CHAPTER V

Conclusion

The plausibility of the theme ‘progressive’ is less visible unless it is examined against the social moulds set by caste. The state itself is such a mould which generates and regenerates those institutions that rearticulate the hegemony. As the ebb and flow of the land reform acts introduced by various governments since 1948 have been widely mooted within an academic as well as non-academic circle, it is unnecessary to go into each in detail. A number of unbiased observers have unanimously pointed out that the exact beneficiaries of the much glorified land reform acts in Kerala were none other than the intermediary tenants. Since the political opponents who assume power in Kerala in alternate turns were a cognate of the reformist-nationalist-communist tradition, they naturally reflected the savarna/non-Dalit interests ingrained in this tradition. By giving hutment right to the tillers where their huts situated (one tenth of an acre), the state metaphorically upholds the condescending savarnas with respect to the Dalit dependents. Its literary parallel can be seen in Ningalenne Communistakki where Gopalan and Mathew express a kind of ‘patronising love’ towards Mala and Karamban. The brotherly or patriarchal condescension showed by Gopalan towards the Dalit girl actually constructs a virtual justification for his affair with Sumam, a savarna girl. The least subsistence given to the Dalits through the land acts introduced by the state was in fact a technical/literal progression of this condescending approach. Putting a veil over the chasm, these instant remedies concealed for a long time the real problems emanated from the situation of being a Dalit.
The analysis carried out in the last two chapters unambiguously re-emphasises the five key suppositions that we made in the beginning. It can further be clarified in the light of our observations.

1. Infusing its double in literature the paradigm of hierarchy constructed a less coercive yet harmful institution in the superstructure of the society. A matrix of *savarna* priorities, this institution obliterated the presence of ‘otherness’ from the discursive sphere through silence and ‘selective inattention’. So, a Dalit cannot enter into that institution unless and until he/she is taken as an object/tool by the author. Naturally, Dalits are forced to remain in the liminal space either as characters or as ‘yet to be taken’ objects.

2. The experience of untouchability has seldom been articulated as a link to conceptualise the Dalit subjectivity. Even the progressive *savarnas* who took up the cause of combating untouchability did not recognise it. Though they had imbibed the values of European liberalism it never helped them make a rupture from the social dominance they assumed. As a result, they subtly retained the practice of untouchability in their works.

3. In effect, they virtually remained in the *savarna* premises built by conservative Brahmanism even if they propagated a technical fraternity (e.g. *Panthibhojanam*) with Dalit mass.
4. The nine plays we enumerated here represent this *savarna* priorities camouflaged under the deceptive label of progressiveness. So we can rightly observe that these nine plays have covertly legitimised the caste hegemony in Kerala.

**Findings**

1. The caste hierarchy in Kerala has played a definite role in hampering the progressive outlook of the playwrights.

2. Even after realising the caste system as an anathema, the playwrights did not succeed in situating the Dalit characters into a discourse more central to their distinct issues.

3. In Malayalam theatre, the Dalit characters and their life have always been suppressed into oblivion. The minimal space they occupied never exceeded the liminal limit stipulated by the articulate caste.

**Suggestions**

Though scholars and activists started to ruminate on subaltern studies since last decade of the twentieth century, negligible was their contribution in historicising the absence of Dalits in literature either as characters or as authors. The efforts of later Marxists in understanding the invisible hegemonies have had comparatively less influence on the Indian intellectual scenario. Even in Kerala, Marxism has not succeeded in becoming an
intellectual presence apart from what has it achieved through its surprising political influence.

We have already discussed how the prominent social movements in Kerala have been assimilated/devoured by the meta-institution of caste. Locating/situating the nine plays as derivatives of these social movements is pertinent in this study for problematising the absence of Dalits/presence of non-Dalits in literature.

Nowadays, the prospects of Dalit studies seem to become more extensive in its search for finding new vistas of dialogue. These quests are essential in bringing out Dalit subjectivity into the discursive field. A rereading of the (theatrical) canon and theorizing of a methodological and aesthetic framework that can breathe the immense possibilities of the Dalit bodypolitic are central to this project. The attempt made here is precisely along these lines.