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History, Representation and Ambivalence

All histories are textured with representations and all representations are historical.[1] The modernist obsession with objectivity and its firm conviction in the ability of the historian to find and expose truths in a sense represented an age of innocence in historical research. As historical sources can never represent a reality devoid of prevalent politics, researchers of history acknowledged the need to read such sources with an irreverent and rational mind. At the same time they often refuse to acknowledge the fact that the very act of writing the past is itself a political activity. 'Reading against the grain' in an effort to resurrect the hitherto subjugated knowledges is also not free from the impasses of representation and narratology even though the endeavour is visibly enfranchising. It is thus apparent that the means and forms of representation while 'emplotting' history render the transferability of reality an extremely mediated phenomenon. Representation becomes a mode of meaning production rather than an attempt at a true 're-enactment of the past'. While past reality is re-enacted into representations, the referentiality of representations would have to rely on historians and their spatio-temporal enmeshes. All efforts at writing the past are bound to confront this dilemma, this inherent ambivalence of capturing the reality and its impossibility—a neither-nor. The contemporary writers of academic history write the past with an increasing realisation of this inherent tension, often finding justifications for their individual endeavour in the politics they stand for.

[1] The framework of this short introduction is informed by the ideas of Hayden White, Homi Bhabha, Bernard Cohn and Nicholas Dirks.

The textual raw materials of history, devoid of academic compulsions of accuracy, are creations of diverse regimes of knowledge production and hence are always excess-representations. The immediate case that leaps to mind would be the colonial strategies of producing new forms of knowledge to serve the empire. The colonial 'cultural project of control' through diverse 'investigative modalities' produced huge quantities of texts, which subsequently became the single most important resource used for construing 'colonial histories'. These sources became central in the 'objectification' of the colony by producing 'fixed' knowledge, resulting in fabrication of otherness and thereby ensuring subjugation. Such representations fixed India as 'static, timeless and exotic', a place needing and longing for colonisation and correction. Social and cultural categories created and formalised in the course of this knowledge construction became the foundations of new and renewed identities, mobilisations and subjugations. However, as different from essentialist renderings, it is pointed out that colonial discourse was not free from inherent contradictions as exhibited by the coloniser's ambivalence in respect to his position towards the colonised 'other'. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that the attempt at constructing colonial knowledge was to formalise knowledge in order to ensure control with consent, and articulate the colonial difference in an attempt to establish an authentic self and consciousness. The colonial discourse also generated desire among the native elite to emerge 'authentic' through 'mimicry' and white imitation became the right conduit to authority. In the attempt of the 'black skin/white masks' or 'mimic men' to re-present or mimic, in search of 'a reformed and recognizable other', originality is lost and centrality decentred. Reiterating the 'the inner compatibility of empire and nation' the mimic man translated the colonial discourse of domination into their own life and relations. At the same time, this mimicry or re-presentation is mired in in-determinacy, a neither nor, an ambivalence. The liminality and ambivalence of the 'native modern' on the one hand allowed the manufacture of new authorities in native society and on the other hand, articulated difference from the colonial masters and

their own fellow beings. The textual/representational strategies of the empire often find resonance in those of the nation in their multiple manifestations. The fixing and unsettling of representations of the past and the present and their inherent ambivalence hold the articles of this issue of TAPASAM together. The intersecting concerns of History, Representation and Ambivalence inform these essays, less or more, but often from the minority position against the glory and idolization of dominant fixations.

Kerala's representation as a development model to the third world due to its remarkable social development is being contested from various quarters nowadays, particularly by bringing to the foreground the shades and flipsides of the acclaimed distinction. K.T. Rammohan's essay reads the popular drawings of Bara Bhaskaran, *Ente Keralam Rekhakal*, and explicates how they unsettle the dominant representation of the state in an effort to envisage a new visual history of Kerala. Through a unique visual language of strokes and letters Bara offers possibilities of exceeding the predominantly 'lock-in' situation and derivative demeanour of Kerala historiography. The present is a conspicuous presence in the frames of the past of Bara and it retrieves Kerala as a differently peopled space, with heterogeneous human and social environments. Rammohan argues that Bara's visual reconstruction of Kerala, upsetting stereotypes and visualising absences, de-totalises history and advances its plurality and discontinuity. Through a careful deployment of conventional and alternative resources of history and by privileging ordinary lives, the visuals re-enact the past from its minority locations and re-draw representations of modernity as progress in disagreement by taking a 'step back'. The article of Sujith Kumar Parayil, on the other hand, examines the way in which photography was used as a tool by the colonial anthropology to formalise native social groups into essential categories. As an objective tool of representation in the 'regime of truth', photographs were deployed to distinguish individual castes and tribes on the basis of their physiognomy, traditional practices and performances/rituals and occupation. In the process, the body became a cultural

sign, a performer's 'transcendent self' became the artefact of identity and many communities who were engaged in the same occupation were collapsed into single categories. Reading the photographs, Sujith also finds that the visual frame of the lower caste photographs were created by the colonial anthropologist by deploying their occupational tools and were shot in their subaltern physical environment. The camera allowed no space for the lower castes to 'imagine the image' and they confronted the new technology of representation in bewilderment, frozen with fear and wonder. The photographs of the elite, on the other hand, were less determined by superimposed visual frames; allowing them to confidently pose for the camera. Framed by established social knowledge, the colonial camera also opened its eye to native women with its sexual fantasies as the 'objects', as the voyeuristic ethnographic photographs exhibits. Sujith also underlines the differences between the photographs of the native anthropologists, the 'mimic men', and their colonial counterparts. While native anthropologists were open to the signifiers of change, the colonial gaze captured the native society as static and ahistorical. The double vision and ambivalence of the colonial camera could be seen in its limitation in manoeuvring an ideal, considered visual frame, as the social semiotics of the photographed space too is unwittingly captured.

The colonial period also witnessed the formalisation of landscapes and relegation of certain communities as criminals and bandits, as addressed in the contributions of Amruth M and Santhosh Abraham respectively. Amruth's article engages with the fixation of native landscape into forests and non-forests and a further division of the former into reserved forests and game sanctuaries in the princely state of Travancore, with the support of a discourse of desiccation. The master discourse of modern forestry as articulated by colonialism became fitting to the princely states too, partly due to colonial control and partly due to the former's perceived suitability to their own economic interests. The institutionalisation of the forest under colonialism as a field of power and

a new order itself could be seen to be ensnared in ambivalence as it aimed at extracting timber uninterrupted on the one hand and sought to preserve the forests for the benefit of the present as well as the future on the other. Further, the sustained yield principle was not seen as antithetical to hunting for amusement and as Amruth emphasises preservation in that sense is just extraction postponed. The instituting of game sanctuaries as a sanctified wild space represented an attempt to ensure a sustained supply of animals for sport hunting by elites, by proscribing native subsistence hunting. Informed by the hunting narratives from across the empire and under pressure from colonial planters, the Travancore government established game sanctuaries and reconstituted wilderness as a space for white and masculine conquest. Conservation for conservation's sake was never the guiding principle, although game sanctuaries became a handy tool in state diplomacy and hospitality. Santhosh Abraham in his essay explicates the colonial strategy of de-legitimising local resistances by representing/fixing the resistive groups as criminals and bandits. Colonial criminal anthropology, with the aid of intersecting theories of legality, race and science constructed its criminal others for the sustenance of colonialism. He examines the story of Mappilas of Malabar, who defied the British decision to restore the Hindu chieftains and landlords due to their prior experience of *janmi* oppression. Santhosh argues that the failure of British conciliatory measures led the war to the domain of representation. Contrary to this, the Nairs who had been also initially represented as 'criminals', were understandably won over by the British reconciliations. The incidents in which Mappilas confronted the British under the leadership of chieftains like Unni Musa (who was reportedly once won over, but later took the company of Pazhassi Raja against the British) were used to create the administrative category of *Jungle Mappilas*, calling forth governmental measures of rectification by annihilation. The history of colonial representations of Mappilas began with those of the Jungle *Mappilas* as embodiments of criminality and banditry, and became definitive in the making of subsequent

colonial representations of Mappilas as a community. Such fictions also restated the British right to rule the natives with their superior administration and rule of law.

White mythologies of race and criminality largely fashioned the vision of the 'native modern' as Sabitha. T.P reiterates in her article by reading the travel writings of S.K. Pottekkat, one of the widely read writers in Malayalam. Pottekkat's visit to Africa for the 'very act of seeing it', but with the eye of a Eurocentric anthropologist, allows him to distinguish himself as different from the 'objects' he had seen in the 'dark continent'. The differences of 'time' and 'civilization' are articulated in terms of the bad odour emanating from the 'Negro' bodies, their semi-nakedness, shameless dance forms and criminality. Pottekkat make friendships mostly with whites and Indians and takes pleasure in 'seeing' Africa from his superior subject position as an 'Indian master'. Sabitha also foregrounds Pottekkat's internalisation of the notion of racial purity as he was uncomfortable at seeing Indians undergoing miscegenation. His determined and parochial Malayalee gaze re-places objects, animals and places in Africa in comparison to those in Kerala. The same Victorian gaze of Pottekkat that see the obscenities of African life, also resorts to detailed descriptions of the female body in voyeuristic detail. The same intellect that see the black oppression at the hands of the whites overlooks the exploitations by Indians and elaborates on problems faced by Indians in Africa. Such ambivalences within the mimic man and his preset vision have been reinforced by his camera, and as Sabitha argues, created a fictitious Africa with a 'total absence of black'. Sharmila Sreekumar's article, on the other hand, addresses the limits of the representational strategies of 'pennezhuthu', a recent literary intervention in Malayalam to centre experiences of femininity. She reads Sara Joseph's short story 'Ee Udal Enne Chuzhumbol', which is a re-reading of a rape-plot in Methil Radhakrishnan's story 'Udal Oru Chuzhnila' through the life of one of its women readers. Informed by the feminist political debates in the aftermath of Mathura judgement, Sara

Joseph's story attempts at a feminist 'misreading', to problematise the internalisation of rape in Methil's story fashioned by the male gaze. Sara Joseph's protagonist 'resists the narrative's invitation into the ambivalence of violence and erotics' and refuses to conform to the pre-written master representation. Rape in the feminist re-telling is another episode in the pervasive violence around which the woman subject feels dis-enfranchised from her body and thus is unable to consent or protest. This is one of the limitations/dilemmas inherent in the feminist re-reading – the refusal of agency and fixing women as already raped or open to be raped. In Joseph's story, the raped woman has no language to articulate her disenchantment and has to rely on the feminist narrator. Woman as a homogeneous category, gender as a radical man-woman binary and the necessity of being immobile to present herself as a cogent victim of rape remain other sites of mimicking. Moreover, the feminist narrator assumes the role of the chief pedagogue, who mobilises a community of critical readers, overlooking the issues of signification and uncritical of the feminist 'real'.

Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella bring forth a live experience of complementarity between religion and economic change from Kozhikode, upsetting the stereotypical global representations of Islam and Muslims. The material context that enabled newer ways in which religion is re-imagined is the dwindling traditional bazaar economy and the emergence of a 'new economy', a result largely of economic liberalisation and remittance flows from the Middle East. The Osellas argue that in contrast to the pessimistic appraisals of the detrimental effects of globalisation or militant labour unionism, the decline of the bazaar reveals as many continuities as breaks and as much diversification as decline. The change has been shored up by a public discourse of competition with other communities through modern education, employment, business and the resources from the Gulf becoming a great reinforcement, in particular. Efforts to reform religious practices is informed and necessitated by a wider project of community transformation and hence the crisis of the bazaar is

not only economic but also moral. The material transformation associated with the 'new economy', beckons new moralities alien to the bazaar and its capital mobilisation, trade practices and sociality, yet go together with community and individual aspiration of good life and progress. The new discourse in favour of change with hard work, ambition and conjugality at its centre also frames wasting new economic opportunities as unislamic and re-articulates the sin of usury in such a way as to enable capital mobilisation through borrowing. The drawing together of seemingly different orientations of reformist Islam and neo-liberal capitalism and the way in which Islam lives in and re-invents itself in specific contexts runs in contradiction with the attempts to primordialise religion and reduce the community to absolute representations.

Rajesh Komath and Rakkee Thimothy take us through their ethnographical research among the youth in northern Kerala to the contradictions between the idea and experience of modernity. The paper reveals that the universal notions of enlightenment modernity such as secular reasoning, rationality and free individuals get fractured afterlives in different local settings. The tension between what is perceived as ideal and what is practiced is underwritten by varied ambivalences as the youth oscillate between different ideological worlds. The opposition to globalization do not prevent them from using its objects or taking its benefits. They use Marxist idiom and are part of its associations but practice rituals and religious rites. Caste and class still wield a strong influence on educational and employment choices and education does not act to raise questions about social/familial norms. Globalisation is seen bringing people closer, but at the same time drives them away from home for employment. Though lower caste youth find reservation handy for getting jobs, it is also experienced as a mechanism of creating caste hatred and fixing them in subordination. Though stated to be broadminded with regard to caste, the youth prefer to marry from the same caste in order to 'ensure smooth family relations'. Rajesh and Rakkee also point out that the class preference in marriage intersects with caste and geographic positioning. Education restricts the ability of dalit women in finding marriage partners from their community with similar educational/class standing. The ambivalent present also fractures the idea of univocal representations and primordial belongings.

The cultural domain of representations is indeed a contested terrain with diverse interests ramming each other. It could be unsettling as much as settling and reifying. Ambivalence in 'modern' representations may be read in multiple ways- an inherent tension within discourse formation, an incomplete modernity or a reflexive/corrective/resistive modernisation. However, even reflexive modernisation is embedded as the acceptability it carries could not be taken beyond the time/space/power dynamics of its production. History itself could be fictionalised by inter-meshing myths, history and imagination, as Scaria Zacharia points out by reading the T.D. Ramakrishnan's popular novel *Francis Ittycora*. An aura of history is created in narration and the emphasis is on 'assemblage' of parallel representations as against texturing continuities of the past. The past is here a tool and emblematic of the concerns of the present, opening up possibilities of numerous (mis)readings in the domain of reception, with their own ambivalences, invalidating the authorial meaning. We hope that the representations/articles in this issue of TAPASAM of the past and present, pre-empting the future, will have their own ambivalences as much as the possibilities of 'misreading'- a continuing resistance to representations.

V.J. Varghese
Issue Editor

Drawing the Absences, Erasing the Stereotypes

Bara Bhaskaran's visual history of Kerala

K.T. Rammohan

Bara Bhaskaran's Ente Keralam Rekhakal (My Kerala: Lines/Documents) deploys drawings and texts based on archival material and ethnographic fieldwork to present a visual history of Kerala. The work captures Kerala life at its social depths and weaves together a range of sites, activities, processes, actors and attitudes.

The important advances in the historiography of modern South Asia — as revealed in themes and perspectives, sources and methods — occurring from at least the early 1980s have not quite reached its south-west point, Kerala. There are exceptions, yet set against the plethora of studies, inconsiderable. The two 'official' schools of reform thought – of Marxism and of caste-based social movements – have thrust Kerala historiography in a 'lock-in'. Alternative ways of viewing the past are condemned as fragmenting the social reality and denied space. Importantly, Bara Bhaskaran evades the evolutionist linearity of the 'official' narratives as also of their hybrid versions. Discarding the dominant grand narratives enables him to recover — to say after Ranajit Guha — "the small drama and the fine details of social existence", which are largely missing in the available historiography of modern Kerala. Bara's work is of significance considering that even the village and local histories of the region — burgeoning under state-sponsorship since the late 1990s – tend to be derivative discourses of the grand narratives.

Bara advances his narrative through a series of frames, each frame comprising a drawing and a text. While the drawings are chosen from his travel sketch-book, the texts are constructed from an assortment of historical sources and from ethnographic observations, his own as well as those of others. The relationship between the drawing and the text is not fixed. At certain points the text anchors the drawing, while at others it is the drawing that anchors the text. Mostly, these are as if by default, because, apparently at least, the text is not conceived to support/supplement the drawing; nor is the drawing deployed to illustrate the text. Also, there are a few texts without drawings as also drawings without texts. Mostly the text stands on its own, sometimes it is juxtaposed against the drawing. Yet even while retaining separate identities, the drawing and the text combine to create a complex, composite whole.

The Text – that is, drawing and text – signifies Critical thinking. This thinking assumes a language of strokes and words, at once humane and ironic. It fills the many absences in the available understanding of Kerala, and by doing so, erases at least some of its stereotypes. Bara engages with the lived experiences of people, especially at the lower depths of society. In doing so, he unravels events and actors hitherto dimly recognised; artefacts unattended; sites missed; technologies forgotten; names ignored; emotions suppressed; practices undocumented; and inter-connections lost sight of. Foremost in the Text, perhaps, are the portraits. The subjects include tribals and fishers; sex-workers, male and female; circus girls and nuns; god-women and domestics; people of different castes, high and low, as also outcastes; celebrity artists and young students of art; nomads and temple servants; cops and florists; prosperous entrepreneurs and struggling primary teachers; potters and priests; doctoral scholars and football players; immigrant traders and trade union activists; and, cobblers, woodcutters, cooks, card players, blacksmiths, tailors, witch-doctors. The Text also depicts a range of processes: from de-industrialisation of textiles to proto-industrialisation of new Gods; mechanisation of agriculture to human migration; proselytisation to urbanisation; reclamation of rice-fields to global marketing of traditional art forms. Varied sites — pickle factories and 'parallel' colleges; railway

toilets and rubber plantations; devotional healing centres and public offices; libraries and movie studios; post offices and fishing harbours; shrines and grocery stores; cemeteries and printing presses; slave markets and timber yards; beauty parlours and booze shops; old-age homes and veda schools; police camps and mental asylums — find a place. So do varied economic activities: trading in rice and vegetables, river sand mining, oil-pressing, tile-making, cashew kernel separation, inland water transport, beedi-rolling, book-binding and fish processing. There are townscapes, bridges, dams, cave temples, urban slums, city tanks, monasteries, statues, warehouses, forts, beaches, tribal settlement colonies, cinema-houses, artisans' workshops, fish markets, war memorials, martyr columns, markets, palaces and monstrous houses of the neo-rich. Also recovered through drawings and texts are other products of human imagination, attitude, and labour: tools of daily use, weapons, steam locomotives, movie studio equipment and paper mills of the old; and, motorised fishing canoes, plastic sheet hedges, mortuaries and mechanised kitchens of new times. Process, activity, site, or tool, of the past or of the present, whichever depicted, is invariably a peopled space – at least their shadows remain as in statues and cemeteries.

Bara's visual reconstruction of Kerala is enabled by varied sources: archaeological inscriptions, palm-leaf and paper records, gazetteers, geographical and statistical surveys, government orders, notifications, land records, representations to government, assembly proceedings, school textbooks, missionary pamphlets, journals, newspaper reports and editorials, early travelogues, biographies and autobiographies, diaries, will, correspondence, rent receipts, ballads, local myths, fiction, advertisements, handbills, photographs, old drawings and posters. These are not however deployed as absolute evidences of scientific history as wont of empiricist historiography. Mostly, these are considered as markers of certain patterns of the past. Some of these are used as visual artefacts to give a feel of the past.

The Text does not treat the past in isolation from the present. Field interviews and observations connect the past with the present. The forests of Wynad thus emerge as a site of twin-murders by the state. In 1805, Pazhassi, the king, fell to colonial bullets after putting up a stiff resistance with the help of local chieftains and tribals. About 165 years later, in the same forests, Varghese, the militant Communist who spearheaded the land struggles of the tribals and the poor, was shot dead by the post-colonial state. Bara's Text depicts the slave market of old Wynad as well as the current recruitment of tribals as captive labour in the coffee plantations.

There is an overwhelming presence of children, women and the poor in Bara's visual history. Among the social groups prominently figuring in his Text are tribals, fishers, lower castes and outcastes and workers in traditional industries. Rightly, Bara does not privilege a closed view of the subaltern. In a society of high unemployment of the educated as Kerala, job-seekers and those occupying lowly positions that fall short of their educational qualifications also belong to the disadvantaged class. Bara draws a temple in southern Kerala that has all over its wall job-wishes written in sandal paste by devotees. While each of these groups – tribals, fishers, workers in the unorganised sector and the like – considered as developmental categories, are vulnerable sections, they are spirited individuals as Bara's portraits and texts bring out. By centralising the vulnerable, yet emphasising their heterogeneity, Bara

erases the 'typical Keralite' — the urban, educated, employed, upper caste male, often with a feudal background – as exemplified in many writings and movies on Kerala. He breaks the imagined geography of a homogeneous Kerala to reveal the several human environments within, which contrast, contest and contradict. By highlighting the spirited individual and by hinting at how the state and the social relations of caste and class produce and reproduce the vulnerable, Bara militantly refuses space for apolitical, sentimal viewing of their vulnerability.

Bara's perspective is fascinatingly interdisciplinary. It is shaped at the interstices of social history, critical anthropology, human geography, and development studies. Consider, for instance, his depiction of a state-owned temple within the forests. For Bara, this is not a one-dimensional devotional space. It is an intensely political space – as David Harvey puts it — "filled with ideologies", especially of accumulation. Bara draws the palace of the local king. An eighteenth century document relating to the pledge of temple receipts is framed alongside. Another drawing foregrounds the temple in the cleared forests. Bara then proceeds to describe, in own words, the temple and its environ:

> Situated at 4135 feet above sea-level. Extending over 338.7 acres of forestland and comprising 18 hills. The chill of Pamba river. Music of the jungle. Exotic legends. Religions walk hand-in-hand. Myth and Reality that would make DD Kosambi sit up. Tiger habitat. Tiger milk. 'Holy Lights'. Studios for pilgrims — to have snapshots of riding tigers in the manner of their deity. Forest protection laws. Twenty-two provisional judgements. High priests. State Minister. Auctions every season. Pilgrims relieve themselves on the wayside. Notice boards in four languages all along the way prohibiting this.

The deity is believed to have rode tigers. Bara's next frame opens up the interior of a makeshift photographic studio with its wooden tigers. The description:

> New Sapphire studio: Proprietor, Mahin Tuckalay. Through the past 32 years Mahin has been operating studios in Sabarimala during the pilgrim season. In Pamba and Erumeli.

> This year he has opened five studios in Erumeli alone — India studio, Sapphire, New Sapphire, Sappha, and Appolo. The government charges him a rent of Rs. Four lakhs for a season of 55 days. That would seriously cut into profit. Sites leased out by others are cheaper. The rent is never more than Rs. Half a lakh. Mahin employs assistants from Tamil Nadu to run the studios. Each studio employs 15 to 20 assistants. Makes a profit of Rs. Eight to Nine lakhs from each studio. Praise the Lord!

A third frame shows one of the many wayside restaurants that mushroom during the pilgrim season:

> These restaurants do not bat a lid through the entire season. These do not bathe. Nor do these brush teeth. These have no space even for the flies to sit on. Lord save us!

Elsewhere, Bara depicts a prosperous midland town flush with cash remittances from migrants abroad and overwhelmingly filled with the elderly because of the first generation migrants returning home and the next generation leaving. Bara begins with an aerial view of the town congested with mostly new buildings, including churches. A pointed text alongside:

> This town has branches of 35 banks, Indian and foreign; 13 travel agencies: Air-India, Orion, Bharat, International, Abeys, Asiana, Blue-bird, City, Cosmic, Fatima, Hindustan, Indo-foreign and others; 14 auditoria; 36 beauty parlours; 46 video studios; 20 old-age homes; seats of 10 Christian sects – Marthoma, Orthodox, Malankara Catholica, Syro Malabar, Canaanites, and CSI Evangelical among others; 15 mortuaries of which six are mobile mortuaries; 21 driving schools; 48 hospitals; 38 devotional music bands.

Even without being explicit, the inter-connections are in place. The town's demographic profile with preponderance of the elderly influences not only the number of hospitals and old-age homes but also the number of music bands and video studios. Music bands accompany funeral processions; mortuaries allow preserving the body for weeks together till the migrant offsprings arrive; and if they fail to arrive, they may watch videos of the funeral.

The state has a strong but often invisible presence in Bara's Text. The failure of the state is revealed in the faces and bodies that Bara portrays. There are also a few direct references — like those relating to a tribal settlement colony that is devoid of drinking water, electricity, and proper housing despite lakhs of rupees having been spent as per official records. Development project is the civilising mission of current times. Bara cites from the Tribal Plan statement of the local panchayath:

> It is proposed to build a kiosk in the settlement and provide a television for the residents who are culturally very backward so that they may hear and view news and news channels.

The drawings depict their huts, implements, pet owl, hounds, woman's dress, alcohol bottles, forest herbs, and a picture of Ambedkar — the icon of Dalit resurgence — hung on the wall. Bara portrays children, women, and men of the settlement, with biographical profiles — mostly in the words of the portrayed, ensuring that they speak rather than be spoken for.

The state aesthetics of development is questioned literally too. Of the state-initiated eco-tourism project on a forest fringe, Bara notes and draws:

> The biggest eco-tourism project in Asia. There are twenty statues built of cement and steel. Cement and steel viewed on its own would not be all that ugly.

Besides erasing the 'typical Keralite', Bara's strokes and words erase the 'exotic Kerala' as enshrined in chants like 'India's Yenan', 'Model of Development', and 'God's Own Country'. Of the rayons factory – set up by the Birlas, the big Indian corporate house, upon

invitation by the first Communist government of Kerala in 1957 – Bara notes and draws:

> Employment of 30000 people – mostly tribals who used bamboo to make multivarious products for self-consumption and for livelihood – were extinguished to create an industrial workforce of 3000 persons. With toxics emptied into the river, the factory of 3000 workers snuffed out the lives of 30000 fishes.

Elsewhere, Bara points to an official notice in a tea-estate:

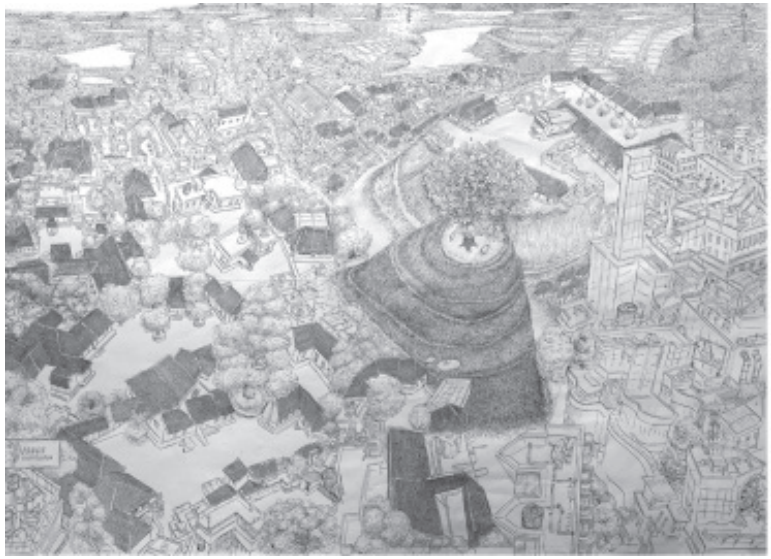
> It has come to the attention of the management that workers persistently pester the estate doctor for recommendations for leave on medical grounds and for advanced medical treatment. Workers should stop this practice forthwith.
>
> Copy to: 1. All trade-unions 2. Commissioner of Labour 3. District Labour Office 4. Plantation Labour Office, Government of Kerala 5. Group Officer, Sholayar.

At its core, Bara's Text unseats dominant moral authority and claims to purity, whether expressed by the state, the Brahmans, the Communists, the Christian healers, whoever. This he does mostly suggestively, but at times the course is vehemently direct. The following would illustrate the latter, direct mode. The text begins with a quote from a preface by a leading Kerala poet (a Brahman) to a book published in 2000:

> Social scientists should not miss the fact that even to this day the Brahman community has not engendered a single murderer.

Bara follows up with a counter-point: a quote from a letter dating back nearly 150 years, written by the Dewan (chief executive officer of a princely state) of Travancore to the British Resident in 1871, protesting against capital punishment accorded to three Brahmans facing the charge of murder.

Referring to the present again, the Text indicates a court judgement delivered in 1997 implicating a middle-aged Brahman in the murder of a Christian woman aged 83. The judgement was delivered three years before the poet wrote the preface and had been widely



covered in the media especially since the slain lady was the mother of a popular actress.

Bara need not utter further on the celebrity-poet who asserts that no Brahman ever committed murder. So, he concludes with 'respect': *ignorance is the halo of celebrities.*

Bara's humour is not at the expense of history; it advances history. He bids farewell to the kind of 'total history' that numerically dominates representations of Kerala's past. His Text contests the notion of evolutionary continuity in history. History in both senses of the term; the past and writing on the past. It de-totalises the assumed, objective, scientific history by advancing plural, discontinuous, micro histories. Bara's Text avoids 'explaining' the past through easily assumed common denominators and simple causation — characteristic of most of the available histories of Kerala. Differently, the Text shows that past may be varyingly interpreted, but not scientifically 'explained'. It recognises the possibility of the uncertain in both the past and our knowledge of the past. Through successive, yet interrupted frames, comprising collages of documents and drawings, many of these portraits, Bara yields a visual-historical narrative that refreshingly re-presents the past and one which is

perfectly in sync with the current understanding of history and of art — which views historical and aesthetic meaning as unstable, contextual, relational, and provisional.

Bara's visual history of Kerala is being published through the past eight years and is continuing in the pages of *Bhashaposhini* monthly — a literary journal in Malayalam with a history dating back over 100 years.

Note: We are thankful to Bara Bhaskaran for providing the drawings used in this article. - *Tapasam*

Visuality of Ethnography: Texts and Contexts

Sujith Kumar Parayil

This paper reads a set of anthropological/ethnographic photographs of colonial Kerala and reveals the way in which they mediated the practices of inventing 'other'. It is found that photographs captured certain social realities that were largely outside the concern of colonial anthropological and photographical categorisation of castes and tribes. Alongside highlighting the socialness of the photographs, the paper argues that these photographs of the late 19th and early 20th century were instrumental in creating a discourse of ethnography of different castes and tribes, leading in turn to the creation of cultural tropes/stereotypes. Photography identified and differentiated social signs, occupations, rituals and traditions in order to establish caste as a basis for categorizing population. Closely following this, it is also argued that the visulaities of Kerala society in the colonial period find a historical continuity in the subsequent representations.

The first part of the essay examines the enduring relation between photography and anthropology. Photographs give a visual objectivity and scientific authenticity to substantiate anthropological 'facts.' This is followed by an analysis of various theoretical premises and methodologies that provided the paradigm within which colonial anthropology produced knowledge. The next section will read a set of anthropological/ethnographic photographs, which are categorised here into four genres such as anthropometric, ritual and performance, occupational, and voyeuristic photographs. The dense cultural tropes and social reflectivity of the

subjects in these photographs are examined. This would reveal an alternative way of understanding the 'socialness' of the ethnographic/anthropological photographs, different from the idealised cultural 'types' of castes and tribes constructed through the practice of colonial anthropology. The last part of the paper by reviewing some of the photographs will argue that the historical consciousness of the photographed subjects have been expressed through the social semiotics deployed. I will also argue that these ethnographic constructions of body became a legitimated representational vocabulary to envisage the identity of different communities. Other visual mediums reproduce such typified ethnographic body as cultural visibility.

Anthropological Photography

Anthropology in Kerala as well as in India is organically linked to the project of colonization. Anthropology and ethnography became an integral part of the operational tools of colonialism just like census operations and the massive attempts at gathering statistical data on various aspects of life and conditions in India (see Metcalf 1998; Dirks 2001; Cohn 2000). Anthropological studies both in India and elsewhere began to employ photography in a substantial manner in the latter half of 19th and early 20th century (see Silverstar, et al 2001). In this context, photographs have served as important symbolic objects indicative of the social act of gathering data in order to define human 'races' in terms of castes, tribes and culture. This subsequently led to the emergence of the distinct field of visual anthropology (Morphy and Banks 1999: 1-3). I would like to locate this paper within this context, particularly focusing on how photographs were used as cultural artefacts to represent the typicality of caste and tribes in the 19th and early 20th century Kerala, functioning both as a mode of description and a means of domination.

The photographic record of castes and tribes in India was part of a positivist system of classification, which mainly focused on the physical characteristics of the subject, as an index of its cultural and social characteristic. These photographs were assumed to reflect reality and 'empirical truth.' This fostered the use of the photographic image as primary data by anthropologists of this

period (sketches, lithography and photography dominated in the case of ethnographic narrations) as evidence to enhance the scientific and objective credibility of their accounts. The investigation here primarily focuses on Edger Thurston's *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (1909) which uses photographs extensively.[2] I also examine some other works, such as Fred Fawcett's *Nambutiris: Notes on some of the People of Malabar* (1900), L. K Anantha Krishna Iyer's *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin,* (1909, III Volumes), L. A Krishna Iyer's *The Travancore Castes and Tribes* (1937, Volume I), C. Gopalan Nair's *Wynad: Its People and Traditions* (1911) and L. K Anantha Krishna Iyer's *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians* (1926) in order to understand how they characterize the castes and tribes of Kerala and the way in which photographic representation valorises the categories and carries the social and cultural realm of the people.

