IMPACT: International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature (IMPACT: IJRHAL)
ISSN (P): 2347-4564; ISSN (E): 2321-8878
Vol. 6, Issue 5, May 2018, 59-66
© Impact Journals

THE VOWS, EXORCISMS, AND MAGICAL FOODS: TACKLING THE FEAR AND ANXIETY REGARDING CHILDBIRTH AND CONCEPTION IN PRE MODERN KERALA

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Received: 22 Apr 2018 **Accepted:** 26 Apr 2018 **Published:** 12 May 2018

ABSTRACT

Conception and childbirth remained a mystery in Pre Modern Kerala. Grappling with these anxieties people resorted to devotion, magic, and exorcism to tackle delayed conceptions and miscarriage. The burning desire of couples comes across the literature with such intensity as they prayed to every deity possible. Delayed conceptions were believed to be due to the secret possession of the lady by celestial spirits. This also implies the need to have one partner at a time for better chances of a successful conception and delivery. Society made the expectant mother consume enchanted food items for an offspring of the desired gender.

***KEYWORDS**: Pre-Modern Kerala, History of Emotions, Conception, Maṇipravāḷam, Eitihyamāla, Vaṭakkan Pāṭṭukaḷ, Magic as Medicine*