Chapter-4

Social Perceptions of Diseases and Healing in Medieval Kerala with Special References to Malabar

In medieval Kerala, Malabar was a cultural hot spot\(^1\) with the existence of constellation of beliefs, knowledge streams, varied practices, facilities and resources. These together organized different structure in which many socio-cultural groups developed their own tradition of healing. These treatments were indigenously evolved within the given cultural settings with multiple interactions with other culture areas, which in turn provided great physical and mental relief to the people.\(^2\)

Thus, this chapter aims at looking into intricacies of the medical knowledge; ideas and practice among different sections during the period under consideration with special references to Malabar. Domains of various beliefs, political functioning, religious moorings, and various temporal institutions, consciously or otherwise involved in the making of these traditions.\(^3\) Therefore, this endeavor necessitates into research, an inclusive methodological framework by which the history of healing practices could be seen, through the backdrop of vibrant socio-cultural-politico-economic situations that arose in the crowded waters on Malabar Coast.

Medical/healing traditions in Malabar region reflected the plurality and dependence of the different cultural frameworks, which constituted whole gamut of knowledge in the region till the last decade of sixteenth century.\(^4\) Concepts of illness and healing were predominantly constructed through religious-cultural consciousness of the people as in the cases diseases

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\(^1\)M.G.S.Narayananan, *Cultural Symbiosis*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandram, 1972,p.ix


such as smallpox, chickenpox and elephantiasis. Therefore, this thesis is also an effort to explore the common psyche during the period under consideration in relation to the binding factors of religion, illness and healings apart from looking at the prevalent practice among the dominant social forces.

In medieval Kerala, Ayurveda, the humor based healing tradition existed along with magico-spiritual practices, that were based on the common beliefs in the supernatural, were very predominant between the Fourteenth and Sixteenth centuries. Rituals and festivals created psychological togetherness and nearness with divine beings such as Kodungallur Bhagavati and Cheranellur Durga Devi who were considered to have caused many diseases and cures. If the offers and votives were not fulfilled by the believers, Bhagavati, the incarnation of the Kali, was believed to have caused small pox or chicken pox by transmogrifying into the more violent form of Badrakali on ritual occasions. Small pox, a highly infectious disease was very common and generally took its ugly turn during monsoon season in Medieval Kerala. Infectious people were experienced acute social isolation in which the situation goes to the worst instance at times when parents were afraid to reach their children who were infected. “Doors and windows are shut, that the patients may not be exposed to the smallest breath of cool air, and heating things alone are given to them.”

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7 Sarah Caldwell, Oh Terrifying Mother: Sexuality, Violence and Worship of the Goddess Kali, OUP, 2001, p.46
8 Fra Paolino Da San Bartolomeo, Voyage to the East Indies; Observations Made During A Residence of Thirteen Years Between 1776 and 1789 in District Little Frequent by the Europeans, (Trans) by William Johnston, p.411
9 Ibid,pp.411-412
10 Ibid
The violent nature and social stigma attached with these diseases forced common people to retort to the divine intervention for healing. Therefore, the preventive elements for such contagious health disorders and epidemics were incorporated in religious festivals such as Mutiyettu, to alleviate the violent whims of divine beings such as Puthenkavu Bhagavati by ‘little traditions’ such as blood sacrifice.\textsuperscript{11} Cheranellur Bhagavati was considered as Mahishasuramardhāni and venerated even in the Fourteenth century for physical and mental diseases.\textsuperscript{12} Interestingly, these religio-magical healing became a tool by which dominant communities such as \textit{Nair} and \textit{Nambutiri} could induce fear into common people for the virtue of being the custodians of the expressed space of sacred beings. By this they could make lower groups to follow the regulations and norms conducive to perpetuate the exclusivity of the dominant culture area out of fear.\textsuperscript{13}

Superstitions regarding illness and remedies were extraordinarily prevalent among all sections in the medieval time and Malabar population was not an exception.\textsuperscript{14} People believed in different local divinities such as \textit{Ayyappan}, who was considered to be protecting them from animal related diseases and attacks, \textit{Chattan}, invoking him was believed to have given the power of causing physical and mental problems for the enemy of the invoker, \textit{Yakshis}, whom the strength of relieving of epilepsy attributed in medieval Malabar as believed by great physicians like Susruta himself.\textsuperscript{15} They also got mileage out of the entrenched fear of people in supernatural powers whose possessions was believed to have

\textsuperscript{12}Kokasandesas, op.cit, p.104, lines-92
been causative for incurable diseases which were considered to be the consequence of being possessed or bewitched. Michael Geddess in a Seventeenth Century church document shows that, the Malabar Christians, who established as powerful community by this time, were also engaged themselves in the belief of spirits.\textsuperscript{16} The objectified worships of the natives or the “Heathens” as the text addresses them, considered to be curing the illness; physical and psychological.\textsuperscript{17} Christians went to witches “when they are sick, that they send for such people to perform some ceremony whereby they hope to have their health restored; and at other times to help them to children (\textit{fertility prayers}), and to discover thefts, and for several other purposes; all which are things repugnant to the Christian religion.”\textsuperscript{18}

Patients in medieval Kerala were also insisted on taking themselves to holy places, make votives or \textit{nerchas} and offerings as divine people were associated with illness and cure.\textsuperscript{19} People and families associated with the murder of St. Thomas, the apostle, was believed to have begotten with Elephantiasis (\textit{aanakkal} or \textit{manthukal}), hence Portuguese came in sixteenth century termed this disease, \textit{Pejo de Santo Thome}.\textsuperscript{20} “Christians of India still go there as pilgrims and carry away thence as relics some little pilots of earth of the tomb


\textsuperscript{17}Michael Geddess,ibid,p.394

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Rifayee Mala},(1781), Reprinted by Thirurangadi Book Stall, Calicut, 2000,p.72

\textsuperscript{20}Yule, \textit{Book of Ser Marco Polo},p.335, footnote, 12; John Nieuhoff, \textit{Voyages and Travels in to Brasil and the East Indies, In a collection of voyages and travels}, 11, (ed), A. Churchil London, 1752, 198; “The disorder always begins with a fever which they here call the raging fever, which sometimes causes delirium, and as the strength of the malady increases, great pain is felt in the legs or in the other parts attacked. the fever then settling in the suffering parts causes it to swell in a frightful manner.”Says Jacob Canter Visscher (1717-1723), \textit{Letters from Malabar,(1743) tr.: to Which is added An Account of Travancore, and Fra Bartolomeo’s Travels in that Country}, Heber Drury, Madras, 1862,p.13
of this blessed apostle." People from Malabar during the medieval times undertook travel to various sacred geography of Christianity, the Catholic Church, Signora de Sauda or “Our Lady of Health” about six miles from Tranquebar. Everybody, irrespective of their belonging or religious consciousness, believed in the healing capacities of the holy person there, irrespective of the fact that it was a Christian personality with a complete different world view. They were given clay pots, holy water and written notes to carry and to be fastened to their arms as well as around their necks. Hindu community also undertook their sacred travels to the Pazhani in Tamilnadu, the land of God Subrahmanyam for many dreaded illnesses such as epilepsy, taking along with him Kavadi and wearing strings beads round his neck and right arm.