Anthropology as a discipline includes within itself acts of representation that serve the ends of cultural translation and interpretation (Morphy and Banks 1999: 3). It involves the representation of a culture or a segment of society to an audience of anthropologists belonging to different cultural backgrounds (Scherer 1990: 141). While this may be true today, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the audience was perhaps more homogeneous. Contextually, it can be said that the ethnographer/photographer have an audience in mind.[3] Hence the nature of the photography is determined not only by the anthropologist/photographer but by the audience as well (Harris 2001: 23; Jenkin 1994: 137). Anthropological photography, in its detailing and documenting of ethnographic images, is mainly constructed for the gaze of the subject of anthropology. It goes along with the colonial effort to categorize, define, dominate and sometime invent a significant 'other' (Scherer 1990: 133). The colonial discourse that elaborates a discourse of the other is precisely the 'other scene' of this 19th century desire for an 'authentic historical consciousness' with an embedded notion of the 'civilizing mission' or 'white man's burden.' Ethno-historic photographs were used as visual evidence accompanying the textual classifications of different castes and tribes, their physical characteristics and culture in the project of colonial anthropology in India. In the surveys and studies of Thurston and Fawcett, photographs occupy the position of the

ultimate proof of objective knowledge. This idea was fundamental to the positivist re-organization of knowledge and was informed by the principles of taxonomy and classification derived from biology (Edwards 1990: 239; Dirks 2001: 196). Apart from this, photographs also served to validate the theory of comparative racial evolution.

Framescape 1:[4] The Anthropologist/Photographer

Before turning to the photographs, it is important to see the methodology adopted by the colonial anthropologists in their constructions of 'otherness.' It is here that the comparative frame emerges, based on a comparison between the West and the East. The Victorian anthropological imagination had its genesis in the project of constructing racial types for African and other aboriginal tribes (see Cohn 2000: 200-203; Parman 1998:1-4). The emergence of Victorian anthropology that created and presented the tribal communities in Africa as 'stereotypes' is organically linked with the construction of similar racial 'types' elsewhere.[5] Thus, a theory of human culture based on identification of types and measurement of racial variation was central to Victorian anthropological understanding. It was on the basis of material aspects of this model that culture was defined and classified. Thurston and Fawcett studied the castes and tribes of South India in comparison with the African tribes and European races. In principle, this eventually led to the division of human societies into two major divisions- 'Ulotrichi' and 'Leiotrichi'- on the basis of colour of the skin, along with colour and length of hair, and the anthropometric measurements of nose, skull, jaws that ascribed a common origin to many of these human races. This was one of the principal features of anthropometric photography in India. Thurston, for instance, deploys various racial theories while juxtaposing South Indian tribes and castes with African and European tribes and races.[6]

He goes on to identify several analogies about the origin of Dravidians in India and arrive at a conclusion by asserting Huxley's point that "there is much that speaks in favour of the view that the Australians and Dravidians, sprang from a common main branch of human race"(Huxley cited in Thurston, Vol.1, xxxi). Through this discourse of comparison, Thurston tries to points out the similarities that the castes and tribes of South India have with the

Australoids of the Leiotrich race. At this point, Thurston condenses the existing racial theories that suggest the similarities between Dravidians of India and the African as well as Australian aborigines. These theories found a parallel origin of the tribes and castes of India with those of European tribes in the context of the argument that the castes and tribes (Dravidians) of South India belong to the great Caucasian family and by virtue of that they were related to the Europeans (ibid: xxxv). Here Thurston also bring to our attention the other genre of racial theories which contextualise the agreements or disagreements about the common origin of the human races.

While contextualising the existing theories, Thurston does not show any disagreement with them. What is important is to note that he has been dealing with theories of race, and religion in his attempt to find an appropriate slot within which he could place the people he was studying. He tried to make his ethnographic survey and classification of south Indian castes and tribes with biological and scientific accuracy. At the same time, the totality of language, nature of implements and tools including weapons, and anthropometric analysis of the features of skulls, hairs and nasal indexes, as well as his efforts to find commonality between his familiar religion of Christianity and Hinduism, reveal the fact that his work comes out from the generalised textual knowledge of the European anthropological imaginations where the comparative paradigm was prominent.

His ethnographic project of identification and measurement of castes and tribes shows that South India becomes a testing ground for various racial anthropological theories. When he was appointed as a superintendent of ethnography in 1901, the primary task entrusted to him was to 'record the manners and customs and physical characters' of the tribes and castes of south India (Thurston 1909 vol.1, *preface*). The first one is accomplished through the detailed narrations of the rituals and customary practices of different ethnic 'types' as well as the collection of the phonographic record of tribal music and songs. The second one, the 'physical character' of natives, were recorded and classified through rigorous anthropometric survey where each part of the body came

under measurement tools. In both methods Thurston presupposed several insights of the existing domain of the classificatory theory, where the comparison between the different racial type, culture and religion occupied prominent position.

Eurocentric generalizations in the colonial anthropological literature were subscribed to by the native anthropologists also in their writings on the castes and communities in South India. For instance, when L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer traced the origins and customs of the *Kadar* hill tribe, he merged his accounts with the dominant European model that fostered the genesis of human society in the common racial origins of all human beings. He quoted colonial anthropologists like A. H. Keane and Topinard and pointed out that "to the primitive groups above referred to belong Malayans, Kadars, Ulladans, Eravallens, Paniyans and many other tribes, who, though speaking the Dravidian dialects, are not full-blooded Dravidian; but represent different Negrito, Kolerian, Dravidian and Aryan blends" (Iyer 1909: 2). The idea of common racial origins was used to think about the human society which shows the spread of anthropological reasoning. However, the attempt here is not to prove the wrongness of the model of colonial anthropologists but rather to point out the fact that the discussion takes such a form of the established theoretical insights. Although indigenous anthropologists never entirely discarded the dominant preoccupations of anthropology, unlike Europeans like Thurston and Fawcett, they did not discuss the genealogy of races and types extensively, but mentioned it in passing. In other words, L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer's and L.A Krishna Iyer's works on castes and tribes of Kerala mainly used ethnological and sociological descriptions, rather than physical or somatic. They had certain other distinguishing features too, though were generated within a colonial anthropological paradigm. For instance, their works give more focus on the everyday activities of the communities. While colonial anthropologists characterized these communities as static ahistorical entities, impervious to contemporary historical consciousness, their native counterparts tried to take into account historical-social institutions such as marriage, caste-determined customs and traditions, and religious practices and the changes that occurred in tune with the times.

It is also significant to note that the colonial anthropological representations of castes and tribes, including those of Thurston, are closely interwoven with the ideas of orientalist history. This particular knowledge emerges through the translation, interpretation and understanding of other cultures through the prism of an available religious knowledge which evolves through hierarchical processes.[7] Thus various 'castes' such as *Tiyan, Nair, Nambutiri, Ezhavan, Valan, Mukkavas,* are said to have emerged within the structure of Hinduism on the basis of the stories of different communities about their upper caste Hindu lineages.[8] Several examples can be found in Thurston of this assertion of the 'Hindu' origin of each 'caste' and 'tribe.' Here he normativizes 'caste' as a distinguishing feature of Kerala society and culture.

As Pinney shows (1990: 277) this analytical model was a prominent feature of the colonial anthropological project, which helped Thurston and Fawcett to mould their anthropometric understanding of South Indian, following the conventions of anthropometry as nothing other than the Mediterranean or Australian (see photograph I). Thurston's analysis and comparison of different skulls will shed light on this:

> Tamil skull.– In Plate VI [here Fig 2] is representated the skull of a Tamil man [caste unknown], who died some time ago in the Madras hospital, which recalls to mind Huxley's inclusion of the Dravidians in the Australoid group of the Leiotrichi [with smooth hair] "with dark skin, hair, and eyes, wavy black hair, and eminently long, prognathous skulls with well-developed brow ridges, who are found in Australia and in the Dekhan" [i.e., Southern India]. (Thurston 1900: 90)

By describing South Indians as anthropometrically close to Mediterranean or Australian, it can be argued that, Thurston is engaged in 'doing science' irrespective of its rightness or wrongness. In the extended arguments of the passage quoted here one can identify the particular usage of photography to debate and come to some conclusion about existing theories of race as a biological concept.

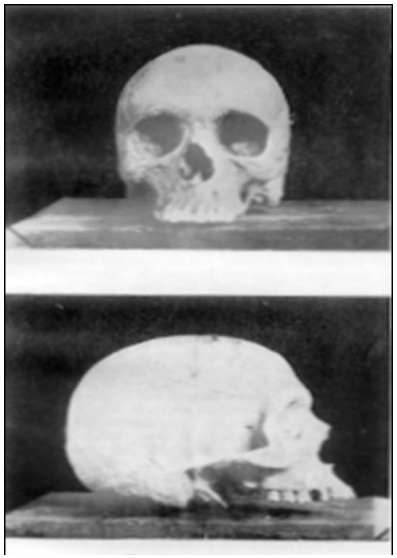
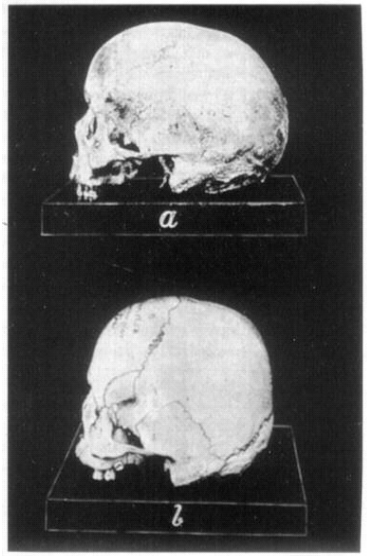


Fig 1: a. Caption: European skull Fig 2: Caption: Tamil skull

ı: Hindu skull



Thurston, *Castes and Tribes in Southern India,* 1909,

Thurston, Miscellanea, in Fawcett, *Nambutiris*, 1900.

photographic or anthropological construction of the
ı can only be understood within the much larger
ıal/ethnographic representation of the whole of South
what is called "imaginative geography" of the region
76). The photographs here show that a European
exhibit the absence of convexity of the back of the
du skull'. The European skull is with a curve gradu-
om the top of the head towards the occipital region
ol.1, xlvi). Fig1 juxtaposes two photographs of skulls,
l one "European." The former is further qualified as
d to a man/woman of the Linga Banajiga caste.
Thurston proceeds on the basis of this evidence of the shape of the skull to give an anatomical profile of the caste, which is then added

to the accumulating taxonomy of physical/racial types and subtypes. However, the Fig 2 is a photograph of a skull captioned as "Tamil skull" which was used to explain the generic biological and anatomical features of the Dravidians in south India. Here the photograph is certainly an illustration (along with the quotation above) that serves the purpose of defining, and producing knowledge.

The photograph became a piece of evidence to substantiate and serve a point of classification proposed by colonial anthropology. Looking at this photograph, it can be said that the 'Tamilness' of the skull is not deduced from its shape or 'type' but rather is derived from the fact that the skull concerned was that of a person who is said to be a Tamilian. The only biographical information that is available to establish the 'fact' that it is a 'Tamil Skull' was the information that that it was of a Tamil person (caste unknown) died in the Madras hospital. It should be observed that Thurston also measured the other skulls to show his anthropometrical obsession and scientific value of his work. For instance he measured three 'Yanadi' (Yanadis of Nellore District) skulls to prove the unique anatomical features of the particular caste (1900: 89-90). The other local skulls that he used for analysis are varied according to its measurement details. But Thurston has been taking the 'average facial angle' of various castes and tribes to generalize and assume common physical and racial types of south Indian castes. In this regard the photograph of the 'Tamil skull' is not different from some other local skulls. Skull photographs are used as evidence to show the common features of the Dravidian 'types'.[9]

It is difficult to arrive at any value free judgment on the skull photographs because of the loaded categories that Thurston has used to explain the skull types in a comparative manner accepting many of the assumptions that support the categories such as 'European skull' and 'Tamil skull.' In fact the skull photographs itself raise fundamental questions on the veracity of the evidence presented in the form of the photograph. But it can be cited as very good example of a photograph being used to prove a colonial assumption of race. It is in this context that we talk about the skull photograph itself: how the scientific photograph of the skull tends to have both a side profile and a front one (Fig 2). Here the

same visual vocabularies have been used in the description of the skull photographs that were followed by the forms of anthropometric photography where the close up and side profile of the native 'types' are captured to explain particularities of the natives.

In general, anthropometric photographs sought to visualize and support the scientific value of identification of physical and racial specificity of the different groups. The skull photographs also visually follow the usual depiction of anthropometric photographs that show the details of the 'type' which could be measured and identified. The photographed subject's body becomes a physical racial/type to organize in categories for interpretation. Here the general categories are important rather than the cultural context or natural existence of the subject and skull photographs become a generic knowledge construction of 'Hindu' or 'Tamil' types.

Anthropometry derived its scientific credibility from the various indices where the body was measured in terms height, chest span, mid finger to patella, shoulders, hips, left foot length, nasal index (including width and height).[10] It is in this context that India became a 'laboratory for anthropometry' (Pinney 1990: 261) or 'living museum' (Metcalf 1998: 117). The human bodies thus marked were 'denied a history of their own' and defined by 'unchanging racial and cultural identities' (ibid). As Fawcett observed, the main objective of such discourses was to "help in determining the vexed question of *identity of race* between some of the *Australians and the earlier races of Southern India*" (9). But at the same time, as Fawcett himself felt, it brought in difficult questions pertinent to racial identity between the Australian aborigines and certain races in South India. Like many other Orientalists, what Thurston and Fawcett attempted was a comparative analysis of "otherness" by imbricating it in their own familiar socio-cultural environment. Typically therefore, any European contextualization of the social or cultural practices of different sects/ communities within the Orientalist notion of Hinduism, caused contradictions, especially, when it came to 'castes' and 'religions.' This becomes clear when we examine Fawcett's accounts of the religion of Nambutiri Brahmins of Kerala:

> The Nambutiri called themselves "Arya Brahmanar," Arya Brahmanas. Mr. Logan thinks *their claim to Aryan origin is not borne out by their appearance.* I think *their measures prove it*… the Brahmanism of Southern India is much tinged with the religion of the *earlier races*, of which we see examples in some of the village and such like festivals, devil dancing - as it is called and the like over Southern India (Fawcett 1900: 80, e*mphasis added).*

Fawcett's approach to the religion of Nambutiris is mediated by his understanding of their racial origin as Arya Brahmans. Fawcett's use of the racial paradigm results only in elaborating yet another normativised understanding of the Nambutiris. His confusions with regard to the incompatibility between Hinduism as he understood it, and the social/cultural practices he had observed, are results of this approach. In Fawcett's own description of his work (his anthropological notes on Southern India) attempts to "describe the people as they actually are, and not as they are supposed to be in the books of Hinduism, which, for the most part, tell us of *Hinduism as it is not* in Southern India" (Fawcett 1900: 6).

The caste-based classification get expressed through the rendition of the mythical accounts of the Hindu tradition and narratives drawn from tradition apart from the customs and practices of various castes and the epistemic order specific to them. The new epistemic order classified the cultural forms and practices prevailing in society as tradition, resulting in new binaries. They included the binaries such as colonizer/colonized, Europeans/Asians, Oriental/Occidental, cultured/uncultured etc and became paradigmatic. The most influential binary of this epistemic order had been the comparative analysis of the orient and the occident. It allowed the dominant discourses to understand their own other and caste emerged a significant trope to categorise Indian society.[11] In Thurston's ethnography, caste is considered and "defined as genetic boundary of the Indian body where individual and community became empirical objects and exemplary subjects" (Dirks 2001: 187). The problematic of colonial modernity made the concept of caste more uniform and structured and began to be considered as fundamental to the socio-religious conditions of India (Dirks 2001:

5). Photographs were used as an authentic and realistic media to demonstrate this illusion by which objects (both tools and bodies themselves) and social environments became the markers of caste identity. It is in this anthropologist's spectrum that we are trying to understand the anthropological and ethnographic photographs of Kerala belonging to the colonial time.

Framescape 2: The Spectrum of Photographs

Ethnographic photographs detailing various castes, communities, and other social entities revolve around certain peculiar notions of 'caste' and community proposed by colonial anthropology. In tune with the colonial anthropology, the classifications in the ethnographic photographs in general present telltale binaries such as savagery/civilization, master/servant, upper caste/lower caste, and purity/pollution. Ethnographic photographs were used as visual evidence accompanying the textual classifications of different 'castes' and their physical characteristics and customs. On the other hand, colonial photography, which is inextricably linked to *our* modernity, has come to characterize an exacting matrix of technology, vision, masculinity and power/authority. Within this matrix, the photograph was an instrument of colonial 'governmentality' and was needed to represent different bodies as well as to construct a typology of racial and cultural 'others' for the process of 'subjectification.'

In Thurston's text, the anthropometric photograph functions within the order of colonial 'governmentality', where the human body and its related environment are treated as a cultural specimen. Here, the network of colonial knowledge and its strategy for dominance penetrated the multi-fragmented social bodies and societies. The human body became a site for objectification and its governance, creating the anthropological body of colonial ethnography. In other words, the body itself becomes a metaphor of political/cultural object of colonial domination and the camera becomes a mere tool for documentation in this process of objectification and knowledge production. Ethnographic photographs could be classified into four major divisions on the basis of their visualization.

***(a) Anthropometric Photographs*:** They are typical photographs representing the model of caste and tribes and giving more emphasis

to physiognomy. They served as good guides to the measurement definitions, particularly the close up and its profile view, detailing physical features. Such photographs assert and validate racial theories that emphasize the features of physical body such as nose, teeth, jaws, features of hair and skin colour. The merging of physical features of castes and tribes led to the construction of anthropometric stereotypes. From the ethnographic point of view, the construction of these anthropometric stereotypes exposes the physical nature associated with tribal or caste member's body and photography manifests itself as ethnographic 'reality' (See Fig 3, 4).

Fig 3: Mala Veda with Filed Teeth

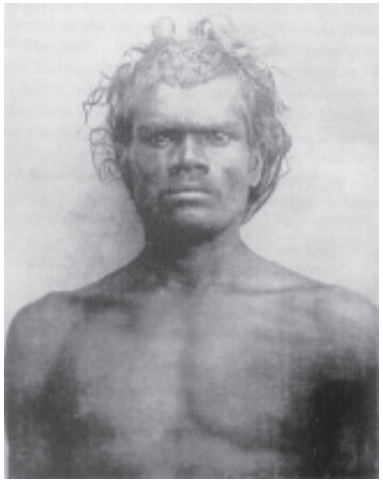


Fig 4: Parayan

Photographs from:

Fig 3 & 4: Thurston, *Caste and tribes,* Vol. VII

Fig 5: ***Kanikkaran Female,*** *Front and Profile*

Photographs from:

L. A Krishna Iyer, *The Travancore Castes and Tribes,* Vol. I.

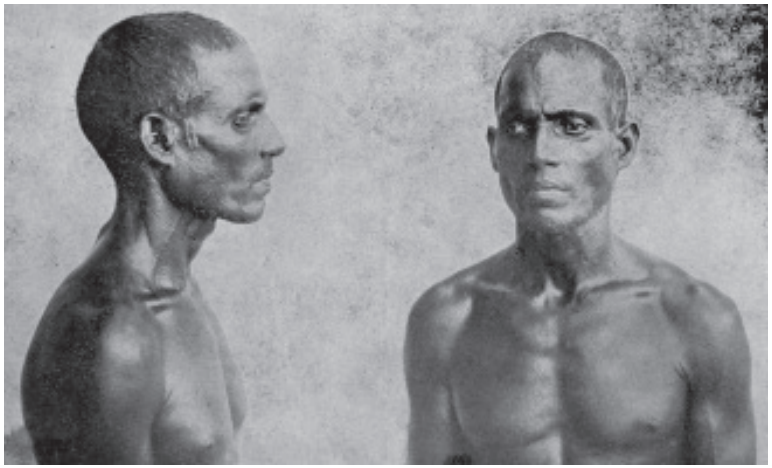


Fig 6: ***A Kanikkara***

Photographs from:

*Photographic Collections, The Government Press, Trivandrum (*also see L. A Krishna Iyer, *The Travancore Castes and Tribes,* Vol. I)

In this genre of photographs, (see fig 3-6) human body becomes a specimen or 'type' ('stereotype') for understanding the 'other' and the photograph the 'ultimate tool in the regime of truth' (Pinney 1990: 260). Significantly, the categorical difference between tribes and castes has not been clearly accounted for, in any of the colonial anthropological works, though they largely distributed social groups into these categories for their anthropological analysis.[12] Here the people came under colonialism and became the colonised subject with implications for bodily presentation. The subject in turn became a political body, to be known and controlled through the measurement and interpretation of physical subjects organised into categories of caste and gender (Dirks: 2001). What the anthropologist or the photographer does is to proclaim or make appear the ideas of an ethnographic reality. The human body accordingly becomes a cultural sign. This had lasting consequences as in the later visual representations of Kerala (particularly through paintings and cinema) these signs became dominant perspectives to visualise the different communities, and particularly to characterise tribal and caste identities.

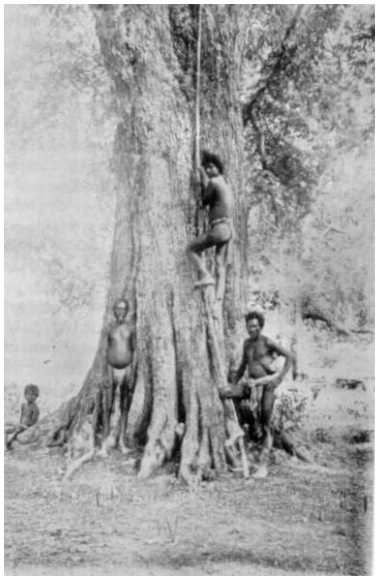


Fig 7: ***Chenchu Tree-Climbing*** Fig 8: ***Chenchu***
Photographs from
Fig 7, 8: Thurston, *Castes and Tribes* Vol. II

Fig 9: ***A Velans Dance*** Fig 10: ***the Panans' Devil Dance***
Photographs from Fig 9, 10: L. K Anantha Krishna Iyer,
The *Tribes and Castes of Cochin*. Vol.1

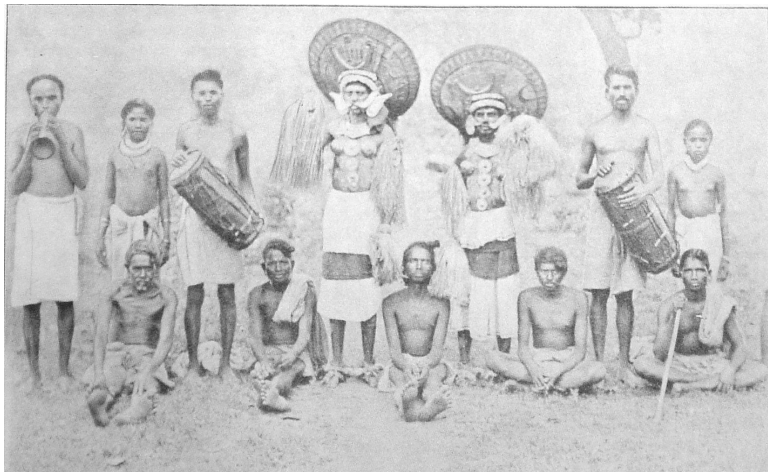


Fig 11: ***The Parayans Devil Dance***
Photograph from
L. K Anantha Krishna Iyer, The *Tribes and Castes of Cochin*. Vol.1

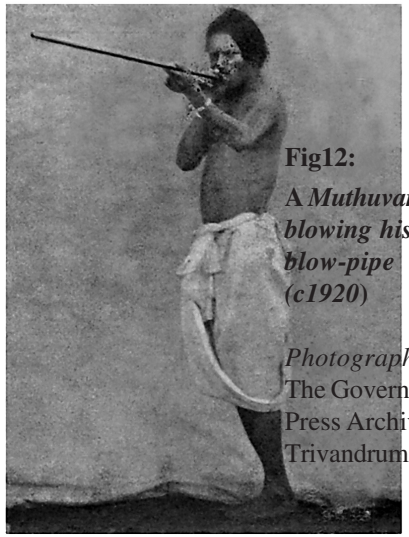


Fig12:
A *Muthuvan blowing his blow-pipe (c1920)*

Photograph from
The Government
Press Archive,
Trivandrum

of Ritual Performance and Skills: The second genre of photographs gives visibility to the definition of caste through

the traditional practices and performances. It should be observed that the gaze of classification is redirected on the technical knowledge of various communities and their particularly defined skills: we have photographs titled as "making of fire," "hunting," "climbing tree," "women rowing boats" etc.[13] Apart from this, there are photographs of particular rituals performed by ritual specialist castes. Photographs depict this as the performative space of 'devil dance' or primitive mode of worships of the natives (see captions in Fig 9-11). In other words, visibility is foregrounded with the anthropological classification of performances as showing the 'primitive' but 'exciting' skills of specified communities (see Fig 7& 8). The photographs are also used to record changes in the occupational visibility of castes of performers such as the Velan and the Vedan. The visual vocabularies of these photographs (Fig 9,10 &11) open up the situated spaces and social positions of the groups. Here photographic framescape can be treated as the 'dense context' organising geographical 'facts' linked to local knowledge. Most importantly, the spatial narrations of photography arranged according to the 'self- reflexive cultural tropes' within the form of a 'theatre of action' and 'cultural performance' (see Edwards 2003: 262-263). The genre of photographs represents these performances (Fig 9,10 & 11) and social skills (Fig 7, 8 &12) are as concrete as spatial elements of the ethnographic reality. The social knowledge that the spaces of photographs silently exhibit is of the many cultural worlds lying outside the realm of modernity. These performances have been considered as the specific property of particular communities and they function along with the restricted symbolic knowledge that is found in that community alone. Performance in anthropology, then, becomes part of the gathering of symbolic data and activities that is revelatory in identifying the physical presence of the group within the frame of differently endowed social. In this manner, photographs of 'a Velan dance' (Fig 9) have generated a visual knowledge that the Velans traditionally engage in ritual performance for generations. In the photographs of Fig 9, the elder man along with two children (a girl and a boy) is participating in the performance with a drum and a bunch of tender coconut leaves. The anthropological project is fulfilled here with the categorization and identification. At the same time, the ritual performance constituted within the photographic spaces involves the active presence of the invisible cultural tropes and social hierarchies.

However, the ritual performance in front of the anthropological camera is only freezing a moment that masks such social relations.

The active invisibility can be drawn at different layers; at the very outset by putting forward a vision of anthropological orthodoxy and conventional wisdom it deny the autochthonous status of the image in the native realm and its spatial discourses (Faris 2002: 82). By presenting a moment of the cultural practices to a temporally and spatially different audience, it also denies the involved dynamic components of collective social relations of the ritual performance. Most of the ritual performances in the society have a collective social participation of different communities. Within the spatial domain the performances themselves generate a new social space in which most of the historically practiced social constraints get blurred.[14] This culturally oriented collectivity of the space is the most significant trope in this genre of photographs. In presenting ritual performance to an audience unfamiliar with it, the cultural practices and social expressions of the actor are rendered invisible. Therefore it makes sense only as the exotic devil dances of the orient.

What could be the self-reflexive cultural tropes that these ritual performance and photographs exhibit? In this context, it can be said that it is the transcendent self (reflexivity) of a performer which he attains while he is performing. He acquires a self which is different from his everyday social position. In fact, he achieves a liminal position as a result of this transformation. The photographs of 'Parayans devil dance' (see Fig 11) symbolically represents this element. This particular photograph could be placed in the larger context of the religiosity of the Parayans to make some crucial observations. As a lower caste, the Parayan subalternity and social position can be understood from their seating posture and gestures. The musicians (blowing bugle and beating drums) create a rhythm for the transcendence of the self.[15] In the performance of the ritual by adopting particular ornaments, masks, chants and mantra he acquires the reflexivity of self, which is different from his situated position in the society. Although these performances are occasional events, once they are photographed they become artefacts informing the identity of a social group.

(c) Occupational Photographs: One of the main objectives of this genre of anthropological photographs has been to visualize the identity of human societies on the basis of occupation. This identification is a very significant aspect of colonial anthropology. In fact the occupational status subsequently becomes a decisive criterion to define the caste identity of different communities. For instance, in Cochin, the different social groups such as "Valan," "Arayan," "Mukkuvan," "Marakkar" who were engaged in fishing came to be referred to as one community as their caste came to be determined on the basis of their occupation. Similarly, toddy tapping became the typical occupation to identify Ezhavas in Travancore and Cochin and Tiyans in Malabar. The Pulayans and Parayans became castes that were integral to the agrarian order. However, I don't follow the line of argument that it was colonialism that invented and constructed caste through various discursive practices. My argument is that it was on the basis of occupation, tradition/rituals, etc. that caste was re-invented and generalized. The other dominant strategies of using photography in census operations and the statistical enumeration and the related processes solidified the determination of caste on the basis of such signifiers.

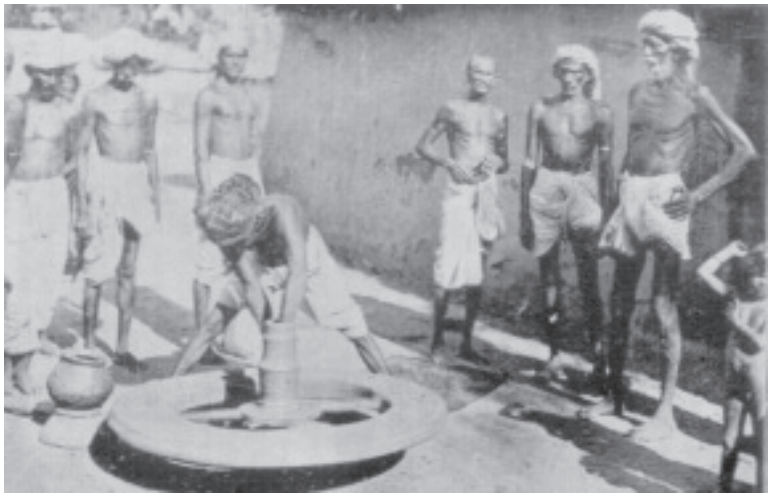
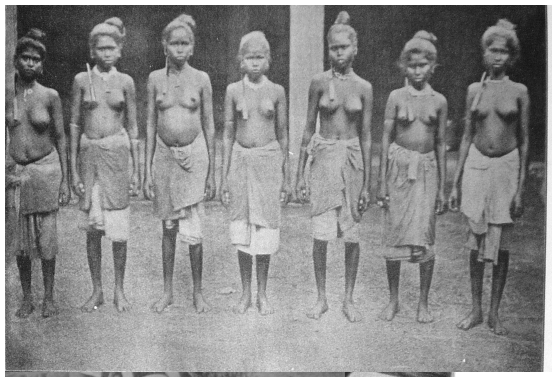


Fig 13: ***Kusavans***
Photograph from;
Fig 13: Thurston, *Castes and Tribes* (Vol. IV)

Fig 14: ***A Pulayan and his Wife Going for Field Work***

Fig 15: ***The Katalarayans***



7: ***The Nayadis going for Alms***

Fig 18: **A *Group of Pulayan Women***

Fig 19:
A Mukkuvan Group

Fig 20:
The Ezhuva Cultivators

Fig 21: ***The Thattans (Goldsmith)***

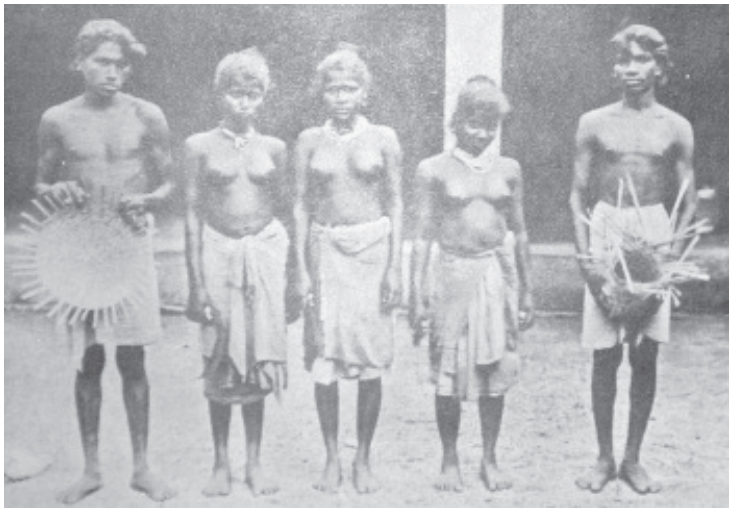


Fig 22: ***The Parayans Wicker Work***

Fig 23: ***Vedic Students with Their Guru or Preceptor***

Photograph from:

Fig 14-23: L. K Anantha Krishna Iyer *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin,* (Fig 14-22, Vol.1 and Fig 23, Vol.II).

Photographs 13-23 are taken from Thurston's and L.K.Anantha Krishna Iyer's books on Kerala castes and tribes. The photographed subjects, particularly the communities belonging to the lower strata of the society have been represented with the tools of their respective occupations (see Fig 13-22). In fact the identity of the photographic subject is determined/made visible by a cluster of physical goods. What is made appear as the signifiers determine their caste and occupation. The photographed subjects are represented within an 'ontological tide' where a series of material objects symbolise their occupationally determined caste identity.[16] The peasants and subalterns appear in these photographs along with their implements and other signs that are integral to their social environment. For instances the Pulayan and his wife with sickle and (see Fig 14), Kushavans and Thattans are visualised within the working environment with their implements and other signs of their occupation (Fig 13&21). Ezhavans are represented as both agricultural labour and as toddy tappers, with the tapping knife and tools and peculiar tapping instruments including pots (Fig 16, 20). Fishing communities (Fig 15, 19) are figured along with oar and net and almost all lower castes are depicted in the anthropological photographs similarly with their occupational objects (Fig 17-20). Here again, the representation embodies the notion of the 'type'. On the other hand, the signified objects in the photographs are conceived as just like another part of their body and the dulled photographic backgrounds always characterise their occupational engagement with nature as well as the nature of the subaltern physical environment. The photograph 'A Group of Pulayan Women' (Fig 18) further reiterates this point. The Pulayan women –all of them– have sickles hanging from their shoulders, as if they are extensions of the body. In other words the photographs of the lower orders show them in their subordination and bondage to their professions. Such photographs could be read as a pointer to aspects of enslavement that Pulayans and other lower castes were subjected to even after the formal abolition of slavery in the middle of the nineteenth century.

