INTRODUCTION

Malayalam is rich in the works of translation from English, French, German, Spanish and many other foreign languages, as well as Indian regional languages. More than four centuries ago, Thunchath Ezthhachan translated the Ramayana from Sanskrit into Malayalam as Adhyathma Ramayanam. After Independence, some of the finest novels in Malayalam have been translated into English and other countries' languages. Chemmeen is the first significant work of Modern Malayalam Fiction which is translated into English after independence. O.V. Vijayan’s Khasakkinte Ithihasam has been translated to English, Turkish and German. M. Mukundan’s Mayyazhi Puzyhude Theerangal has been translated to English and French. Translated works are not always the best sellers. However, the translated novels of Marquez and Coelho are best sellers in Malayalam. Perhaps, the novels of our masterly authors are not translated in a way that retains the charm and lyrical beauty of the original. Translators often rewrite the original during the process of translation. When O. V. Vijayan translated Khasakkinte Ithihasam into English, the original text underwent a kind of transcreation. If Vijayan had translated the novel word for word, it would have appeared pedestrian and trivial in English. Hence while translating, Vijayan omitted the local dialects and the linguistic versatility in the source text to make it more readable to the readers of other cultures. Vijayan published his English version of the novel in 1994, after meeting Swami Karunakara Guru. The Legends of Khasak was written by O.V. Vijayan in the later period of his career, a man more inclined to spiritualism, which make it very different novel in its sensibility, in spite of being a translation. This is what mostly happens in self translation.

Most of the gems in Indian Literature are published in regional languages. These regional language authors from diverse background—writers from rural areas, oppressed castes, minority religion, eco-activists and women—are all coming into Indian Literature in a big way, telling new stories from innovative perspective.

Each society has its past and present though it is going on in the present society. The sense of the past is imprinted in the human mind, blended with the sense of the future. It is rightly remarked by Bhikhu Parekh: “The past is not like a distant sky, an abstract and indeterminate background to the present, but rather like the earth from which has sprung and to which it is tied by organic bonds.” For all societies, the past has been a bonding force. O. V. Vijayan is a pioneer in exploring the past and picturising the present in varied ways. O. V. Vijayan is the writer who was born in Manikara, a village in Palakkad in the state of Kerala. He became one of the pioneers of fiction in India and his fame is widespread in the western countries also. He completed the master degree in English from Madras University. He started his career as a teacher and then as a columnist and writer in periodicals. In 1958, he became a cartoonist in Sanker’s weekly and continued as an Editorial columnist. Thus he fully engulfed in journalism and settled in Delhi. O. V. Vijayan’s literary career bloomed through the journalistic career in Patriot, For Eastern Economic Review, main stream, Mathrubhumi, Illustrated weekly and State man. As a journalist, he was able to understand the modern nuances of western literature. In 1955, he published three Wars, his famous work. And his literary career was sprouted through many novels and he got a break with the publication of Thalamarakal in 1997. He is not only an artist but a thinker on the Social, economic, political and cultural phases of India. His articles were published in the column “Indraprastham” in the Malayala Nadu weekly. And it was followed by the publication of articles in several other publications and also in other multi-lingual publications. Oru Sindoarappottinte Orma (1987), Goshayathrayil thaniye (1987), Kurippukkal (1988), Varga samara, Sathvarnam (1989), Ithihasam (1989) are his famous articles and is followed by the publication of Ente Chirithuvanveshana Preeekshanangal, a satirical work.