People attributed disease and curing to many gods and goddesses at many of the temple complexes in Malabar region. Devis (goddesses) at places such as Kodungallor and Chottanikkara temples, traces their origin to the early medieval period were worshiped and entertained to ward off the evil influences of Masuri, Chicken Pox, and possession. Muslims, Christians and Hindus occasionally converged during the sixteenth century and before at Chottanikkara, for the removal of unmadam and other serious psychological problems. Rich Freeman explain that, oracles and oracle dances in Malabar, in order to cure and diagnose, has had a history of two millennium. Bartholomaes Ziegen Balg, The Dutch

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21Duarte Barbosa, op.cit, , p176
23Ibid,p.504
24F. Fawcett, Nayars of Malabar, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1985, p. 270
25Kodungallor temple is considered to be a former Buddhist centre for learning and worshiping by many historians. V.T.Induhudan, The Secret Chamber, The Cochin Dewaswom Board, Trichur, 1969, p.56
Missionary who stayed on Malabar Coast in 1713 elaborated about the “devil dancers” on the coast who were believed to have been possessed healing prowess.\textsuperscript{28} Medieval Sandeshakavyas talk about Mother Goddesses like any other Manipravala literatures existed during this period.\textsuperscript{29}

The tradition of associating disease and healing deities continued and followed by other communities as well. Subsequently, people started worshiping their holy figures and Sheikhs at respective places of worships such as Idiyangara.\textsuperscript{30} Idiyangara Sheikh Masjid, which was constructed in 1551, gives a peculiar picture of healing, where any kind of disease was cured when the patients offered appam (baked sweet rice cakes) to the saint. The appam offered for this purpose was to look like the body/organ part that was affected.\textsuperscript{31} The Church at Malayattur in Ernakulam was believed to have been constructed by St. Thomas in early Common Era.\textsuperscript{32} Large number of people who are affected with health related issues used to gather to get quick relief from the malice of wrong deeds.\textsuperscript{33} The “miraculous” water spring at the top of the mountain is considered as a powerful object to heal all illness.\textsuperscript{34}Correspondingly, some temples in Medieval Kerala also offered to worshipers

\textsuperscript{28} Bartholomaes Ziegen Balg, \textit{Genealogy of the Malabar Gods}, 1713
\textsuperscript{29} Kokasandesham, Lines-16-3
\textsuperscript{30} N. V. K. Varier, \textit{Ayurveda Charithram}, Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala, 2002, p.486
\textsuperscript{31} Ziyaud-Din A. Desai, \textit{A Topographical list of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu inscriptions of South India}, Indian Council of Historical Research, 1989, p.103
\textsuperscript{33} Calcoen: \textit{A Dutch Narrative of the Second Voyage of Vasco Da Gama to Calicut}, Printed at Antwerp, Circa 1504, (trans), J. Ph. Berjeau, London, 1874.cited in Em nome De Deus, p.168; “Six days from Coloen is a town called Lapis, and nearby is Saint Thomas in the sea. It is there that for a fortnight about the time of his festival the sea may be passed on foot, and they give the sacrament to all who are worthy to receive it, and refuse it to the unworthy. And this place is four days distant from the great city of Edissen,28 where he built the large palace. But this above-mentioned town of Lapis is for the most part ruined, and the Christians inhabit it on condition of paying a tribute, and everybody, including the king and the queen, walk naked, with the exception of their loins, which are covered” says Kenneth Parry, The Blackwell companion to Eastern Christianity, Black well publishing, Oxford, UK, 2007, p.311
\textsuperscript{34} Maya George, \textit{Faith & philosophy of Christianity}, Kalpaz Publications, New Delhi, 2009, p.296
prasadam for the speedy recovery of health. Medicinal milk offered for lunatic patients at Thirivizha temple in Alappuzha\textsuperscript{35} and Trikkangode Randu Murthi show that of a tradition which cut across population who probably did not really benefit from the dominant tradition of humor based healings. Trikkangode Randu Murthi temple is unique in itself for having both Shiva and Vishnu as murthis for people who have been affected by fits.\textsuperscript{36}

\textit{Prasadam} was given as medicine at Thiruvizha temple at Cherthala which was believed to have been an effective remedy against mental disorders.\textsuperscript{37} Chronic diseases like leprosy, dropsy were treated with \textit{Valiyenna}; medicated oil at a Sastha temple at Thakazhi in south Kerala.\textsuperscript{38} This oil was made out of eighty four \textit{Angadi Marunnu} (bazaar medicines) and sixty four green herbs. This oil was considered very effective and capable of curing all kinds of illness.\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Turmeric prasadam} of the Cheemeni Mundya temple was considered to be a panacea of all health problems by devotees. Interestingly, some scholars suggests that healing practices associated with these temples represent the forceful conversion into the Hindu culture area of medieval Buddhist \textit{Viharas/palli}s, as Hindu temples traditionally offer no treatments for any diseases inside its sacred complexes.\textsuperscript{40} Nevertheless, temples where Vedic teachings were held with patronage of Nambutiri/Nair combination promoted, to a large extent, \textit{Ashta Vaidya} families during the period. Meanwhile temple centered treatments such as ‘healing-prasadam’ could re-strengthen the already existing dominance of higher caste population who was patronized by the state.\textsuperscript{41} Emotion, fear psychosis and cultural moorings

\textsuperscript{35}Emily Gilchrist Hatch, \textit{Travancore: A Guide Book for the Visitor}, OUP, 1939, p.39
\textsuperscript{38}Emily Gilchrist Hatch, Travancore: A Guide Book for the Visitor, OUP, 1939,p.39
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid
\textsuperscript{40}P.K.Gopalakrishnan, \textit{Keralathinte Samskarika Charitram}, State Institute of Languages, Trivandrum, 2000, p.255
were used to keep under control the largely illiterate and ignorant mass through the spectrum of ritual purity.