In contrast to this, the elite classes are represented differently. It is their posture in the photographs that relates to their occupational identity and social status. Apart from the sacred marks on the master's body, there are sacred bell metal utensils as symbolic

objects. The posture of the students (Fig 23) with crossed arms and definite looks as well as the distinguishable sitting posture of the teacher, holding sacred beads explicitly articulate their dominant authoritative position in the social hierarchy and access to the privileged domain of knowledge. The body posture of students conveys their dominance as the custodians of this knowledge.

It can also be noted that the visual field of the photographs undergoes a change when it is a question of representing upper castes.

Fig 24: ***A Typical Nayar Family***

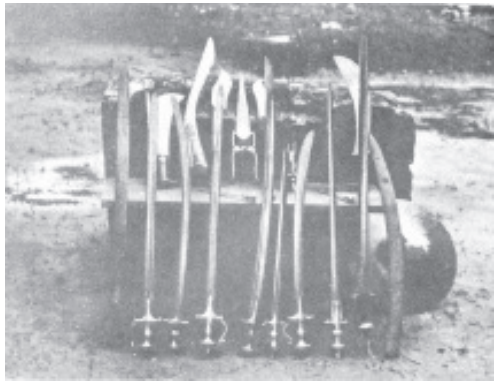


Fig 25: ***The Weapons of the Old Nayar Warrior***

Fig 26: ***Two Nayar Girls with Ornaments***

Fig 27: ***Old Ornaments of Nayar Ladies***

Fig 24-27: L. K Anantha Krishna Iyer's *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin,* Vol.II

A sophisticated visual idiom and romanticised fantasy of cultural superiority is superimposed on this genre of photographs. The photographs of 'Nayars' (Nair) underline this point. When we consider the 'typical Nayar family' photographs, (Fig 24) it can be seen that the photographic surface was filled with a mat and the subjects showing familiar gestures in response to the gaze of the camera. The subjects are looking at the camera as the occasion of the photographic event allows them to open a performative realm in front of the camera in an act of representing themselves. The subjects are seated properly, and are posing for the camera (Fig 24 & 26). The photograph of the weapons of the erstwhile warrior class in the anthropological text indicates their prior position in the Kerala society (Fig 25). In addition to this, objects such as specific ornaments of Nayars (Fig 27) further exhibit their power of acquired symbolic capital. In this respect, the camera is not particularly objectifying any object or subject to determine their caste compared to the occupational photographs of the subaltern. It follows the

already established social knowledge in which Nambutiris and Nairs have a privileged position. The gendered photographs and the different looks of different communities are entrenched in the social and cultural practices of the society.

It would be useful to inquire into another aspect of the visual field present here: how did subjects respond to the camera's or mind's eye perception of the anthropologist/photographer? Some photographs particularly those of the tribal groups and lower caste people of Kerala throw light on this question. The Kurumbas and Ulladans (Fig 28 & 29) for instance, have a fearful, antagonistic and wonder-struck look.[17] The two children (Fig 28) are looking thoroughly scared, holding on to the leg of a woman for protection. The women herself has crossed her arms in a defensive gesture and all the figures seem to be leaning back in a gesture of avoidance, their faces marked by an expression of scepticism and powerlessness. It is a simple act of self-protection against the intrusion of the camera. In the other photograph of Ulladans (Fig 29), on the other hand, the subjects have an air of puzzlement and speculation, as if they were looking at the event of photo-documentation uncomprehendingly. Ethnographers have reported that the people they photographed, especially tribes and lower castes, were afraid that the camera would capture their soul and reduce their life span. However, here it may not be possible to read such beliefs in the photograph, but seems rather that they expressed their fear of the intrusion of the alien object—camera.

Nonetheless, these particular appearances could be read along with the schema of measurements adopted by the colonial and native anthropologists and attitudes of the people towards them. It is basically an ignorance and unawareness about the new technology and its encroachment up on their inhabited spaces that result in the frightful and perplexed and anxious pose. Thurston complains that the beliefs of the tribal communities and their limited awareness of colonial authority created considerable difficulties in his work. For instance, he says that the Paniya women of the Wyanad believed that he was going to take the finest specimens among them and stuff them for display in for the Madras Museum.[18]

Fig 28: ***Kurumbas***

Fig 29: ***The Ulladans***

Fig 30:
The Koodans

Fig 31: ***The ThandaPulaya Women***

Fig 28 : from, *Thurston, Castes and Tribes*, Vol. IV

Fig 29 : from, L. K Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, Vol.I

Fig 30-31: L. K Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, Vol. 1.

A further point can be made about these photographs. It seems that in the visual field image is organised in such a way that different communities are marked differently. This can be seen most clearly in the tribal and lower castes people's photographs, which follow a particular pattern of lining them up for the picture (also see Fig 22-25). The camera formulates a new visual vocabulary that codifies categorical differences.

Figs 30 and 31 exemplify one form of this new visual vocabulary. Here the subjects are arranged as symmetrical sequences of bodies, their individual presence is subsumed under the design (seated and standing figures alternating; or bodies arranged in rows and shot at an angle to emphasize a geometrical formation) to which their bodies contribute. All bodies are uniform in character and with similar look. It is a way of visualizing lower caste bodies in some sort of generic categorization. Most of the subjects appear in full length. Through this group lining arrangement (Fig 31), the camera seeks to develop a normalised and universalised visual depiction of certain racial characteristics.[19] Technology has objectified an assembled body as a 'naturally seen picture' and the camera has captured bodies employing certain visual forms or conventions (Snyder 1980: 224). Visuality submits the subjects to a particular arrangement, seeking to place them within a form imposed upon their world. The subjects of these photographs are detached from their workspaces. Subjects are identified by their caste or tribe affiliation alone and there is no attempt to record their names. As against this, the elite groups are always represented in a dynamic space, determined less by imposed visual forms, and are closer to a culturally recognizable visual vocabulary. As mentioned earlier, bodily posture becomes a social signifier in these representations. However, the camera offered a liberal space to these subjects for self-articulation as well (Fig 23).

Contrary to the representational strategies aimed at the subaltern body, the representation of the elite men and women in ethnographic photographs directly deploys their power and status derived from their caste position. As a result, they face the camera without any embarrassment, and with a determination to 'pose' in front of it (see fig 32-34 and also see fig 23, 24 & 26). The fact that the elite men and women approached the camera with the prior knowledge of the event with appropriate facial expressions and body language is in complete contrast with the encounter of the subaltern classes with the new technology. For instance the photographs of Nayars clearly articulate the 'manliness' and the 'womanliness' and their position in relation to domesticity as expressed in other genres of representation (see fig, 33 & 34).

Fig 32:
Adhyan Nambutiris

Fig 33:
Nayar Girls Upper Class

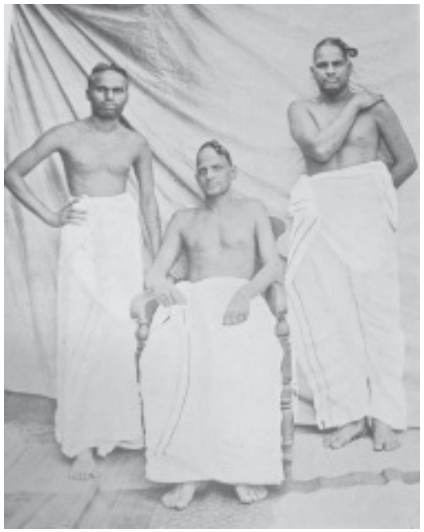


Fig 34: Nayars

Fig 32, from L. K Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, Vol.II
Fig 33-34, from Somerset Playne, *Southern India: Its History, People, Commerce and Industrial Resources*, 1914-15.

The colonial photography thus followed different conventions of visualization in representing different social groups. Most of the photographs reproduced here suggest that peculiar photographic representation to the elite/subaltern mentalities as well as the customs and traditions of the photographed subject are deliberately given. Along with this, another visual trope, the imagined image, was developing through the photographic representation. The imagined image refers to the conceptualisation of the image before it is photographically produced. It is possible to read traces of this imagined image from the photographs. It appears that when elites confronted the camera they have certain set of conceived notions about the photographic image. The preconceived image (imagined image) of oneself therefore involved the distinction between what he/she "really is and what must be represented" (Prasad 2006: 73). On the other hand, the visual idea of preconceived image (imagined image) or notions of what must be represented provide different form

of visualization to the subaltern and elite. In the case of the elites they have greater say in what must be represented, whereas the subalterns have little or no say. Camera thus provided new visual vocabulary for the cultural types, which in turn become a recurring ethnographic sign for the other visual media, such as popular cinema.

(d) Voyeuristic Photos: An analysis of the representation of women in this set of colonial photographs would also show that they were

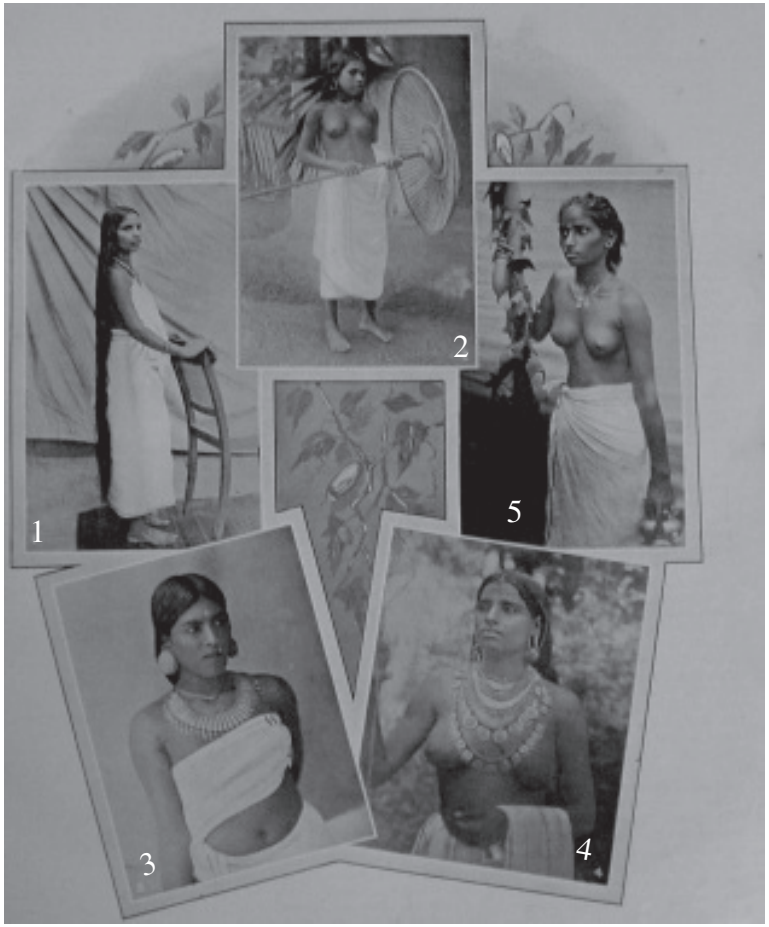


Fig 35: 1,2,3,4 ***Nayar Girls.*** 5 ***Rural Nayar.***

the products of the photographer's sexual gaze on the female. The female body thus photographed is evocative of a notion of ethnic female types (Fig 35&36). Sexual voyeurism and aesthetic features dominate these photographs. These photographs particularly invoke the "visual pleasure in looking." For Laura Mulvey, "woman as icon, displayed for the gaze" and the "erotic" or "voyeuristic" "patriarchal male gaze" projects its phantasy onto the female image which is arranged accordingly (Mulvey 1975: 7-11). Here the ethnographic/ anthropological photographs found their space not within anthropology but in the genre of pornography that provided visual gratification to white men. Large numbers of obsessive postcard photographs circulated in the metropolitan cities, carrying representations of female body substantiate the idea that this genre of photographs were – in the words of Malek Alloula – nothing but dedicated to exhibition or an 'anthology of breasts' (Alloula 2003: 105).

Fig 36: ***1 Tiya woman, 2 Toda Girl, 3 Cheruma Girl, 4 Tiya women***

Fig 35-36: from, *Playne's Southern India.*

The photographs (Fig 35 & 36) are presented in groups, arranged in an ornamental design suitable for display.[20] In the pictures displayed here of Nair girls, the aestheticisation of body acquires prominence as the pictures show Nair girls adorned with other objects in the photographs including ornaments. The sequencing of feminine beauty is crucial here as the photographs are arranged mainly for communicating a particular perspective. This cluster of photographs would indicate the mixing of 'scientific' (ethnographic) legitimation of the categories of interpretation. Along with this, one needs to understand the consumption of these images within the ethnographic voyeuristic practices.

In these photographs none of them are looking straight, but and posed to exhibit physical charms. The ethnic features are augmented by the display of various objects like a palmyra-leaf umbrella (*ola kuda*, Fig 35-*2*), a metal water pot with a spout (*kindi*, Fig 35-*5*) and ornaments, as well as through the exhibition of long hair (*karkunthal)* - which is traditionally associated with feminine beauty- and clothing (see Fig 35- *1, 3, 4*). All these photographs are interestingly in postcard size suitable for circulation and private consumption. The particular ornamental display of the photographs (Fig 35 & 36) enunciates that they are no longer classifiable as "anthropological/ethnographic" photographs, but that they functioned as pornographic images that employed ethnographic detail as a veneer for voyeurism, a widespread practice among colonials, with parallels in other colonial sites. (Alloula 1986).

Metcalf has pointed out that in contrast to the voyeurism which was common to the male European vision of the Middle East, the British in India being in charge of maintaining order had to confine the male erotic fantasies to the 'moralised imperial authority' (Metcalf 1998: 102). But, it can be said that anthropological photographs had an enduring connection with administrative impulses of classification as well as the sensual fantasies of male eroticism. By using photographs of Tiya women (Fig 37&38), Thurston wanted to show the peculiar hairstyle followed by them as well as the particularities of their earrings and the style of wearing them apart from other ornaments. Nevertheless, it can be observed that there is incommensurability while comparing these two photographs with

Fig 37: ***Tiya Woman***

Fig 38: ***Tiya Woman***

Fig 37-38: from Thurston: *Castes and Tribes, Vol.VII* (also see Thurston's *Ethnographic Notes*, 1906)

the other genre of anthropological photographs because of the anthropologist/photographer gaze on the female body. Most of the photographs included in Thurston's volumes on ethnography were personally photographed, while some of them borrowed from A.T. Penn of Ootacamund. Ethnographic practices, even when it remained as a scientific project, included voyeuristic overtones owing to the general characteristics of colonial ethnography as one can bring here a lot comparable materials from other parts of the colonial world. But ethnographic situation in Kerala provided a matrix for the voyeuristic ethnography also due to the condition in Kerala, particularly the appearance of bare breasted women in the public spaces. While this kind of bodily appearance was quite common among the lower castes many early travellers and ethnographers have referred to this as 'nakedness'.

In fact, colonial travellers and writers such as Buchanan (1807.Vol. II: 98) and later William Logan had referred to the

'remarkable beauty' of the Tiya women of North Malabar (1887 Vol. 1: 143). Logan remarked further that "in appearance some of the women are almost as fair as Europeans" and some of them had relationships with Europeans (ibid). The Tiya woman is conceived as a sensual beauty and sexual object in these representations. It is in this context that these photographs acquire a further significance. Thurston's curiosity about the sexual relations between European men and Tiya women in northern Kerala further emphasises such an understanding. According to Thurston, the *Marumakataya* system (inheritance through the female line) in North Malabar, has favoured the establishment of temporary relations between European men and Tiyyan women, and the children of these unions, he says, often are as fair as Europeans (Thurston 1909, Vol.VII: 36). He reiterates this point further by quoting the Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission, 1894 and says that "in the early days of British rule, the Tiyan women incurred no social disgrace by consorting with Europeans, and, up to the last generation, if the Sudra girl could boast of her Brahmin lover, the Tiyan girl could show more substantial benefits from her alliance with a white man of the ruling race" (ibid: 37). It can be said that there was a sensual imagination and fantasy associated with the Tiya women and their connection with Europeans. The Tiyan Women Photographs therefore is subsumed with this sensuality of Tiya women as well as ethnographic voyeurism of an exotic body.

The point that I want to emphasize is that the colonial anthropologists through photography visualized an immutable or frozen and ahistorical Kerala society wherein they had recorded only certain relics of the cultural practices that had already vanished or were on the verge of disappearing. The project of recording everyday activities was confined to certain traditions, rituals, religious practices, and social institutions like marriage, where anthropology turned the human being and his culture into a specimen or a cultural relic. All traditional ways of living, and institutional practices came to be approached through a normative understanding based on a generalised theory of caste.

Early 20th century works, particularly that of L. K Anantha Krishna Iyer and L. A Krishna Iyer on castes and tribes of Travancore and Cochin, illustrate everyday practices of different communities,

allowing an entry into their social worlds. However, there is a need to contextualise these works to appreciate the difference as the period in which they were composed was a time of flux when Kerala society was undergoing rapid social transformation. It has been observed that colonialism caused a rupture in the mentality of the people in different ways. Ethnographically we can read these changes in terms of a certain class mobility wherein lower strata of people could elevate themselves by the adoption of the customs and manners of the higher sects, making use of the western education, colonial jurisprudence and religious teaching, making use of the option of converting to Christianity and the like (see Mohan 2006; Jeffery 1994; Kawashima 2000). The native anthropologists and ethnographers took note of this as "a radical change in the ethnographic conditions of the country" (Iyer 1909, Vol.1: 27). This transformation is absent in the colonial anthropological photographs and texts- the consciousness of the present. Except anthropometric photography, the indigenous anthropological and ethnographic photographs on the other hand visually absorb the signifiers of change taking place in the early 20th century Kerala.

It has to be observed that the anthropological photographs have a particular character that they could be interpreted only along with the ethnographic narration. The verbal accounts give meaning to the photographic texts. Except the photographs of occupationally determined castes and tribes, it is difficult to identify the difference between various tribes and castes. This becomes clear when we compare the colonial anthropological works mentioned above (Thurston and Fawcett) with C. Gopalan Nair's work on Wynad (1911). Nair's ethnographic account describes the different tribes of Wynad, some of them having migrated from different parts of South India. Though the customs and ways of life of tribes are different, it is impossible to understand these cultural variations photographically. The subjects are photographed in groups (to be precise, in couples or family groups) without indicating any occupational category in the caption or visual marks of their identity. The female subjects cover their breasts (which do not happen in the case of other photographs of tribes) and pose in a dignified manner (see Parayil 2007). Thus it is difficult to identify the tribes from these photographic

evidences alone. If the colonial anthropology made an effort to differentiate among the various tribes and castes and photography substantiates these textual strategies of anthropological narration, the native anthropologists although belong to the same anthropological paradigm, seem to have been much more concerned with the social changes taking place in Kerala during the colonial period like changes taking place in the family structure. We also get a positive reading of the imminent social change from these photographs of native anthropologists.

L.K Anantakrishna Ayyar in his *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians* (1926) vividly documented the changes taking place in society through photographs. These photographs carry aspects of the social life of Syrian Christian community in the moment of colonial modernity including the emergence of the modern family are represented. It is necessary here to point out that the emergence of the modern family is crucial, as most social groups seem to have accepted this as a norm. The extent of its reach can be seen in the ethnographic photographs of the tribal couples as husband and wife of a nuclear family alluding to the modern norm. At the same time, we are not certain whether this had been the prerogative of the photographer to represent tribal couples as forming the nuclear family. The photographs of weddings and of married couples and family groups have since then become very common as families took to recording and preserving such moments.

In contrast to the stereotyping process, the framescape of discursively arranged photographs in this ethnography of Syrian Christians depicts a variety of activities of the community spread across different spaces: religious (churches, rituals and ritual objects, and priests and nuns); private (marriage, family, group photographs of different sects and funeral photographs), and occupational. Similarly, these photographs overtly evoke a framescape which is divergent from the 'panoptical and anachronistic time and spaces' that have conveyed the technologically determined time of the colonial anthropological photographs in general. It should be borne in mind that the socio-religious reform movements, movements of community assertion as well as the commercialization of economy, and new industries all helped different communities to change their social/ economic status thus altering the relations between castes. (see

Fig 39: ***A Romo-Syrian Bride and Bridegroom in their wedding attire***

Mahadevan 1991: 169; Tharakan 1997: 100-246). The Syrian Christian community benefited particularly from the socio economic problematic of colonial modernity.

In tune with the change, the photographs represent an elevated worldview of the Syrian Christian people. The framescape encompasses the new social consciousness of the people by including new objects of social value such as the umbrella (Fig 39-42) and modern clothing. The subjects assume a pose of dignity and presentability. The formation and unity of the family as well as intimacy are the prominent ingredients of this visual ethnography. It is also important to note that these visual ethnographic spaces subsumed within the immediate moments had their implications. Fig 39, where husband and wife are sitting apart, is one such immediate moment captured by the ethnographic camera. Here the anthropologist attempts to envisage the occasional wedding attires of Romo-Syrian group and the photograph might have been taken just after the occasion of marriage. But the sitting pose-angle and posture of husband and wife also suggest the moment of non-acquaintance between them. Both of them look straight into the camera; nevertheless, both the posture and the sitting angle signal knowledge of subjectivities within conjugal relationship, and by

Fig 40: ***A Group of Anjuttikar*** **(community of five hundred)**

Fig 41: ***A Marriage Group (Chaldean-Syrian)***

Fig 42: ***A Wedding Group of Topasses (The Community of Three Hundred***

Fig 43: ***Two Roman Catholic Converts (Pulayans)***

Fig 44: ***A Romo-Syrian Funeral Groups***

All photographs (39-44) from, L.K Anantha Krishna Iyer, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, 1926.

extension, in domesticity. The wife shows an acceptance of subordination in contrast to her husband's posture of idealised manly authority in the marriage relationship.

These ethnographic photographic framescape are filled with familiar social practices rather than objectifying physical spaces and bodies of subject. The look and pose suggest an air of familiarity, as against the intimidated expression of the subaltern subjects, in the presence of the camera. It is not the technologically determined time of the anthropologist but the photographically mediated social and cultural time that is foregrounded here. The funeral group photograph (Fig 44) is another form of the visual frame associated with social occasions that have evolved from indigenous practices of photography. The occasion for the photograph is the bidding farewell to a family member, where the inner family hierarchy is clearly articulated through the arrangements of seating and lining up of the other members. In this photograph, the children are seated in the ground and below the dead person. Above this and next to the body, there is a row of women who are surrounded by another row of young and old family members. As with the funeral practices themselves, the camera shows the body of the dead person in ornamented dress. This is one of the typical and particular visual vocabularies of Christian funeral photographs followed in 20th century Kerala, where the camera invented new visual idioms of native social practice in ways completely different from the familiar frames deployed by photography at this time. The technology found a parallel development which creates a composite between social life and its cultural practices, and where photographic framescape is diffused with the social–ness of its time.

At the same time, the visual vocabulary of the framescape such as the adoption of particular poses, looks and enunciations of the expressive realm, is ideally that of the elite frames of the colonial photographs. This point can be further elucidated with reference to the photograph (Fig 43) of the 'Roman Catholic Converts (Pulayans).' This is the photograph of two Pulayans who were converted to Christianity from their agrestic slave past. The photograph projects the changed physical appearance of the previous outcastes of Kerala: these lower caste Christians are in neatly folded white clothes, cropped hair (sometimes combed), posed against the backdrop of a

wall, and are in sharp contrast to the stereotyped images of half naked lower caste men with untidy hair against the background of workplaces or thatched huts. In fact, this photograph intends to convey the idea of bodily 'cleanliness' and transformed self within a changed and 'interactive social space' of the lower caste, as they come under the 'civilising project' initiated by the Christian missionaries (see Mohan 2006). This genre of photographs was regularly published in missionary journals. Although they were converted to Roman Catholicism, the subaltern features such as body posture, the staring and sceptical look persist. This photograph which appeared in the source material, *Anthropology of Syrian Christians*, itself shows its significance, since the Syrian Christians in normally do not keep social relations with Pulaya Christians. Even if they belong to the same Church denomination the former usually despise the latter. Here the native anthropological photographs appear to be more sensitive to document changes and more accommodative of changes occurring in the society.

Framescape 3: The Ethnographic Symptom: Sketches and Paintings

It cannot be argued that it was the colonial photography that invented the practices of identifying categories through occupations,

Fig 45: ***Two Kerala Brahmins, the man with a parasol palm-leaf fan, the woman with a parasol*. Watercolour (1828).**

Fig 46: ***Palmyra Tree Climber***

objects, body features, etc. The fact is rather that the photography got extended into the prevailing forms of colonial representation of the other, allowing a new form of technologically determined identity for different communities. There were paintings and sketches of the colonial and post-colonial period that have adhered to the notions of the occupationally determined caste identity. The lithographs and sketches of the colonial period particularly carry this form of representation (see Fig: 49-52).

Fig 47: ***Pulayars***

Fig 48: ***Potters at Work***

Fig 47: British Library online catalogue: http://www.Imagesonline.bl.uk/britishlibrary/controller/home

Fig 46 & 48: Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore,* 1883.

The idiom of these images has subsequently been deployed in photography to represent the visual real of communities in Kerala. The paintings done by Appan Thampuran in 1938 to illustrate the

characters of a cinema based on his novel *Bhutharayar,* show a tendency to imitate the style of the sketches and photographs of castes and tribes, showing how influential these styles were in moulding the popular imagination (see Fig 49-54).[21]

Fig 49: ***Bhutharayar***

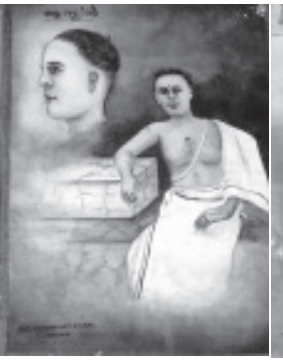


Fig 50: ***Aasiyan***

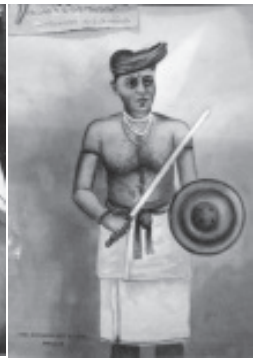


Fig 51: ***Nayar Yodhave***

Fig 52: ***Pomathiri***

Fig 53: ***Kaadan***

Fig 54: ***Kaadathi***

Characters drawn by Appan Thamburan in 1938.
Courtesy; Appan Thampuran Smaraka Museum & Library, Thrissur

Each individual is drawn as a typical representative of the respective communities. As in the ethnographic photographs, objects held by the subjects, clothing and ornaments signify their occupations and community identities, while the posture (seated or standing) and

props (furniture, pedestal) indicate their relative position in the social hierarchy. The ethnographic sign, in this context, is an unchanging bodily allegory that asserts the embodied nature of community or caste. Cultural symbols in these representations are immobile and frozen.

In contrast to this, photographer/anthropologist, who has taken a snap of past 'reality', gives visual expression to the past and continuing realities, as the camera inadvertently preserves existing practices and unconscious memories of the people. The camera goes beyond the limits of the anthropological ideology and begins to document life practices. In spite of their primary ethnographic intent, photograph cannot help bearing traces of the social/historical present in which they are actually taken. This particular reality could sometimes generate meanings that are historical in nature. The image, with its unconscious trace of expressions, and a realm of unintended meanings, could be outside the control of the photographer. The teleology of the photographer is neither 'natural' nor 'artificial' but it is, as Barthes puts it, 'historical' and 'cultural' (2000b: 206). As a result, its signifiers – colour, expression, posture, objects and figures-are readable in the context of the contemporary social reality. It is here that the photographer, his ideological imagination and his aesthetic sense, find themselves alienated from the text of the photograph. Located within such texts are practices that are far more complex than the static customs and habits that dominant colonial anthropological practices' claim to represent. Revisiting some of the anthropological photographs will unfold entrenched social-ness embodied in the cultural practices of the everyday life of the people. The photographs now move away from their prima-facie anthropological duty of exhibiting cultural artifacts, and begin to gesture towards a social reality; a point taken up further in the next section.

Framescape 4: Re-visioning Spectrum

Re-viewing two photographs in Thurston's text will give insights into the social and cultural contexts of the subjects in the anthropological texts (see photographs of the Tiyan family and Nambutiri house, Fig 55 & 56). The first photograph draws special

attention to the photographer's intention of using it to substantiate text (Fig 55). Tiyan, a South Indian ethnic group involved in a variety of occupations, is occupationally defined by toddy-tapping. Thurston has given elaborate notes on physical features as well as customary practices of *Tiyan* community (Thurston Vol. VII: 36-136).

Fig 55: ***Tiyans***

Fig 55: ***a***

Fig 55: ***b***[22]

Fig 55: from, Thurston, *Castes and Tribes,* Vol.VII.

The use of the Tiyan family photograph when the anthropologist speaks of Tiyans is understandable as he wants to give his narrative authenticity and accuracy. The intention might have been to make a frame of a *Tiyan* family with all its ethnographic details. The visual content of the photograph is very much attuned to this purpose. The objects shown in the photograph such as *spathe*-hat *(Palathoppi)*, the coconut tree, and the implements for tapping the coconut flower serve to authenticate the occupational caste definition. In his study, Thurston extensively deals with the other cultural traits of Tiyas, such as rituals and traditions, marriage and kinship, etc. In the photographs, in addition to the constructive function of photographic image and the documentation of ethnographic reality the camera capture and visualize the body language of the subject, their conscious and unconscious semiotic practices. These practices have been evolved out of their tradition and are part of their worldview.

The man sitting in the front row (a Tiyan family member) exhibits certain signs of social hierarchy (Fig 55a). We can read this from his body posture, which indicates a movement or action that allude to a conscious/unconscious mentality. This particular action emerged within the frame of hierarchical social relations. According to the prevailing social practices, the lower caste people had to adopt certain body postures in public places (Bhaskaranunni 1998: 145-221, 451-53). In this example, non-verbal communication is achieved through the disposition of the body, which bears witness to the prevailing practice of that time. These photographs amply prove the fact that the lower castes had a different body posture and expression when compared with the upper castes. For example when it comes to the sitting position of the former they squat without touching their buttocks on the ground. His buttock does not touch the floor when he sits in front of an upper class man (Fig 55b). Though the semiotics of the body or bodily posture was not significant analytical tool for Thurston's studies, he has observed these physical expressions (possibly taking them to be 'natural' expressions) in another context:

> In a photograph of a group of Izhuvan females of Palaghat eating their meal, which was sent to me, they are all in a kneeling posture, with the buttocks supported on the heels. They are said to assume the same attitude when engaged in grinding and winnowing grain, and other occupations, with a resultant thickening of the skin over the knees (Thurston Vol. VII: 41).

The other photograph is that of a house of a Nambutiri Brahmin (Fig 56). According to Thurston they are on the top layer of the caste hierarchy in Kerala and they had been following very rigid caste traditions and practices. In fact, this is the only photograph of the Nambutiri in Thurston's text. Unlike other photographs by Thurston, this one does not show any interest in the usual features like physiognomy, customary practices or occupational signs.

Nevertheless, this photo reveals certain other peculiar customary and traditional practices of Kerala society. Here, one can problematise the interiority of the photograph itself. The visual vocabulary of the photographs allow us to understand further the distribution of social spaces and the pollution limits that separated different communities at that time. In the photograph the Nambutiri is seated in the courtyard along with another Nambutiri who is in standing position close to him (see the head knot of standing man, Fig 56), and the postures of two men who stand with crossed arms (Nairs) a few yards away from the Nambutiri indicate both the practice of distance pollution and their servitude to the Nambutiri. According to the custom, a Nayar should not come nearer than six paces to a Nambutiri (Baskaranunni 1998). The spatial distance that various castes were supposed to maintain in the presence of the Nambutiris was fixed:

> Fixed distances are appointed, within which persons of low caste dare not approach those of higher caste. A Nair, for example may approach, but must not touch a Namburi Brahman. A Shanar must remain thirty-six paces off, and a Pulayan slave must stay at a distance of ninety-six paces. Other intervals, according to a graduated scale, are appointed to be observed between the remaining castes; thus for instance, A Shanar must remain twelve steps away from a Nair, a Pulayan sixty-six steps and so on.[23]

The rules of distance pollution are observed in the composition of the photograph. The practice of tying the shoulder towel around the waist is another sign of subordination (Fig 56a). The other set of

photographs (Fig 57 & 58) will elucidate this point further. The photograph has been taken from Kanipayyur Sankaran Nambutiri's autobiography. The author has used the photograph to illustrate the older social hierarchy that existed between Nairs and Nambutiris

Fig 56: ***Nambutiri Brahmin House***

Fig 56a

Fig 57: ***Otchanikal***

Fig 58: ***Thozhal***

Fig 56: from, Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, Vol. V. (also see Fawcett's, *Nambutiris, 1900).*

Fig 57-58: from, Kanippayyur Sankaran Nambutiri, *Ente Smaranakal (My Memories*), 1963**.**

where the Nairs are subordinated to the Nambutiri.[24] This photograph shows the other particular postures (known as *otchanikkal and thozhal*) that were socially expected of the Nairs to the Nambutiris. The photograph clearly indicates the Nairs' subordinate position vis-à-vis the Nambutiri through their facial expressions, the way the body is slightly bent, the shoulder towel (*tholmundu)* tied around the waist as a mark of respect, and the mouth cover with their palm which provide a picture of the social traditions as well as occupation (Fig 57 & 58).

The caste order in Kerala was kept in place by sartorial and bodily disciplines. The style of clothing and of adorning the body, the rules of distance, and of sight pollution and of food habits constituted a set of complex signs for expressing social relations. Nairs, who are otherwise a dominant community, were forced to signify their subordination to the Nambutiri by means of such markers. So keeping the cloth off the shoulder in front of the Nambutiri had a social semiotic function (of the Nair, Fig 56a). Similar and more stringent rules applied to other castes.[25] The above said photographs (Tiyan and Nambutiri) from the Thurston text, irrespective of the indented concern of documentation as cultural stereotype, reveals that the photographs are subsumed within a social semiotics, which leads us to understand prevailing social relations.