His short stories explore the value erosion in the different phases of life coupled with the modern problems. Among them, there are many famous works such as Oru Neenda rathiryude Ormakkayi (1979), Asanthyi (1985), Kadaltheerathu(1988) and kattu Paranja Katha. And there are many remarkable works picturising the wilderness of anarchic world and those elements are presented in Enna, Arumbara and Brooman. As a writer, he won the respect in the literature in the areas of creativity and it is in a refined form. He has made the maximum use of Malayalam language and he has made an impression that he is fully interested in the future of the entire human race. His novels reveal social problems and he explores the ethical question intrigued by the human beings and the problems of the world at large. His novels also deal with the intricacies of urban life, its aberrations in individual life. The problems of disgrace sprouted from it, the irregularities in politics and administration. The historical events, the decadence of values in varied ways and the human psyche immersed in the sense of futility, are the varied subjects dealt in O.V. Vijayan’s works. And in many works, he presents his ideas in relation to the need for a social set up in our society and the nation at large. The first work which won fame for O. V. Vijayan among the Malayalam novelists is The Legends of Khasak (1968). In this novel, he unfolds the mechanical life of man, the abandonment of values, the erosion of values in individuality and the existential pathos through the picturisation of a village blended with myths. His another novel The Saga of Dharmapuri (1985) is a work which reveals the political, historical, environmental and spiritual perspectives. His work The Infinity of Grace, reveals the metamorphosis of a depressed man in to spiritual life. And this novel is also considered as a work which unfolds the worries, dilemmas, anguish and the
urges of a person who comes in to communion with the
nationalistic mind of India. In the novel, Pravachakante Vazhi
(1993), he presents the traditional culture of India and the Indian
spiritualism which is evolved through the conflicts and
communications among the different religious thoughts. Here
O.V. Vijayan also speaks of the traditional attributes of Indian
culture and its future prospects in realms of culture. His another
work Mathuram gayathi(1990) O.V. Vijayan deals with the
worship of nature coupled with the mystic stories. Here, he
presents the relationship between nature and man, Man and
Machine, Nature and Science, village life and the urban life,
spirituality and materialism and the images of harsh internal
conflicts. In his work, the scenario of Kerala culture extends to the
Indian scenario and the world scenario at large. This novel unravels
the story of three generations in a wide canvas. Many endeavors
had been done to internalize the complications of art based on the
Works of O. V. Vijayan’s Novels. Many articles are published in the
periodicals based on the O.V. Vijayan’s The Legends of
Khasak:Many critics have made deep studies based on his works.
The scholars on O .V. Vijayan’s works have found the interrelated
cycles of human life. They have given a scenario blended with the
sexuality, spirituality and the complex structure of myths. In The
Saga of Dharmapuri, the writer presents the human state blended
with the traditionalism and the feudal system. And in the end, it
becomes, an Endeavour for liberal democracy. The Infinity of
Grace reveals the metamorphosis of a man engulfed in the
complexities of life touched with the flavors of Fascism and the
journey of that person for spiritual salvation in the later life.

In contemporary literary studies, a theme is the central topic a text
treats. Themes can be divided into two categories: a work’s
thematic concept is what readers “think the work is about” and its
thematic statement being “what the work says about the
subject”.

The most common contemporary understanding of theme is an
idea or point that is central to a story, which can often be summed
in a single word (e.g. love, death, betrayal). Typical examples of
themes of this type are conflict between the individual and society;
coming of age; humans in conflict with technology; nostalgia; and
the dangers of unchecked ambition. A theme may be exemplified
by the actions, utterances, or thoughts of a character in a novel. An
example of this would be the theme loneliness in John Steinbeck’s
Of Mice and Men, wherein many of the characters seem to be
lonely. It may differ from the thesis, the texts or author’s implied
world view.

A story may have several themes. Themes often explore historically
common or cross-culturally recognizable ideas, such as ethical
questions, and are usually implied rather than stated explicitly.
An example of this could be whether one should live a seemingly
better life, at the price of giving up parts of one’s humanity, which
is a theme in ‘Aldous Huxleys Brave New World’. Along with plot,
character, setting, and style, theme is considered one of the
components of fiction.

Major and minor themes are two types of themes that appear in
literary works. A major theme is an idea that a writer repeats in his
work, making it the most significant idea in a literary work. A minor
theme, on the other hand, refers to an idea that appears in a work
briefly and gives way to another minor theme. Examples of theme
in Jane Austen’s “Pride and Prejudice” are matrimony, love,
friendship, and affection. The whole narrative revolves around the
major theme of matrimony. Its minor themes are love, friendship,
and affection etc.

It is important not to confuse a theme of a literary work with its
subject. Subject is a topic which acts as a foundation for a literary
work while a theme is an opinion expressed on the subject. For
example, a writer may choose a subject of war for his story and the
theme of a story may be writer’s personal opinion that war is a
curse for humanity. Usually, it is up to the readers to explore a
theme of a literary work by analyzing characters, plot and other
literary devices.

A writer presents the themes in a literary work through several
ways. A writer may express a theme through the feelings of his
main character about the subject which he has chosen to write
about. Similarly, themes are presented through thoughts and
conversations of different characters. Moreover, the experiences
of the main character in the course of a literary work give us an idea
about its theme. Finally, the actions and events taking place in a
narrative are consequential in determining the impact of the
theme.

In Malayalam literature, there are many novels having more than
one theme. O. V. Vijayan’s The Legends of Khasak is one of these.
The themes in this novel have universal appeal and it has
succeeded in its attempt and in its manifestation.