The extensive distribution of different venomous snakes such as Moorkhan (Cobra), rajila (Krait), Venthiran (Viper) which medieval Malabar famous for, inspired folk medicine there to address supernatural beings in order to create the space for hope in survival. While Jewish tradition and Moses figured snakes as a symbol of health, Babylonians venerated the Sachan snake as a curing deity. Malabar Hindu population adopted many rituals and constructed temples for cobra snake, one of the ferocious kinds. “When the king of Calicut learns where the nest of any of these brutal animals is, he has made over it a little house on account of the water. If any person should kill one of these animals, they would immediately be put to death.” Serpents, for them, represented the spirit of God personified.

This had become a whole tradition by itself by evolving as a ritual, Sarppam Thullal, across the region from the twelfth century itself. Apart from these metaphysical treatments, people also developed indigenous methods of driving snakes away by frequently burning strong smelling substances that produce great deal of smoke and vapor. Snakes abode mainly in places where little attention was paid to cleanliness. Malabar snakes such vellikkettan,

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43 Ludovico Di Varthema, (1503), The Travels of Ludovico Di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Desert and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, AD 1503 to 1508, Translated from original Italian Edition of 1510, by John Winter Jones, London, 1863
44 M. Gaborieau, “The Cult of Saints Among the Muslims of Nepal and Northern India” in S. Wilson (ed.) Saints and Their Cults, Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1985, pp. 302-309; In certain regions like Nepal and Punjab, for instance, Muslim saints were specialized in certain treatments such as Sakhi Sarwar for eye complaints, Makhdum Sahib for eye diseases and exorcisms, Shaikh Saddu for Melancholy, Guga Pir and Madar Shah for snake bite, Pir Jahaniya for leprosy, etc.
45 Varthema, op.cit, 173
46 Ibid, pp.173-174
47 Ibid, p.174
48 Bertolomeo,op.cit, p.249
anali/mandali, ettadimoorkan, iruthalakkuzhali, rudhiramandali, Karuvela, were the most dangerous yet venerated by the people in the region as the symbol of life and death.\textsuperscript{49} Yet, metaphysical understanding of the poison and snakes were properly supplemented with scientific understanding of the symptoms and various treatments according to types of poisons in the classical tradition of Ayurveda in the region.\textsuperscript{50}

Invoking Saints for curing diseases were a wide-spread cultural construction among all religious people in medieval Malabar.\textsuperscript{51} Some of the Muslim believed to have specialized in particular diseases but reached nowhere in variety and sophistication as it did in Christian tradition.\textsuperscript{52} Saints were gifted with abundant gifts and were praised in many ecclesiastical establishments. The cults of many saints in Malabar from the medieval periods are still prevalent and this shows the efficacy of the saints-protectors.\textsuperscript{53} Prayers to Sheikh Rifayee and St. Thomas were conducted to build up a capacity to stir-up the individual suggestive potentials for milder and major suffrance including intoxications.\textsuperscript{54} They were also invoked even to enhance the individual defense mechanisms.\textsuperscript{55} It was possible that, the advantage and the positive suggestive effects of the saintly cult influenced the survival rate of the injured.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid, 250 “during my residence at Verapole I found snakes everywhere not only in gardens but also in the houses...people therefore must be always on their guard and keep everything neat and clean.” Ibid, p.251
\textsuperscript{50}Mahasaram, (compilation of 33 medieval texts by an unknown person in the beginning of 1800), M.K.Vaidyar, (ed), Government Oriental Manuscript Library, Madras, 1951, op.cit, pp.3-6
\textsuperscript{52}E.F, Frey, Saints in Medical History, Clio Medica 14: 35-70. 1979
\textsuperscript{54}Rifayeemala, op.cit, p.73
with the addition of the popular-medical misinterpretations of coincidence. This could explain the survival of the cults of the saints-protectors from snake bite up to our days.\textsuperscript{56}

Existence of numerous proverbs with regard to snakes reflected the predominant consciousnesses within the culture area about snake bites and poisons. These proverbs also do reflect the composition of the affected sections; poor and lower castes who directly came in contact with wild as forest dwellers or peasants.\textsuperscript{57} Proverbs such as “Alamuttiyal Cherayum Kadikkum” (even rat snake may bite as a last resort), “Novichu Vitta Moorkhan” (released the harassed cobra), “Neerkkolikum Vishamo” (even water snake carries poison?!), “Keeriyum Morkhanum Pole” (like the cobra and mongoose), “Chanbhoomikku Muzham Pampu” (a yard of snakes for one feet land), Aloru Pampa (behaves like a snake), “Veliyilulla Pampine Tholilittu” (like shouldering the snake lying on the fence), “Theyyane Thacchapoole” (like the beaten teyyan snake), “Aleriyal Pampu Chavilla” (too many people can’t kill a snake), convince us the strong sense of fear and reverence among the people and the way this fear crept into the popular psychology.

Problems of infertility, impotency and skin disorders were attributed to the wrath of ubiquitous Serpent Goddesses that were worshiped across Kerala from early medieval times.\textsuperscript{58} Majority of the sacred groves in Malabar were centers of serpent deities. Certain medieval temples even had nagas (serpent) as “subsidiary deity” along with presiding deities.\textsuperscript{59} Childless couples used to conduct prayers and special offerings at Karippal Kavu in Malabar where Theyyams of nagarajavu (serpent king) and nagakkanni (serpent queen)

\textsuperscript{56}Rifayee Mala, op.cit, p.73; Amir Muzur, op.cit, p.37
\textsuperscript{57}Varthema, op.cit,167 “in my time one of these serpents entered in to a house during the night and bit nine persons, and in the morning they were all found dead and swollen. And when the said pagans go on a journey, if they meet any of these animals they receive it as a good augury.”p.174
\textsuperscript{58}Frederick J. Simoons, Plants of life, Plants of death University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 1998,p.86
\textsuperscript{59}Susan Bayly,op.cit, p.32
observed every year.⁶⁰ These sacred medicines, administered at temples or groves represent the holistic nature of the traditional ways of healing.⁶¹ Certain temples in medieval Malabar always had practices healing associated with it. Hence, boundaries of medicines, healings, sciences and religion got shrunk in which people failed to realize the temporal and non temporal causatives and curative processes.

