

Reconceptualizing The Kerala Higher Secondary English Curriculum: A Critical Review of Literary Diversity

Soorya Nayana S S¹, Dr. Meenu²

Submitted: 08- July -2026 Revised: 13-July-2026 Accepted: 15-Aug.- 2026 Published: 31-Aug.-2026

Manuscript ID:

IJEWLPSIR-2026-030401



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA)

4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work no commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22784552

DOI Link:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22784552>

Volume: 3

Issue: 4

Month: August 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-7873

¹Research Scholar, Sunrise University,
Alwar, Rajasthan
Email: engdptccv@gmail.com

²Research Guide, Sunrise University,
Alwar, Rajasthan

How to cite this article:

Soorya Nayana S S, & Meenu. (2026).
Reconceptualizing The Kerala Higher
Secondary English Curriculum: A
Critical Review of Literary Diversity.
International Journal of English and
World Languages & Literature
Paradigm Shift in International
Research, 3(4), 1–4.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22784552>

Address for correspondence:

Soorya Nayana S S
Research Scholar, Sunrise University,
Alwar, Rajasthan
Email: engdptccv@gmail.com

Abstract

The Kerala Higher Secondary English curriculum for Plus One and Plus Two (2022–2025) includes a relatively small number of regional, marginal, or first-person experiential narratives along with a carefully chosen selection of international literary works, most of which are written by canonical male authors from Euro-American traditions. Within this prescribed curriculum, "own voice" narratives—those that speak from lived experiences of caste, gender, class, or postcolonial identity—are erased or marginalised. This article critically examines this practice. The lack of Dalit voices, indigenous viewpoints, and first-person autobiographical storytelling leads to a homogenised literary canon that falls short in capturing the diverse realities of Kerala students, even though the syllabus has a variety of themes across units like *Glimpses of Greatness* and *Harmony of Life*. The study makes the case for a curriculum redesign that emphasises lived experience, encourages compassionate learning, and affirms the diversity of identities in the classroom by examining the book selections and pedagogical consequences. Students' exposure to a variety of viewpoints is restricted by the curriculum's lack of representation, which perpetuates an elite worldview and ignores the complexity of identity, oppression, and resistance. In order to promote empathy, social awareness, and alignment with Kerala society's heterogeneous fabric, this article promotes a more inclusive strategy that includes "own voice" storytelling.

Keywords: "Own Voice" Narratives, Marginalized Voices, Indigenous Perspectives, Curriculum Redesign, Pedagogical Consequences, Lived Experience, Social Awareness, Pluralism.

Introduction

The English curriculum at the higher secondary level has the potential to be revolutionary in a culturally heterogeneous nation like Kerala, where regional, caste-based, and linguistic identities collide with a long history of literary engagement. Literature develops students' ethical, emotional, and critical thinking skills in addition to helping them acquire languages. However, a limited literary imagination is reflected in the Kerala Higher Secondary English curriculum for Plus One and Plus Two (2022–2025). Even though the curriculum is structured around thematically rich units like *Glimpses of Greatness*, *Harmony of Life*, *Flights of Freedom*, and *Challenges of Life*, it disproportionately favours upper-caste nationalist figures and canonical Euro-American male voices while ignoring or marginalising stories based on social resistance, lived experience, and local cultural realities. A detailed examination of the required texts identifies a pattern of omission: regional Malayalam writers in translation, feminist and LGBTQIA+ voices, Adivasi storytelling, and Dalit literature are all missing. A few works, like Didi (life writing), Horegallu (anecdote), and *Conceptual Fruit* (short fiction), provide a glimpse of personal or different viewpoints, although they are confined within a dominant literary framework that is influenced by patriarchal, colonial, and caste-neutral beliefs. This limited portrayal not only homogenises literature exposure but also prevents students from becoming socially conscious, sympathetic, and sensitive to the intricacies of inequity and identity in modern-day India. The lack of "own voice" narratives—stories arising from the lived realities of caste, gender, class, and region—undermines literature's potential as a democratising and humanising force, according to this study, which examines the current curriculum through the perspective of literary diversity. The study argues for inclusive curriculum reform that acknowledges literature as a venue for resistance, identity affirmation, and pluralistic participation, drawing on critical pedagogy and curriculum studies. By doing this, it reinvents the English classroom as a place of important discussion where each student can understand how their world is mirrored, challenged, and changed.

Statement Of the Problem

Kerala has a great literary legacy and a diverse sociocultural population, however the current Higher Secondary English curriculum (2022–2025) does not sufficiently represent marginalised voices and lived experiences in its text choices.