An existing knowledge of customary bonds and duties with all its social/cultural/economic intricacies (visible or hidden) thus intrudes into the photograph. What the photograph does is to animate shared discourses of objects, signs and events. In this context, social signs project and make possible the deduction of meanings from the events and discourses that are a part of them. Images and scenes are to be understood as cultural signs. The culture becomes inlaid in the construction and creation of social meanings of image. It is true to say that photographs cannot speak themselves. Therefore, when we reconsider the 'image' embedded within the photograph, it helps us to explore the process of social ordering through positioning, framing and the looks of the subjects of photographic images. It conveys those age-old values, customs and rituals as well as the subject's action and behavior, which construct and order his/her social knowledge (the structure of the existing knowledge

system) and decide his /her position in the hierarchy. This inextricable relation between the image and its worldview relates to the power dynamics operates in the society. It underlines the fact that even when photographs of a particular period are considered as 'frozen social moments' and the shots are taken (un)intentionally, they are neither apolitical nor value neutral.[26]

This particular point becomes explicit if we consider the fact that it is through particular gestures and body language, conscious or unconscious, that traditional relationships of subaltern classes to the larger society are expressed. Anthropological photographs show the creeping in of prevailing socio-economic and cultural values and traditions both covertly and overtly. A re-examination of such photographs makes possible this analysis of the configurations of social power that frame the objects and the social ordering of the subjects that are photographed. This is expressed through the traditional values and practices as well as through the subjects' own social interactions: both determined by the hierarchy of power relations. The elements that construct the consciousness of the individual include social and cultural values and practices in the material realm of economic production. The body language and expressions of the subaltern classes in the photographs show the transhistorical forms of hierarchical power relations that existed in society and expressed without the spoken word. In other words, we can say that although photographs could be products of deliberation or of absent mindedness but they surely open a window to the power structure of the society and also to its blind alleys.

Conclusion

The examination of ethnographic photographs reveal that several factors are implicated in the production of their visuality: the technology itself, the social relations, the camera's (colonial) interventions into the cultural domain with a set of conventions and stereotyping gaze. The photographic framescape is the predicament of many ethnographic realities, distinct from its projected scientific precision of castes and tribe. One important aspect is that it invents certain new visual forms of representation, constituting unique visual vocabularies for the subaltern as well as the elite.

It is the ethnographic body and the combination of social and technological regulations that constitute the representational form of photography. However, it cannot be argued that subaltern or lower castes were being excluded or marginalised from dominant perceptions of visuality. In these circumstances photographic visuality foregrounds a 'subordinated inclusion' of the referred social groups. "Subordinate inclusion" is an outcome of the historical perception of a definite and dominant mode of distribution of social space.[27] The visual spaces have been unequally distributed with historical and social signs to identify the binaries of the subaltern/elite mentalities. The subaltern subjects are performing within this subordinate photographic space- created through the different vocabularies and established conventions- without encroaching upon the definite and dominant spaces of the elite. A revision of photographic signs and their visuality are reproduced in certain prevailing social practices and relations. It can be argued here that photographic visuality is historically constructed and historical consciousness is being embedded in it. Consequently, the historically constituted and constructed visual ethnographic signs and its visuality solidify the prototype as a cultural image. These prototypes of the cultural image are subsequently reproduced as visuals of caste identity through various mediums; it is overplayed in contemporary Malayalam cinema, for instance (Parayil 2005). The colonial and contemporary visual representations are thus linked in historical continuity. However, in visual representation, historical continuity is not articulated in a completely rigid or static form but rather is enunciated through the facets of refashioned subjects with the newly invented self, be it within the context of colonial modernity or beyond.

Notes

1 My sincere thanks to M. Madhava Prasad, Dr P. Sanal Mohan, Ashish Rajadhyaksha and V. J. Varghese for their valuable comments.

2 From Thurston's seven-volume work, I am using only selected photographs that deal with the castes and tribes of Kerala.

3 Elizabeth Edwards has pointed out that the anthropological interests were outside the intellectual control of those who sought to use them as evidence.

Most of the 20th century anthropological photographs were mainly produced for European consumption. At the same time the photographer has immense control to arrange the visual according to his or her perceptions, beliefs and visual vocabulary (Edwards 1990: 238).

4 The framescape is a conceptual aid to understanding the gamut of knowledge, signs and meanings that are deployed in any concrete *event of photography*; the (in)visible, (un)intentional and (un)conscious aspects of the photo–frame, (see Parayil 2007: 29-33).

5 Within the evolutionary structure, the fixing of races had exceptional importance particularly with the establishment of the notion of 'type', which in turn was the essence of the method of classification. 'Type' derived from the analysis of biological and physical anthropological spectrum. In anthropology the use of 'Type' has been conceived as the parameters of a race. In anthropological photography it was used as 'stereotype' to identify "specific character of physique or custom that stood for generalities and indeed 'reality' of a given place or people." The concepts 'type' and 'stereotype' were widely employed by the European anthropologists to compare tribes in the East and the West and to foreground the primitiveness of the former. For a detailed discussion, see Edward 1990: 240-241.

6 Thurston here extensively cited Huxley's theories of the origin of human races. For example, he quotes Huxley and points out: the races of mankind are divided into two primary divisions, the Ulotrichi with crisp or wooly hair [Negroes; Negritos], and the Leiotrichi with smooth hair; and Dravidians are included in the Australoid group of Leiotrichi. "With dark skin, hair and eyes, wavy black hair, and eminently long, prognathous skulls, with well-developed brow ridges, *who were found in the Australia and in the Deccan"* (Huxley cited in Thurston, 1909 Vol 1. xxv, emphasis added).

7 This insight is drawn from Vivek Dhareshwar's lectures, during my PhD coursework at CSCS Bangalore.

8 This is true with Thurston's descriptions on the lower castes like the Tiyans and the higher castes like the Nambutiris (1909 Vol. 7: 100-101; Vol.5: 157, 234-35).

9 Nevertheless, here one can observe the paradox that generated in colonial anthropological project. They were categorizing and classifying communities according to their customs, manners and physical character with the scientific veracity where each caste and sub-caste becomes different. At the same time, while exemplifying the racial origin, they tend to show the commonality and parallelism.

10 Even specimens of hair and finger–prints of all those who were measured were taken for this categorization. However, fingerprints are not referred to

in Thurston's and Fawcett's notes, because, they have not yet been discovered as racial characteristics. In this context, some of the notes given below will articulate how they measured and differentiated people according to the statistics and measurements;

Stature: The subject standing on the instrument box, back to the measuring rod which is kept perpendicular, using a plumb line.
Height sitting: the subject on the instrument box, back to the measuring rod, placed on a box so that the thighs of the subject are horizontal.
Height kneeling: The subject kneeling on the instrument box, right or left side towards the measuring rod, as erect as possible.
Span: The measuring rod held horizontally in front. An assistant placed the right hand of the subject against the rod, tip of the mid finger at the o; the stretch was made to the left as far as possible. (Fawcett 1900, Nambutiris, 6) These details are interesting in the context of photos that show these different postures.

11 It will be instructive to see how they understood caste. They considered caste as an aspect of Hinduism and Hinduism as a religion was equated with Christianity in a comparative manner (Balagangadara 1994). They tried to understand all other religions within the paradigmatic frame of Christianity, and Christianity was a universal/homogeneous category to understand the 'other.' (Balagangadara 1994: 307). This also led to the generalization that all world cultures have religions comparable to that of Christianity and that religions play a crucial role in the development of cultures across the world (ibid). Colonial anthropology, taking its cue from such a perspective, invented the various categories in India as 'castes' and 'tribes', and some more 'uncultured' than others, leading to the normalization of such notions. Hinduism was thus constructed as a monolithic on the one hand but with mutually exclusive castes on the other.

12 In the periods immediately before and after independence the categories of caste and tribe evolved as administrative categories and taken into the constitution of independent India for the purpose of reservation. Even in academic research such administrative categories are used without any critical engagement. As Pinney observed, the classification sometimes made in terms of 'caste', or 'tribes', and other captions present groups as 'sects' with a discrete image of individuals. In the 1860s the categories were sometimes used interchangeably, but 'caste' was most commonly invoked where the community was considered to be part of the mainstream Hinduism (1997: 35).

13 For details, see photographs 'Kanikkars making fire', 'Snake Worship', etc in Thurston's *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India*, 1906

14 For instance, during the performance of *Theyyam*, a cultural ritual performance done by lower caste, helps to create a social space where the age old

hierarchical notions and constrains get blurred. It provides a shared space of interaction for both the upper castes and the lower castes (Menon 1993, 1994).

15 The music of the Parayas and the rhythm of the drum have acquired new meaning in the hermeneutics of social movement and popular religion in which the drum and the beating acquires a new meaning informing the subaltern notion of divinity. For a detailed discussion see Clarke 1998: 112-

16 Ontological tide here specifies that the subject's relation to existing environment and their position within the socio-economic life of the society (Pinney 1991).

17 Scherer outlines various methods to understand different aspects of the anthropological photographs within their historical context and querying into the perspective of subjects is according to him very important (Scherer 1990: *137*).

18 Several people were frightened and reluctant to come under the measurement instruments. Some people believed that he was a recruiting sergeant bent on capturing them to be sent off to work in South Africa, and they fled from town to town before his approach. When he was measuring their heads, feet and chests, people suspected that he was an army tailor measuring them for sepoy's clothing. A woman bade farewell to her husband as he entered the impromptu laboratory, believing he would never come back. On the other hand, the members of certain castes insisted he take his measurements before 4 pm so that they could perform the necessary rituals to purify themselves. From these descriptions it appears that there existed fears and superstitions among the upper and lower caste people towards Thurston's project (Thurston 1909 Vol.1: xvi-xvii).

19 Here it is important to bear in mind what Michel Foucault calls the 'micro physics of power', in which the bodies of social subjects became the sites upon which an obsessive quest to quantify, log, calculate, and control racial differences is played out (Foucault 1973).

20 This ornamental display of photographs have parallels in plantation and industrial photographs where clusters of arranged images, like tea and rubber plantation etc., actually provide the sequences of production of available economic resources of the region.

21 The novel was written in 1923. The plot of the novel is set in medieval Kerala. It is a historical fiction based on a fight for the chieftaincy of Chera Nadu. Based on this novel Appan Thampuran directed a play which was staged in Ernakulam and Trichur in 1927 and 1934 respectively (see Ramavarma 1998: 72-78). Later in 1950s, Kerala Ciniton Company decided to make it their debut film and appointed Notani from North India as the director, who had assisted for the first Malayalam film, *Balan*. Rehearsals had started but due to financial constraint they abandoned the project.

However, Appan Thampuarn, who supervised the rehearsal, had painted the characters for his film. For details see Ramavarma 1998; Cherian 1964.

22 Thanks to Dhanaraj Keezhara for drawing this picture for me.

23 Mateer 1870: 32; interestingly, this quote is yet another example of how Europeans represented Indian society as static and unchangeable. Thurston and Fawcett repeat the same observation of Mateer to the word. Though they mention that this situation is undergoing modification, their accounts do not reflect this fact. This exemplifies how certain social practices that were part of tradition become normative knowledge for 'others' (see Thurston 1909, Vol. V: 196; Fawcett 1900: 59).

24 Kanippayyur nostalgically remembers the feudal relations of the past in his autobiography and says that the present Nairs were servants of the Nambutiri and this particular posture according to him, is generally known as *ochanikkal, or thozhal* and it shows Nair submission to Nambutiri (1963 Vol. 1: 169).

25 For instance, in colonial South Travancore, the upper cloth was allowed for only upper caste women and the lower castes were forbidden cover the upper part of their bodies. (Mateer 1870: 61)

26 The photographers' ideological consciousness, concepts and worldview are essentially associated with the determination of each snap shot. But at the same time the subject who appeared in the photograph has his/her own individualized 'I' which means this 'I' was socially structured and therefore, it appears with certain implied meanings in circulation that has its value in a particular paradigm (Sontag, 1979: 119).

27 To understand the inhabited social spaces of Dalit colonies, Pramod uses the concept of 'subordinate inclusion'. He argues that the distribution of social space is initially controlled by the *savarna* castes. Such spaces are real in both geographical and non-geographical senses. According to him "[A] Pulaya girl might find herself as trapped in a space of subordination in a University classroom even today. She is locked in an unequal engagement in terms of her relationship with classmates and teachers, most of who are *savarans,* and therefore, differently endowed socially" (Pramod 2004).

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Logic of Extraction and Spatiality of Exclusion:
Constitution of a Game Sanctuary in Colonial Travancore

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This paper attempts to demonstrate how colonial conditions enabled the circulation and institutionalisation of game preservation ideas in the princely Travancore. Informed by the utilitarian ideas of ensuring sustainable availability, the concept of game sanctuary represents an extension of the progressive governance of forest estate as well as state power. The sanctified space of game sanctuary was created by earmarking a part of the permanent forest estate for promoting the game/sport hunting for the members of the privileged class. This unmanned wild country was created as much by evicting the local/ethnic populations from their place. Sport hunting was one of the hallmarks of the 'upper-class European male emigrant' identity in the colonial period, wherein the subsistence hunting was despised as effeminate and made illegal. The privileging of sport hunting by creating exclusive hunting and game preservation zones, tourist destinations in the late colonial time, involves a redefinition of man-nature relations as well.

In the forthcoming pages I shall demonstrate how colonial conditions enabled the circulation and institutionalisation of game preservation ideas in the princely Travancore. Formation of game sanctuary for game preservation was an extension of the progressive governance of forest estate and extension of state power. It will also be shown that these ideas were informed by the utilitarian ideas of preserving viable populations of game animals for sustained availability of them for sport hunting.[2] I shall proceed to do this by describing the inscription of sport/game hunting in the legal discourses and creation of a novel space-the game sanctuary-as part of a scheme for promoting the game/sport hunting for the members of the privileged class. This sanctified space was created by declaring a part of the permanent forest estate of the State as a game sanctuary. The creation of sanctuary space (as per the received notions from across the empire) required it to be an unmanned wild country. This in turn required the local/ethnic populations to be evicted from their place. This was a material manifestation of the ideals of sport hunting circulated under colonial conditions. These ideals were hallmark of the 'upper-class European male emigrant' identity in the period under consideration (Pandian 1995: 241). Within this discourse the subsistence hunting was despised as effeminate and utilitarian; finally, branding it as illegal while privileging the sport hunting by creating exclusive hunting and game preservation zones. Further, towards the late colonial period, the zone also acquired distinction as a tourism destination. As we shall see in this paper, the drama enacted in these spaces had consequences to the redefinition of man-nature relations.

Before embarking on a trip to trace the sources of game preservation ideals in Travancore, it would be rewarding to have a glance at the process of institutionalisation of forest governance in the state. Our focus is on the period from 1920s to 1940s when Travancore was under the indirect rule of the paramountcy. Territorial boundaries of Travancore underwent no significant change during the period.

Constitution of a Permanent Forest Estate

In the early 19th century, the control on forests in Travancore was located on forest produce, either through their monopolisation or by controlling their transportation and trade. It is well known that the affairs of forests in the state were keenly observed and controlled by the British as the fine timbers for various purposes, especially teak for the Royal Navy's seafaring vessels, had assumed strategic importance in maritime trade (Chundamannil 1993: 11-20). There were inquiries on the availability of teak timber from the forests of the Malabar Coast right from the late 18th century (Mann

2001: 9-26).[3] However, interest of the Travancore government on the forests was mainly to maximize the revenue for which it was hard-pressed. Though these aspects of control on timber and hill produces and their procurement and sale were often taken for the forest conservancy, the organized drive for 'improvement' of the forestlands on the basis of Forestry was to begin only in the post-1860s. This change was coterminous with similar development of the tropical forestry and commercial plantation agriculture in other parts of the British-India.[4] Improvement of the forests required an appraisal of existing forest governance and finding out its defects. Such a move was also necessitated by the increased demand for wood and timber, which had to be met by intensification of extraction. The Sustained Yield Principle, the guiding principle of continental forestry imported to colonial India, required the quantification of available timber resources over space and time before start extracting the timber.[5] It was found that phasing and planning of extraction are also equally important; where, techniques of continental forestry came handy to the forester. However, existence of suitable administrative machinery, legal provisions and well-demarcated forest territory, the prerequisites for operationalising the Sustained Yield Principle, were lacking in the state. Gradually, the attention and locus of control shifted to forestland (the territory), timber crop and its productivity.

In this context, in 1884, a Joint Committee on Administration of Travancore Forests was constituted to look into the matters of forest administration and report its defects. Based on the recommendations of the Committee, T.F. Bourdillon, then Assistant Conservator, was assigned with the duty of preparing a detailed report on the modalities of effecting these changes. The Committee also made proposals for reserving forests and for making an enactment similar to that of Madras Forest Act. Travancore promulgated the first Forest Regulation in 1888 closely following the provisions in Madras Forest Act (1882), which was a modified version of Indian Forest Act brought out in 1878.[6] The Forest Act had provisions for forming two kinds of forests the 'reserved forests' and 'protected forests'. The right to use reserved forests was exclusively vested with the government, boundaries were clearly demarcated and others could use it only with government permission. The protected forests, on the other hand, were those government forests that were not yet been surveyed and been open to limited private use.

The Forest Regulation along with the Forest Rules provided a framework for translating the ideals of the Continental Forestry into practice in the princely state.[7] The legal framework formed the crucial invention and contrivance that empowered the foresters to assert the rightness of their specialised knowledge over the 'ignorant' by labelling their practices as criminal.[8] The regulation of 1888 was revised and expanded in 1893 with provisions for asserting state rights over the monopoly forest produces.[9] The modified Forest Regulation prohibited most of activities that had been practiced by laymen in the forests (TFM 1917: 13-17).

To suit the operationalisation of the new legal instruments, Forest Department was reorganised by the turn of 20th century by dividing territory in its possession into Divisions and Ranges on the lines of the British Forest Administration. The objective of passing forest regulation was to consolidate all activities to a forest territory that was exclusively owned by the state. This was made possible by settling of private rights on forests once and for all.[10] State owned Forest Estate was a prerequisite for practicing the Continental Forestry knowledge that was originally constituted as one of the cameral sciences in the 18 and 19-century Germany and France (Rajan 1998, *passim*).

The first two decades of the 20th century witnessed regular demarcation of forest boundaries, enumeration of timber trees and enthusiastic pursuits of preparing working plans for more and more forest blocks. Plans for harvesting special resources such as sandalwood were also under preparation during this period. It was reported that, in 1910, Conservator's office prepared 311 maps. Such information was frequently made in the Reports of Administration to show the progress of the work. By 1908, the total area declared as Reserve had already risen to 2,305 sq. miles. This means that 800 sq. miles of forests were reserved in excess than was originally proposed by Bourdillon 15 years back (SMPA 1908: 4 and RAT 1908-09: 20). Despite all these, even at the end of 1910, the planned forestry was yet to be born in the state (Amruth 2008: 46-51).

Thus, guided by the revenue ambitions of colonial paramountcy and subjected to the discourses of improvement and progress, a number of institutions and series of legal enactments took form in the princely Travancore. It was only towards the end of 19th century

that consolidation of the affairs of forests by a forest department reorganised in the lines of similar establishments in British India took place. Such a consolidation was accompanied by enclosure of the forests through legal enactments which enabled settlement, reservation, survey and demarcation of a permanent forest estate (Amruth 2008 *passim*). These devices also enabled the state to make deep forays into the everyday life of it's subjects. Some of these institutions, modified to suit the particular conditions in the region, were but little more than the replicas of their counterparts in the British India. Two other important episodes in this context were the expansion of commercial plantations (of coffee in the beginning and of tea later) and regulation of shifting cultivation. All the above took place in the context of a modernity that was developmentalistic, where the human and the nature were not only distinguished as distinct entities but also were put to extreme separation (Raju 2003: 45-74 and Amruth 2008: 201-214).

Reservation of forest for the use of colonial state was the first step in the normalisation of the forest. This was followed by envisioning forests through the geometrical lens, making forests amenable for measurement and calculation through survey and demarcation. Preparation of working plans by estimation of timber value, annual increment of timber volume and phasing of timber extraction in the well-demarcated forest space formed the subsequent strategy for making forest legible. However the desire for creation of the legible forest estate was never achieved fully, as in the case of woodland Bengal (Sivaramakrishnan 1999: 80).[11] But, this did not lead to abandoning of the ordering process in the forests.

In this scheme, forests came to be viewed only in terms of its use and exchange values. Forests of Travancore were reconfigured to fit into the needs of the colonial economy. The idea of improvement was articulated in the context of increased revenue requirements of the state. With the coming of colonial science of forestry, forests of Travancore were envisioned as an exhaustible resource, which needed improvement by adopting specific and scientifically informed measures. This implied a new arrangement of forest and a new diagram of operation on nature. Extraction of timber was the overarching concern. Continuous or sustained production of it formed the measure of 'success' of forest conservation. In the colonial dis-

courses of progress, the improvement of forest meant employing definite measures for maximising the outflow of timber resources for the present as well as in the future. The rationale and modalities of achieving this end required institutionalisation of practices in compliance with Maximum Sustained Yield Principle championed by continental forestry. Means of operationalisation of this principle required enunciation of legislations and policies, and creation of legible Forest Estate. This process was guided by a particular form of humanism, which recasted the forests as resources that need to be managed for the benefit of present as well as future. The principle of sustained yield forestry brought in a notion of time to forestry, and thus took the subjects and objects of the forestry to a new temporality.

Hillmen and Hunting for Subsistence in Travancore

Let us begin by examining the distinction between hunting for biological reproduction and hunting for amusement. Much before the ethnographers were to enter forests and record the human life there, the missionaries and planters have recorded the hunting skills of the hillmen.[12] A planter observed that 'Uralis were famous for their skill in catching elephants and were forest guides for parties of hunters who occasionally came up from Madras State' (Lovatt 1972: 5). It was widely agreed that the Uralis were the best marksmen both with a shotgun and, bow and arrow. Another tribal group, Ulladars, usually hunted with bow and arrow with an iron spearhead. Ulladan was known to be able to 'cut a wriggling cobra in half at the first shot.' Moreover, when armed with guns they made excellent marksmen also. Hatch described that:

> Their accuracy in spearing fish is wonderful….they have a novel arrow: a piece of iron at one end and a strong string about thirty feet attached to the other. In shooting fish, the string helps to bring the catch in, and in shooting birds or animals prevents the precious arrow being lost…. Crocodile meat is considered a delicacy. When they want to catch a crocodile they put a kill conveniently near a river bank, and place an iron hook attached to a long string in the kill. When the crocodile comes to eat the kill, the iron hook get entangled in its mouth, and watching Ullatans rush up and kill him (Hatch 1939: 106).

It was said that Mala Arayas were very good hunters and meat eaters who were especially fond of the meat of Black monkey (Mateer 1883: 73). However, Muthuvan and Kanikkar had least dependence on forest animals for food. Kanikkar desisted eating the meat of gaur and grey monkey but ate the meat of black monkey. Kanikkar had special traps for wild boar and tiger, which were 'made with rough timber supported on a spring which falls and lets down the whole weights upon the animal's back' (Mateer 1883: 66). Pandarams ate 'snakes and lizards when nothing else is available' (Lovatt 1972: 5). Mateer reported that 'they dig roots and snare ibex in the hills and jungle fowls; eat rats and snakes, and even crocodiles found in the pools amongst the hill streams" (Mateer 1883: 81). The animal fat supplemented their tuber based dietary habit.

Thus, it is evident that the tribes, most of who lived in the hamlets deep inside the forests, hunted mainly for subsistence. Method of immobilising the prey varied from employment of a country gun, bow and arrow or a trap. Since the tribes practiced subsistence hunting, the question of sustainability did not arise. The pursuits of hunting had not acquired the dimension of a sport and recreation. Neither did the hunted animal acquire the status of a trophy or a subject of photography. It is also evident from the facts above that they did not look at the animals in the forests in general when they hunted for subsistence. With the coming of the game hunters the hunting tribal populations were made to go beyond the subsistence hunting to the supply-hunting for the planters.

Venison was a regular delicacy on the dining tables of planters, originated either from their own hunting pursuits or supplied by the Hillmen. Until the cart roads were laid out, food supply for the pioneering planters of Peermade were brought in head loads from Kottayam and it was mainly rice. 'However they were all handy with a gun and there was no shortage of game' (Lovatt 1972: 7-8). Even in the later years, when the European families arranged their social gatherings in the weekends, the delicacies included 'wild boar, sambhur meat and fish from Periyar River. The Uralis who lived in the Ranikoil jungle provided most of this' (Lovatt 1972: 21). It was during one of their lengthy hunting expedition in these hills that two pioneers who opened up the Kannan Deven Hills in High Ranges, H.G.Turner and A.W. Turner, thought-out their plans for establishing

the plantation in these hills (Muthiah 1993: 61).[13] Though organised sport hunting was rare in the High Ranges at that time, it was already a regular event in Nilgiris (Pandian 1995: 239-263).

Diffusion of Sport Hunting from the Nilgiris

Before discussing the early efforts in sport hunting in Travancore, it is important to see the developments in the adjacent planting zones of the Nilgiris. Nilgiris formed the hub of a network through which technologies of planting and sports including game hunting and angling diffused to the neighbouring hill stations. Nilgiris were closely knit to other plantation enclaves on the South Indian hills through institutions such as Botanical Gardens, plantation research establishments and planter's associations. In addition, Nilgiris was known for its annual sporting events. The first Game Protection Organisation was established in Nilgiris by the year 1877. Most of its founding members were planters. It was also in the same year that Nilgiri Wildlife Preservation Act, first legislation of its kind in India, was passed by the Madras government exclusively for Nilgiris District. Both the institutions were meant to legalise shikkar rather than to ban it. The Organisation imposed control on the specified tracts of forests and hunting grounds by instituting 'closed seasons'. During such seasons killing of females and young males were prohibited and the size and number of each species that can be hunted were also stipulated. Following the suit, though much later, a Game Preservation Association was formed in the Travancore High Ranges in 1928. It was reconstituted in 1935 when Travancore government decided to form game sanctuaries in the plantation districts and appointed game wardens and watchers. However, the rules of controlling the shikkar remained more or less same as in the case of Nilgiris.

By the fag end of the 19th century, the sport hunting, modelled after the Ceylon Elk Hunt and Ootty Hunts, were introduced in the Travancore hills. G.H. Danvers Davy, referring to his early life in Munnar between 1897 and 1905 describes his sporting pursuits:

> In the matter of sport we did rather well for ourselves, we had three packs of hounds. The primeval jungle was much too thick for any man to penetrate, and the hounds accordingly would draw the cover and if lucky would turn out a sambur

> which they would eventually bring to bay in a stream – fascinating thing to see and quite in the style of Sir Samuel Baker (Dee-Dee 1946: pages unnumbered).

It was common to have a few packs of hounds with each estate for ensuring security and for the purpose of hunting. Organised sport hunting with foxhounds had an early origin in Ooty with 'riding jackals' in 1829. It continued to be popular with different sporting arrangements and conventions until 20th century. By 1900s, the event came to be known among the British in India as 'Ootty Hunt', which was patronised by the army as in the case of Poona and Meerut hunts (Muthaiah 1993: 454). Though such organised and large-scale sport hunting was not practiced in High Ranges, there were local innovations. The 'High Range Hunt' is an instance and it was started by W. O. Milne in 1899 where he improvised the 'elk hunting' of Ceylon. A description of the highrange hunts is provided below:

> The Hunt started early every Sunday morning to follow the hounds that were in care of Aylmer Martin. The hounds were blooded by a sambhur being shot. Then the huntsmen gave up their rifles for 12-inch long knives, which they carried in their belts, and followed the hounds on foot. When the hounds brought a sambhur stag to bay, the men would move in to strike it over the heart with their knives. This Ceylon style 'Elk Hunt' called for "skill and agility to enable them to deliver the *coupe de grace* ; many were the fights the stags put up and many were the knives lost in the pools (Muthaiah 1993: 455).

Nearly three years after its introduction, in 1902 the 'High Range Hunt' was closed down for reasons not known.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Europeans in the Travancore hills were synonymous with planters. Lengthy, tiresome and risky journey to reach plains and markets in the plains persuaded the European planter-families to innovate community life in planting zones. Planter's Associations and institutions such as Planter's Clubs, Game and Angling Societies, provided occasions for socialisation that European families in the hills required badly. Apart from these, such institutions also formed the bulwark against the possibility of "going native" in the environs in remote hills. They also

provided the much-sought out occasions of camaraderie for men (Pandian 1995: 240-246). Such gatherings and networks also formed the channels though which the thrilling accounts of hunter's exploits from other parts of India as well as other colonies achieved circulation.

Literature on sport hunting had big readership not only in colonies but also in metropolis. By early 20th century, sport hunting had already developed into a sport requiring elaborate preparations, bound by etiquette and rules. Elaborate rules were in place on ownership of the kill, sharing of the hunting grounds, selection and shooting of the quarry etc. Often the hunted and the hunter were considered to be indulging in a game and 'fair play' was the key word. Adoption of risk evading technologies and strategies by the hunter was considered unfair. Therefore, use of artificial lights in shooting, shooting from vehicles and shooting animals at the waterhole were all considered unfair and against the sportsman spirit and hunter's etiquette. It was observed that

> Mere killing …is not sport: the real charm lies in the feeling that you have pitted your reason against the quarry's instinct and won the equal fight and that your trophy is the reward of your own skill. This feeling is the very essence of sport and it makes success doubly sweet (Phythian-Adams 1936: *passim*).[14]

The trophy could vary with the quarry. In case of bison and deer, it was the head with horn, in case of tiger, panther and bear it used to be the skin and, in case of elephants it was the tusk. Such trophies decorated the walls and visiting rooms of the planter's bungalow.[15]

With the discontinuance of Munnar Hunt, the game hunting and angling organised by the Game and Angling Associations formed the major sporting occasions in the hills of Travancore. Occasions of killing the big mammals, which were declared as rogues, vermin, man-eaters, or cattle-lifters, were often celebrated as hunting events with added advantage. The added advantage was that the crop destruction was thought to be prevented. According to a treatise on the hunting etiquette, no such etiquette was to be observed while shooting a vermin (Phythian-Adams 1936: 5). Local people also took part in such hunting events. Such display of valour also produced its

own heroes. In one such incident of killing a rogue elephant in 1920s, the hero was the Valiyakoil Tampuran, of the Travancore royal family (K.C. 1949: 1-18) who was a hunting enthusiast and member of the Peermade Game Association (Annual Report 1938-39: 26-27). According to the narrative, the Valiyakoil Tampuran, well accompanied by the forest officers, including the Deputy Ranger of the Peermade A.W.Woods, and marksmen and *Shikkaris* from Chenkotta and number of armed persons proceeded to kill the proscribed elephant. At the end of the hunt, that lasted whole of one afternoon, the elephant was shot dead. Throughout the hunting the norm was that none other than the Tampuran would fire a shot unless ordered to do so.

State was aware of emerging trends in sport hunting as corroborated by the statement made by the Dewan in the Sree Mulam Popular Assembly during 1929. He was responding to a representation made by Albert J. Wright of Kannan Devan Planter's Association who requested an increase in the money reward for killing proscribed elephants. He reasoned that the existent rewards were insufficient to meet the cost of locating and killing the animal. Dewan refused to consider his request by stating:

> Government trusted that a European planter who could destroy a rogue elephant would be prepared to do it more for the sport that it affords than for any material profits. In Travancore especially it is not easy to have elephant shooting, because you cannot shoot an elephant without special permission. In these circumstances Government think that it will be considered a kind of privilege to be allowed to shoot an elephant. They [officials] never had the idea that an offer of Rs.50 would tempt you or any member of your Association to take up the pursuit of a rogue elephant, if otherwise and on considerations of sport you were not prepared to do it (SMPA 1929: 37-38).

Capture of the elephant also provided a spectacle similar to shooting of the vermin. Very often people and various officials visited the premises to watch the capture operations (K.C. 1949: 97-105).

Hunting Royalties

Even before the Valiyakoil Tampuran was to celebrate the

shooting of rogue elephant in 1920s as an occasion of sport hunt, by late 19th century, the representatives of the Crown, who were visiting the state, were provided with opportunities for hunting on the hills as part of the state hospitality and diplomacy. The forests surrounding the Periyar Reservoir in the Peermade-Vandiperiyar planting district was the royal hunting ground in Travancore. The Periyar Reservoir was formed in 1895 with the construction of Mulla-Periyar dam. Though the dam was constructed for diverting water for irrigating the plains in the British territory on the east, the reservoir and its surroundings were attracting celebrity shikkaris ever since. Let us look at some such events of game hunting and the images they invoked.

In 1892, when the new Governor of Madras (Lord Wenlock) visited the territories of Travancore for inspecting the 'Periyar works', he was invited to extend his visit to Trivandrum. Having heard positively from the Governor, the Travancore State made elaborate arrangements for his reception. One of the key events in the plans was a hunting trip on the hills. Let us look at the arrangements made there as described by an official historian:

> …a programme was drawn up, which provided among other things for a sporting excursion of a week's duration on the hills near Peermade. O.H. Benseley Superintendent and Magistrate of Cardamom Hills and in that capacity had become intimately acquainted with Peermade and the hills and forests, was specially deputed to proceed to the locality and lay out shooting camps in consultation with the Resident. His Excellency attended by Captain the Hon'ble E. Baring, was received with every demonstration of welcome. The next two days were spent by His Lordship inspecting the Periyar Works…. On the 13 the October, the party moved to the shooting camp and stayed there the next nine days. The north-east monsoon had then burst, but not withstanding the clemency of the weather, His Lordship was constantly out on the field and succeeded on killing a bison and a big tusker. The feet and the head with the tusks of the latter were sent as trophies to Government House, Madras (Iyer 1998: 75-76).