The everlasting presence of different snakes in the day to day affairs of Malabar population helped the growth of many Vishaharis (poison destroyer) and Vaidyans (physician) who specialized in different stage of treatments. These vishaharis, a term which was prevalent in Indian tradition, found its way into the royal courts and rich men’s houses that lived with the constant fear of poisoning; natural or artificial.⁶² These vishaharis insisted on sprinkling kayam (asafetida) in and around of their residence in order to thwart off the entry of the venomous snakes into human habitants.⁶³ This practice is carried out even today by all sections of people.⁶⁴ A medieval kavu (sacred grove) for goddess Badrakali situates in the medieval port town of Kollam, was exclusively sought after for the protection from the snakes and is called pishari kavu, a term derived from its medieval origin Vishahari Kavu.⁶⁵ Medieval texts such as Narayaneeyam, Uddhisham, Ulalpam, Hara Mekhalam, Lakshanamritha, Ashtanga Hridayam, Kalavanchanam gave ample space for dealing with

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⁶² Manasa, the sister of Vasuki was known as Vishahari who was invoked for the protection from snakes. Says Katherine M. Ball, Animal Motifs in Asian Art: An Illustrated Guide to their Meanings and Aesthetics, Dover Publication, US, 2004, p.167
⁶³ Asafetida (kayam) was traded extensively on Indian Ocean and found its presence on Malabar ports and theruvus markets. K. N. Chaudhuri, Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750, CUP, UK, 1985, p.205; M. T. Narayanan, Agrarian Relations in late Medieval Malabar, ICHR, New Delhi, 2003, 74
⁶⁴ Chikitsamanjari, op.cit,p.620
Many works have been written later on based on these books among which Vishachikitsa is very important.

“Manthra”, a form of treatment existed amongst all sections of the society during the period under consideration. Kanippayyur Shankaran Nambhoothirippadu has compiled in early nineteenth century, many texts dealing with magico-religious practices of “curing”. Some of them are titled as Yanthravidhikal, Manthraprayogangal and Dhyananglum Manthrangalum that established the fact that Boothavidya (“Knowledge of Possessed”) was prevalent from time immemorial in the cultural landscape of Kerala. In Medieval Malabar, common people believed in the harmful effects of Jinni, Satan, Kuttichathan, Yakshi and Yakshan, Bhagavathi and many others.

“Manthra” is one of the major healing methods in Ahstavaidya tradition as well. Prevalence of it as sanmanthravadam (positive manthra healing) and durmanthravadam during medieval time found its counterpart in Kerala as well. Medieval Eastern India attained certain notoriety especially in Orissa and West Bengal for magico-religious practices like sorcery and black magic. Mathra as a healing practice had been mentioned in all standard text books of Ayurveda. Susrutha in his Samhitha talks about it in “Uttarasthanam” (amanushheeyam) section, while Charaka Samhitha deals with it in Unmada Chikitsa section. Susrutha sees psychological disorder as a consequence of the possession of Bhuthas in the

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66 Mahasaram, op.cit, p.xiv
67 ibid
69 Fee Shifau Nnasi: Ithu Orumichu Koottappetta Pazhaya Upakaram Tarjama Kitab, (“This translated compilation contains remedies for people”) compiled in 1885 by Ahmad Bava Musliar., reprinted at C.H.Muhammad Koya and Sons, Thirurangadi, 2001.p.60; Kokasandesham, op.cit,p.84
70 Mahasaram,op.cit,p.xvi
71 Vishnu Nambutiri, 1996, op.cit, p.133
72 ibid
patients. “Manthra” as a form of treatment lost its credibility in medieval times itself as many practitioners and quacks used it indiscriminately for monetary purposes and powerful positions by influencing the rich and powerful with their knowledge of this art.

Kalavanjana Saram, a medieval treatise on Visha Chikitsa talks about how to achieve the power to master the knowledge of Manthra for scholar/physicians. “The person should observe 3 years long japa, which was an essential part of Hindu population according to Maropolo. The affected patient had to neglect all these issues and has to carry out the mission and he would definitely attain the bliss of Manthra power. Once he attains the bliss, he has to remain with japa and puja for another three years otherwise would he lose whatever he attained. There are some symptoms for attaining the blissful health and prosperity as it is said “he would get the aura of sun; would lose sleep and hunger; onlookers don’t feel like taking back their eyes from him for his absolute beauty, attractiveness and perfect health; he acquires the power of controlling the highest provocation and combination of a imposing character”.

People had strong belief in the causative effects of spirits that inhabit in certain trees such as Pala or Aal, water sources etc. These beliefs were invariably exchanged from generations to generations as the fear of supernatural elements is not out question in twenty

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74 “This elixir or Rasayana covers within its therapeutic range such affections of the body as coetaneous diseases such as Kushtha, chronic fever, epilepsy, insanity, and the diseases due to the effect of poisons and to the evil influences of ghosts and malignant spirits.” says Sushruta Samhita, Kaviraj Kunja Lal Bhishagratna, Calcutta, 19II, p.526
76 Mahasaram, op.cit,p. xiv
77 Marco Polo, op.cit, p.331
78 Mahasaram, op.cit. p. xix; Upakaram, op.cit,pp.70-71
first century as well.\textsuperscript{81} The beliefs in the spirit and supernatural reflected in the ubiquitous tradition of evil eye in medieval times.\textsuperscript{82} The evil eye was perceived as one of the most dangerous forces that can interfere in the life of any person. This was one of the major reasons why people invested much energy in worshiping and taking blessings from various ‘spirits’ to counteract it.\textsuperscript{83}

People thronged to \textit{Bhagawati kavus} to escape from the evil eye and other problems as stated above.\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Manthra} such as “I prostrate myself to \textit{Bhagavati}. When Sri Paramesvara and Parvati went hunting, Sri Parvati was under the influence of the evil eye. Sri Paramesvara put away this influence. Do though unto this case of evil eye likewise. My oath is on my guru” was chanted at Kavus in Kerala of medieval origin to escape from this problem.\textsuperscript{85} Social and personal problems such as envy, bad luck and misfortune were explained as a result of evil eye in many social circumstances. They tried to remove this by keeping chanted object or \textit{Molikas} as Jacobus Canter Visscher described it.\textsuperscript{86} “If the eye of the person, possessed of a malign aspect, falls on this object, it is robbed of all power of working mischief either to plants or to anything else.”\textsuperscript{87}

Evil eye was believed to have caused impairment of sexual activity, impotence, sterility, disorder in menstruation, problems in pregnancy and childbirth, deficient breast

\textsuperscript{82}\textit{Upakaram}, op.cit, 230; M.V.Vishnu Namboothirippadu, 1979, op.cit, p. 34 and p.59
\textsuperscript{83} “A man to his grave, and a camel to the cooking pot”; a Bedouin saying regarding the uncertain conditions of the desert environment.
\textsuperscript{84}Alan Dundes, \textit{The Evil Eye: A Casebook}, University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 1992, p.59
\textsuperscript{85}Ibid
\textsuperscript{86}Jacobus Canter Visscher, op.cit, p.145 “they are in the habit of setting up a \textit{molik} or figure in their fields, young plantations, and houses and particularly in their roads, not for the purpose of scaring the birds as it is done Europe, but to act as a charm against the evil eye. This \textit{molik} can be the image either of an idol, a man, or an ape or sometimes it is merely some kind of painted vessel.”
\textsuperscript{87}Ibid, “there was a Mocqua (fisherman) chief living there whose countenance was supposed by the natives, to be endowed with this pernicious influence; so that he was entreated never to enter fields when the plants were in bloom, lest he should injure them; which request he observed.”
milk, mastitis, a baby's refusal to suckle, and so on. People believed that the ones who were most vulnerable were that the very young men, the wealthy folk and the beautiful women.