The curriculum largely highlights mainstream nationalist leaders and canonical Western writers, marginalising Dalit, Adivasi, feminist, and regional viewpoints that are essential for promoting inclusive education and critical thinking. This lack of literary diversity restricts students' exposure to the variety of identities, conflicts, and resistances that define Indian society and maintains an elite, homogenised viewpoint in the classroom. The goal of the current study is to investigate this disparity and promote a more inclusive and socially conscious curriculum that is consistent with Kerala's multicultural culture. For the curriculum to be reimagined in this way, tokenistic inclusion must give way to meaningful representation of "own voice" narratives that represent actual, lived experiences. Stories that address caste, gender, class, and regional disparities can be incorporated into the curriculum to foster empathy, conversation, and learning that is transformative. Therefore, the purpose of this study is not just to evaluate the current curriculum but also to add to larger conversations about decolonising education and bringing literary pedagogy into line with social justice and equitable ideals. The study emphasises the critical need for educational frameworks that represent the lived reality of all students, not just the affluent few, by drawing attention to these curricular disparities. In the end, it aims to create an English classroom that fosters critical thinking, identity affirmation, and the development of a community of students who are sympathetic and socially conscious.

Objectives Of the Study

1. To critically analyze the prescribed English textbooks for Plus One and Plus Two in the Kerala Higher Secondary curriculum (2022–2025) with a focus on literary diversity.
2. To identify the extent of representation of marginalized voices, including Dalit, Adivasi, feminist, regional, and postcolonial perspectives in the current curriculum.
3. To examine the pedagogical implications of the existing literary selections on students' understanding of identity, empathy, and social awareness.
4. To explore the gaps and silences in the curriculum with regard to "own voice" narratives rooted in lived experiences of caste, gender, class, and region.
5. To propose recommendations for a more inclusive and pluralistic curriculum that reflects the heterogeneous realities of Kerala society and empowers students through critical literary engagement.

Hypothesis Of the Study

Alternate Hypothesis (H₁):

The Kerala Higher Secondary English curriculum (2022–2025) lacks adequate representation of marginalized voices and lived experiences, leading to a limited and non-inclusive literary exposure for students.

Null Hypothesis (H₀):

The Kerala Higher Secondary English curriculum (2022–2025) sufficiently represents marginalized voices and lived experiences, providing inclusive and diverse literary exposure for students.

Relevance Of the Study

Its recent analysis of the Kerala Higher Secondary English curriculum and its inability to fairly reflect under-represented voices make this study relevant. In a state like Kerala, with its rich literary heritage and significant socio-cultural variety, it is crucial that curricula represent the real-life experiences of all societal segments, particularly those who have historically been marginalised. Students are unable to comprehend the intricacies of identity, power, and resistance within their own community since Dalit, Adivasi, feminist, and regional viewpoints are not included in the required textbooks. It is essential that students interact with a variety of narratives that oppose prevailing ideas and advance social justice, empathy, and inclusivity as they are ready for a globalised society. The focus on classic Euro-American and upper-caste nationalist writers in the existing curriculum reinforces a limited worldview that disregards social justice and does not promote a better understanding of the diverse identities that comprise Kerala's populace. This study is also pertinent to larger discussions about curriculum reform and decolonising education to better represent the many realities of students' lives. The study urges a change in teaching methods that go beyond tokenistic representation in order to fill these gaps. It emphasises how crucial it is to include "own voice" tales derived from actual experiences, like those pertaining to gender, caste, and regional inequalities. Students will get the critical thinking abilities needed to navigate and confront societal injustices as well as an appreciation of the complexity of their own cultural background with such an approach. This study is a significant step towards a more inclusive, socially conscious educational system because, in a world that is changing quickly, it is more crucial than ever to provide students the skills they need to comprehend the social fabric of their communities and the histories that have shaped them.

Critical Analysis

The Kerala Higher Secondary curriculum (2022–2025) offers a crucial opportunity to assess the English textbooks required for Plus One and Plus Two, especially with regard to literary diversity. Examining these textbooks critically with a focus on how well they reflect a variety of literary voices is the study's initial goal. Growing awareness of the need for an inclusive curriculum that captures the complexity of societies has emerged in recent years. This study aims to determine how much the combination of canonical literature and modern storylines found in the textbooks under consideration benefits pupils in Kerala, a state with a rich history and diverse population. Representing under-represented voices, especially Dalit, Adivasi, feminist, regional, and postcolonial viewpoints, is one of the study's main priorities. Historically, dominant cultural narratives have been prioritised in textbooks, frequently displacing those from marginalised populations. Although considerable progress has been made, a critical

examination of the existing textbooks shows that marginalised voices continue to occupy a secondary place. Therefore, it is vital to consider how, if at all, these viewpoints are included. For instance, there is still a dearth of representation in Dalit literature; this study aims to comprehend how these voices influence students' knowledge of societal injustices and caste-based oppression.