Later on, hunting excursion to the hills became a standard package of the state hospitality shown to the British superiors. The

package was not much different when another Governor of the Madras, Lord Ampathill, visited Travancore in 1902.

> The programme included a shooting excursion of about eleven days duration on the hills about Peermade. His Excellency the Governor and party on the first October 1902 arrived on the Travancore frontier at Kumili, whence he proceeded to inspect the sluice of the Periyar dam. …. On the 2nd and 3rd October the party went out shooting on the hills near the dam where a fine bison was shot. The camp then moved to Mlappara. Here His Excellency bagged a tusker, a sambur and an ibex. On the 10th another tusker was bagged by His Excellency and a third by Captain Martin His Excellency's Aide-de Camp (Iyer 1998: 110).

Stories of similar hunting excursions can be seen in the Reports of Administration boasting the fruitful efforts of diplomacy. During the viceregal visits of 1929 and 1934, similar arrangements were made (RAT 1929-30: 8 and RAFD 1934: 52), the official narrative goes thus:

> In connection with the Visit …Shikar was arranged at Edapalayam in the Kottayam Division …. A spacious camp to accommodate about 5 Guests with the required outhouses etc., was constructed at Edapalayam entirely of eatta and bamboos wherein none other than hillmens labour was utilized. The simple and rustic constructions fitted in well with surrounding scenery. A subsidiary camp on a small scale was also constructed above Salt Lick Creek. Vicount Rattendon, His Excellency the Viceroy's son and Captain Cazelett M.P. went to this camp and had Shikar, a tusker elephant fell to the gun of Vicount Rattendon. The guests admired immensely the rustic simplicity of the buildings and the skilful and artistic work of the hillmen and enjoyed their stay there immensely (RAFD 1934: 52).

British Resident of Travancore maintained a summer residence at Peermade and he stayed there every year for three months (Piggot, Undated: 16). It would be an educated guess that the stay there facilitated organised hunts for the benefit of the Resident and his guests. Peermade became one of the prominent summer stations

of the British in Travancore state. Peermade could also claim most of the assortments of features of a typical hill station anywhere else in the British India. There were a government garden, lake, plantations, hunting grounds, planter's clubs and game and angling associations (Pradhan 2007: 33-91). This signifies that the forests in the late colonial Travancore were not only resources such as timber and water but also a source of wild game and recreation; further, it was also a site of diplomacy.

Creation of 'Sanctified' Space: A Sanctuary for the Game

The first attempt by the state to regulate emptying of gun at the beast was manifested through the regulation of 1860s, which prohibited the shooting of wild elephants. But, a comprehensive legal provision in this regard had to wait for nearly half a century until when a comprehensive set of directives was passed in 1912 to regulate hunting, shooting, fishing and setting of traps and snares besides prohibiting the use of poison in the rivers in the forest territories.[16] These directives, passed under the provisions of forest regulation, were applicable to Reserved Forests and Government Lands outside the Reserved Forests. Four different kinds of licensing were introduced and the fees were substantial (TFM 1917, 62).[17] The directives licensed and prohibited the hunting in all the above lands and Reserved Forests (unless exempted under the concessions of hillmen rules). However, all the officers of Forest Department above the rank of Rangers and all officers of Revenue Department in Devikolam Division were outside the purview of these rules.

'Closed season' for hunting big games within Reserve Forests were imposed through the regulation.[18] It also stipulated the maximum number of animals in each species of game that may be killed by each licensee per year.[19] But, the estate owners were allowed to drive away animals by shooting them whenever they posed a threat to the cultivation. The Regulation also had provisions for prohibiting '[B]eating or the setting of traps or snares for game' (except with the special permission of the Divisional Forest Officer). Any Reserved Forests or its parts could have been declared permanently or temporarily closed for hunting by a prior gazette notification. The owners of property lying adjacent to the government forests or lands

could avail a limited license for shooting destructive wild animals within the three miles of his property. Unless not closed by special order, no license was required for fishing in the forest streams. However, deployment of mesh-net, poison, and dynamite or explosives was prohibited along with shooting or trapping of insectivorous birds, which were specified in the Schedule attached to these Rules.

To replace an earlier regulation passed in 1898, a sequel was passed in 1914 with the aim of protection of game and fish. This was in line with a similar regulation passed in Madras state in 1879. There was a preventive measure in the regulation which banned the killing and entrapping of birds, animals and fishes in the 'wild state', irrespective of the fact that they are in the forests or not.[20] The provisions for declaring closed season were also included in the regulation. This paved way for declaring game sanctuary with minimum human presence. Moreover, this regulation consolidated provisions in many of the preceding regulations.

Travancore enthusiastically followed the developments in game preservation as it emerged in the colonies elsewhere. It also established an office of wildlife warden in 1933. By early 1930s itself the concern over the depletion of wildlife in the colonies of the empire was a hotly debated subject in Britain. An International Conference for Protection of the Fauna and Flora was held in London in 1933. Apart from representatives of the governments of Africa, the governments of United States of America, India and Netherlands have sent observers to the conference.[21] In the message sent by the prime minister of United Kingdom, Ramsay MacDonald stated that:

> In the territories for which they are responsible His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom regard themselves as trustees for the Protection of Nature not only in the interests of their present inhabitants, but in those of the world at large and of future generations (Hubback 1934: 6).

The success stories of the system of National Parks and the 'Game Fund' based action programmes as it were practiced in the US from 19th century soon captured the imaginations of the wildlife enthusiasts of the empire. Game fund was a system of raising revenue from the licensing and regulation of hunting through a game

preservation society duly supported by national laws. This fund was used for conducting the everyday affairs of the association. Thereafter, a similar system was recommended for most of the colonies including India. The possibility of elaborating the system was discussed in the Wildlife Conference held at New Delhi, in 1935. It was resolved to implement in the British India also (Hubback 1936: 15).

The making of the Game Warden's office in Travancore was preceded by lengthy discussions since 1926 when the Conservator of Forests brought to the notice of the Government that:

> wild animals and birds were becoming scarce in the State Forests owing to indiscriminate shooting, that several valuable and useful species hade been completely exterminated and the places like Bison Valley, Kaduvappara, and Karadikkuzhi are now not much more than names reminiscent of the wild animals that once abounded there (TFM 1947: 40).[22]

It was also felt that the situation would only become graver because of the extension of cardamom cultivation, assignment of land inside the forests for food crop cultivation, and granting of gun licences. However, when the idea of setting up a separate office of Game Warden was proposed, it was met with objections in the state legislative bodies on account of the fear that it might incur additional expenditure to the state (TFM 1947: 40-41). Nevertheless, having convinced that the forest staff was insufficient to take up the protection of wildlife and birds, government went ahead with the creation of a separate office of Game Warden. This was also informed by the institutional innovations and experiments carried out in various provinces in British India and abroad, especially in Africa, for protection of game species.[23]

S.C.H. Robinson was the first Game Warden (a post he was to hold for nearly a decade) in Travancore and he was to report to the Conservator of Forests. His responsibilities included 'preservation of wildlife in the forests of the state, to take measures…for the protection of game by creating game preserves in suitable places in the reserved forests and by the formation of Game Associations' (RAFD 1934: ii).[24] Curiously enough, he was also expected to 'regulate hunting and introduce new and varied species of the animals

and birds from other countries' (TFM 1947: 40-41).[25] One of the first tasks entrusted to him was setting up of the hunting camp at Edappalayam in connection with the visit of Viceroy (RAFD 1934-35: 49). This is not surprising as one of the objects of establishing the game sanctuary was to control hunting and to sustain the game population so that the privileged can avail the game hunting.

In 1936, in the aegis of the Game Warden, the spotted deer, which was 'facing extinction in the state', was introduced in the sanctuary. Two dozen spotted deer were transported from the Trivandrum zoo to the Periyar Game Sanctuary (RAT 1935-36:65). Out of which only 18 survived the transportation (RAT 1935-36:256). Installation of artificial saltlicks for the animals in suitable localities and providing boating and camping facilities to the visitors and organisation of Game Association were also taken up by the Game Department in Periyar Sanctuary. The Peermade Game Association played a crucial role and in return the Association enjoyed many privileges and government patronage. Appointment of the Game Warden gave a new impetus to the regulation of game hunting and circulation of knowledge on the topic in Travancore. For instance, in the year of its establishment, the Game Warden was elected as a member of the Bombay Natural History Society and a member of the Committee for Preservation of Wildlife in South India. Game Warden represented Travancore in the meeting of the committee held in the same year (RAFD 1934-35: 49).[26] He also represented Travancore in the All-India Conference for Preservation and Conservation of the Fauna and Flora of the Empire held at Delhi in 1935 (Proceedings 1935: iii). Most of the provinces in the British-India and princely states were represented in the conference and the resolutions of the conference paved way for formulation of new legal instruments including acts and rules, which were to come to place later.

All the forests in the state fell under Game Warden's jurisdiction as far as the matter of game protection was concerned (TFM 1947: 40-41).[27] The Periyar Reservoir and its surroundings in Thekkady started receiving more attention. Additional facilities were made for enabling stay, surveillance, observation and photography of the wildlife by erecting picnic sheds and *machans* at key points such as Manakkavala (RAT 1936-37: 71 and RAT 1937-38: 62-63).

In 1935, Maharaja of Travancore and Dewan paid visits to the Periyar Sanctuary in two occasions. Soon this became an annual event.[28] Some of the official reports provided accounts of such royal visits. It was said that, in 1938

> …Maharaja and the members of His family, and accompanied by the Dewan visited and camped in the proposed National Park on two occasions and were able to see plenty of game. They spend every day in wandering over the forests, watching the wild life to be seen there such as elephants, bison and sambur and taking cine and still photos of them. They even passed one moon lit night in a machan, when a herd of thirty to forty bison grazed past the machan (Annual Report 1938-39: iii).

Not only the Rajas of Travancore but royal families from other princely states also visited the sanctuary (RAFD, 1943-44: 30). For instance, in 1939, the Maharaja of Bikkanir visited the game sanctuary. It is said that they were all "pleased with the lake and the proposed National Park and were much impressed with the possibilities of the place becoming a Tourists' Paradise" (RAFD 1939: 48). By this time, in many occasions, one finds that the sanctuary is visualised as precursor to a National Park which is envisaged to cover larger area (Annual Report 1938-39: Frontispiece).[29]

Towards the last decade of the colonial rule, in 1940s, the official illustrated periodical of the Travancore government (namely, *Travancore Information and Listener*) carried several photographic essays on the game sanctuary. All these invariably were attempt to project game sanctuary as a sample of the pristine and virgin nature and an exotic tourism destination.[30] Some of these articles provide information for the tourists on road and rail access to the sanctuary, weather, facilities such as, boating in the lake, boarding and lodging. These articles also provide clues on the models of rifles suitable hunting in the area besides advicing on the photographic potentials of the locations. Full page commercials on the tourism potentials of the Travancore that regularly appeared in the *Travancore Listener and Information* mentions game sanctuary in the Hills as one of the four main destinations. The sanctuary is introduced here in these words: "[U]p in the hills, on the shores of

the Periyar lake, is the *Royal Game Sanctuary*, India's National Park where you can watch wildlife in their natural habitat".[31] It is notable that these articles and commercials in English were targeted only the readers with English literacy and the class represented by them.

The Peermade Game Association

The Peermade Game Association was formed in 1935 with the patronage of the Central Travancore Planter's Association, Peermade. The newly constituted Game Association was conceived on the lines of similar organisations in Nilgiris and elsewhere.[32] The Association as different from that of the High Range Game Preservation Association (which commanded only the area within the lease land in the Kannan Deven Hills), had a wider area under its command and enjoyed the patronage of the office of the Game Warden.[33] The Association became an influential appendage of the Game Department. The notice/leaflet circulated on the occasion of its formation invited the attention of the gathering to the changing worldview on game management in the 'civilised world'. It also highlighted the need to emulate the same in Travancore. The objectives of forming the Association were:

> to protect and preserve what is left, and to try and re-establish what has become extinct, and to introduce new species of birds and animals for our present advantage and future generations, and to undertake all this without detriment to the cultivator or to the sportsman (Minutes 1935).[34]

The statement further affirmed that the only way to do this was:

> (1) to create Sanctuaries or National Parks in the places were they will not be detrimental to the interests of cultivators, and where the Wild Life may live breed absolutely un molested, and the over flow of which will alone be available for sportsmen and (2) to start and encourage Societies [Sic] who will assist and co-operate with Government in drawing up and carrying out rules regulating shooting and fishing and other matters in connection therewith (Minutes 1935).[35]

Five objectives drawn along these lines and activities of the Association were enframed with a declaration that the Association would strive for better administration of game by closely working with the state government and other institutions.

The Association facilitated game hunting in its territories by restricting the privilege of hunting only to its members. It was reiterated that the "chief object of our Association is not only the preservation of fauna of the country, but at the same time to afford facilities for legitimate sport to those who want it' (Annual Report 1938-39: vii). Following the well-known authorities and writers in the area of sport hunting, including Theodore Roosevelt, it was asserted that 'for successful Game Preservation it is essential to have Game Sanctuaries' (Annual Report 1938-39: vii). It was also felt that a National Park would be more desirable as it would form a place 'where wild life can be left in perfect peace to breed and multiply'. It was also hoped that game sanctuary is only a transient phase towards founding of a National Park and until this, the game cannot be considered 'really safe.' The catchments of Periyar Lake with an area of nearly 160 square miles were to form the proposed National Park area. It was supposed that the overflow of the game from this area would be available to sportsmen. The document containing the minutes of the Association promised the members that, the Association is taking a leading role to achieve the said goals and promised excellent sport for it's members. In 1939, the Association boasted that '[O]ur Association has been placed on a footing far in advance of any similar Associations in India.' The basis of such a claim was that:

> …our government have gone further and done more …[in the matter of wildlife preservation] than any other government in India. Neither in British India nor in any state have the government concerned placed a large area like ours under the absolute control of a Game Association, given it an annual grant, also powers of issuing, refusing or cancelling licenses, nor have any of them conferred on the members of such an Association the powers of a Forest Officer as regards arrest of offenders, seizure of property liable to confiscation etc. (Annual Report 1939: v-vi).

These game conservation measures culminated empowering the Association, which worked on the principle of exclusion and providing access only for members. The creation of the sanctuary and authority to surveil in the area for excluding potential competitors by the Honorary Game Wardens began to pay benefits for its members- in the form of increased game and angling opportunities.

Apart from the ex-officio members, all member of the Association were of European origin and all of them were attached to planting companies. Though, the membership was opened to the residents of Travancore, their immediate relatives and non-resident Travancoreans in 1938, the Association consisted largely by a group which hailed from privileged class. The Association was conferred with legal and licensing powers. In 1936, a high power committee decided that Game Association would be the licensing authority as per the game rules within its jurisdiction. This also enabled the Association to make use of the money collected as license fee. Some of the members of the Association were vested with powers to arrest offenders and confiscate offender's property. Finally, the Association was given an annual grant of Rs. 2000. All these came in to force in 1937 with special interests of the new Dewan C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyyer.

The annual fee for shooting in the reserved as well as non-reserved forests was Rs.50, In addition to this, a daily fee of Rs.5 (for jungle sheep) and Rs.100 (for elephants and tigers) were also to be paid for animal shot (Annual Report 1939). Members of the Association were also engaged as Honorary Game Wardens.[36] Most of them were senior planters. As Honorary Game Wardens they had powers to take actions against those who violate the game laws. The office of the Game Wardens and Game Associations functioned as part of the planting companies and operated by enrolling members from the European planting communities on the hills. As a justification for this, one of the managers of the Finlay's who was in charge of the Association in High Ranges, stated "[I]t is the *shikkari* in these hills who is the best protection to game, as he is the best deterrent to poaching" (quoted in Muthiah 1993: 453). According to the official historian of United Planter's Association of South India (UPASI), "[U]nder the strict control of the Association, *shikaris* in

1937 brought down three tiger, four leopard, three gaur, seven sambhur, three Nilgiri Tahr, two wild boar, seven jungle sheep, five wild dog and one bear" (Muthiah 1993: 453). As in the case of sustained yield forestry, in case of sport hunt also the strategy was to retain the privilege of extraction to a select few, so as to ensure a continuous availability of game.

Periodically, reports on protection activities were sought from the Honorary Game Wardens. It is evident that the unauthorised hunting had reduced and population of the game were on increase (Annual Report 1938-39: 6-19). And there were also reports of the increase in the wild boar populations and increased damages occurred to the plantations. It is obvious that the goal was to increase the availability of the game. One of the Game Wardens observed that 'the moral effects of the Game Association is …having beneficial results. I think one would find from the Forest Department figures that convictions for poaching offences had increased on their records. This indirectly is probably due to the activities of Game Association' (Annual Report 1938-39: 13). For instance, wild dogs were considered as a competitor and 'pest' on the game and they were to be stamped out. There are records of incidences in which the poachers were scared away by mere presence of the patrolling party led by the Game Wardens (Annual Report 1938-39: 6-19).

One of the reports of 1939 shows that the population of the mahseer fish was increasing in the Periyar Lake due to the better protection effected by regular patrolling which brought down the illegal fishing. The Game Warden H. Gibbon provides us following testimony:

> …I landed 92 lbs. of mahseer fish over one week-end in November last year [1939]. Further, a 19 lbs. fish was banked soon after on plug bait and was taken from Periyar Lake area itself….Although visiting the lake on several occasions I think it was with only one exception I failed to return with a catch of any sort (Annual Report 1939: 18).[37]

The Association functioned better than Forest Department in surveiling on poachers. From the proceedings of the Association, it is possible to discern that a number of offences detected by the Association were under the consideration of courts, which included

offences such as shooting of Black Panther, fishing with dynamites etc. In 1939, the Association reported 33 offences. It is notable that the Association was able to report 34 cases in approximately two years, whereas the Forest Department reported only 23 cases from the same area over a period of five years (Annual Report 1938-39: 13). It was mentioned that the hunting licenses sought by the members were mainly for shooting the animals such as panther and tiger that prey on cattle.

The Association also had legislative powers. It was keenly updating the game rules by incorporating the newly introduced provisions from the Madras Game Rules. For instance, the prohibition of photography with flashlight and shooting from vehicles were a matter under the consideration of the Association in late 1930s. The ban on flashlight photography as suggested by the Association was subsequently approved by government on the condition that gazetted officers are exempted from this.[38] The Game Association also took steps to scrutinise the exemptions claimed by the government officials in holding licenses for the firearms under the arms rules. Association also declared that only 12-bore rifles, muzzle loading guns, and country guns would be allowed in the cardamom hills for the protection of the crops. It was further clarified that if anyone wished to apply for arms other than this, they should first become members of the Association. In pursuit of propaganda, the Association printed the game rules in both Malayalam and Tamil languages (Annual Report 1938-39: *passim*).

In 1940, the Association entered into an agreement with Madras government for the fishing rights in the Periyar Lake for ten years at the annual rate of Rs. 300 (RAFD 1940: 51). A boat was purchased by the Association for the use of the members and their families. It also made additional provisions for temporary membership at the rate of Re.1 per month so that more people can avail the services of the boat. Owing to these measures, the Association was steadily becoming more popular among the planters.[39]

Though damages caused by the elephants to the estate and property continued, the Association was hesitant to take steps. This was because the:

> elephants are looked on as "Royal Animals", and that there is a good deal of sentimental feeling prevailing about their destruction, and committee felt that the Game Warden (as in other countries) is the proper person to deal with such matters. If one or two of the real destructive animals were destroyed they think it would have desired effect, and that if the Forest Department will co-operate with the Association in the matter pointing out and identifying the proscribed elephant it is probable that elephants proscribed would be destroyed in future (Annual Report 1938-39: 38).

When the damages inflicted on crops by the wild elephants were brought to the attention of Conservator in 1939, the Conservator sought the help of Game Association to procure rules and details of practices relating to management of rogue elephants in Tanganyika and Kenya (Annual Report 1938-39: 38). Meanwhile, the Association demanded the government to vest increased powers of proscribing the elephants to the Honorary Game Wardens; because the legal framework in existence vested such powers only with the Dewan. Though this was declined, it is evident that the Association enjoyed considerable power in matters of granting gun licences in the area under its control.[40]

Population of the game in the sanctuary was increasing as an outcome of the control of poaching by the Game Association.[41] Besides, large-scale migration of the elephants from Vandanmedu to the game sanctuary was reported when the locality was cleared for cultivation as part of the measures to enhance food production in 1944. Population of bison was also reportedly increasing steadily. However, due to the depredations of 'vermin' such as wild dogs increase in the population of sambar was affected. So at the demands made by the Association, the government permitted their killing.

By early 1940s the Game Department was separated from Forest Department. In an attempt to create an 'unmanned wild country', similar to that of the National Parks in United States, the tribal population in the game sanctuary area was relocated to its fringes in 1940s. In 1941, the Game Warden stated that 'human intrusion in to forest reserves [were] completely prevented' and 'most of the persons in unauthorised occupation of lands in and adjoining the sanctuary were evicted during the year' (RAT 1942-43: 66).

The Game Department was under pressure to balance conservation of the game and prevention of the depredations by the wild animals. The Department sought for professional inputs in wildlife management and T.P. George who had undergone special training under the retired Game Ranger A.W. Wood was transferred to the Game Department in 1944. Rules for hunting were also made more stringent. The revised rules of the Game Association required a licensee to notify his intention of shooting 48 hours in advance. This was for making arrangements to attend the activities of these sportsmen by the watchers. Watchers were offered special rewards for reporting illegal hunts and hunters were warned of heavy penalties in case of the breeching of the stipulations.

Two of the members of the High Range Association were also members of the State Wildlife Advisory Board that was formed in 1956. In addition to the game preservation, Association members were made honorary elephant wardens and elephant *shikkari*-s who had powers to proscribe rogue elephants and shoot them when required by government. Until 1959, the Peermade Game Association was affiliated to the Wildlife Preservation Society of Northern India. The patronage the Association enjoyed from Game Warden's office and the information network of the game enthusiasts of other colonies of the empire facilitated the adoption of the latest features of regulatory measures. Considering the fact that National Park System envisaged the Park as an unmanned wild country to form culture medium for game to grow, multiply and spill over, one can find parallels in the system game sanctuary as conceived in Travancore and the national park system in the United States.[42] In Travancore, the tribal population residing inside the proposed national park area was evicted and settled in a colony on the fringes of the sanctuary.

Sacred and Profane: Governing the Nature

It is assumed in the paper that, in governmentalisation of forests, the objects and spatialities get implicated in networks of relations of power. Formation of such a field of power is made functional by normalisation of the codified practices and exclusion of potential competitors by vesting the authority of action with a few. Land area got distinguished as forests and non-forests; still further, forests

were classified as reserved forests and game sanctuary. (Distinctions among animals of the forest were made such as wild, domesticable, game, vermin, rogue etc. Further, mode of cultivations were distinguished between was settled vs. shifting cultivation.) Such distinctions made new visibilities of the same entity, namely forest. This visibility was closely corroborated, if not made possible, exertion of colonial power and creation of a new order in the forests.

It may be noted that while the wild animals, which did not have direct use value were exterminated, shooting of elephants were a closely scrutinised affair. Wild elephants were looked upon as a potential resource. And the wild herds of the elephants were necessary for the multiplication of them in the forests. However, the exploits of pachyderms often forced the state to act upon the population by killing, though such events were reduced to a bare minimum. The deployment of elephant power in the production process signifies two crucial aspects of man-nature relations as moulded under the colonial conditions. First, the utilitarian humanism asserted that "what is not useful" or counterproductive has to be annihilated. The second is that, what may be rendered useful needs to be made use of, but in a controlled manner for ensuring their conservation for the posterity.

The game hunting and angling as organised sport was the privilege of a small group of elite consisting of Europeans, state guests and, rarely, some members of the royal family. Most of these hunts emulated the values circulated through the hunting narratives from across the colonies of the empire. There was a stark distinction between the hunting by the natives and the new form of hunting, which came to represent the *actual* hunt. To be able to hunt in European way was impossible for the members of tribal communities who otherwise immobilised the animals for meat; at the most they could only become a good tracker. This was because hunt had become a strictly rule bound activity, a game, with its own etiquette, ethics and governmental approval. Moreover, not all animals made a game; it is only certain charismatic fauna such as tiger, leopard, gaur, sambar, mountain goat and proscribed elephant made an approved game. Hunting was more or less completely men's affair (while women were active in angling). In angling also, rules and definitions of the game were vital. So, to be able to do angling, it was

necessary to introduce imported trouts in the local streams and impoundments. The hunting in the empire carried the aura of conquest, growing up to manliness by overpowering the feminine nature (Pandian 1995: 239-263). Hunting was also part of securing the landscape in the colony from vermin, making it a more liveable place, bringing the place to a civilised and productive time.

It is notable that the construction of these spaces occurred in the context of a prevailing desire for augmenting the revenue by the princely state. The state aspired to maximise revenue from land both by 'improvement' of forests and by encouragement of commercial plantations of tea and coffee. Such policies intended to augment revenue, enabled circulation of certain forms of knowledges and acceptability of certain sets of ideals, made possible through networks of missionaries, forestry and plantation professionals, game hunters and anglers. It is evident that the game preservation activities on the montane-subtropical hill stations in Travancore catered to the interests of a privileged class of (game) hunters in the society, which consisted of representatives of the crown, planters and members of royal family.

Through institutions such as Game and Angling Societies and Associations and the Planter's Clubs perpetuated the European notions of hunting and wilderness as they were fashioned in the colonies of American and African continents and in India. The networks of planters, game hunters and sportsmen, along with the trafficking of rhetorics in the form of hunting narratives from other colonies of the British Empire, especially from the African subcontinent, have enabled the recasting of the ideas of 'wilderness' and 'game preservation'. These emergent notions and concept of new spatiality–forest as the game sanctuary—became a site of new sets of practices and produced new power relations. These relations of power also rendered certain practices unquestionable and normal. These relations and boundaries of inviolable spaces were normalised through legal enactments. Certain forest animals that were considered as vermin were consecrated in the micro-geography as game and wildlife. The consecration process was characterised by rendering of the animal as untouchable and sacred and by reserving it only for the use of the privileged. But, outside the bounds of sanctuary, they

were game; nevertheless, only for members of the Game Associations.

The colonial process enabled formation of certain forms of scientific networks and institutions, functionality for the scientific knowledges, practices and calculations for articulation of certain concerns, such as depletion, desiccation etc. This institutionalisation of knowledge is necessitated by the need for improved intelligibility of subjects and the landscape for exercising power on them so that they could utilise them. In our case, it can be said that, networks of knowledge production institutions of the colonial-state, such as botanical, anthropological and topographical surveys, census organisation, botanical gardens and meteorological department, played decisive and enabling roles. State institutions facilitated the material and rhetoric trafficking across national borders by improving the legibility of land and society (Philip 2003: 1-10). Creation of an institutionalised form of knowledge of forests and its people, within the confines of the state machinery, is a significant event in the history of governmentalisation and exercise of power.

Anxieties about the environmental consequences of human activities often manifested as concrete activities and policies, especially under the colonial conditions. Clearly, the desiccation discourse-understood as linking of deforestation to climatic change and rainfall reduction with a definite cause effect relation- was brought to scholarly attention by the prolific writings of Richard Grove (Grove 1993, 1994, 1995 & 1998 and Grove and Damodaran 2006 a & b). He had demonstrated the formation of intellectual-institutional networks and formation of desperate state policies as parts of the desiccation discourse from the second half of the 18th century. What is interesting to note here is that, it was the individuals and institutional networks in the colonies that were the key players in propagating desiccation discourse along with the institutions and intelligentsia at the Metropolis.

The environmentalist gospels of desiccationist discourse had direct governmental implications in the colonies.[43] The discourse has set down institutional control as a solution for curbing the 'irresponsible' behaviour of 'ignoramus' individuals and the communities who promoted desiccation by denudation of hills for cultivation. Therefore, from various levels of ideations the desiccationist discourse

developed as full-fledged state programmes of governance. Establishment of Forest Department just being one among them. Contemporarily, maintenance of canal irrigation systems, control of soil erosion, plans and preparations to forestall famines etc. have gradually converged on the theme of desiccation. The game preservation activities also functioned in similar lines in the space created in the wake of desiccation discourses and knowledge networks.

It is also evident that the game preservation under the colonial conditions is founded on utilitarian notions/ideals. Here, conservation ideals proceeded by distinguishing certain elements of nature as resources. Restrictions over the extraction on these resources (here game animals) are prescribed by fixing their extractive limits over space and time. These extractive limits are determined on the basis of certain calculations of the rate of recoupment of the resources. Here, sustained yield is assumed, which means limiting the extraction for enabling future consumption, which in a way is nothing but the extraction postponed. The logic behind the colonial game preservation was ensuring the uninterrupted utilisation. This is contrary to the present day idea of conservation that such restrictions be imposed by acknowledging the intrinsic value of these elements i.e. conservation for conservation's sake.

Notes

[1] Author is thankful to S. Raju for going through an earlier draft and for making suggestions that resulted in substantial changes in presentation and content of this paper. However, the responsibility for any shortcomings rest solely with the author.

[2] This is not to say that there were no other reasons inherent in the institutionalization of game preservation. I accept there could be other streams of thinking which would have at various stages of negotiation functioned favourably. My contention is that, as it is reflected in the early discussions of the formation of the sanctuary and in the practices of game hunting, the policy has an explicit bias in favour of preserving for use later - or consumption postponed. In addition, the conservation space was to function as a site of entertainment/leisure for the privileged class who imagined 'this nature' as exotic and not part of everyday life, clearly suggesting how immediate every day nature is considered different from 'the pristine nature'. This would also indicate that elaborate inscription of 'man and nature in the discourse of labour and wealth' as suggested by Raju (2003 *passim*).

[3] By the end of the 18th century, British in effect replaced the Arabs as buyers of teak timber for the construction of their sea going vessels (Chundamannil 1993: 12).

[4] The British Indian forest establishment had a formal beginning in 1864 with Dietrich Brandis as Inspector General of Forests (Chundamannil 1993: 20). The transfer of rule to the Crown following the revolt in 1857 and subsequent development of railway networks for enabling faster troop movements necessitated huge demand for railway sleepers. As the requirements of railway was seen as an issue related to the maintenance of internal security of the colony, the establishment of forest department as a governmental agency for meeting the timber demands of the crown was a high priority. The first version of Indian Forest Act was brought out in 1865 i.e. soon after the institution of the Forest Department. It was replaced by a more 'sophisticated' Act in 1878.

[5] The Sustained Yield Principle meant limiting the annual fellings to what the forests can yield, without deterioration by distributing the fellings equally over forests. The planning of the forestry operations for the sustained yield necessitated, preparation of Working Plans on the basis of a careful enumeration of the standing timber, estimation of growth rates based on actual ground survey and extrapolation using allometric functions. The Sustained Yield Principle offered a long-term frame of utilising the resources incessantly. Sustained yield introduced the concept of time in forestry. And this sense of time, the temporality, was not free from any of the attendant notions of control, power and government.

[6] The Indian Forest Act was passed in 1878. Madras Government declined to implement the Indian Forest Act of 1878 as the rights of the villagers over the forests were such as to prevent the formation of exclusive State Reserves. Thus, a separate Madras Forest Act was envisaged and following long discussions after four years of delay the Act was passed in 1882. Majority of the foresters in the Madras Presidency were sympathetic to the needs of villagers. Though, Madras Forest Act also was framed in the same general lines as the Indian Forest Act, the procedures relating to the constitution of reserved forests were made more people-friendly and simple. For more details see Guha (1990: 65-84).

[7] Continental forestry was developed during the 18th century in the war affected Germany. It was constituted as one of the cameral sciences, where, forestry was to aid insertion of forests in to the science of state finance. The cameralist reason of state as emerged in the late 18 century Germany involved strict control of the state finances. The core of the German forestry thus emerged in 18 century and modified by turn of the 19 century was 'describing the living forest quantitatively before subjecting it to the economic reason' (Rajan 1998: 328). Indirect methods were developed with the aid of integral calculus for estimation of wood volume of the standing trees without felling them. Sampling was one of the key operational principles in these methods. Some of them required only measurement of a few

variables as girth, diameter and height of the tree and, shape of the bole. Based on elaborate methods of controlled field measurements, some of these methods were perfected to create species specific ready reckoners of yield volume tables. These tables also provided a grid for conceptualising and visualising the forests. As per this framework the three crucial steps in forest management were; first, the geometric survey, second calculations of wood mass and the third 'linking the forest balance sheet to the monetary budget by treating the standing forest as capital, its yield as interest and then completing a chain of conversions from wood to units of currency' (Rajan 1998: 331). The key organising principles of this continental forestry were; one, minimum diversity and maximum homogeneity, second, balance sheet i.e. budgeting the wood value against the cost to be incurred in obtaining it, thirdly the sustained yield principle which corresponded with obtaining maximum yield continuously on longer period from fixed land area. The cameralist tradition had an inherent allegiance to the state control. And to be more precise, the science of this genre of forestry required autocratic control of the forests by the state and creation of an exclusive state owned forest estate for its practice. This formed the basis of the annulment of traditional rights of the people and reservation of forests. Local systems of forest utilisation involving simple coppice systems were discredited and banned along with other traditional forest uses by the 'scientific forestry'.

[8] See Amruth (2008: 161-199) for case of dissuading shifting cultivation and incorporation of the shifting cultivators to specific desirable production processes by the state.

[9] The regulation of 1888 concerned only about the reservation of forests; this was retained in the 1893 regulation more or less fully (TFM 1917: 1-2).

[10] This process was called 'forest settlement'; where, the word 'settlement' stands for settlement of private rights.

[11] For a detailed illustration of the Travancore case see Amruth (2008: 35-89).