The common word used for evil eye was *kanneru dosham* which was remedied by magico-religious medicines like *kannetu manthravada ppattu* by the lower caste community of *Malaya* rather than treatments, based on humoral theory. *Parayan* women in medieval period used *Takudu*; a charmed flat plates of copper to remove from the baneful result of the evil eye.

Muslims seems to have followed the Arab tradition of the evil eye and believed that the principles of evil eye were compatible with the texts of Islam. As an established community, with proper functioning of the mosques and attached schools, where *hadith* tradition and Quranic lessons were thought, they were quite acquainted with scriptural principles of Islamic medicines and healing. Medieval *otthupalli* and *dars*; Islamic learning centers; were dealing with principles of Islamic jurisprudence, history and *hadiths* compiled by Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim. One such *hadith* reported by Ninth Century Scholar Imam Muslim Ibn al-Hajjaj says “Prophet said: The evil eye is true, and if there were anything in the world which would overcome fate, it would be an evil eye.”

The Prophet’s own belief that, invoking God could be a guard against the evil eye was resonated in the Muslim practices during the period under study. Evil eyed persons

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89 F. Fawcett - 1915, op.cit, 307
92 *Upakaram*,op.cit,p.81
93 Quasi Muhammad, op.cit, p.42, lines-69 and 95
95 In his Book of Medicine, Al-Bukhari (810–72 AD) recorded that the Prophet one day saw a servant girl with a *sa'fa* (or su'fa, a black or brown mark or excoriation) on her face, and said: “Recite incantations for her, for the ‘glance’ is on her” (Sahih al-Bukhari1974, 426). It was said that she was
were believed to have represented impurity of mind and body with which they could provoke real, perceptible damage to the envied person, animal or property. They believed that the evil eye conveyed the *nafs najsih* ("impure spirit"), as opposed to the *nafs tahira* ("pure spirit") of saints and healers. Protection from the negative effects of the evil eye was achieved through different kinds of prayers and seeking refuge with Allah. Even God told the Prophet to take refuge with him from the evil of the envier.

Muslims in medieval Kerala generally considered that two *Suras* (chapters) in Quran, known as *Al-Mu 'awwadhateyn*, could be the supplication for refuge and protection from the health related problems. These chapters had been in use from the seventh century and were suggested by the prophet to be recited to protect and treat from the evil eyes and the witchcraft of feminine “blowers upon knots”. Many other references were also found as suffering from an evil eye inflicted by the stare of the *jinns*, whose piercing gaze is more deadly than the points of spears. Al-Jawziyya (1292–350 AD) argued at length about the logic behind the belief in the power of the evil eye. He insisted that the power rests not with the eye of a person, but rather with the spirit (*nafs*) working through it Al-Jawziyya, 1957, pp.127–36.

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97 *Upakaram*, op.cit, p.80, Narrated 'Aisha, “The Prophet ordered me or somebody else to do *ruqya* (if there was danger)from an evil eye.” In Vol. 7, Book 71, Number 634, Bukhari; Narrated Um Salama, “that the Prophet saw in her house a girl whose face had a black spot. He said. "She is under the effect of an evil eye; so treat her with a Ruqya." Volume 7, Book 71, Number 635 Bhukhari; Narrated Abu Huraira, “ The Prophet said, "The effect of an evil eye is a fact." Volume 7, Book 71, Number 636 Bhukhari.


99 Narrated 'Abdul 'Aziz, “Thabit and I went to Anas bin Malik. Thabit said, "O Abu Hamza! I am sick." On that Anas said, "Shall I treat you with the Ruqya of Allah's Apostle?" Thabit said, "Yes," Anas recited, "O Allah! The Lord of the people, the Remover of trouble! (Please) cure (Heal) (this patient), for You are the Healer. None brings about healing but You; a healing that will leave behind no ailment." Volume 7, Book 71, Number 638.

100 *Upakaram*, op.cit, p.82, “And lo! Those who disbelieve would fain disconcert thee with their eyes when they hear the Reminder, and they say: Lo! He is indeed mad” (Quran 68: 51). One can seek protection by saying the prayers called the “Throne Verse” (Ayit al-Kursi) and the two Suras: “The Daybreak” (al-Falaq) and “Mankind” (al-Nas) (Quran 2: 255, 113: 1–5 and 114: 1–6).

101 *Upakaram*, op.cit.p.81

102 *Upakaram*, op.cit, p.81, Holy Quran, Sura, 113:4 (Falaq-The Day Break); 114:4 (Naas-Mankind); Blowing upon Knots was a common form of witchcraft in the Arabian Peninsula, where women were
‘healers’ for affected persons at harmful occurrence. Another treatment for the evil eye suggested by the prophet was the ruqya (charm) that the angel named Jibril said for the Prophet. The evil eye was one of the most dangerous diseases of which pregnant women and small children were the most vulnerable to. They were advised to use rudraksha or urukku from the saints or spiritual leaders according to their beliefs. Muslims also resorted, in order to get rid of the impairment of ayn, to hanging amulets and charms on the body, writing verses from the Quran, taking vows, visiting the tombs of saints. Measures were taken to outwit the evil eye by carefully following rules of behavior, religion and hygiene. Muslims classified ayn in to two such as that of insiya (humankind) and that of jinniyah (the Jinnis) like the Arab tradition of evil eye classified this phenomenon. Ayn was normally associated with personal enmity, envy and the effect of it was transmitted by conscious stares, body touch or verbal communication and so on. Evil eyed persons were believed to cause dangers habitually, even deliberately; while some of them may do it accidentally and unconsciously. It caused sudden sickness, loss of temper and vigor and even grief.

