CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION

Translation of modern Malayalam fiction into English from the very beginning and arching over the present has been brought under scrutiny, with special reference to selected texts that were subjected to detailed analysis vis-à-vis specific problems of translation, and possible solutions offered. The whole exercise is wrapped up below, along with a few pertinent observations.

An extensive survey covering the history of translation of modern Malayalam fiction into English during the last one hundred and ten years was carried out, with substantial introduction about the authors, translators and works.

After this, detailed analysis of texts was carried out, and the data was made ready for formulation of the problems.

Certain formulations of the prominent cultural, linguistic and other problems of translation of modern Malayalam fiction into English had been made in the Introduction. They have been taken up one by one in Chapter III, established and illustrated with supporting evidence culled from the text and alternate translation provided in most of the cases.

First of all, cultural appropriation by the hegemonic language and culture, happening uninterruptedly in the field of Indian fiction in translation, alongside the recent boom in Indian English fiction-writing has been interrogated with reference to modern Malayalam fiction in English translation. It has been found that even from the colonial times, as in the case of O. Chandu Menon’s Malayalam novel Indulekha translated by JWF Dumergue with the primary intention of recording
the rituals, customs and relationship patterns of educated Imperial subjects of Malabar, as also to provide entertainment for readers back home and to highlight the spreading of the message of English education, modern Malayalam fiction at its very inception was appropriated by the hegemonic power. The attractive narrative was retained in translation, whereas the culture-specific and linguistic peculiarities were smoothened out, and defaced without even giving adequate explanatory notes or providing a glossary, with the express purpose of providing uninterrupted reading pleasure for the TL readership. The arbitrariness involved in this is so symptomatic of the colonial times that Anitha Devasia and Susie Tharu made the following formulations about it:

The result is a fluent and eminently readable translation, one that does not seem like a translation at all. But it is also a translation that rewrites its original into the dominant (and therefore also transparent) discourse of the target-language, providing the target language reader with the pleasure of recognising his or her own culture in the foreign text and feeling at home in another history and another culture. Such translations obviously domesticate the foreign text, obscuring differences of history, politics, intertextuality, context etc. The translation displaces the original as it establishes the reading in which Indulekha is rendered intelligible and of value, and circulated canonically in Malayalam — and world — literature (A.Devasia and S.Tharu, 1997: 74-75).

The argument has been supported with sufficient evidence procured from
the detailed analysis of the T L text by the present researcher.

Next, the question of free translation leading often to appropriation of the text by the dominant language culture has been taken up. Analysis of the novel *Marthanda Varma* of C. V. Raman Pillai, translated into English by B. K. Menon, is the biggest extant example of free translation in the history of modern Malayalam fiction in English translation. This has resulted in a T L text which has lost its identity—apart from the historical frame and the main action line of the line, nothing else come out in translation. C.V.’s superb narrative art, placed within the cultural ambience of Travancore, lent the uniqueness to the original, which is sadly lost in translation. The novel has been analysed in detail and sample passages of free translation identified and alternate faithful translation provided by the present researcher.

Questions of power inherent in translation have been taken up for discussion next. The translator can arbitrarily suppress details in the S L text; likewise, he can adapt, dilute or manipulate the structure of the original. The anxiety of the author over the fate of his work, takes the form of authorial intervention, accusing the T L text of lack of authenticity. The author attempts to re-establish authorial authority over the T L text. Cases illustrative of the translator’s manipulations are *Marthanda Varma* (for free translation, dilution of original, manipulation of structure, omission of extensive material from the original and suppression) and *Chemmeent* (selective deletion of S L Material, pruning the structure of the original to suit Western aesthetic sensibilities, obliteration of T L culture specificities by free translation, and lack of a thorough understanding of the original). In the
case of Chenmeeen, early attempts at commodification of culture is detected. Through providing alternate translation for passages deleted extensively from the S L text by the translator, the present researcher has established the extent of damage done to the S L text, and suggested that another faithful translation of the novel has to come out.

The above-mentioned problems together pose the greatest threat in the post-colonial situation for our regional literatures in English translation. Preparing them as cultural products for export may go well with the dynamics of the free-roaming signifier of the post-modern experience that symbolises the freely circulating commodities controlled by neo-colonial forces in the form of hegemonic powers and trans-national companies and their unlimited markets. The Internet shrinking the global village further can be a good excuse as well, for planning out our cultural identities, to make it easier for international consumption.

The cases of O. V. Vijayan and Kamala Das as translators of their own works have been interrogated to examine the way they have re-worked their originals for presenting before a different audience than the S L readership.

The question as to what kind of English to translate into has been examined. Considering all aspects of the post-colonial experience, it can be seen that Indian English is best suited for the purpose.

In a literary translation, involvement of different disciplines like linguistics, literary studies, cultural history, philosophy, anthropology and so on are certain to come together. Literary studies, cultural history, anthropology etc., have been variously looked into in the preceding sections by way of problems of translation.
that cropped up during the analysis of literary texts. Then comes the consideration of linguistic problems encountered in the translation of modern Malayalam fiction which are also formulated, and listed with examples from the aforesaid textual analyses. Faulty translation has also been identified as one of the linguistic problems. The most vehement case has been made out in this thesis, against cultural appropriation by the hegemonic language, English. Although the process of translation was kept up during the colonial times through "the ideology of selective appropriation and cautious canonisation" as K. Satchidanandan puts it, (Satchidanandan, 1999: 172) we need no longer recognise this as a legitimate activity. In an era of commodification of culture, import and export of cultural products, homogenisation of all sources of human expression and a unipolar world presided over by a single superpower, identification of power relations in the realms of literature and culture on a realistic basis would help form a resistance to all that is dehumanising and anti-human in such projects. Of course translation of our fiction into English places it in a national and international context. But it should be done on a non-hegemonic, equal footing, by way of cultural transference. Says K. Satchidanandan:

When a work in an Indian language is translated into English, it entails the representation of a regional culture for a more powerful national/Indian culture; when made available outside India, it involves representing a national culture for a still more powerful international culture. There is here an interplay of cross-cultural pride and prejudice when one world is represented for the other in
The practice of translation in post-colonial contexts has given form not only to discourses of domination, but also of resistance. Translation theories so far have mostly been dominated by translations involving Western culture. It is necessary to relocate the theory and practice of translation within hitherto unexplored, Eastern cultural contexts. Translation activity needs to be examined as policy prioritisation, empowerment, enrichment, and culture learning within post-colonial contexts since cross-cultural relations are constituted not on an abstract, transcultural, universal of beauty, but on immediate encounters with other cultural systems. Translation is also a celebration of difference and a re-inventing of cultural identities. The choice of language signifies one’s position in the social reality, and the conflict of codes functions as a representation of linguistic diversity. Translation activity constructs cultural identity by reframing the boundaries of the sayable and changing the terms of affiliation.

All acts of translation are an attempt to mediate between cultures, texts and nationalities... (Satchidanandan, 1999: 173).

Concluding this thesis on such an optimistic and balancing position seems most appropriate.