[12] The official ethnography of Travancore was inaugurated with work on the publication of 'The Travancore Castes and Tribes' by a forest Ranger, L.A.Krishna Iyer. He was commissioned in 1934 to collect information on hill tribes by Travancore Government. The first Volume of the survey was published in 1937.

[13] Also see Nair (1988: 19-20).

[14] The author was a member of the Nilgiri Wild Life Association and one of the Honorary Game Wardens in Nilgiris (Annual report of the Committee of the Nilgiri Game Association for the year 1937-38, Annual Report 1938: 1).

[15] In later years, even when the camera started substituting guns, most of these terminologies of shooting, such as 'load', 'aim' and 'shoot' remained. Besides, the camera significantly changed the concept of trophy as the

photograph replaced it. In case of trophy, it was unique and nonreplicable, but photographs have been replicable. "Shooting" was common to both hunting and photographing, but the outcomes were different.

[16] Rules Passed under Section 21 (g) and Section 22 (f) of the Travancore Forest Regulation Dated 11th November 1912 (TFM 1917: 62). This regulation was to replace an earlier regulation of 1906.

[17] The fees stipulated for the each licence for hunting in the whole Division, except Devikulam, was Rs.50. and Rs.25 in case of un-reserved forests and government lands. Parties with hounds and packs of dogs with 5 or more dogs shall pay Rs.100. Provision for hunting or shooting for sport within reserved forests and other government lands at payment of a fee of Rs. 200 and the license was valid for one year.

[18] It was between 31st of May and 1st of October and for the feathered game and here it was between 30th November and 1st April.

[19] This included two heads each of the mature males of bison, ibex, spotted deer, sambhur and such other animals with a single license in a year. In case of elephant, female or immature male of bison, ibex, sambar or spotted deer it was unlawful to kill, capture, pursue or attempt any of these at any time of the year even with a license.

[20] The schedule of animals (game) that are protected under the regulation are specifically: (1) Bustards, ducks, geese, floricans, jungle-fowl, partridges, pea-fowl, pheasants, pigeons, quail, sand-grouse, snipe, spur-fowl and wood-cock. (2) Hares, Malabar squirrels, asses, oxen, bison, buffaloes, elephants, sheep, goat, antelopes, gazelles, and deer. (Regulation XII of M.E. 1089. A regulation to make better provision for the protection and preservation of Game and fish (TFM 1917: 79).

[21] Such meetings had clear precedents; in 1931 an international conference was held in Paris for protection of nature (Hubback 1934: 5).

[22] See R.Dis.No.2099/33/Devpt., Chief Secretary, dated 23-11-1933.

[23] It was not only the idea of game sanctuaries that spread to India from the Africa but some of the hunting etiquettes were also originally evolved in the context of African game hunting (Phythian-Adams 1936).

[24] Robinson was a retired Land Revenue and Income Tax Commissioner and his post was equivalent to ex-officio Deputy Conservator of Forests. The appointment was made as per the Proceedings R.Dis.2099/33/ Development dated 23rd November 1933.

[25] Also see RAFD (1934: 49).

[26] It is notable that the Travancore – Cochin Bird survey by Salim Ali, Bombay Natural History, Society was also commissioned in the 1933 (Ali 1985: 78-85).

[27] R.Dis.No.2099/33/Devpt., Chief Secretary, dated 23-11-1933.

[28] The royal patronage used to be an important catalyst in the institution of Game Warden's Office. Maharajah was a life member of the Bombay Natural History Society and he also donated Rs. 5000 to the Peermade Game Association at the time of its formation.

[29] A touring map published by the Peermade Game Association in 1939 had marked the area in the catchments of the Periyar Lake as 'Proposed National Park'. See the Annual Report and Minutes of Meetings of the Peermade Game Association for M.E. 1114 (Annual Report 1938-39).

[30] For instance, see following articles in *Travancore Information*: 1941 May (pages 37-38), 1941 June (pages 23-30), November 1942 (pages 7-23) and *Travancore Information and Listener*: May 1944 (pages 20-21), February, 1945 (pages 34-36), November 1946 (pages 48-54).

[31] *Travancore Information*, February 1941 (page 80).

[32] The notice circulated during on the occasion of its formation stated that the proposed Society would be conceived in the lines of similar societies in Ceylon and Madras Presidency.

[33] High Range Game Preservation Association was formed at Munnar, in 1928, under the aegis of planting companies and game hunting enthusiasts. The District Magistrate of Devikolam, T.H.Cameron was the ex-officio member of the High Range Wildlife Preservation Association (Singh 1988: 57). The Association received the patronage and support of the M/s. James Finlay & Company limited. It also organised an Angling Association in High Ranges. Two game watchers, both of them Mutuva tribe, were appointed by the Association at the concession area on a handsome salary of Rs. 20 per month. Soon after its formation, emulating its counterpart in the Nilgiris, the Association declared a closed season for hunting and shooting in the concession area and stipulated the maximum number of animals that could be shot. According to this, hunting was allowed only after 1st of October. The Association, not only maintained a vigil on the populations of animals in the hills, but also kept an account of the number of animals culled. The Association was guided by the notions and ideas of Game Management translated/ transported through the networks of Game (Preservation) Associations established in British India and princely states in Central and Northern India. In 1932 an Angling Association was started in the hills and the game association was coordinating the activities of the Association. For nearly two decades, until 1947, all members of the Committee of the Game Preservation Association were European men and in the case of High Range Angling Association, among the 30 paying members eight of them were women (Singh 1988: 51).

[34] See Page 1 of the Minutes of the Meeting held at the Peermade club on Sunday the 27th March, 1935, from the files of Peermade Game Association, Arnakkal Estate.

[35] See typewritten Manuscript Page 2, of the Minutes of the Meeting held at the Peermade club on Sunday the 27th March 1935, from the files of Peermade Game Association, Arnakkal Estate.

[36] Eight members of the association were made Honorary Game Wardens and were invested with the necessary powers under the Forest Act (RAT 1937-38: 63).

[37] The Annual Report and Minutes of the Peermade Game Association for the year 1938-39 (Annual Report 1938, 18).

[38] By late 1930s, it was reported that "…the camera is gradually being substituted for the rifle, and nowadays generally sportsmen prefer to go and watch wildlife in their natural surroundings than to shoot them' (Annual Report 1938-39: 26).

[39] The membership of the Association increased from 48 in 1937-38 to 55 in 1939-40 and 75 in 1940-41(see relevant section of the Report on the Administration of Travancore for respective years).

[40] The Minutes and Annual Report of the Peermade Game Association for the year 1938-39 (1938: 51).

[41] See relevant portions of the Reports on the Administrative of Travancore (RAT) for various years in 1940s.

[42] Here the Game Sanctuary is analogous to an inoculated microbial culture medium in the sense that game animals can thrive and multiply.

[43] Theoretically, the notion of governmentalisation has antecedents in the Foucauldian notion of governmentality; it provides insights on technologies of government and creation of docile subjects through modern disciplinary regime (Dean 1994, *passim* and Burchell *et al* 1991, *passim*).

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Note: In all the citations with abbreviated titles listed below, the year referred is the year of reporting, not the actual years of their printing/publication.

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Making of the *Jungle Mappilas*: Colonial Law and the Construction of Native Criminality in Early British Malabar

Santhosh Abraham

This article looks into the ways in which a section of the Mappilas of Malabar were categorised as Jungle Mappilas epitomising criminality and banditry by the colonial state between the years 1792 and 1802. It is argued that there were several attempts by the colonial state from the very beginning to classify certain sections of the Malabar population as distinct from the rest. This characterisation in Malabar was the first of its kind in south India, where the British attempted to construct criminal types to serve the imperial interests. The relegation of the recalcitrant native groups into criminality was preceded by conciliatory interventions to win them over as 'useful' participants and collaborators of the colonial state. The rebellions of the 'Jungle Mappilas', especially of Unni Musa Muppan and other chieftains are highlighted in the article, to understand the reactions of the Malabar public to the Company rule in its initial days. Paradoxically, these rebellions strengthened the hand of the colonial state and apart from repression, allowed it to push the principles of the rule of law firmly into the public.

The colonial modalities of 'writing and documenting' exposes the stereotypical sense of the British, who depicted the Indians among other things as 'criminals', 'robbers', 'rebels', 'docile Hindus', 'fanatic Muslims', 'untrustworthy Arabs', etc. Such nomenclatures were invented to describe those groups reacted against the colonial invasion

and was an important tool in de-legitimising such local uprisings. As Edward Said pointed out, through this exercise, various colonial texts had made sweeping generalizations about the Orient, its culture, mentality and society (Said 2001: 193).

Most studies on native criminality in colonial India have focused on the mid or late nineteenth century with special reference to the ways and reasons by which the native tribes, peasants and groups were labelled as 'criminals' by the colonial state. Native criminality is often regarded as the only means left for livelihood. As Ranajit Guha noted, 'there were regions of chronic poverty, where for hundreds of years peasant youths have been slipping out of desolate villages and starvation and bonded labour in order to take to dacoity as a profession' (Guha 1983: 84). More pointedly David Arnold has argued that 'the colonial Criminal Acts were used against the marginals who did not conform to the colonial pattern of settled agricultural and wage labour' (Arnold 1985: 85). Sanjay Nigam too found that the category of 'criminals' was a colonial stereotype invented to justify the punitive 'disciplining and policing' interventions to sections of population that were unwilling to accept the new moral order that the British sought to impose on rural society (Nigam 1990, 1990a). In any case, by the late nineteenth century, the colonial state constructed the criminality of such people, informed in chorus by the ideas of caste, race and groups (Brown 2001). This article looks into the ways in which, 'native criminality' was perceived during the early days of British rule in India, with special reference to British Malabar where the colonial state manoeuvred to classify certain sections of the Malabar population as distinct from the rest.

It was in 1792, with the *Srirangapatanam* treaty[1] between Tipú Sultán of Mysore and the East India Company that the region of Malabar was brought under the British colonialism.[2] Soon after the treaty, a section of the Mappilas in Malabar led by a local Chieftain *Unni Musa Muppan*, in south Malabar, were characterised as *Jungle Mappilas*, equivalent to 'criminals' and 'bandits' by the colonial state.[3] This characterisation in Malabar was the first of its kind in South India, wherein the British attempted to construct criminal types discursively. In the process, several disciplinary measures and procedures were used to remould the recalcitrant colonial public into 'useful' participants and collaborators to the colonial state.

Colonial Construction of Indian Criminality: Caste, Race and Group

Questions of public order and discipline had been a concern of British administrators since the establishment of East India Company's authority in India. The British quest to establish the notions of law and order and definable and reliable relationship between the colonizers and the governed entailed the formulation of knowledge through various ethnological investigations into a wide range of questions on native society (Cohn 1997). The early efforts of the Company to establish knowledge of India and to lay down a grid of order over the subjects produced what has subsequently been referred to as the discourse of 'Orientalism' (Said 2001, Inden 1990). The Orientalist identification of the Code of *Manusmriti*[4] suggested the concept of hierarchical caste and the related notion of *dharma* as the legal keys to unlocking pre-colonial judicial India. High-castes, by virtue of their greater privilege, occupied key positions within the criminal justice system. Outside the four-fold hierarchy were the untouchables and the criminal castes and tribes. The pre-colonial Indian notions of policing and justice were in agreement with the caste hierarchy wherein offences were defined and penalised according to caste, respectability and social norms.

By internalising the knowledge of the high-castes, the early colonial officials established key sites of 'law and order'. Caste definitions assumed a more concrete form, not only in a social and political capacity, but also in the construction of caste-related criminality. Thus, Warren Hastings' plan for the administration of justice in India assumed that indigenous norms could be incorporated into Western-based legal texts without significantly altering the laws of the *Quran*, with respect to the Mohammedans and the laws of the Brahmin *œâstras* with respect to the Hindus (Firminger 2001: 18, Morley 1858: 178). The system being planned for Malabar in 1792 was not different from the Bengal experiences. As an attempt to bring out an effective rule of law in the region, the British officials initially announced that, 'every offender shall hereafter be immediately seized on and by proper persons appointed at Calicut, judged and punished according to the laws of the *Quran* and *Veda*'.[5] As Kartik Kalyan Raman has pointed out that, 'this was a process, whereby

the British made compromises by supporting the symbolic expressions of indigenous policy and accordingly adapted their expectations to certain prevalent Indian legal forms, such as the appellations and form of tribunals or the applicable law' (Raman 1994: 740). The central aspect to the control of the people of India was thought to be establishing continuity with the ancient regime, which as Derret said 'took the orthodox Brahminic learning as the standard of Hindu law' (Derret 1962: 21).

The construction of colonial notions of Indian criminality was coincided with a much larger exercise to classify and stratify Indian society. This acquired its legitimacy from the evolutionary theories, especially the typologies from what was increasingly becoming known as criminal anthropology. Marc Brown has pointed out that, 'ideas about criminal types and the development of a scientific understanding of native criminality in India emerged directly from these exercises which were, themselves, grounded in the principles and measurement systems of race theory' (Brown 2001: 349). The use of 'scientific' notions of 'criminality' culminated in the arrest, removal and forcible transportation of the natives. Therefore, it is right to say that, legal language and cultural and 'scientific' images also played a crucial role in framing the Indian criminality. The race theory and caste notions also became handy to be deployed against 'rebel' groups and communities in India.

Since the late eighteenth century, several efforts were also made by the British colonial officials to classify 'criminals' into groups and types. It was the problems associated with governance that led colonialists to classify particular groups of communities as criminals. During the early colonial rule in India, crime was associated with groups rather than individuals. British officials in India were actively involved in tracking and recording the details of these groups, now referred to as criminal fraternities. The behaviour of such groups, their family and kinship associations, their language and their social customs were measured and duly recorded. An array of colonial scholars have worked on the making of criminal communities and groups in north India through the discourse of race, caste and tribe, especially *Thuggees* and *Sansis,* who were known for their perceived criminal propensities.[6] Very recently, in an interesting comparative

analysis on colonial India and Victorian England, Preeti Nijhar has stated that, 'in colonial India, identities were constituted through the use of similar authoritative techniques of legal (criminal and civil law) and scientific methods, as in Victorian England (Nijhar 2009: 115). Her analysis further suggested that, crimes of survival by the *Sansi* were redefined by imported imperial definitions of criminality (Ibid: 134). The 'criminal' tribes and castes of imperial India were legally and socially reified in ways similar to the 'dangerous' classes in Victorian England.

The movement to classify native rebels into 'groups' in Malabar had been initiated with the identification and categorization of *Jungle Mappilas* as 'professional *Mappila* robbers' who adopted banditry against their Hindu landlords as an outburst of retaliation and revolt against the political authority. The following sections of this article will examine the construction of native criminality in the discourses of colonial administration in Malabar.

Mappilas as 'Criminals' and 'Bandits': *Jungle Mappila* Movements in Malabar

Muslims of Kerala were known by the generic appellation of *Mappilas*.[7] The *Mappilas* are geographically located in Malabar and their origin is often traced back to Arab traders and converts to Islam from among the natives of Malabar.[8] Throughout the colonial rule, the attitude of the British towards *Mappilas* was a mixture of positive and negative remarks and policies. The *Mappilas* in return also showed their dissatisfaction and resistances to the alien rule.

The colonial approach towards the *Mappilas* had different stages since the beginning of the British rule in Malabar. At the beginning of the Malabar settlement, the attitude of the British was favourable towards the Hindu establishment, mainly due to the British perception that during the Mysorean interlude in Malabar the *Mappilas* had given their support to Tipú while the Hindus had opposed him.[9] The colonial tendency to classify the population into groups and sections, as exercised against the tribes in north Indian regions, was visible in Malabar in the categorization of *Mappilas*. In 1792, for instance, the joint commissioners of Malabar conducted a survey of the region of Malabar and reported that,

> [A]long with the great and respectable body of *Mappilas* there are also very several numerous bands of public robbers by profession in Malabar country who from their haunts and general residence are called *Jungle Mappilas*. They are banded together under the chiefdom of *Unni Moosa Muppan*, who is an open avowed robber. He has several places of residences in the jungles. He kept with him four head *Moopas* (heads of the gangs) and two hundred armed men, besides many other inferiors, who infest the jungles and pay him tribute and acknowledging him as their chief, join him when required. They frequently assemble at night and to commit depredations as usual after which it was their customs to divide immediately and disperse. They were concerned with kidnapping children and to be sold to commanders of European vessels for exportation.[10]

This colonial record clearly identifies *Unni Musa* as 'chief of public robbers' and the category of *Jungle Mappilas* as 'public robbers'. The report also identified the 'members of lower caste communities of south Malabar, who either voluntarily espoused Islam or resorted to banditry' as part of the group.[11] This representation in the Joint Commissioners' report was the primary resource from which the later administrators drew upon resources to illustrate the inhabitants of Malabar. However, the categorization of a section of the *Mappila* community as 'robbers' and 'bandits' – together as 'criminals' - was the continuation of the initiatives of the Bengal Governor General Warren Hastings in 1772.[12] All the reports, diaries and political and judicial documents that followed the Joint Commission reports in Malabar continued with this classification till the first decade of nineteenth century. John Wye's report identified the *Mappilas* as 'very turbulent, prone to robbery and the revenue always more difficult to uncover where the *Mappilas* prevail' (Wye 1801: 13). Spencer's report on the administration of Malabar also continued with the same categorisation *Jungle Mappilas* and with the very same propensities (Spencer *et.al* 1801). Another description of a *Mappila* as a 'robber' and 'bandit' is found in the Board of Revenue Consultations of 1802.[13] Interestingly, in these initial instances, the term 'fanatic' was nowhere mentioned.

Another fact which should be noted here is that John Wye's report identified the *Nairs* of Malabar along with the *Jungle Mappilas*

as 'criminals'. The report said, 'the *Nairs* of Malabar are the hereditary military…..always proceeded whether on business or for pleasure with arms in their hands and the *Mappilas*, since the *Muhammadan* invasion, being more independent have done the same' (Wye 1801: 16). The primary objective of such categorizations, as described by Homi Bhabha, 'is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate type on the basis of social origin in order to justify conquest and to establish a system of administration' (Bhabha 1994: 77). This view is similar to the view taken in 1773 by Warren Hastings who instructed to regard all persons travelling with arms through the country as enemies of the government. Possession of arms was a matter of grave concern for the state. In another example, the attitude of the British was seen as they were taking advantage of the breach between the *Nairs* and the *Mappilas*. Wye's report projected 'the spirit of jealousy between the *Mappilas* and *Nairs* as the circumstance favourable to the Company government' (Wye 1801: 17). Richards' administrative paper also confirmed this as, 'a judicial management of the enmities and rival ships of the adverse tribes of *Nairs* and *Mappilas* may materially conduce to the firm and permanent establishment of our own power' (Richards 1804: 8).

The colonial classification of *Jungle Mappilas* as 'bandits' takes our attention to the concept of 'social banditry' coined by E.J. Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm explains the social bandits as 'peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within the peasant society and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, as avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation' (Hobsbawm 1969: 13). Hobsbawm also examined banditry as a form of 'primitive rebellion' occurring in pre-capitalist societies and bandits, robbers of a special kind, perceived as outlaws and delinquents by the state, were supported and revered by the peasant community as heroes and avengers (Hobsawm 1959: 3). Specific to India he has pointed out that, 'a possible or partial exception might have to be made for the peculiar caste divided societies of Hindu Southern Asia, where social banditry is inhibited by the tendency of caste robbers, like all other sections of society, to form self – contained caste and communities' (Ibid: 15-16). Indian scholars have further confirmed that there is little firm evidence for social banditry in South Asia (Yang 1985: 1-47). Therefore, the colonial

categorisation of *Jungle Mappilas* as 'bandits' exhibits incongruity with the concept of 'social bandit'.

Colonial Law and Mappila 'Criminals'

The colonial construction of criminality among the *Mappilas* got further strengthened as the British began to implement the western legal codes. It was on this 'constructed' idea of *Mappila* 'criminality' as 'robbers', 'bandits' and 'criminals' that the Joint Commissioners proclaimed punishments and penalties for the region of Malabar. The commission suggested that,

> [w]e fear that the avidity of gain in individuals and the unprincipled habits of the Jungle and the other *Mappilas*, who long have been in the practice of driving emolument from thus preying on their fellow creatures, have on the experiment proved too powerful for these inhabitants which were however all the commissioners had been in their power to promulgate against such inveterate mischief, in the carrying on of which the law less part of the *Mappilas* found themselves as much interested.[14]

This ethnological observation of the Joint Commissioners on the 'criminals' in Malabar informed the British administrative consciousness to enact separate *Faujdari* laws to bring this 'dangerous band' under the command of law. Hence, the 1793 criminal regulations clearly framed notes on punishments by penalties, fines and scourging against child stealing or sale of children for exportation, etc.[15]

It was the British decision to take over the administration of Malabar that brought the *Mappilas* of Malabar into collision with the British administrators, particularly due to the British decision to restore the Hindu Rajas and chieftains in Malabar.[16] This issue can also be discussed in the background of the Mysorean interlude in Malabar, which saw the upper sections of the Malabar Hindu society taking refuge in Travancore to save themselves from the 'oppression' of Tipú Sultán. The Joint Commission noted that, 'during the time of Tipú's rule, many of the *Janmies* were reduced to the necessity of relinquishing everything and of taking refuge in Travancore where a Hindu prince maintained his independence of Mysore'.[17] Scholars

have different views regarding the habituation of independent tenures by the *Mappila Kanamdars* during the period of '*Janmi* depression' in Malabar. Conrad Wood is of the view that Mysore hegemony had provided the Mappilas with unique opportunities to advance their interests at the expense of the high-caste Janmi hierarchy (Wood 1976: 543-44). K.N. Panikkar, on the other hand, has pointed out that only the *Mappila* chiefs like *Unni Musa*, *Chemban Poker* and *Attan Gurikkal*, took advantage of the situation and enhanced wealth, power and influence, through their association with Tipú Sultán (Panikkar 1992: 55).

The Joint Commissioners of Malabar observed that 'when the *Janmies* returned to Malabar from exile to reclaim their ancient estates with the support of the British, this entailed not only resistance but disaffection and open rebellion from the *Mappila* tenants who during the period of *Janmi* depression and exile had habituated themselves to the ideas of independent tenure'.[18] From the moment Tipú's forces were in retreat, members of the *Zamorin*'s family, thought of attacking and subduing the *Mappilas*. The Joint Commissioners substantiated this:

> the ill-will that subsisted between the *Mappilas* and those of the *Nairs* and other Hindu castes together with the ill-judged and unsuccessful measures of violence that were resorted to by the latter of the *Zamorin*'s family to reduce them; an object which might much more easily have been attained by the opposite means of conciliation and mild treatment.[19]

It was reported that in 1792, the *Mappilas* of *Kondotti* (south Malabar) complained of 'oppression by the *Nairs*, in so much they were obliged to take up arms in their own defence'; and therefore the Commissioners of Malabar issued a warning to all persons especially the *Nairs* 'not to oppress the *Mappilas* and the *Mappilas* were required to apply themselves to their former occupations'.[20] The British apparently tried to halt this persecution and save the *Mappila* tenants from the extortionate demands of the *Janmies*. Admitting the discrimination, the Joint Commission issued a public notice, giving consideration to the *Mappila* tenants over the Hindu *Janmies* and anything different from such an approach was thought to be 'unjust and contrary to the intention of the honourable

Company'.[21] However, the oppression continued in the form of arbitrary tax collection from the *Mappila* peasants.

The admiration found in the Joint Commission report as 'the great and respectable body of the *Mappilas*', proclaimed the need to reconcile and attach as far as possible body of the *Mappilas* to the Company's government. Therefore in order to reconcile the people to the new order, the British proclaimed a general amnesty for all crimes committed by the *Mappilas* and *Nairs* against each other up to the 1st of February 1793. It proclaimed,

> ...the Commissioners appointed for settling the ceded countries, considering the pernicious state of things in the region to make all the inhabitants unite and live together on terms of concord .....have therefore determined that it would be neither politic nor just for the present Government to make a strict scrutiny into the manifold enormities committed during the last twenty years in this country. It is merely declared that no acts of homicide, maiming, robbery or theft committed before the first of the present month of February shall be cognizable in any court of justice and as Government have in the present instance evinced its merciful disposition towards those unfortunate persons.....and the Government will take necessary actions on such persons who offence against the public peace and private security of any persons from the date aforementioned, wherefore let this proclamation be a warning to all men in time to come to observe a just and circumspect conduct towards each other and to deport themselves in all respects as become good and peaceful subjects'. [22]

This offer of general pardon was directed especially to the section of Mappilas branded as *Jungle Mappilas* and their chief *Unni Musa Muppan* who apparently maintained connection with Tipú and continued his resistance. *Unni Musa Muppan* reportedly participated in the war against the Company with Tipú Sultán of Mysore.[23] *Unni Musa* is also reported to have become effective proprietor in *Janmies'* landholdings in their absence during the period of Tipú.[24] By this colonial act of proclaiming pardon to the native 'criminals' of Malabar, colonialism projected itself as representing the 'impartial rule' of the enlightened over a primitive people. However, the objective was to

gain the allegiance of the southern *Mappilas* and to show off the colonial notion of 'humanitarian concerns' towards the colonized.

In an attempt of remoulding the recalcitrant colonial public into 'useful' participants and collaborators in the operations of the colonial state in Malabar, the earlier Mysorean plan was adopted in the region. As in the Mysorean plan of administration, the British continued with the appointment of *Moopas* (headman) to various districts with a proportion of armed *Mappilas* to assist them. These *Moopas* who were entrusted with the collection of revenue and the preservation of peace were to be subordinated to the British superintendent of each division (Spencer 1801: 28). The objective of the British at this juncture was to gain the allegiance of the southern *Mappilas* 'even by scarifying to them, if necessary, some part of what might be the justifiable claims of government'. Roland Miller has pointed out that, these conciliatory gestures towards the *Mappilas*, whether genuine or politically motivated, fell afoul of the major direction of the British policy (Miller 1976: 105).

The early colonial discourse on *Mappilas* and indigenous criminality is problematic and significant for multiple reasons. Certain observations need to be emphasized in particular. Firstly, the Malabar Joint Commission had observed that, only a small population of the 'great and respectable body of the *Mappilas*' were reported to be the 'criminals'. Secondly, the criminal bandits, especially the *Jungle Mappilas* were not comprised of *Mappilas* alone; it was recognized as voluntary converted *Mappilas* and the members of the lower caste communities. Thirdly, the evidence of crime in the reports was assumed rather than established. The early reports which followed Joint Commission reports, did not change or go further from this initial colonial construction of *Mappila* criminality till the term 'fanatic' was enforced and administered into existence during the later decades of nineteenth century.

The Mappila Chieftains and Colonial Law in Malabar

Among the *Mappila* chieftains, who took up arms against the British authority were *Majeri Attan Gurikkal*, *Unni Musa Muppan* and *Chemban Pokker*. The resistances of the *Mappila* chieftains in matters of revenue collection and against the new legal codes resulted in the change in attitude of the Company towards the *Mappilas*.

Various forms of struggles like *Mappila – Nair* rivalries, attack on the government offices were rooted in these resistances.[25] It was the attempts of the *Mappila* chiefs and leaders to question the authority of the Company government, soon after its establishment in Malabar, that led to the confirmation and categorization of the *Mappila* 'criminality' and the proclamation regarding the disarmament of the natives. It is important to explore the activities of *Mappila* chieftains and the legal measures adopted by the Company to put an end to it.

The first resistances of the *Mappilas* were led by *Manjeri Attan Gurikkal*.[26] He was a revenue official in Ernad (south Malabar), appointed by the *Zamorin* of Calicut. Under the British rule, when the *Zamorin* relinquished the collection of revenue for the Ernad Taluk in 1797, *Attan Gurikkal* was appointed as the head of the police establishment in Ernad consisting of hundred men. Along with *Attan Gurikkal*, another *Mappila* chieftain, *Chemban Pokker* was employed as a revenue official in *Cheranad* by the British. This was also the result of the colonial ideology that the 'the collections of revenue should be entrusted to men of their own sect'.[27] Later the Company reports explained that the *Daroghaship* was exploited by these chieftains.[28] But, this was not restricted to *Mappila* chieftains alone; the reports also threw evidences to the mismanagement in revenue collection by Hindu chieftains and local *Rajas*. Buchanan confirms that 'their (*Rajas* and Chiefs) greed and misrule were without comparison and nothing could exceed the despotic rapaciousness of these men' (Buchanan 1807: 482).

'Later in 1799', noted by Ibrahim Kunju, '*Attan Gurikkal* broke with the British after his brother-in-law was executed on charge of killing a Nair by the new British courts' (Kunju 1989: 86). Small frictions led *Gurikkal* to ally himself with *Unni Musa Muppan* to fight the British. On the other side *Chemban Pokker* who was imprisoned in the *Palghat* fort because of bribery and corruption as the head of the revenue escaped from the fort sometime in 1799 and returned to *Cheranad*. At this juncture, an attempt was made by the British to secure the future good behaviour of *Chemban Pokker* by pardoning and restoring his possessions.[29] But it appears that he did not keep the word and his possessions were captured and his house burnt by the British, whereupon he fled to the jungles and became a law

and order problem for the British in *Chernad* and its neighbourhood.[30] Later, his association with *Attan Gurikkal* and *Unni Musa* made it a formidable combination against the British authority in south Malabar.

Unni Musa Muppan was an official under the Mysore rule in Malabar. The Company observed that *Unni Musa Muppan* was one of those 'farmers, who when the high-caste Hindus had fled the country in the Mysorean period had become effective proprietor of their land holdings in the *Mappila* districts'.[31] After the Mysorean interlude in Malabar, *Unni Musa* turned hostile to the newly established British rule. His defiance is well conveyed in the message sent to a British officer who had restrained him from collecting taxes from the *Mappila* holdings. *Unni Musa* wrote,

> For what reason you, your *Nairs* have put a stop to my *Makama* (tax?) Do not think that I have much fear of you and your guards… Have you not heard of the murder and robbery at the *Cutcherry*? Even in your dreams do not think to put a stop to what I do. Have you not heard of my bravery?' (*Unni Musa Muppan*). [32]

Unni Musa's letter is significant as this is the first of its kind in India which officially and formally depicted the attitudes of the natives against the Company. In the administration processes in India, the British inaugurated the new technology of writing where a form of regularity was deployed in addressing the British through 'formal letters'.[33] *Unni Musa*'s letter also takes our attention to the new form of 'argumentative writing' in colonial India as the nature of these letters was either petition or an argument, pointing out circumstances, situations and state of affairs of a particular issue, incident or practice. The public space of the native Indian is revealed here as the natives began to write and 'petition' to the colonial state expressing their anxieties, grievances and problems.[34] This particular letter was written by *Unni Musa* because of the decision of the Company to use the *Kolkars* and *Silbendy* groups (armed natives from both Hindus and Muslims) along with the Company troops against his group, the *Jungle Mappilas*.[35] However, attaching a group of native militia was not a new feature in the administrative strategy of the British. Certain proposals were brought out during the taking over of Malabar district by the British that permitted 'one battalion of

Mappila militia in the South and another battalion of *Nairs* in the North'.[36] The Company's attempt to put an end to *Unni Musa* became intense after his neglect of the proposal of general pardon to the *Jungle Mappilas*.[39] Therefore, the British immediately proposed the use of more force. The Joint Commissioners observed that, 'one force should be immediately made use of to bring him to a proper sense of his duty, and to convince him that he cannot remain in this country without conducting himself as an obedient and quite subject'.[40] Logan has provided an account of the conflicts between *Unni Musa* and the British. 'The Company soldiers led by Captain Burchall upon the instructions of Major Dow marched against *Unni Musa Muppan* and surrounded the fortified house. The 'robber' chief however made a desperate sally and escaped. But some of his noted followers were captured and his lands sequestered' (Logan 1887: 492). Though the followers were caught and the hiding places were destroyed, *Unni Musa* continued to be remained as a serious threat to the Company. *Unni Musa* even at the face of strong attack by the Company troops was said to be able to form an alliance with the revolting *Rajas* of the *Zamorin* family and some of the *Poligar* chiefs who entered into Malabar forests from Coimbatore (Ibid: 496).