said to tie knots in a cord and blow upon them, while uttering a curse. This practices found references in Quran as well in 113:4

103 Upakaram, op.cit, p.81
105 M. D. Raghavan, India in Ceylonese History, Society, and Culture, Asia Pub. House, 1969,p.170; Anathapuravarnanam, lines-44
106 Aref Abu Rabia, op.cit, p.247
107 Upakaram,op.cit,p.83
108 In the chapter entitled kannerine thadukkanulla Asmaukal (Countering Evil Eyes), Upakaram, the Medieval Medical treatise elaborates these concepts. Upakaram, op.cit, pp.81-83
110 Upakaram,op.cit.pp.82-83
Mappila Muslims in medieval Malabar, who by this time became a practicing South Asian Islamic community with strong beliefs in Hadith and Quran,\textsuperscript{111} believed that both health and illness were in the hands of God who sends diseases through natural and supernatural powers created by Him.\textsuperscript{112} The ideas and healing principles in Arabic-malayalam literatures suggest that, illnesses were considered to be a direct punishment for their sins by Allah, who acts through the mediation of human beings.\textsuperscript{113} This causative element was believed to have contained through proper administration of basic rules of hygiene, religious practices and respecting norms of behavior.\textsuperscript{114} These concepts were expressed, for example, in abstaining from eating carrion, spoiled food and drinking contaminated water, and avoiding places where there is danger of disease, particularly where contagious diseases occurred.\textsuperscript{115}

The evil eye was considered to be a social punishment by the God himself to the person possessed for making him “discontent with his lot.”\textsuperscript{116} Evil eyed person was socially and morally isolated and avoided generally and was also “empty-souled”.\textsuperscript{117} The envious person becomes harmful, whenever he casts a glance of the eye. Smearing the forehead of...

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\textsuperscript{111}Zainuddin Makhdum, Tuhafatul Mujahideen fee Ba-a-Si Akhbaril Burthukaliyeen (1583), translated as “A Gift to The Warriors with Information about Portuguese.” Written in Arabic (trans-Malayalam), C.Hamsa, Al-Huda Book Stall, Kozhikode, 1999; English(trans), S.Muhammad Husayn Nainar, Other Books, Calicut, 2006, pp.39-49

\textsuperscript{112}Muhyiideen Mala, op.cit, pp.124-125

\textsuperscript{113}Upakaram,op.cit,pp.43-65, Paropakaram, op.cit,pp.65-79; Narrated ‘Aisha, (the wife of the Prophet) that she asked Allah's Apostle about plague, and Allah's Apostle informed her saying, "Plague was a punishment which Allah used to send on whom He wished, but Allah made it a blessing for the believers. None (among the believers) remains patient in a land in which plague has broken out and considers that nothing will befall him except what Allah has ordained for him, but that Allah will grant him a reward similar to that of a martyr." Volume 7, Book 71, Number 630 Bhukhari.

\textsuperscript{114}Nafeesth Mala, Noorul Islam Press, Tirurangadi, 2004, p.4

\textsuperscript{115}Narrated ‘Aisha, The Prophet did not do that (i.e., forbade the storage of the meat of sacrifices for three days) except (he did so) so that the rich would feed the poor. But later we used to keep even trotters to cook, fifteen days later. The family of Muhammad did not eat wheat bread with meat or soup to their satisfaction for three successive days, Volume 7, Book 65, Number 349

\textsuperscript{116}Clinton Bailey, Bedouin Religious Practices in Sinai and the Negev, Anthropos, 1982: 77,p.79

\textsuperscript{117}Ibid, p.6
new born baby with different herbs was a customary practice among the Mappilas. The application of kohl to blacken the baby’s eyelids or dimple for medicinal purposes, as well as protection against the evil eye became part of *Mappila* life in Malabar as done by their counterparts in Arabia. They believed that the effects of evil eye were varied and could result in illness and suffering of different kinds, behavior changes and even financial losses. It was also believed that certain persons like *odiyans* ranging from lay persons to Sufis had the power to get rid of this evil eye and it can be done by prayers, dried red chili, salt, burnt hair, onion skins, broomstick etc.

Extra-human power or super natural aetiology (folk aetiology) was attributed to all health problems in medieval Kerala and magico-religious remedies were employed in treating them. Certain places in medieval Malabar had strong traditions of ‘cure-deity’ worship. At Payyannur, the *Kavu* was attributed to Mother Goddess, *Cheerma* whose unhappiness and wrath caused small pox and other epidemic diseases, draws a large number of lower caste population from medieval time. Outbreak of small pox was believed to have been contained by the *Komaramas* (oracle) of the *Cheerma*. They used to visit houses in the localities which were under the sacred authority of the respective deity and blessed the devotees by sprinkling turmeric powder.

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118 Upakaram, op.cit,p.84
122 Muhiyiddin Mala, op.cit;p.47-49, Upakaram, op.cit;pp.32-46 Mahasaram, op.cit, pp.87-88
Mardhini was considered to be the cure of all diseases in medieval Malabar. One of the lower caste groups Chakliya worshiped another mother goddess Mariyamma during medieval period as described by Barbosa.

Another magico-ritual practice associated with healing was the performance of Chamundi Theyyam, a medieval art form to please the deity Chamundi to get off the brutality of small pox. Here, the performers from the lower castes conduct a ritual walk through big heaps of burning charcoal. Temple at Meenkulam which was constructed around a sacred grove (kavu) was known to have cured skin problems of patients, if the sacred fishes and Indian flap shell turtles in these ponds were fed by worshipers. Thoovakkadi, a skin disease was believed to have cleared with obeisance when given to Goddess Thoovakkali. The Goddess was believed to be another form of Kali, the quintessential mother goddess of the wrath and anguish. The traditional solution for this disease is to administer tender coconut to the body and offer the same to the deity. These along with sorcery were prevalent in cultural life of medieval Kerala and this was known as theyvammattu in medieval literature. People also prayed to specific Gods/Goddesses for securing cure and to begot children. Medieval Kerala believed that those villages surrounded by evil spirits such as Yakhis, Chathan, Kuttichathan and Otamulachi (single breasted spirit) should have their

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125 Barbosa, op.cit,1996, p.115


129 T. Madhava Menon,op.cit, p.451

130 Anathapuravarnanam, op.cit, lines-94; Barbosa,op.cit,pp.59-60

131 Anathapuravarnanam, lines-143
images worshipped at temple complexes.\textsuperscript{132} Presence of these dread spirits created a parallel culture about body, medicine and healings in the entire region of Malabar.

