CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

Legends have played no mean role in creating a "history" of a region. By drawing examples of actual places and with creative skills the creators have succeeded in convincing the reader of the actual existence of an "imagined community". Sankunni is no different. It is through the Aithihyamala that people of Kerala seem to be aware of the history of temples, history of the regions and life histories of rulers and the ruling class. "It is left to us", says Ambalapuzha Ramavarma (Sankunni, Prologue) "to sift and sieve the legends to look for the truth through logic and research. However, it is commendable, that Aithihyamala has been able to give us a memorable history although shrouded in untruth and vagueness".

The postmodern rereading of ancient myths and legends (Aithihyamala, for instance) shows a shift of emphasis from myth as communicating a sacred, religious meaning to myth as a way of thinking and feeling and above all, an ideology. This marks the progress of myth and legend from a mythical world to a literary world. There is no better way of deciding this than by analyzing literary works that self-consciously use myths to fabricate reality.

Reading through the gaps in Sankunni's narration of popular legends in Aithihyamala reveals a mainstream and conformist reading of legends. One finds a "politics" behind the legend-making, a deliberate attempt at compiling an elitist record of legends and through it the homogenising of histories. One fails to see the subaltern voice as seen in the "other" histories. I have attempted a rereading of the legends and their
representations in film adaptations and fictional narratives. In the film adaptations of *Perumthachan* and *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha*, the marginalized and subverted characters -- Perumthachan and Chandu are recast as protagonists with a political and psychological justification of their motives. In the process, the film adaptations throw open newer gaps which affords the possibility of a reading through those gaps. They again reveal a distortion of history and perpetuating the caste hegemony and appropriation of the marginalized in subtle and obvious ways. I have analysed *Pulijanmam* in juxtaposition with the earlier movies. *Pulijanmam* deals with a legend popular among the marginalized communities and thereby providing a cultural and spatial identity for the subaltern. However, I wish to add that I have not looked at the stylistics of the movie, but only restricted myself to reading the form and ideology in the movies.

In the fictional narratives, I have examined the legend of *Parayipettu Panthirukulam* through the novels -- *Innalathe Mazha* by N. Mohanan and P. Narendranath's *Parayipettu Panthirukulam*. Both have done a retextualising/retelling of the actual legend in *Aithihyamala*. While N. Mohanan takes us on a psychological journey through the physical journey of Vararuchi and Panchami, Narendranath explores the story through the lives of the children of Panthirukulam. Both have attempted to blend the legend with the ideologies and the thought structures of contemporary society. Narendranath has in fact, made bold statements against the caste hierarchy through the unfolding of the episodes in the life of the characters of *panthirukulam*. His Amathan, son of Pakanaar is the subaltern voice who is finally silenced by the power structures of a society which follows the dictates of caste hierarchy. It is interesting that he is entirely the creation of the author and his name is creatively coined to mean
“one who has no religion”. Narendranath’s text and its rereading was a revelation as a ‘subaltern text’ as it has been considered and even recommended to me by sources as a text in the genre of children’s literature. I have also read the poem *Naranathu Bhranthan* by V. Madhusoodanan Nair which gives the vision of an egalitarian society through the (in)sane voice of Naranathu Bhranthan. These can be read as texts which bring the subaltern text, especially Narendranath’s *Parayipettu Panthirukulam* which voices the conflicts and struggles of the marginalized communities against the power structure of caste hegemony. This is done through the retexualising of the episodes in the life of the twelve children of *panthirukulam* which is mentioned by Sankunni in a rather hasty manner relegating them to just about ten pages of the original legend. In this context I had to limit myself from examining subaltern texts with the myths and legends drawn from the marginalized communities. Although I attempted a reading of the novel *Maveli Manrom* by K. J. Baby, I could not do a convincing translation. Texts like *Maveli Manrom* where the narration of the myth of the ‘manrom’ is used to establish and consolidate the local identity of the subaltern.

As for the translations, I have depended on my own translations, in some cases free/loose translations of the text. I do not claim to have done an expert job although I enjoyed and in the process, learned the difficulties and issues in translation — how narratives get translated and appropriated or are subverted and rejected when there is an attempt to interpret them as contemporary, secularized versions of ancient myths and legends. I have translated the relevant portions of the screenplay/adaptations of *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* and *Pulijanman* from their published texts. Only in the case of *Perumthachan*, I had to depend on the available translation *The Master Carpenter* by Gita Krishnankutty. I also translated the legend of *Parayipettu*
Panthirukulam (including the portion of the legend of Perumthachan) from Aithihyamala and portions of the novels – N. Mohanan’s Innalatho Mazha and P. Narendranath’s Parayipettu Panthirukulam and a loose translation of parts of N. Madhusoodanan Nair’s poem Naranathu Bhranthan.

Most oral history is personal memory and it becomes difficult to record it using a selective mechanism, as the selection is within limits and constantly changing. I have not been able to find/collect myths and legends from the oral tradition because of these and other constraints, namely time and finance to back my research work. However, I had been able to record some myths/legends and clarify some of them through a source who has been associated with many of the marginalized communities of Achenkovil and Areekakavu in Kollam and Pathanamthitta districts in the southern part of Kerala. An attempt at a compilation of the legends of the marginalized communities in Kerala will definitely be a rich resource in the field of folklore studies. A study of the adaptations of these legends in popular culture, namely televised serials and comic books are interesting areas that can be explored. It would be also be academically enriching if more critical readings of lesser-known legends in Aithihyamala are undertaken. Additionally, translations with non-conformist/critical readings of the Aithihyamala will be a possibility in the field of publication.