The novel has no story-line. It recounts the numerous encounters
of Khasak from a spiritual and philosophical frame of mind.
Through these encounters, Vijayan narrates numerous stories,
myths and superstitions cherished in Khasak. He places them in
opposition to the scientific and rational world outside, which is
now making inroads into the hamlet through Ravi’s single-teacher
school. The irony of the interface between these two worlds
occupies a substantial space in the novel. Through the myths and
stories, Vijayan also explores similar encounters of the past
recounted by the people of Khasak, enabling him to have a
distinctly unique view of cultural encounters across time and
space.

As it being a multi-faceted novel; readers can assimilate and
reproduce it in a multiple way. Many intellectuals have found in
depth presence of myth s in the novel. Likewise there are several
other themes like the concept of rebirth, death and nature, lust
and mystic experience, sense of sin etc. There one can see
powerful images like the image of water and image of time.

In this novel, the writer has created a myth. The characters delta
deep into the foregone days. At the same time, it retains the vitality
throughout the novel. They do not worry about the troubles and
turmoil of life; they do not repent their actions too. Ravi more or
less appears as an outsider in Khasak. And he is forced to carry his
own actions. He is overburdened with responsibilities. Anyway,
he would like to get rid of those ailments and eventually slips into the
clutches of extreme gratification of his innermost feelings. And he
becomes passive in his life. The helplessness and stillness follow
him. Slowly, he gains confidence to emancipate himself of his
worries. In the novel, the writer has created a world of symbols.
He has created another way of life and its turmoil. It is done not
through his language, but by careful portrayal of images in his
novel. He delivers his own visions throughout the novel. It is done
through words images and characters. The logical placement of
these factors delivers much for the unique nature of a literary art.
His novel is an experience, a feeling that a person never had in it
our life.

The concept of rebirth is another theme in this novel. According
to David Hume; Mind is only an illusion. It is constructed out of the
knowledge about the things around. The concept of rebirth
answers to all the puzzles. His or Her birth is according to the sin or
virtues committed by him in the previous birth. Life energy is the
energy exercised by protoplasm, the living thing. For example; the
procession leading to the funeral ground, experienced by
Kannamma, the character in this novel.

Ravi’s arrival to Khasak is not an escape from his life; instead a
constant pursuit of life. He starts his journey in an evening, symbol
of sub conscious mind. His conscious mind is driven by a guilty
conscious and the subconscious mind is driven by primitive anxiety.
It simplifies the presence of great futility in this novel. Ravi was
not conscious of his destination. He just followed the universe and
the material life attached to it. His mind was teeming with the
thoughts of futility. He turns out to be an ardent seeker of ultimate
truth and ultimately he comes to know many real things in his life.
What did he know out of it? He realized of the omnipresent human
foibles and sorrows. His contaminated mind was shadowed by his
thoughts on his adultery. He had to forbid his beloved forever. He
According to Shoppen Hover “Ravi’s character is entirely driven by his sense of sin. His senses related to his own existence could be taken as the essence of his life. The sense of his existence on earth itself is the reason for his troublesome mind. It is accelerated by his sense of guilty feeling”.

The reference to the spreading of smallpox in this novel symbolizes sinful disease which affects the entire public. It is transferred from generation to generation. The notion related to karma is a part of it. The refined thought is that the state of being is the biggest sin and the mere birth of a person is a matter of sin. O. V. Vijayan mocks at this situation.

In this novel, the writer has used a number of images too. Among those images, the image of water and the image of time are predominated. Here the image of water symbolizes the womb. It shows Ravi’s internal urge to go back to mother’s womb. It also symbolizes Ravi’s urge to sleep with it. He spends a lot of time in water which in turn signifies his innate feeling to return to his mother’s womb.

In this novel, the image of time remains as a part of vision. Here, the narrative sequence is intermingles with past and present. It reminds us of the globe. In the initial part of the novel, Ravi’s wandering mind denoted the time.

CONCLUSION

O.V. Vijayan had undoubtedly created a magic world and the readers can have a comprehensive outlook about the known and the things about the existence of man in this universe and the mysterious ways that make his life possible on this earth. Like any other novelist, he has some visionary ideas about the reality inherent in the physical world. For this purpose, he makes use of an absurd language. There are certain things in life which can be determined as purely illogical in terms of its state of being and expression. The illogical realities related to life remains as the crux of the story

REFERENCES