\textit{Nerchas} or celebration of divine personalities; birth/death anniversary; formed an tradition to seek the help for health issues in medieval Malabar.\textsuperscript{133} During \textit{Nerchas}, cutting across socio-cultural differences, people thronged at the sacred geographies of holy saints, singing hagiographical songs of which earliest one discovered is \textit{Muhiyiddin Mala}, written in early seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{134} The word \textit{nercha} is derived from the Dravidian root \textit{ner} which denotes multiple meanings including ‘truth’ and ‘agreement’ means the act of taking a vow. Muslims in Malabar did not necessarily internalise the whole tradition of saint worshiping and healing at and \textit{Nercha}, modeled on indigenous ceremonial patterns, as Stephel Dale argued.\textsuperscript{135} The tradition of saint worship and seeking remedial measures from the holy persons had always been very much part of Islamic communities worldwide.\textsuperscript{136} They believed that the saint’s “life does not end with his physical death for death simply means a new state for his holiness.” History shows that, martyrs and holy men, emerging as ‘saint healers’, who could benefit the believers through \textit{karamath} (miracles), goes back to the early history of Islam in Arabia and India.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{132}Narayana Menon, \textit{The Performing Arts}, Humanities Press, 1983,p.48
\textsuperscript{133}Husain Rāṭāi, \textit{Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti Colonial Struggles}, Other Books, Calicut, 2007,p.69
\textsuperscript{136}Beatrix Pfleiderer, \textit{The Red Thread: Healing Possession at a Muslim Shrine in North India}, Aakar Books, Delhi, 2006,p.188
By sixteenth century, Muslims in Kerala created for them their own niches of saint worship and also hagiographical literature such as *Muhyiuddin Mala*. Saints such as Muhiyudin Abu Muhammad Abdal Qadir al-Gilani (1077–1166 CE), who was also known as *Ghaus-e-Azam* and Shiekh Rifayee were strongly venerated in the region. Muslims in Malabar believed in their power of healing disabilities, child disease and many such chronic disorders. Medieval Arabian tradition of Islam, practiced in Medieval Malabar, was very much in agreement with the worship of Holymen and their capacities of healing. The continuity of the tradition could be seen in the later works such as *Rifayeemala* written in 1781, and *nafeesathamala*, written in 1895 by Ponnani Nalakath Kunji Moideen Kutty.

Later period, with the emergence of new socio-political consciousness, changed the pattern of *nercha*, which was earlier functioned as a space for communion and healing complex for the believers. Nevertheless, many *nerchas* such as Kondotti *nercha* or urs (meaning death anniversary) remained as blissful place for health seekers who attributed their cure in the oils and cannons at Kondoti *Dargha*. Carrying these ‘curative-guns’ is still considered auspicious and a help in curing ailments. Even the traditional Hindus believe that the oil used for the guns have special medicinal properties. *Appa Vanibha Nercha (urs of bread offering)* at Idiyangara, Calicut, also represents the medieval beliefs in the imaginary

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138 *Muhyiuddin Mala*, op.cit., pp.56-65
139 Ibid, pp.20-30; *Rifayeemala*, op.cit., pp.72-76
140 *Muhyiuddin Mala*, op.cit., lines-112-113
142 Kunji Moideen Kutty, *Nafeestah Mala*, op.cit., p.5
143 Dale, Menon, op.cit., p.531
144 This statement is made based on my field work in the area, in order to understand the continuity of the medieval practices.
145 Dale, Menon, op.cit., p. 531
healing power of divine personalities. The offerings there, appam (bread) was considered to be healing in the blissful presence of Auliya or saint who constructed the Mosque in the sixteenth century. Such beliefs and practices had been a continuation of the pattern that all Islamic communities followed since Abbasid period.

People in medieval Malabar believed in the extra-personal causative elements like jinn, shaithan, and so on. Patients affected by them were advised to write certain Arabic letters in particular pictographic table along with specific numerals. This had to be written in a karthasil and should be covered with black color tread and be burnt in the cow ghee which was subsequently kept in the head-side of the affected patient. Medieval beliefs classified these causative elements as “good” and “bad” depending on the moralities of the Jinns who could be a “Muslim” or “Kafir” (unbeliever). This classification represents the similar beliefs in the superior and inferior Jinns in the medieval Islamic communities world over. Possession caused by Kafir Jinns and Satans were considered more harmful and was treated differently with more dominant symbols and letters. These groups of jinns were believed to have caused many specific health problems such as miscarriage or infertility among women which could be remedied by the invocation of particular saints such as Sheikh Muhiyiddin. People also believed in his capacity to heal the poison, especially snake bite, as he was considered to be over and above the power of snakes. The medieval Muslims also believed in the unbreakable healing capacities of the Sufi saints in the cause of snake

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146 Husain Randatthani, op.cit, p.69
147 Howard M. Federspiel, op.cit, pp.26-27
148 Muhyiddin Mala, op.cit, lines-81-126; Upakaram, op.cit, pp.53-54
149 Upakaram, op.cit, p.53
150 Ibid.p.54
151 Ibid, pp.52-56
153 Ibid, pp.55-56
154 Muhiyiddin Mala, op.cit, lines-112
155 Ibid
bites. Muslims believed in the concept of *sihr* (black magic) which was prevalent even in the pre-Islamic Arabia. Their concept of black magic, which makes anybody sick and vulnerable had gone hand in hand with the already excising tradition of Kerala among many communities.

Counter black magic also took a definite pattern during this time. Arabic Malayalam literatures suggest that the persons warding off the evil effects of the *sihr* should have extremely hygienic “*dehavum puthayum*” (body and cover) in order to become more effective. This exercise was done by recital of exclusive chapters of the Quran which contains verses that deals with these issues. Some section of the *ulemas* mastered the arts of “diagnosing” and “prognosing” different health problems by synthesizing Quranic verses with Arabic alphabets and numerals certain ways. These techniques were employed to examine pregnancy sex of the child, even occurrence symptoms of the death and so on. Interestingly, sometimes they also conducted urine tests in order to understand the health condition of the patients.

