process with an innovative way of linguistic acculturation to promote his vision of cultural harmony in the land. To achieve this goal he undertook diverse practices. Linguistic acculturation was one such successful attempt. He considered the integration of cultures as an indispensable one for the very existence of the human community.
Therefore, his literary mission aimed to develop a broad minded and secular attitude among the Keralites. The element of bhakthi, the concepts like gender equality, fraternity, universal brotherhood, humanism, making use of the language of the common people, linguistic acculturation – all worked as building blocks of his vision and mission – cultural synthesis through his teachings and writings ushered in a new era in the history of Kerala.

Arnos Padiri took literature as the medium of his vision and he contributed a number of works to both Malayalam and Sanskrit literature. Going through the whole repertoire of the poems of Arnos Padiri, from Puthen Pana to Genoa Parvam, it becomes very clear that the vision of cultural synthesis is inbuilt into the very grain of each one of them. In Genoa Parvam, the vision becomes more accurate and frank as it forms the fundamental factor of Padiri’s mission. Thus, Arnos Padiri successfully synthesized the Indian-Hindu culture with the Christian-Western culture in Genoa Parvam. He presented a broad-minded and secular ideology of cultural integration to the whole world through his literary endeavours.

Through the vernacular literature, Arnos Padiri worked hard in a sincere attempt to present his wholesome vision and mission of cultural unity in Kerala and he is a pioneer in this space. The most fruitful achievement and the greatest contribution of Arnos Padiri’s literary
mission in Kerala was the success he tasted in yoking together Indian philosophy with Christian ideology.

Padiri’s novel modes of treatment in the area of literature and missionary activities were successful to a great extent in Kerala. The literature clearly proves that the mission of Padiri was the synthesis of the two cultures. He tried to promote the spiritual life of the people as well through his literary activities. Thus, he produced a corpus of Christian devotional literature that was similar to Hindu devotional literature. Thus, he opened an innovative approach to missionary work with an aim of promoting a tolerant, assimilative, symbiotic culture. Although his literary endeavours were centred on the Word of God, it culminated in a truly revolutionary cultural awakening in the land. His contributions to literature and other spheres of societal life impelled a cultural regeneration in Kerala. Precisely, because of this, the contributions of Arnos Padiri to the true and authentic identity of the Christian community in Kerala remain unique.

The vision and concepts of Arnos Padiri were to a great extent continued and practiced in Kerala by a number of reformers, such as Ayyankali, Sree Narayana Guru, Chattambi Sawamikal, Vagbhadanandha, Kumaranasan and others. Thus, these eminent socio-religious leaders took up the new spirit of universal oneness and fraternity. There began a new awakening in the social milieu of Kerala and Padiri became the pioneer in
this effort and consequently, the village - Velur became one of the centres of Kerala Renaissance.

The ultimate success of Padiri’s activities was a reawakening in the social, religious and cultural environment of the Kerala society. His literary pieces are beacons on the socio-cultural horizons of Kerala for students and scholars alike who wish to study its history and culture during that period. They reflect the social, religious and emotional aspects of people in Kerala in the eighteenth century. The inspiring devotional poems of Arnos Padiri made a deep impact on the people of Kerala. Despite his aim of spreading the gospel, his literary endeavours contributed much to the secular Indian literature creating landmarks in the cultural history of Kerala. Above all, innovations in his literary pieces caused for a cultural reawakening in Kerala society.

Today Arnos Padiri’s contributions open a new horizon of literature and the researchers of history and language enjoy the fruits of his talent and extraordinary knowledge. Hence his contribution to the creation and consolidation of the identity of Kerala culture cannot be disassociated from history.