Disarmaments in Malabar

All these incidents subsequently led to the proclamation of disarmament measures in Malabar. The agitating attitudes of the rebels and their continued contacts with *Srirangapatanam* forced the Company to negotiate with the rebels. This was also because of the fear of growing influence of Tipú Sultán and to get support of the Malabar rebels against Tipú. Hence, *Unni Musa* was offered a pension of thousand rupees per annum, but he refused it and as a result a reward of three thousand rupees was offered for his capture. British force seized his fortified house at *Pandalur* hill and demolished it along with six other fortified houses.[41] *Unni Musa* however continued his open rebellions till 1797, when on the visit of Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay to Malabar he was pardoned and restored to his estate of *Elampulasseri* on condition of 'finding good and sufficient security for his future peaceable demeanour'.[42]

Earlier, the *Putiyangadi Tangal*, an influential *Mappila* in the region, had been given exemption from the payment of the revenue

on condition that by his influence, he might restrain the lawless habits of the rebel *Mappilas*.[43] This was probably due to the fear of rebels joining Tipú against the British. *Unni Musa*, however, in 1800 joined the *Pazhassi* rebellion and created 'insecurity and disorder' yet again in the country. His reason for joining the *Pazhassi Raja* appears to be that his own brother was executed by the British allegedly for harbouring a criminal.[44] The British observed that 'the custom of carrying arms in Malabar was formerly a main cause of disturbance in the country. The mischief's which have arisen from the indiscriminate use of arms in Malabar have not only disturbed the public tranquillity and violated private rights and happiness, but also threatened the very existence of our government' (Richrads 1804: 65). A variety of arms were reportedly recovered from the inhabitants in great numbers and consequently the British prohibited carrying of arms. To render this prohibition effective, 'the carrying of arms and the manufacture of arms and ammunitions were declared capital offences and rendered liable to the punishment of death or transportation beyond sea' (Ibid). For the British, travelling with arms meant a violation of the law and a challenge to its authority. The British, however, exempted the *Rajas* of Malabar from this rule. The *Rajas* were allowed, each according to his rank in the country, a certain number of muskets to arm an honorary guard for their own persons (Ibid). Later in 1804, the Governor of Madras, Lord Bentinck prohibited the carrying of arms with transportation as the punishment for disobeying the rule.[45]

William Logan has stated that, 'by this time, a formidable combination of *Unni Musa*, *Attan Gurikkal* and *Chemban Poker* was formed instigated by a spirit of revenge for the punishment inflicted by the regular judicial process on some of their connections'.[46] Also the reactions to the fall of *Srirangapatanam* at this hour came in the forms of several agitations by the *Mappilas*. Serious troubles began to break out in the *Walluvanad* area, and the disturbances soon extended to the neighbouring area of *Ernad*. The news of the fall of Tipu generated different reactions among different constituencies- 'news on the decisive crushing of the Muslim power in Mysore had acted with electric effect on the rival castes in Malabar inspiring the *Nairs* with hope as much as it depressed the *Mappilas*' (Wood 1976: 550). In early 1800, *Unni Musa* circulated an address among the

Mappilas of his control and neighbouring areas to influence the minds of the *Mappila* inhabitants with the warning that 'since last year, the Company had begun to persecute several of the sects of Islam which since the oppression was increasing would not be protected but destroyed'.[47] Therefore, in the same year, the Company issued a formal appeal to all the citizens of Malabar:

> whereas…..an attempt has been made to influence the minds of the *Mappila* inhabitants with the belief that the Honourable Company's government was prejudiced against that caste of its subjects….we do hereby call upon the inhabitants of both castes to lay aside their ancient prejudices against each other and forget their ancient animosities and live in friendship and unanimity together.[48]

In the meantime, *Attan Gurikkal* also made several addresses to the *Mappilas*, justifying his actions in the interest of the *Mappilas*. In many of his speeches, he attempted to rouse the *Mappila* population by stating that, 'none of us are safe; someone or other will prefer complaints against us, and the evidence of the *Nairs* shall be received and we shall all be apprehended and hanged'.[49] Later the Company officials suggested that the leaders of the revolt be dealt with moderately and as a result both *Gurikkal* and *Pokker* were pardoned. But when they refused to come into terms, a proclamation was issued in 1800, declaring *Gurikkal* as a rebel and offering a reward of five thousand rupees for his capture.[50]

All these incidents and the growing activities of *Unni Musa* forced the Company to introduce the 'Malabar Disarmament Act' to prohibit the *Mappilas* and the *Nairs* from habitually going about armed.[51] In order to tackle the *Mappila* resistances, 'numerous complaints were filed against the *Mappilas* for murders and robberies and a number of *Mappilas* were seized by the British troops'.[52] British prosecutions turned the *Mappila* movements violent and several attempts of murder and attack on the British and revenue *Cutcheries* took place.[53] Soon the British felt that the existng military force in the Malabar district was inadequate to restore complete tranquillity in the region. The increasing resistance from the side of the *Mappilas* forced the Company to use '*Nair* Corps' (*Kolkars*) recruited from the elite Nair families.[54] The British felt that '*Kolkars* were the cheapest troops that can be employed and will be found most serviceable and

active in preventing combinations against Company or pursuing small parties of fugitive banditti' (Richards 1804: 32). These corps worked as 'intelligence agents' and 'operating columns' in rural areas and the use of '*Nair Corps*' actually created a communal divide in Malabar. In 1802, a long period of warfare ended with the extirpation of *Jungle Mappila* leaders. [55]

The occupation of Malabar by the English East India Company in 1792 generated popular discontent. The spontaneous and activated revolts disturbed the peace and tranquillity of the region for more than a decade, but were mainly restricted among the agrarian classes. Although the peasantry as a whole, both Hindus and *Mappilas*, were subjects to exploitative conditions, collective action was confined to the *Mappilas*, owing to the mediation of religion. It was during and after those various movements of the *Mappilas* that the British produced a caricature of the *Mappilas*, first as 'criminals' and 'robbers' and later as 'brutish and hopeless fanatic'. Once the conciliatory measures failed to generate desired results the war was taken to the domain of representations too. The history colonial representations of Mappilas started with that of *Jungle Mappilas* as embodiments of criminality and banditry, which became definitive in the making of subsequent colonial representations of the Mappilas. It is also important to note that in suppressing the discontents among the local population, the British imposed their system of administration and justice on India, reiterated their claim of superior administration and legitimacy to rule the natives than the natives themselves.

Notes

1 For more details of *Srirangapatanam* Treaty and the wars between Tipú Sultán and the British, see (Tilby 1912: 144-175).

2 The rulers of Mysore, Hyder Ali (1725–1782) and Tipú Sultán (1750–1799) had made repeated attempts to gain control over Malabar between the years 1766–1792. For more details of the Mysorean conquest and the treaty, see (Logan 1887: 399-473). By the treaties of *Srirangapatanam* with British, Tipú was forced to yield 'one half of the dominions including Malabar which were in his possession at the commencement of the war'. See *Preliminary Treaty with Tipú Sultán*, 22nd February, 1792 in (*Aitchison* Vol. 5: 145) and *Treaty of Peace with* Tipú Sultán, 18th March 1792, in (Logan 1879: 138-46)

3 *Bombay Castle Records* (Henceforth *BCR*) *Secret and Political Department Diary* (Henceforth *SPDD*) 1793, No.32, *Letter from Malabar Commissioners to Bombay*, pp.116-117.

4 The Code of *Manusmriti* were not only the ordinances relating to law, but a complete digest of the prevailing religion, philosophy, and customs practiced by the *Brahmin,* the *Vaishyas,* and the *Kshatriya*. For details, see (Sengupta 1950: 3). Also as quoted in (Roy 1908: 16).

5 *Report of a Joint Commission from Bengal and Bombay Appointed to Inspect into the State and Condition of the Province of Malabar in the Years 1792-93* (Hereafter *RJCM*), Foreign Miscellaneous Series, Major Dowe's Early Recommendations Towards the Introduction of System of Administration of Justice (Madras: Fort St.George Press, 1862), Section: 190.

6 For more details of the images of native criminality found in the phenomenon of *thuggee* and in the ethnological classification of criminal tribes in north India, see (Yang 1985), (Singha 1998), (Freitag 1991: 227–61)

7 The name *Mappila* is a transliteration of the Malayalam word *Mappila*. The transliteration has taken several different forms, the most common being *Mâppila*, *Mâppilla* and *Moplah*. The origin of the term is not settled, but it appears to have been basically a title of respect. For more details, see (Miller 1976: 30 – 36).

8 For more details of the origin of *Mappilas*, see (Kunju 1989: 14 –28) and (Engineer 1995: 17 –34).

9 The reforms introduced by the Mysorean rulers affected the ruling elites in Malabar and favourable to the Muslim community. When the Company took over the Malabar region, the British helped the privileged classes in the region to regain what they had lost during the Mysorean rule. The justification to the British rule also came from the colonial creation of the tradition of violence and the pre-existing animosity between Hindus and Muslims. It is with and against this traditional background description of *Mappilas* that the British defined and justified all their actions against them in the following years.

10 *BCR, SPDD,* 1793, No.32, *Letter from Malabar Commissioners to Bombay*, pp. 116-117.

11 Ibid, p. 120.

12 In 1772, Governor General Warren Hastings in Bengal enacted laws (article 35) to punish dacoity and robbery from the individual offender to his family and village. For more details see (Kaye 1853: 380-416). Also see (Singha 1996: 27-32 & Chapter 6).

13 *Board of Revenue Consultations*, Letter from the Collector of Malabar to the President and Members of the Board of Revenue, 28th June, 1802, (Madras:

Fort St.George, 1806), Section XII.

14 *BCR, Judicial Department Diary* (Henceforth *JDD*) No.52*,* 1793, *Letter from Malabar Commissioners to Bombay*, p. 23.

15 *Malabar Joint Commission Manuscripts* (Henceforth *MJCM*), Voucher No.97, *Criminal Faujdari Regulations*, Sections: LXIX to XCI.

16 With respect to the land revenue, the British adopted the principle of state authority that had been initiated by the Mysoreans. The British decided to utilize the *Rajas* as the land revenue agents in their old territories and at the same time affirm the *janmies*, sharing revenues with them on an 'equitable' basis. In this way they could both assure the collection of revenue and bind to themselves the traditional leaders of the Malabar society. Involved in this policy was the decision to restore ownership of their properties to those who had fled during the Mysorean wars, a determination that meant inevitable conflict with those who had taken possession of the land. For details see (Munro 1817).

17 *RJCM*, Section: 114.

18 Ibid, Section: 179.

19 Ibid, Section: 187.

20 *From the Diary of the Bombay Commissioners*, 26th June 1792, Proclamation warning the *Nairs* not to oppress the *Mappilas* of *Kondotti*, in (Logan 1879: 152).

21 *From the Diary of Malabar Joint Commissioners*, 5th June, 1793, Publication against the inequalities in assessing Hindus and Muslims, (Logan 1879: 189-90).

22 *From the Malabar Joint Commissioners' Diary*, A Proclamation of General Amnesty, 8th February, 1793 in (Logan 1879:176 –77).

23 *BCR, SPDD*, 1793, No.34, p. 56.

24 Ibid.

25 *BCR, JDD* & *SPDD*, 1794 – 98 (Various diaries).

26 *RJCM*, Section: 51. *Attan Gurukal*'s father had revolted against Tipú's Governor *Arshad Begh Khan*, in 1785-86. As *Arshad Begh Khan* was hard put to meet the situation, he prevailed upon the younger *Ravi Varma*, of the *Zamorin*'s family, to join him and 'with their united forces, *Gurikkal* was discomfited and fled.

27 *BCR, SPDD*, No.70, *Spencer's Minutes*, 6th October, 1798, p. 6381.

28 *Madras Revenue Proceedings*, *J.W.Wye to Board of Revenue*, 4th February, 1801, pp.178 – 185. It is said that *Attan Gurukal* had amassed landed property

not only under Mysore rule by exploiting his position as *Darogha* under the Company in Ernad. As *Darogha* in *Shernad*, *Chemban Poker* had also acquired a good deal of land.

29 *From the Diary of J.W.Wye*, Collector, Local Judge and Magistrate of the Districts of Vettathunad and Shernad, 1st August 1800, *Security for the good behavior of Chemban Poker, a pardoned Mappila bandit*, in (Logan 1879: 337).

30 *BCR, SPDD*, No.88, *Letter Bombay Commissioners to Governor General*, 21st July, 1800, Sections: 3 to 18, pp. 741 – 764.

31 *RJCM,* Section: 265.

32 *BCR*, *SPDD,* Translation of *Ola* from *Unni Musa to Mellingchamp*, 16th October, 1798, pp. 785 – 86.

33 For more details of the 'new technologies of writing and documentation', see (Abraham 2008).

34 In an interesting analysis about the 'petitions' in colonial India, Potukuchi Swarnalatha has pointed out that 'petitions were the means by which the officials of the colonial state learned about popular feelings and discontents regarding the new policies and structural changes that were being effected', (Swarnalatha 2002: 128).

35 *BCR*, *SPDD, Jonathan Duncan's Minute*, 11th December, 1798, pp. 6523 – 6529.

36 *RJCM*, Section: 510. See also Sections: 217 & 298.

37 *BCR, SPDD, Letter from the Southern Superintendent of Malabar to Malabar Commissioners*, No.77, 29 March, 1799, pp. 1838 – 1839.

38 Day 1863: 368, cited from Miller 1976:.107.

39 *RJCM*, Section: 189.

40 Ibid, Section: 290.

41 *From the Diary of the Malabar Supervisor*, 16th, 23rd and 30th June 1794, *Agreement with Unni Musa and restoration of his estate of Elampulasserri*, in (Logan 1879: 218).

42 *From the Diary of the Second Malabar Commission*, 23rd December 1797, in (Logan 1879: 218).

43 *From the Second Commissioner's Diary*, 1st February, 1799, *Translated copy of writing from the Second Calicut Raja to Syed Ahmed, Tangal of Puthiyangadi*, in (Logan 1879: 94).

44 *Letter from Captain Watson*, 29th June, 1802, in (Logan 1879: 218).

45 *Malabar Collectorate Records* (Hereafter *MCR*), *Minute of the Governor Lord William Bentinck*, 22nd April 1804.

[46] *Mappila* chieftains' reactions became alarming after the execution of *Adhan Khan*, brother-in- law of *Attan Gurikkal* by the British troops. *Chemban Poker* made a daring attempt on the life of Southern Superintendent (Logan 1887: 527).

[47] *BCR*, *SPDD*, Translated copy of *Ola* addressed by *Unni Musa* and *Chemban Poker* to the Inhabitants of *Ernad*, 17th June, 1800, p. 3227.

[48] *Proclamation*, 18th March, 1800, declaring that the Honourable Company's wish is to unite the *Nairs* and *Mappilas* in one amicable body showing favour to neither party, forbidding either party to collect together in bodies for the purpose of acting against each other and stating an intention to suppress the gangs of robbers in *Ernad*, in (Logan 1879: 332).

[49] *BCR*, *SPDD*, No.93, 1800, Translated copy of speech by *Manjeri Attan Gurikkal* in *Letter from Malabar Commissioners' to Col.J.Satrious, Commander of the Troops in south Malabar*, pp. 3105 – 06.

[50] *Proclamation declaring Manjeri Attan Gurikkal a rebel*, *and offering a reward of Rs.5000 for his apprehension*, 25th November, 1800 in (Logan 1879: 341).

[51] *BCR*, *SPDD*, No.94, 1800, *Mappila Disarmament Act in South Malabar*, pp. 3115 – 3146.

[52] *BCR*, *JDD* & *SPDD* (Dairies between 1794 – 99. Also see Wye, *Report*, pp. 19-20.

[53] *BCR*, *JDD*, No.15, 1800, *Letters from Malabar Commissioners to Bombay Company*, 20th and 23rd December, 1800, pp.636 – 721.

[54] *MCR*, *Political Department Dairy* (Henceforth *PDD*), 1801, *Minute on raising Nair corps as a measure to stop Mappila disturbances*, p. 949.

[55] Ibid, *Letter from Malabar Collector to Sub-Collector*, p. 2365.

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Darkness Invisible: Difference and Indifference in Pottekkat's Travelogues on Africa

Sabitha T. P

This paper examines the political engagement with Africa in the African travelogues of S. K. Pottekkat, especially Simhabhoomi (Land of Lions) and Kappirikalute Nattil (In the Land of Negroes). It raises questions of what the traveller sees/chooses to see in the countries he travels in and what his subject-position vis-à-vis the viewed is. My argument is that Pottekkat's vision is one that is always already determined in the mould of a Eurocentric ethnographer's apparently disengaged and objective sight along with that of an aesthete's discourse of marvel and pleasure at seeing natural wonders such as waterfalls and the prairie thick with zebras, lions and giraffes in East Africa. Pottekkat also makes use of the comparative axis often used by travel writers, constantly referring to the African landscape in comparison with that of Kerala that he and his readers are familiar with. This paper attempts to analyse the discursive matrices in Pottekkat's texts on Africa written in the 1950s when a framework for an emancipatory discourse is available not only in English – in the writings of Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Nehru on Africa as a political entity – but also in the Malayalam public sphere.

> Going up that river (Congo) was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world…There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine…And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention.
> - Joseph Conrad*, Heart of Darkness* (1898-99)

To reach the Murchison waterfalls one has to travel 40 miles up the Nile river. All along the Nile, on either side of it, are

> uninhabited fearsome forests and hills… one can see wild animals in these woods where man has not set foot since the beginning of time.
> - S.K. Pottekkat, *Nile Diary* (1956)

S.K. Pottekkat, the Jnanpith award winner, celebrated fiction and travel writer in Malayalam, and Member of Parliament in the Indian government, has written four narratives of his travels in the African continent: *Kappirikalute Nattil* (In the Land of Negroes - 1951), *Simhabhoomi* (Land of Lions - 1954-58), *Nile Diary* (1956) and *Cairo Kathukal* (Letters from Cairo - 1956). In this essay, I will be looking at these texts to try to yield some answers to questions on Pottekkat's perspective of Africa, what it is that he sees there, and what discursive matrices determine the way he sees.

Pottekkat never reveals his objective in going to Africa. We have to then assume that he goes to Africa in order to see. The tourist eye/I roams up and down Africa purportedly not in search of anything except the very act of seeing it. However, as Peter Mason points out, "the innocent eye has never existed" (qtd. in Ghose 7). The eye/I sees things it desires to see. As Irit Rogoff observes, "what the eye purportedly 'sees' is dictated to it by an entire set of beliefs and desires and by a set of coded languages and generic apparatuses" (22).

S.K. Pottekkat begins each of his travel narratives with a brief history of the place he is passing through. He usually begins with the colonial conquest. On page 2 of *Simhabhoomi* he writes, "[W]hen the Germans entered the scene, Dar-es-Salaam was a poverty-stricken fishing village. Realising that this is an ideal spot for a port, the Germans slowly started to civilize it…Everything that contributes to the urban beauty of Dar-es-Salaam, the streets, the beautiful beach boulevards, the European hospitals, the houses of the natives, and churches, were designed and built with a high aesthetic sense by the Germans."

Running counter to this is his account of African houses and dances. About the houses in Akbar Shampa, a village 4 miles from Dar-es-Salaam, he writes that they were like pig pens. And here is his first impression of Masindi, a town in Uganda.: "[T]he towns in the interiors of Uganda are built against the backdrop of the over-

flowing beauty of nature. The beautiful white buildings surrounded by gardens built on top of verdant hills are the residence of the district commissioner and Government offices. Museums of white hegemony. It is only in the streets that we get to experience the colours and malodour of native dirt" (*Simhabhoomi* 254).

The aesthetic sensibility by which Pottekkat judges African buildings is clearly a learned Western one. His eye does not just see, but judges that which it sees by the aesthetic and epistemological paradigms of colonialism. Residences of the colonisers are recognised as "the museums of white hegemony"; however, this does not translate into an identification with the colonised. They are seen distinctly as different from the self.

Discussing the way we see 'reality', Foucault says, "[W]e must not imagine that the world turns towards us a legible face which we would only have to decipher. The world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no pre-discursive providence which disposes the world in our favour" (Foucault 67). This remark emphasises the idea that the 'other' world that the tourist 'I' sees and then reproduces for a wider audience has been mediated by relations of power between the seen and itself.

Pottekkat has more to write about the smells and colours of blacks. "What annoyed me most often during my African bus-journeys was the bad smell emanating from the bodies of Negroes. The bad odour coming from the hair of Negro women was of a different kind… their body odour was like rotten meat and the smell of their hair was like rotten vegetables. They never take baths" (*Simhabhoomi* 129) It is then not just what he sees that is determined, but all sensory receptions are filtered through a paradigm of power-relations where the experiencing subject is the judge and the blacks are the offenders in a civil(ized) society. Pottekkat also riles Westernised black women, "when we see these black madams ("*madamma*") in their skirts and head-scarves walking hoity-toity in their high heels, we would feel like laughing" (*Kappirikalute Nattil* 27). He is also dismissive of "Indian madams" who walk around with "reddened lips and cheeks, and vanity bags" for whom "we feel sympathy" (*Simhabhoomi* 147). At the same time, he reports that black women are oppressed and that "the negro society believes that a woman who has come of age is an instrument for the satisfaction of

male lust and for reproduction" (*Simhabhoomi* 104). It is this dual judgemental vision that informs a lot of Pottekkat's African travelogues. The ambivalence stems from his assumed subject position of a superior "Indian *bwana*" (master) as he often refers to himself in these texts.

The first thing Pottekkat observes about various black tribes is their semi-nakedness. He says that most parts of Africa are corners unreached by shame and if at all they tie clothes around their body it is only for ornamental purposes and not to cover their private parts (he says this about *masais*, *mbulus* and *mangatis*). This is interesting given that women of lower castes in Kerala started covering their breasts only in late 19th century. (The breast-cloth controversy in Travancore began with lower caste chanar converts into Christianity asking for rights to cover their breasts, supported by missionaries who introduced the notion of shame in them). And if the African women do wear clothes they again come in for criticism. About Rhodesian urban women he says that they strut around in their floral dresses and high heels like black madams. S.K. Pottekkat finds both the topless tribal women and the fully clothed urban women in Africa shameless, one for being unclothed and the other for breaking the semiotic codes of hierarchical relationship between the blacks and the non-blacks.

Pottekkat finds African dances equally shameless and obscene. In his first African travelogue, *Kappirikalute Nattil*, he writes, "one night I went to see the dance of Negroes here [Nyasaland]. I won't describe it. It is that obscene" (58). But when we come to *Simhabhoomi*, he leaves his Victorian prudishness aside and describes African dances in luscious detail, though he begins his descriptions by saying that these dances are ugly and disgusting manifestations of the erotic art ("*kaama kala*"). He describes dances where women rub their breasts on the chests of men standing opposite them (*ukkukkusaana*), fertility dances of Saala women in which women express milk from their breasts on the ground and men make love to a hole on the ground and ejaculate into the earth, wedding dances which end in orgies (*kafenka*) and many others. We also notice his male gaze at work when he describes female dances. He notices the way their breasts shake and quiver, their pelvic regions expand and contract and their buttocks rotate. Female bodies are

fragmented into eroticised parts in an act of optical violence. As if to justify the voyeurism, he grants that "the negro's understanding of morality is different from the meaning we assign to the term" (*Simhabhoomi* 108). Pottekkat's employment of cultural and moral relativism here is a rare – and perhaps, self-justificatory – one that legitimises his voyeuristic gaze as that of an 'objective' observer's.

The camera is an integral part of his travels. Very often we read about his regret that he ran out of film and his exultation about a scene that his camera managed to "copy." While travelling up the Nile, Pottekkat makes friends with a Swiss traveller, Michel. When they get off the boat at Khartoum, Michel goes looking for naked women to photograph. "When Michel found a beautiful Arab girl alone, he gave her a pilaster, greedy for a photograph of her. He asked her to remove her upper cloth and pose for him topless. While she was standing thus, a group of Arabs arrived on the scene and prepared to thrash Michel. Michel said he ran for his life without waiting to take the picture" (*Nile Diary* 123). The camera, often used by travellers to make truth-claims, creates a fictitious Africa. Africa often poses for the colonial camera thus unwittingly aiding the photographer-subject's propagation of an exotic and often erotic 'other-land.' The two of them later laugh about the incident in a friendly backslapping manner. The gaze at local women is gendered and sexualised.

The people with whom Pottekkat becomes friends during his journey are either whites, Indians or, in rare cases, Arabs. It is remarkable that there is not a single account of him making friends with a black during his 7-year journey through the African continent. Right at the beginning of *Simhabhoomi* he calls himself a "*mhindi bwana*" (an Indian master). On page 8, he writes about a native dance in which he and his friends join. "When they saw that *mhindi bwana*s were willing to dance with them, these negroes must have felt more pride than wonder." Later in the text he again talks about how he made a black feel proud by sharing a cigarette with him. There again he calls himself a "*bwana*". He maintains the hierarchy adopted by Indians in Africa towards the blacks. Even when he comes across white officials and fellow travellers during his journey he is only too quick to dissociate himself from the people of colour and identify with the colonial master.

In *Kappirikalute Nattil*, he begins with a history of the oppression of blacks; however when we come to the actual narrative of what he sees (the brief history he lays out is in an introduction) he completely abandons any such historical perspective. He hardly ever sees their oppression in *Simhabhoomi*, *Nile Diary*, or *Cairo Kathukal*, even though he lays out some incidents in the manner of a historian. Whenever he describes black workers in factories or houses, he talks about their presence without questioning their exploitation. He confirms stereotypical western notions about black people that his Indian friends warn him about: that they are dishonest, ruthless and devious. He even goes as far to say "problems such as poverty or unemployment do not even affect them" (*Nile* Diary 105). The narratorial gaze adopted in all the instances I have mentioned above is very clearly Eurocentric which is also the gaze adopted by most Indians in Africa. They choose to see the blacks as thieves, and uncivilized and smelly barbarians. Their socialisation is entirely with other Indians in Africa. Just like their white counterparts in Africa they have built invisible walls of racial taboo around them and exploit the cheap labour of the blacks. Pottekkat who thinks of himself as a "*mhindi bwana*" unquestioningly adopts the same perspective.

It is also to be noticed that he mostly stays with Indians, preferably Malayalis, wherever he travels in Africa. He is also remarkably uncomfortable with Indians gone native in Africa. He says of an Indian *duka* (shop) in Butiaba that he somehow managed to drink the tea offered by the wife of an Indian Muslim shopkeeper after he realised that she was black (*Nile Diary* 52). He writes rather ambiguously about a Krishna Menon he meets in Arusha in Tanganyika that he was a mysterious person with no family in Africa and who was a favourite of black women because of his good sense of humour. "Menon stopped to talk to every woman we came across on our way – it did not matter whether he knew them or not. He always had something to ask them and the conversations dragged on. Finally he would leave after smiling at them meaningfully" (*Simhabhoomi* 41). Krishna Menon is presented as an oddity in his account of Indians in Africa. Pottekkat is clearly uncomfortable with the idea of Indians gone native. The notion of racial purity is quite uncritically defended.

Pottekkat's frequent sense of danger in Africa is connected to his stereotyping of races. When he goes to Bagamoyo off Dar-es-Salaam, he writes, "the residents of Bagamoyo are all Muslim negro children of Arabs. Altogether a terrifying atmosphere. After lunch we laid out our mats on the courtyard of that house. But I could not sleep" (*Simhabhoomi* 6). He imagines the cries of slaves in chains and is haunted by them (*ibid*). What could have been an empathetic emancipatory narrative ends up being gothic, given its deployment of techniques from the rhetoric of horror-fiction. While in Oldeani, he goes for a walk that ends in a bush from which he turns back quickly, "I remembered Vohra telling me that there are lots of zebras in this region. I also recalled *mangati*s who offer a human head on their wedding night. (Perhaps a *mhindi bwana*'s head will fetch two or three *mangati* brides. A nice head with smooth hair and a shapely nose that it is)...In the distance, Mount Kenya appeared like a smouldering cremation ground. Fear captured me - I walked back…The reason [for the fear] was unknown" (*Simhabhoomi* 114). He experiences this apparently inexplicable sense of fear many times later as well and his intuition is proved right each time; either he was about to travel at night along a road that led to "cannibalistic natives" or he was staying in a house charmed by black magicians or he was too close to the revolutionaries of Africa, towards whom he is ambivalent. When an East African black, Kofi who is from the Kikuyu tribe, speaks saucily to Pottekkat, he imagines that it is possible that he is part of the Mau Mau rebellion. Pottekkat comments uncritically, "I knew that this was a question deliberately meant to insult an Indian *bwana*. In East Africa, Indians are the *bwana*s (masters) of the natives after whites" (*Simhabhoomi* 120). When he asks Kofi whether he wants to come to India one more time, Kofi says, "[W]e have a homeland. Let us see whether we get it back" (*Simhabhoomi* 121). Pottekkat continues, "Kofi's reply did not fail to surprise me. Is he a revolutionary too? I had learnt that Kofi was a Kikuyu. I had heard from some Indian friends that a secret society of natives against white hegemony was being organised in Kenya and Tanganyika" (*ibid*). There is a rather easy othering process that happens with African blacks in his Westernised Indian perspective on "dangerous" natives, Indians gone native, and miscegenates, whose 'impure' identities are suspect.

If at all he sees the blacks without the anthropological gaze, he sees them the way immigrant Indians in Africa see them. The only time he identifies with the African blacks is when he writes about racial segregation practised by the whites, "There are several clubs here that are only for the whites. Neither the blacks nor the Indians know about the goings-on in these places. Because there tower the black walls of racism" (*Simhabhoomi* 154).

Many descriptions of people in Pottekkat's texts are about Indians in Africa. One of the few times he writes about the exploitation of the blacks by the Indians is when he says, "[I]n southern Rhodesia, you will meet many Indian traders who are millionaires. It is evident that all this wealth is due to their exploitation of the natives. We hear many things about the problems faced by Indians in Africa. But what are their problems? When the ways of exploiting the natives some more seem closed, they rise up in arms" (*Kappirikalute Nattil* 41). He further writes, "I asked each Indian trader whom I met, 'Are you doing anything for the good of the Africans?'. Their reply was 'Why should we?' Yes, they have only one intention in Africa: to make money. They will not be ashamed to do any evil work or to sacrifice anything for that" (*ibid*). Pottekkat also reports the regionalism within the Indian diaspora. In *Nile Diary*, he is mistreated by a few north Indians in Butiaba for being "a black *Madrasi*" (28) Pottekkat comments, "We are outraged by the way whites treat Indians in Africa. However, we should be ashamed when we learn that even in the hinterlands of Africa 6000 miles away, Indians secretly maintain their regional prejudices and their contempt for *Madrasi*s" (*ibid*). However, in *Kapprikalute Nattil*, Pottekkat himself expresses prejudice towards Tamils whose ancestors were bonded labourers in Africa. Initially Pottekkat observes, not without sympathy, "These coolies who were born and bred in South Africa continue to work as coolies like their fathers and grandfathers" (*Kappirikalute Nattil* 24). When he talks to the porter of Tamil origin who is to carry his luggage, he says that he was reluctant to talk about his family. "I averred that like other Tamils in Africa, he too must have found a negro woman and must be staying in a hut with many spiky-haired children" (*ibid*). The word used here is "kappiricchi", a derogatory and dismissive way of referring to a black woman. He also notices that the Sikhs and the Hindus are constantly at war with each other

in the working committee of an Indian association in Arusha (*Simhabhoomi* 39). The Indian diaspora in Africa do not locate themselves in a critical hybrid postcolonial space, rather, they occupy a space that maintains their prejudices and has the character of a colonial masterly position towards black Africans. And there is no intent of subversion in their colonial mimicry as reported by Pottekkat whose own predominant subject position, we must remember, is one of hierarchical superiority towards African blacks.

What is also remarkable is that there are more descriptions of animals and landscape than of people in these texts. Pottekkat's first thoughts when he sees a beach near Dar-es-Salaam are that of Kerala. He goes to the beach in the company of twenty young Malayali men. They drink and sing Malayalam songs sitting on the beach. He writes, "in short, we reached Kerala in the aeroplane of intoxication" (*Simhabhoomi* 7). Whenever he comes across a wooded hill he is reminded of Nilgiri and Koonoor. When he sees coconut trees or palm trees, he remembers Kerala. He even has an Onam sadya (elaborate Malayali festive lunch) in Dar-es-Salaam where he is served bananas, which he thinks are not a patch on Kerala bananas. When he is in Moshi, a Tanganyikan town close to the Kenyan border, he says, "it is almost like Mananthavadi in Wayanadu." (*ibid* 30). When he is in Kattera near Kampala he says it is just like Kattoopara on the Pattamby-Perinthalmanna road in North Kerala. He does not even spare the African elephant. In his Malayali gaze, the African elephant comes off the poorer when compared to the Indian elephant, which of course you find in plenty in Kerala. He creates Malayalam names for unfamiliar animals: "ottakappuli" (camel-leopard) for giraffe, "hamsappakshi" (swan-bird) for flamingo and "varayan kazhutha" (striped ass) for zebra, they can be understood only when naturalised and translated into a familiar cultural register. He even has chapter subtitles such as "Again the smell of Kerala" and "The Pride of Calicut." He sees more Kerala than Africa in the landscape. Africa can exist only in comparison with Kerala. The translation of unfamiliar experiences into a familiar cultural register is a narrative technique commonly employed by travel writers.

The parochial Malayali gaze coexists comfortably with a Eurocentric gaze in these texts. Through the Eurocentric gaze he

only sees what he expects to see. It is a white myth of Africa spread through Western discourses that he sees. He frequently refers to Western travelogues on Africa. It is an Africa that is "known" that he sees. And through the Malayali gaze he sees an Africa through naturalizing associations, associations of what he already knows. In both cases his gaze is determined. He simply fits Africa into existing cultural grids. There is also a near-total absence of a politically enabling perspective on the blacks. This is remarkable given that Pottekkat travels to Africa quite soon after the Indian independence. Africa figures quite frequently in anti-colonial discourses of the 1940s. In 1951, in the first Asian summit after India's independence, Jawaharlal Nehru said, "[W]hat Indians staying in Africa must always remember is that they are the guests of Africans and that they should never do anything that hinders Africa's progressive movement towards independence. They should aid the Africans in any movement for independence. We need a world that is built on universal freedom, and equality between all races and peoples." Pottekkat was a card-carrying member of the Communist party in Kerala in the mid-50s. However this does not enable him to consistently see the oppression of blacks by the whites, Indians and Arabs in Africa.