Muslims in Kerala considered epilepsy (*grahani*) as “being possessed by non human elements.” Like Ayurveda prescriptions, treating this non-human association of the disease

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156 Ibid, lines-125  
157 Quran-113:04. *upakaram*, op.cit,61  
158 *Ananthapuravarananam*, lines-94  
159 *Upakaram*, op.cit,pp.60  
160 Ibid, pp.59-61  
161 Ibid, pp.62  
162 Ibid, pp.37 and 43-44. This was done by calculating the number of Arabi months, name of the pregnant lady and her mother with an addition of number twenty. If this calculation was falling under the category of *Lahv-ul- Hayathu*, the mother and kid would live. If bad luck makes the calculation falls under the category of *Lahv-ul-mamath* both of them would die.  
163 Ibid, 60  
164 Ibid, p.53  
166 Ibid, p.57
went along with prescribing herbal medicines as well. Herbs such as *murikkintholu* (skin of a thorny tree), *kayppavalli* (bitter guard plant), *kundirikkam, tippali* (long pepper) were recommended for the disease which was then known as *apasmaram (ummu sswibhiyan).* But, medieval classical Ayurvedic practitioners looked at the issue more scientifically by exploring the intricacies of the humoral systems of Ayurveda depending on the imbalance in *dosas* (hormour) such as *Vata* (air), *pitta* (bile) and *kapha* (phlegm). They divided epilepsy into eighteen sections for variety of reasons like gender, symptoms, velocity, age and genetics and so on.

*Kushtam* (leprosy), a medieval menace, was considered a fall out disease for the wrath of God. In an exclusive chapter on leprosy, *Upakaram* combines Quran and herbs as a treatment for this disease. A whole gamut of herbals such as *kanjiram* (poison seed), *poovarash* (portia tree) and *karimjeerakam* (cumin seed) were suggested to deal with, with proper mixing of the divine words and *Karma.* Patients were warned from socializing with non-affected as the disease is highly contagious. Affected persons with diseases such as conjunctivitis, chicken pox were strictly prohibited from mingling with general public. Tradition of quarantining also continued as the contagious disease spread across the region irrespective of the color and creed. In eighteenth century, Dutch, with the help of doctors,

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167 *Chikitsa Manjari*, op.cit, pp.199-200  
168 Ibid,pp.57-59  
169 *Chikitsa Manjari*, op.cit,p.454  
170 *Mahasaram*, op.cit, p.15  
171 *Chikitsa Manjari*, op.cit, p.334; *Rifayee Mala*,op.cit,p.72  
172 *Upakaram*,op.cit, p.186  
173 *Upakaram*,ibid, *Chikitsa Manjari*, op.cit,p. 354  
174 *Upakaram*,op.cit,p.186  
175 *Upakaram*, pp.186-188  
176 A.Galletti, The Dutch in Malabar, Usha, Madras, 1911,pp242,p.82,p.34. “the asylum was erected in 1728…an asylum was previously maintained at castello. The site of new asylum was that of the old Portuguese fortress at palippot near the north end of the island vypeen looking on the backwater.it had passed to the dutch with other Portuguese enclaves when they took cochin in 1663…..it appears that
started a leper asylum in order to discipline the disease and patients.\textsuperscript{177} These doctors had to visit the isolated patients on the island of Baypin.\textsuperscript{178}

Another socially despised disease \textit{Vellappandu} (Albumin), was also prevalent among all communities during the period under study.\textsuperscript{179} These problems were handled at the traditional families as well as \textit{Masjid/Darsus} where most of the Islamic scholars operated from.\textsuperscript{180} Though there were references to the Quranic-curing, the diseases were predominantly administered by the herbal plants.\textsuperscript{181} These plants were included \textit{Neem leaves} (neem), \textit{Velutha Muthalu} (white penny wort), \textit{kayappa} (bitterguard), \textit{velluthulli} (garlic), \textit{Munthiri} (grape) and many other locally available plants.\textsuperscript{182}

Diseases such as \textit{Sanivali} (nervous cramps), \textit{Adisaram} (flex or dysentery), \textit{Pani} (fever), \textit{Tridoshagioram} (the fever with all dosas), \textit{Malampani} (fever occasioned by a certain wind from Gauts), \textit{Frameham} (diabetics), \textit{aadram} (hemorrhoids) were reported to have been very prevalent in the region of Kerala during the period under concern.\textsuperscript{183} People were also affected with \textit{Mahodaram} (dropsy), \textit{Kamala} (jaundice), \textit{Sanni} (Phrensy combined with convulsions), \textit{Velupa} (kushtam), \textit{Astrisava} (inflammatory disease which affects the whole body and consumes the marrow of the bone).\textsuperscript{184} Diseases like \textit{Ciardhi} (vomitting), \textit{Masuri} (small pox), \textit{Ciori} (chori/itch), \textit{Arbuda} (cancer), \textit{Sannivadham} (apoplexy), \textit{Engal} (asthma), \textit{Ciuma

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{177} ibid \textsuperscript{178} ibid \textsuperscript{179} Chikitsa manjari, op.cit, p.291; Rifayimala,op.cit, p.72 \textsuperscript{180} Chikitsa Manjari, op.cit, p.291 \textsuperscript{181} Upakaram,op.cit, p.188 \textsuperscript{182} Ibid,p.189; Chikitsa Manjari, op.cit,pp.292-295 \textsuperscript{183} Fra Paolino da San Bartolomeo, \textit{Voyage to The East Indies; Observations Made During a Refidence of Thirteen Years Between 1776 and 1789 in Districs Little Frequented by the Europeans}, (trans) by William Johnston, London,p.405 \textsuperscript{184} Ibid}
(cough) were the major diseases that took heavy toll among the common population during the period.\textsuperscript{185}

Midwifery, as a prevalent tradition in Medieval Kerala, was associated with village therapies. \textit{Peretuppu}, as it was known, is now completely extinct in the cultural canvas of Kerala.\textsuperscript{186} Midwife or \textit{petti} was required to function at the house of pregnant lady till the delivery was done.\textsuperscript{187} Mostly, women from lower caste \textit{Malaya} community acted as midwives, who could be reciting \textit{Manthra} and songs. These songs believed to have ensured smooth deliveries and healthy babies.\textsuperscript{188} \textit{Pettis} observed \textit{Maleyankettu}: a peculiar ritual to stop premature abortions and subsequent death of expecting mother. Elite women were assisted by the subordinate castes in many rituals, such as \textit{anchamneer} (ritual bath). Pregnant women also sought divine blessings from local deities such as \textit{peroorayyan} who resided at \textit{perunmkavu} (grant sacred grove) with long prayers.\textsuperscript{189}

\textsuperscript{185}Ibid; \textit{Chikitsa Manjari}, op.cit,pp.15-46
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Payyanurpatu}, op.cit,lines-17
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid,pp.10-11
\textsuperscript{188} M.V.Vishnu Nambhutiri, “Malayarude Chikitsa Paramparyam”, in Dr.Hafeel (ed), op.cit, pp.96-97
\textsuperscript{189} \textit{Payyanurpatu}, pp.9-10,