

EDITED BY  
P.K. SREEKUMAR



# SINS AND SHADOWS

CULTURE, COGNITION, CONSCIOUSNESS

The collection of essays titled *Sins and Shadows: Culture, Cognition, Consciousness* is an insightful consolidation of contemporary theoretical positions which have substantially defined academic and popular conceptual spaces. Prepared with a view to offering a firm foothold for the student and the researcher alike, these essays reveal inquisitive, perceptive and analytical minds, combined with exemplary critical acumen, behind them. There are refreshingly new research papers on adaptation, translation, ecology, genealogy, feminism, folktales, television and so on.

P.K. Sreekumar is assistant professor and research supervisor at Government College, Tripunithura, affiliated to Mahatama Gandhi University, Kottayam.

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## **Caste Hindu Commonsense and Popular Culture**

**Ajay S. Sekher**

Popular culture is often celebrated as democratic and multivocal, especially after the rise of cultural studies in the academy. But its problems and inherent contradictions are to be probed in the context of fascist mass hysteria, cultural nationalist mobilization, mindless majoritarian formations and jingoistic gimmicks. We have the critical engagement with popular culture from Bakhtin to Benjamin in the European context (Benjamin 1970). It is often seen as plural, polyphonic, dialogic and democratic by some critical thinkers in the field (Bakhtin 1981 1930). While it is true that popular cultural expressions form a partial vent and temporary release in the context of hegemony, it is equally true that it is often mediated and manipulated by the hegemonic culture and elitism in multiple ways, as in the Kodungallur Bharani (Kavu Teendal) for example. Here the temporary carnival is used to diffuse the repressive caste tensions in a violent society. They are strategically diverted against the Kavu or the Kanyakavu or the nun/bhikuni to capture and convert the sacred grove shrine or nunnery into a Brahmanical temple. All other forms of popular folk rituals have been thus systematically Hinduized and co-opted or rendered into a hegemonic Varnasrama mode establishing Brahmanic patriarchy in the caste Hindu society in Kerala especially after the Hinduization of Kavus in Kerala (Menon 1992).

But new sparks re-emerge and gradually the hegemonic culture appropriates them as well. This precisely is what happened to Teyyam in Malabar. The local heroes and heroines who come from basic avarna communities are thus reloaded into

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Edited by P.K. Sreekumar

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