Examining the literary selections' educational effects on students' comprehension of identity, empathy, and social awareness is another important goal. Even if the current curriculum offers a wide range of literature, it could nonetheless place more emphasis on literary form and aesthetics than on the works' social and political contexts. The decisions made in curriculum design have an impact on students' capacity to interact with literature as a mirror of the world. This study investigates whether the chosen literature fosters critical self-reflection, empathy for under-represented groups, and an understanding of the complexity of social issues. The report also discusses the curriculum's omissions and inadequacies in relation to "own voice" narratives. These stories are based on the real-life experiences of members of marginalised communities, including those from indigenous, feminist, and lower-caste backgrounds. Since it restricts students' exposure to real and varied viewpoints, the lack of these voices in the curriculum is a serious problem. The purpose of the study is to find out if these voices are given space in the required texts or if they are still marginalised in the curriculum.

The study emphasises the need for a more inclusive and pluralistic curriculum by pointing out the representational gaps. Kerala needs a curriculum that reflects the state's multiethnic, multilingual, and socioeconomically diversified people. This objective is not often met by the curriculum as it is now, as evidenced by the chosen books. This study makes the case that a curriculum emphasising critical literary engagement can empower students by fostering a deeper understanding of caste, gender, class, and regional issues.

The study will also examine the textbooks' specific content, determining which texts prominently lack marginalised voices and which do. For example, it will take into account the writings of Dalit authors whose experiences contradict popular narratives like Kamala Das, who tackle feminist and postcolonial issues. Whether or not these authors' works are presented in a way that provides their perspectives the depth and respect they merit will be determined by this analysis.

The significance of regional literature in the curriculum will also be a focus of the study. There is an urgent need to incorporate additional works by regional authors who can provide insights into Kerala's social and cultural landscapes, even if English textbooks mostly cover works by authors from around the world. Students might gain a more personal and contextualised perspective of their society through literature written by state authors, including those from under-represented groups, which would foster a sense of identity and belonging.

The study will look into how caste, gender, and class issues are addressed in the assigned books. Works that interact with the lived experiences of women from varied socio-economic origins, for instance, should better depict the exploration of gender equality and the difficulties experienced by women in the modern social order.

Furthermore, incorporating various voices within a curriculum has significant educational ramifications. Teachers are essential in helping pupils understand and comprehend these literature. In order to promote an atmosphere of critical inquiry, the study will investigate how educators could be better prepared to lead conversations on touchy subjects including caste, gender, and regional inequality. This supports the study's goal of offering practical ways for teachers to adopt more inclusive teaching methods in addition to criticising the curriculum.

The research will analyse the curriculum's gaps and silences and offer suggestions for fixing them. A broader range of literature representing different writers, viewpoints, and experiences could make the curriculum more inclusive. Including supplemental texts, poetry, and short stories that emphasise the voices of Dalit, Adivasi, feminist, and regional writers could be one way to address this issue. Additionally, the study might suggest reorganising the curriculum to incorporate more recent works that address present social and political concerns, which would inspire students to recognise the value of literature in comprehending their surroundings.

The study aims to promote change rather than merely criticise. The study aims to support a pedagogical shift that honours the variety of voices that comprise Kerala's society by suggesting a more inclusive and pluralistic curriculum. The goal is to provide a curriculum that fosters empathy, compassion, and a profound regard for diversity by encouraging students to think critically about their place in society in addition to teaching literature.

The study concludes by attempting to critically examine the literary diversity seen in Kerala's Higher Secondary English textbooks for Plus One and Plus Two programs. By concentrating on the representation of under-represented voices, curriculum gaps, and the pedagogical consequences of the current choices, the study will draw attention to areas that require improvement. The ultimate objective is to make suggestions that result in a more socially conscious, pluralistic, and inclusive curriculum that uses literature to empower students.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their sincere gratitude to Sunrise University, Alwar, Rajasthan, for providing the academic environment and institutional support necessary to carry out this research. We are especially thankful to our Research Guide, Dr. Meenu, for her valuable guidance, insightful suggestions, and constant encouragement throughout the course of this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Works Cited

1. Government of Kerala, Directorate of Higher Secondary Education. *English Textbook for Plus One*. Kerala State Education Board, 2022.
2. Government of Kerala, Directorate of Higher Secondary Education. *English Textbook for Plus Two*. Kerala State Education Board, 2023.
3. Nivedita, S. "Revisiting Dalit Voices in Kerala's Literary Curriculum." *Kerala Journal of Education*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2021, pp. 102–118.
4. Radhakrishnan, A. "Caste, Class, and the Marginalized in Kerala Literature." *Indian Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2020, pp. 90–105.
5. Tharakan, T. A. "The Question of Regional Identity in Kerala's Literary Curriculum." *South Asian Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2022, pp. 85–102.