It is interesting to place these texts beside two other texts that refer to Africa written in the 1950s in Kerala. One is K. Panoor's *Keralathile Africa* (Africa within Kerala) and the other is N.V. Krishna Warier's poem simply titled "Africa". Panoor's work is a record of the oppression of the *adivasi*s in Kerala. He calls the *adivasi*s the blacks of Kerala. They are exploited, oppressed and culturally ostracised like the blacks in Africa, says Panoor. He even takes a dig at Pottekkat when he says that before our writers travel outside India in search of material for a travel narrative, they should visit the blacks in Kerala and record their plight (Panoor 151). Krishna Warier's poem is about slavery and the sufferings of blacks in Africa. He writes, "wherever man's hands are in chains, there my hands ache, wherever whiplashes fall on the backs of people, it is my body that hurts, wherever people stagger to stand up on their feet, there live I, today Africa is my land and I cry with grief for her" (Warier 223)

These two contemporary texts bring to our notice that there were other political points of view available in Malayalam and English

on Africa in the Indian public sphere of the 1950s. Pottekkat travels like a *mhindi bwana* and writes like one more often than not. His leftist politics does not enable him to see much of what is wrong in Africa, barring occasional observations and comments. He is nearly blind to white hegemony and oppression of blacks in Africa except in the cursory mentions in the history of the nations he is passing through. My contention is that there is a total absence of blacks in his narratives except through an anthropologised or Eurocentric gaze because the only "truthful" space to look at Africa from is the Western gaze. There is no indigenous knowledge being explored in his narratives, nor is there a consistent consciousness of the oppression of African blacks by whites, Indians, or Arabs. Pottekkat's subject-position is that of the white master towards the black slave – one of naturalised hierarchy. His travels in Africa just confirm his worst fears about blacks. We cannot celebrate the narratorial space occupied by Pottekkat as a "hybrid" space of critique. Its identity is entirely created out of white colonial notions of a superior and hegemonic self. Africa as a continent of oppressed and angry people is almost totally absent from these narratives.

He leaves the African continent to travel to Europe. His European travel narratives begin thus, "Leaving the dark forests and dry deserts of Africa for the valleys of snowy mountains – from the heat to the cold – leaving the animal-like negroes [*kappirikal*] for the land of the whites in concert with the arts and sciences, I continued my journey as a mere Indian traveller" (*S.K.Pottekkat Europilude* 7). What he sees in Europe and how he negotiates his Indian identity there is the subject for another study.

Notes

1. All translations from Malayalam, both those of texts by Pottekkat and Krishna Warier, are mine.

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■

Pennezhuthu as Women Reading, as Women Re-reading

Sharmila Sreekumar

The very formulation of the term pennezhuthu has tended to centre attention on the figure of the woman writer, thereby obscuring other possible axes of enquiry. This paper takes Sara Joseph's short story "Ee Udal Enne Chuzhumbol [When This Body Encircles Me]" as an occasion to understand pennezhuthu as a mobilization space for gendered, resistant and rebellious readers, as well as for new conventions of re-reading. By doing so it attempts to re-approach the ambitions, possibilities and impasses of pennezhuthu.

> Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival —*Adrienne Rich*

Since the time it emerged in the 1980s, 'pennezhuthu' has received considerable bad press. And some critical attention. Yet, one might well ask, what exactly did it seek to name? Did pennezhuthu mark the cautious and guarded forays of women writers into the literary-scape of Malayalam? In other words, did it translate as "woman-writing"? Or, did it signal a mode of writing that displayed a palpably feminine sensibility (whatever that be)? Was it, thus, "writing the feminine"? Alternately, did it seek to designate writing that could be characterized as "feminist" (feminist-writing)? Was pennezhuthu the name for a bold new initiative or was it the bombast of sound and fury signifying nothing?

It could be argued that as a literary phenomenon pennezhuthu was something of a non-event. Indeed, it was ushered into the literary public sphere of Kerala as an already failed enterprise, and in many ways it lived up to this description. Firstly because the interests and energies it summoned up were all too sporadic, all too brief.[1] Today, it would appear that the passions engendered by pennezhuthu have almost faded out. Secondly, it is believed to have effected very few lasting literary transformations. Additionally, there is the discomfiting fact that most women writers chose to dissociate from this label—even as they claimed to write from a woman's standpoint, even while they admitted that they got curt receptions from the literary theocracy. The overriding fear seems to have been that pennezhuthu would further ghettoize and marginalise women writers from the literary "male"stream.[2] It has also been argued that pennezhuthu engendered a space for men to debate, rather than for women to write (Arunima); that the debates it provoked were, more often than not, a series of grandstanding on questions such as: Is there something called pennezhuthu? Is there a discernible women's voice in literature? As though, these questions could be settled a priori, as though they could be settled outside the conflicts and the social conditions of their emergence.

Despite the arid debates that it has spawned, or rather, *because* of the arid debates that have hitherto stifled it, I propose that it is important to revisit pennezhuthu—especially now that the debates and hostilities have abated. Not because we need to fix its meanings, or arbiter whether it was a success or failure. But because pennezhuthu signalled that there were new stories to be told; it problematised language and narrative as sites of enunciation; it brought the "scandal" of gender into narrative. It also, I hold, served as a prominent venue for the articulation of feminism in Kerala. There is a need to examine this historical moment and this rhetorical mode of feminism also because of the current discontent and debates within it. Today, when many have refused the consensus and the sisterhood proposed by earlier feminist articulations, when the category "woman" has come in for internal disagreements, it becomes all the more necessary to re-examine the motivations, limitations and historical relevance of pennezhuthu.

This is admittedly a large and ambitious imperative. The

present paper sets itself rather more modest tasks. It, for the most part, fusses around one short story written by Sara Joseph, which it takes as both symptom and example of pennezhuthu. It also makes occasional darts into a short story by Methil Radhakrishnan, which the former story sought to "revision". The aim is not to undertake a meticulous and close analysis of either of these stories. Instead, it is to chart a possible indirection through which fresh enquires into pennezhuthu can be tentatively advanced.

The particular indirection I propose to take in this paper is routed through the topos of women/reading. Such a route of inquiry tugs us away from customary approaches to pennezhuthu. The very formulation of the term, I argue, has tended to centre attention on the figure of the woman writer and upon issues of writing. I propose here that it would be productive to re-focus our enquiry towards the mobilization of readers and reading. By this I do not intend to suggest that we should divorce writing and reading as two discrete autonomous events. As we shall presently see, such a separation does not quite obtain. I would however wish to suggest that concerns of women and literature are not exhausted by, and cannot be restricted to, questions of women and writing. Further, that the monofocus on writing has tended to obscure the cultural work that pennezhuthu has done in other areas.

The "problem" of reading and of the reader has, in fact, been a site of energetic mobilisations and disputations that has hitherto been largely ignored. Sara Joseph's short story *Ee Udal Enne Chuzhumbol* [When This Body Encircles Me] presents an entry point into this field of contestation as it sets itself up as a re-reading/re-writing of Methil Radhakrishnan's story *Udal Oru Chuzhnila* [The Body, An Encircling Situation]. Indeed, it dramatises the fierceness of the battle around issues of reading; it displays how reading slides into a theorization of reading, how re-reading becomes meta-reading.

But this is to already pre-empt the analysis that I shall be undertaking in the following sections. Besides examining some of the modalities and implications of Sara Joseph's re-reading of Methil's story, I shall, in the next two sections, also explore possible reasons why this particular story invited feminist attention in the '90s. In the process, I propose to lay out the densities that gather around

different figurations of the woman-reader. These I shall argue are historically salient. In the concluding section I shall critically re-visit the issue of pennezhuthu and the enunciations of gender and gendered reading that it made possible.

I

The stories under study would be sufficiently familiar, since they had provoked considerable interest and debate in the '90s. I will not, therefore, spell out their plot-outlines except in the broadest of strokes.

Methil Radhakrishnan's story *Udal Oru Chuzhnila* quick-sketches a host of characters. Among them is Nachcheelan, the cobbler, who, through certain crafty and not entirely honest transactions, secures for himself a propertied, middle-class life. There is also Kokila, the travelling salesgirl who is prompted by circumstance to overstep the diktat of her company. She rings the doorbell to Nachcheelan's house, goes in unaccompanied, and is raped. As she rushes out of the house, she loses one of her sandals thus darkly reversing the fairy tale of Cinderella. The story tracks the lives of both these characters as well as of others whose lives intersect with theirs.

Sara Joseph's short story *Ee Udal Enne Chuzhumbol* follows the figure of Radhamani who has been raped by a mechanic from the workshop below-stairs. At the time she was raped she was at home, reading. The story takes us back, episodically, through Radhamani's growing-up years and, in a series of quick tableaux, through her rape trial. We encounter the voyeurism, the innuendos, the suppositions and finally her defeat. As Radhamani emerges from the courtroom, we are informed that "there are multiple turning points" for her story (Joseph 73, 49).[3] We are then offered a glimpse of one possible denouement.

It is all too evident that the title of Sara Joseph's story sets up a tangle with Methil's. Except for this, it might not be immediately clear from the above narration how the one is a re-reading of the other. Let me therefore supply a crucial detail before I move on. The story that Radhamani was reading just before she was raped was

the above delineated story by Methil.

* * *

"Does one read *a story* and have a similar experience, or do we have experiences after which *the story* comes into being?" [emphasis added] (Joseph 68, 42).

It is this curiously academic question that inaugurates Sara Joseph's story. A first-time reader soon realizes that this is anything but an idle, meditative inquiry. "The story" casts its long shadows into Sara Joseph's narrative and quotations from it begin to echo insistently. Adding detail to the above realization is the author's note on the last page, which unambiguously informs that "the story referred to here is Methil Radhakrishnan's *Udal Oru Chuzhnila*. However, it is true that most readers today would not have to wait for this note to recognise that the inaugural question announces a quarrel. The clamour of this rather well known literary episode continues to ring in the memory of the Malayalam literary sphere.

Of course, narrative engagements which re-tell older stories, which re-signify textual precedents are by no means uncommon. It has even been suggested that "[i]n contemporary fiction telling has become compulsorily belated, inextricably bound up with retelling" (Connors 123). Sara Joseph has herself re-told other stories—prominently, stories from the *Mahabharata*. In fact, re-tellings have become so commonplace that they do not by themselves invite attention any longer. It has been argued that "[S]omething more (and something more specific) is needed to argue how and why a particular event of rewriting might matter" (Morris 5).

Why then does this story become an occasion for a particular enquiry? Primarily because what we have here is not, as in most re-tellings, a careful picking of gaps, ignored possibilities, absented voices, marginalised characters etc. What we have here is a full-blooded, often polemical quarrel with Methil's story. It is an angry debate staged in the space of fiction. Unlike many other well-known re-workings, this engagement is not a battle with the past, with a historically sanctified narrative. It is, instead, an altercation within the present, with a story that is contemporary. Interestingly, Sara Joseph's narrative goes beyond the end of Methil's story. It turns a

critical corner in that it imagines the afterlife, as it were, of its textual precedent. As noted above, it pursues Methil's story through the life of one of its readers—more particularly, through the life of one of its women readers. Unlike most other re-tellings, therefore, in this piece Sara Joseph writes outside the cast of characters and the resolutions of the "original" story.

Even so there are questions which tend to pester her exercise: "Is Sara-Joseph's reading of Methil's story consistent with the "original", or is it idiosyncratic, even ideological? Does she execute her reading successfully, or does she steamroll the complexities of Methil's story? Above all, are her interpretive moves justified? Such questions tend to disclose rather settled approaches to reading. It seems to presume that meanings are located in a text at the point of its production and that a reader's job is to faithfully "uncover" these meanings. In this scheme of understanding, a resistant reading of a text would always already be an unsuccessful reading, as it sets out, rather explicitly, to be disloyal to the "original"; to defy the latter's ideals and assumptions. Therefore, to undertake an exercise as Sara Joseph does here, wherein she supplies characters and plot structures that are extraneous to the "original" story, is to already embark upon a misreading. But given that the very objective in this instance is to revolt against the promptings of Methil's story, there is very little to be gained by this approach to reading. Instead, therefore, of asking if Sara Joseph's reading is interpretively successful, it would be more useful to examine what her defiant re-reading engenders, what it serves to signal.

I strongly suspect that such a scrutiny would indicate a wilful attempt by this story—indicative of pennezhuthu at large—to make literature "a gendered, political space in which women's issues [can] be discussed" (Lauret 1). I suspect that it would indicate a vexed sense of identification and alienation from literary traditions and precedents; a sense of being at once their inheritor and their critic. In many ways, as we shall see, Sara Joseph's re-reading is as much about the praxis of reading and of storytelling as it is the aggressive undoing of another story.

Let us go back to the initiating question in Sara Joseph's

story: "Does one read a story and have a similar experience, or do we have experiences after which the story comes into being?"

What is it that this question wants explained? Does it seek to pursue first causes and effects; is it the old question of life imitating/ following/causing art, or art imitating/ following/causing life? Or, does the question press further? Does it seek to probe the boundaries of literature and life? Does it enquire into the epistemological and experiential implications of literary textualities and subjectivities? While we cannot be immediately certain where this question leads *to*, we can be assured that it leads *away* from the idea of an autotelic work of art. It almost certainly moves away from conceiving art as an independent, autonomous and sealed-off realm; from foreclosing enquiries into life and society. Instead, it suggests that life and text have a certain ecological relationship with each other—at least for Radhamani, the protagonist of Sara Joseph's story.

It will be recalled that Radhamani has been raped. "Just before Murukesan raped her Radhamani had finished reading a story" (Joseph 68, 43). We are left to entertain no doubts about the story she had been reading. It is undoubtedly Methil's, where too the protagonist, a young woman, is raped. Subsequently, we also encounter the traumas and blatant insensitivities which confront Radhamani in the courtroom. But what pains Radhamani more than all of these, we are told, are the "knotty traps" of the story she had been reading (Joseph 68, 43).

Strikingly, it is only Radhamani who seems to think that she has been trapped in a story that has already been written. Murukesan, the man who raped her, is convinced that "it was not because of reading a story that he raped Radhamani" (Joseph 68, 42). Her husband Gopinathan Nair "does not believe that the story has anything to do with it either" (Joseph 68, 42). We have no evidence that these men had actually read the story in question. However that be, the "knotty traps" of Methil's story do not seem to enmesh either of them.

So what is at stake here? The peculiar susceptibility of the woman reader? In some ways, yes.

This seemingly simplistic proposition needs scrutiny and not,

I submit, an out of hand dismissal. I propose, therefore, to read Sara Joseph's story as one that asks questions about the way women inhabit/are made to inhabit language and narratives. More particularly, I read it as the story about *a* woman reader forced to make sense of her experiences by negotiating her relation to the protagonist and the plot of the story she has been reading.

There is, as we have seen, the nightmarish repetition of rape. Radhamani's rape seems to refer backward to the rape of Kokila—the protagonist of Methil's story. Recursions do not stop here. Radhamani's rape seems to have been already imagined in the story she has read. In Methil' story too, the woman-protagonist finds that the plot of her experience has already been narrated by a male writer. Thus, when Kokila recounts her experience to Senthil—her lover, who is also a promising young writer—he exclaims: "Kokila, you are the Shailaja in my story" (Methil 175). Senthil then narrates *his* story. Kokila becomes his audience/reader.[4] It is on the second recursion—not of rape, but of the figure of the woman reader of men's stories—that I would like to dwell for a while.

How is Kokila, the woman reader/audience, configured in Methil's text? And what does the act of reading mean in his narrative? Undeniably, Kokila is an eager, willing audience in the episode of Senthil's story-telling. She readily shares his amazement at the serendipitous intertwining of life and narrative. She goes on to confirm: "In the beginning of the [Senthil's] story Shailaja goes through the very experiences I had had" (Methil 175). Significantly, Kokila continues to love the storyteller who subjects her life to narration.[5] She displays no unease or dis-identification with the author who narratively pre-figures her experiences. On the contrary, she begins to partake in his viewpoints and his emotions. "I now look at myself, the person who went into Nacheelan's [her rapist's] house with the same amazement that Senthil had had", she notes immediately after (Methil 175).

This, I argue, is what radically differentiates the woman-reader in Sara Joseph's story. While Kokila is captivated by the narrative which seems to address, thematise and prefigure her experience, Radhamani finds herself captured and injured by its "knotty traps". To read this merely as dispositional and individual difference between two readers would be reductive. Since Sara Joseph's re-reading insists upon Radhamani's difference, let me turn to how she is constituted as a reader in contradistinction to Kokila.

Radhamani, unlike Kokila, appears to be an instinctively resistant reader. For Kokila, Senthil's story is clarificatory. It seems to put her in contact with her "real" experiences and feelings. Radhamani on the other hand displays a strong disinclination to let the male author guide her modes of seeing and being. As we read further into Sara Joseph's story, we realise that it is not simply the violence represented *in* the narrative, or a naïve understanding of the violence provoked *by* the narrative that agitates Radhamani. She seems to experiences the narrative *in itself* as a form of violence. She is unsettled by the story's overarching power to arbiter meanings and interpretations; of its power to make sense and impute meanings to *her* experiences.

For instance, the male narrator in Methil's story "complicates" Kokila's experience of rape. He notes, "However, in the final moments of this event, she [Kokila] was doubtful if she could decide whether she was being raped, or whether she was participating in a not-one-sided experience that was pleasurable" (Methil 170). This rather complicated arrangement of words and indecisions, hedged by parenthetical insertions and negatives, insinuates its way from the story Radhamani has read. It casts its shadows on her own experience of rape. Radhamani feels manipulated by the story, as though it were recruiting her reading-self against herself. Radhamani's distress is not that her experience does not find validation in the story she had been reading. It is that the story seems to plunder, even pre-empt her experience; that it assigns meanings to it. Above all, it seems to establish her as an unreliable witness of her own experience.

This, I would argue, is significant. It throws into relief the particular manner in which the woman reader becomes susceptible, especially in the '90s. It draws attention on the historical circumstances of particular acts of mis/reading and allows us to trace some of the argumentative and interpretive forces "outside" the text,

which nonetheless impact upon it. In the process, it also allows us to speculate why this particular story by Methil Radhakrishnan emerges as a force-field for feminist anxieties; why it invites an urgent re-telling. But to appreciate this more fully we will need to take a detour through the calendars of the feminist movement in the '80s and the '90s.

* * *

Since the late '70s when women's groups from various parts of the country rallied against the Mathura judgement,[6] "rape and sexual violence against women have been one of the most visible and strongly articulated issues in the women's movement" (Menon 108-9). A vigorous campaign was launched against existing rape laws which were shown to be insensitive and archaic. In 1983 the laws were partially amended. But the public debates and efforts at legal reform continued through much of the '80s and the '90s. In 1993 (incidentally, the year in which this short story by Sara Joseph was published in the collection *Oduvilathe Suryakanthi*) the National Commission for Women prepared a draft document suggesting further amendments in the rape laws of India. In Kerala, public debates on rape gained circulation in the '80s as small feminist groups were formed. (Sara Joseph, it is well known, was a prominent member of many of these feminist configurations.) After the Fourth National Conference of Women's Movements was held in Calicut in December 1990, feminist initiatives in the state witnessed a further surge.

Given this political climate, we can begin to understand what is at stake in this episode of feminist re-telling. We can begin to see why Methil's story provokes passionate quarrel in the Kerala of the 1990s. As the women's movement mobilized against rape, it became clear that rape did not exist politically unless it could be made representable. Some of the most vexatious questions they had to wrestle with were: How does a woman's testimony get devalued and misinterpreted in rape trials? How does doubt insinuate its way into her testimony? How do intentions, motives and unconscious desires get imputed to women? How are men's accounts rendered reliable, objective? How, in other words, does rape become a fiction

that women produce? All of these were, demonstrably, questions of language and subjectivity.[7] All of these raised issues of volition, agency, choice. Sara Joseph's story, it can be seen, dwells painfully upon many of these courtroom re-significations of rape. Somasundaram the lawyer harries Radhamani, "When the incident occurred was Murukesan above or below? ...You didn't resist Radhamani. Isn't that so? ...When the incident occurred, where were your hands Radhamani?" (Joseph 70, 46).

Clearly, feminist struggles to represent rape engender particular urgencies. In this context Methil's story emerges as politically insidious because it renders rape indeterminate as an event. It will be recalled that Radhamani is unsettled most by the equivocations in Methil's story; by how it prevaricates amidst the deceptions of desire, guilt and complicity. She resists the narrative's invitation into the ambivalence of violence and erotics, into the mystification of imputed desires and emotions.

* * *

If we could have surprised upon Radhamani while she lay reading (before the rape) we would have encountered an all too emblematic scene. We would have found her cloistered at home, solitary, languishing, pouring over a story. This picture-perfect snapshot usually typifies a particularly immersive experience. It has been used to represent a woman who has dissolved her world willingly, involuntarily, in the world of her reading. No questions of the here-and-now, the local or the dross everyday intrude upon the absorption of this woman reader. Radhamani, however, seems to quietly parody this scene of reading. Even when she ensconces herself with Methil's story, she refuses to dissolve her world into it or to recast herself in its terms. On the other hand, we find her stubbornly inserting her "parochial", gendered experience into her reading. For all this however, we find that Radhamani does not have the language to articulate and analyse her disenchantment. She is seized by unnameable anxieties and grievous hurts. We do not find her articulating a studied critique of the story even after it proves to be injurious. That is a task which is undertaken by the narrator of her story.

The narrator, I argue, is the second woman reader inscribed in Sara Joseph's story. Unlike Radhamani, who labours from diffused discontents, the narrator consolidates a feminist sensibility. She not only relates the experiences of Radhamani, but also, simultaneously, offers a critical re-reading of Methil's story. She does this not by simple repudiating the "master" narrative, but by interrogating the codes and narrative conventions which structure Methil's story. In the following section I shall focus on a few of her literary-critical manoeuvres.

II

We had noted earlier that the cast of Sara Joseph's story was entirely different from that of Methil's. There is, however, one figure who is invoked into its narrative space in a certain oblique manner—the narrator of the "master-story". In fact, one of the crucial ways in which Sara Joseph's feminist narrator uncovers the textual politics of the "master-story" is by summoning up its narrator and by rigorously challenging him. For instance, when she poaches the vexatious line from Methil's story so as to embed it in its new narrative situation, she notes caustically: "If *someone* were to say that in the last moments of rape, Radhamani could not be certain if she was being raped, or sharing in a pleasurable experience that was not one-sided, however philosophical that statement, what are *we* to understand?" (emphases added). The shadowy, unnamed "someone" is, for all its obliqueness, an unmistakable pointer to the narrator of Methil's story. This is a significant move, for it trains attention on a figure who tends to escape the readers' scrutiny. She rightly apprehends that authority in Methil's story is underpinned by its narrator. Suspicions about the story, therefore, get assembled around the figure of its narrator.

There is yet another significant move that the feminist narrator initiates in the above passage. She summons into existence a "we", a set of readers who need to "understand" the mediating presence of the master-narrator. These newly summoned readers are deployed against, or at a critical distance from, the narrative voice in Methil's story. I'll have occasion to return briefly to these readers. For now, let me press on with the feminist narrator's interrogation of the master-narrator. We find her challenging the structures and modalities

of his knowing, his omniscience. "When even Murukesan, the man who raped Radhamani, cannot authoritatively tell us what Radhamani was going through "how can a third person even offer an opinion on it?" she asks (Joseph 70, 45). Of course, Sara Joseph is being unashamedly polemical. But, we cannot fail to see that the master-narrator has been placed squarely on the dock; he has been called to account. Nor can we ignore how fictionality becomes a theme in this re-telling. The feminist narrator presses home the limits and promises of the realist ideology in order to challenge the authorial voice of the narrator.

We can see why such an unrelenting challenge of the "knowing-male-narrator" is warranted. Clearly, the feminist narrator regards his confident omniscience as an 'author'itarian ruse to defuse political contestations on rape and the gendered grammar of violence. Moreover, his posturing allows her no foothold in the narrative apparatus—no room from which to speak, nothing to say. The narrative has to be prised out of his tight, controlling hold before she can re-signify it. She has to aggressively re-read in order to recuperate a space for writing. Furthermore, the master-narrator needs to be exposed not just as an individual voice but as an ideological position. It is, in fact, through her persistent interrogations that the feminist narrator succeeds in uncovering his socio-sexual position. True, we realise that the narrator of Methil's story is a man without strenuous interpretive excavations. (This paper, for some time now, has been using the pronoun "he" to indicate this narrator.) However, I argue that it is Sara Joseph's re-telling of the story which re-signifies this story as a "man's narrative". Before her re-reading, the narrator's sex-gender does not get hypostasised as a social position. "We" are not prompted to ask the question: *What* speaks in his voice? What structures of privilege, what ideologies, what social mediations? We are not prompted to recast the narrator's apparent neutrality and seeming objectivity as androcentricity in disguise.

It is this mode of re-reading which allows the feminist narrator to dispute the conventions which, in her analysis, control women and impose meanings on their self, experience, body, sexuality. By stridently questioning the immunity that the master-narrator has shored up, she is able to clear pathways for examining how his narrative voice mediates, speaks for and displaces the woman's

voice. The feminist narrator thereby creates a space within fiction in which to enact a public debate on rape.

In fact, the feminist narrator uses the space of the story to substantially recast the rape-plot. As in Methil's story, rape inaugurates the narrative here as well. However, it is dislodged from its originary position in Radhamani's socio-sexual history. "Were Radhamani to tell her own story", the feminist narrator speculates, she would perhaps remember how as a young girl she took delight in her slowly budding breasts (Joseph 68, 43). Pleasure in her sexuality was soon marred by a series of intrusions upon it. If Radhamani were to read "the unbound book of [her] experience", the feminist narrator informs us, she would read a series of incidents where her body was fondled, pressed, hugged, crushed (Joseph 69, 44). It is in these unwelcome, often frightening, encounters that her body becomes sexualised. None of these encounters sought her consent or her pleasure. In fact, they caused her nipples to sink inwards in depression (Joseph 69, 44).

By plotting the "event" of rape within a more extended history of sometimes elusive, at other times overtly aggressive instances of sexual violence, Sara Joseph's story radically re-theorises the rape-plot. It also lays open the politics of a narrative, which sees violence as an aberration, as a one-off and exceptional event rather than a daily negotiation. Rape, in this re-telling is no longer about an isolated event as in Methil's narrative. Rather, it marks an episode in a predicament of pervasive violence. Her narrative forces us to ask: How does a woman sexualised by violence come to experience her body? Even before the rape, Radhamani had been split in two. Her mind had refused to "flow into [her] body" (Joseph 71, 47). This violent and internal division seems to pit her body against itself. She comes to experience her body as the agent of its own betrayal, as an "encircling situation" from which she cannot break free. At the time of rape, we are informed, "this is how matters stood" (Joseph 69, 45). Radhamani did not love her body; she did not hate it; it remained, more chillingly, "unresolved" (Joseph 69, 45).

How does such a subject, who has been gendered into the violent appropriation of her sexuality, who feels bifurcated and disenfranchised from her body, configure its consent, pleasure or protest?

As the feminist narrator points out, after all the many intrusions upon it Radhamani tended to regard the privacy of her body as no more than "a convenient fiction" (Joseph 69, 45). The right to decide who she would share her body with had never really rested with Radhamani—even in her marital arrangement (Joseph 70, 45). Her body had never been allowed volition; its desires had never been anybody's concern. And yet during the critical moments of rape, it is called upon to bear witness to what are purportedly its most secret and elusive desires, to its deepest pleasures and betrayals. As never before these become matters of philosophical debate and conjecture. We had previously noted that what aggrieved Radhamani the most was not that she was subjected to an oral rape in the courtroom or that her body had been subject to intensely voyeuristic scrutiny. What was far more injurious was the "facile manner in which her complex sexual experiences had been captured in meshes that went unseen all the time she had spent reading stories" (Joseph 72, 49). This, then, is the susceptibility of the woman reader.

It might be useful at this juncture to recall Radhamani's first (recounted) experience of sexual violence. As a young girl, she felt rough hands groping her while she slept. "Causing her pain" (Joseph 69, 43). Tousled and plucked awake from sleep, young Radhamani imagines that the hands, which had suddenly disappeared, were those of the magician in the story she had been reading. The pattern is too insistent to be missed— stories, and characters in stories, infringe upon her in all too palpable ways. A Murukesan might be able to hold the belief that no stories influenced him. That the rape was his own work, it was original (Joseph 68, 42). It is not possible for Radhamani to entertain similar fantasies of autonomy. She comes to experience her body and her self through the cognitive field of socially available narratives.

It is not simply one story that captures her life in its narrative tentacles. It is many stories—starting at least from the tale of the magician. It is not only one story that renders her experiences facile and vulnerable to discursive appropriation; it is all the stories she has spent time reading. It is the entire paradigm. To see her, therefore, as only rebelling against Methil's story would be simplistic. Given that they are everywhere, it is not possible to simply abjure stories that are injurious. What is called for instead is a radical

transformation of modes of reading. Though she does not explicitly state as much, the feminist narrator appears to think that insofar as we have been socialised into reading, we are committed to the solicitations of stories, we respond to them on the terms they set for us. This, then, is the power they wield over us. If stories draw us into their tightening noose, she notes, it "is the peril brought about by passive reading" (Joseph 72, 49). What we need by implication is to learn to refuse their invitations and ruses, to voice our disagreements, to read them against the grain, and above all, to undertake a critical analysis of the reading process itself. Thus, it is that re-reading, critical reading, misreading, "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" emerges as acts "of survival" (Rich 167).

* * *

It is primarily through the figures of three women readers that I have tried to understand the battles over reading. Of them Kokila, Methil's protagonist, proves to be a willing, even enthusiastic, audience who displays an excess of fidelity to the stories which produce her. Interestingly, she is not invoked into the narrative ambit of Sara Joseph's story. One can discern why. She appears to be shadowed out in this re-reading as the creation of the male narrator. If she easefully inhabits men's stories and finds possibilities of self-actualisation in them, it is because she is a figment of his imagination, his desires.

There is arguably an extended history in Malayalam fiction of male authors and (their) women protagonists (many of whom were avid readers). Sara Joseph's story seems to want to pluck the woman reader from male texts, to disrupt the illusory coherence and well-being in their figurations. Radhamani is characterised as a "real" person, painfully negotiating the stories which appropriate and thematise her life. She is at once an individual reader as well as a place-holder for the woman readers in history. She stands as representative of the women who have inserted their locations and their particularities into the experience of reading fiction; who have refused to subsume their selves in the stories they have read, who have disallowed male voices to ventriloquise them. A more sustained analysis of how the social institution of Malayalam fiction engenders

the woman reader, and what individual women readers *do* when they read fiction is the subject of another, more meticulous study.

Meanwhile, it must be noted that the reader that Radhamani embodies is significant for yet another reason. She is new and historically emergent, a figure who gets summoned up in the '90s. What do I mean? Of course, as noted above, there have been women-readers in Malayalam before Radhamani. Of course literacy, print and narrative in Kerala have mobilised women insistently. Some women readers, like Chandu Menon's Indulekha (and Methil's Kokila), have even been figured inside the stories that have been told. If Radhamani is new, it is because she is not merely a reader; she is poised to become a "re-reader". She stands at the head of new and emergent modes of reception, of new and critical ways by which to enter old stories, so that she can recuperate a space for herself in language.

We find that fiction (not just the particular space of this story, but arguably, the extended space of pennezhuthu as well) becomes the occasion to constitute this re-reader. It is important to note that unlike a reader like Kokila, the re-reader does not simply find herself in stories. Instead, she produces herself through her resistant engagements with the stories around her. To do so, she has to device (re-)reading conventions that are not necessarily available to women in Kerala in the early '90s. In a manner of speaking Sara Joseph's story dramatises the learning occasion for this re-reader. Radhamani is equipped almost exclusively with her nebulous disaffections with the stories she finds around her. It is the feminist narrator who initiates the discontented, resistant, but inarticulate woman reader into a feminist re-signification of gender, body, (hetero)sexuality.

What does re-reading entail in this context? It requires an alertness not just to what a story says but also to what it represents. It prompts the woman-reader to step outside its narrative framework in order to dissect and analyse its informing structures and discourses. In other words, instead of reading with the story, the woman-reader is encouraged to read at and through it. It allows her to mis-appropriate, dislocate and subvert inherited modes of reception. That is, to creatively misread, and to provoke further misreading. Gender is the central analytic and organising principle in this exercise.

What this also lays out is the historical circumstances of particular acts of reading. In the 1990s in Kerala, we find, on the one hand, that a gender rebellion is being instituted against the pliant, complicitous reader, inscribed in (male) narratives. On the other hand, we find that a coherent feminist reader has yet to emerge. Thus, we have the figure of Radhamani—a proto-feminist reader, a not-yet-feminist reader. She strains against the limits and possibilities proffered by the (male) texts she reads. And yet insofar as these narratives encircle her, insofar as they are allowed controlling sway over her, she is internally cleaved by them. Radhamani does not yet have the impudence and the interpretive skills required to radically defy the mandate of these stories. She has to be trained to engage in resistant readings, to be a re-reader. It is in the pedagogic engagement between her and the feminist-narrator in Sara Joseph's story that we discern the condition for the emergence of such a reader.

Notably, the feminist narrator of this story is involved not only in training Radhamani but other putative re-readers as well. It might be recalled that fairly early in the story, the feminist narrator had posed the question, "...what are *we* to understand" ((Joseph 69-70, 45) (emphasis added). The first-person plural, the "we" who is invoked here, are a community of women readers that she assembles together textually. This collective "we" is called upon to grapple with the politics of Methil's story. They are encouraged to identify with Radhamani, to similarly deploy their experience and literary/literacy resources to read against the grain of the "male" text. The mobilisation of this larger feminist readership is arguable one of the crucial possibilities thrown up by pennezhuthu. It is in and through such a readership that pennezhuthu hoped to forge associative links between women, which would, at once, ground its ambitions and emerge as its sought after consequence.

III

The question to be asked then is: If pennezhuthu proposes itself as an occasion for formulating and maintaining connections among women, why do so many women today refuse to be mobilised by it? What is the nature of disenchantment with the sign of the woman summoned up by it, and more particularly for us, by this story?

By way of concluding this paper, I intend to examine some of the germinal tendencies in this exercise of re-reading that go on to become full-blown impasses for pennezhuthu, and for feminist articulations at large. Regrettably, I will be able merely to outline their broad contours as they are large subjects in themselves and need to be pursued in greater detail elsewhere. What I propose to do at this point is to examine them only within the limited purview offered by Sara Joseph's story.

Let us turn first to the overwhelming grammar by which gender comes to be constituted in Sara Joseph's story. We insistently encounter the formula of male violence and female vulnerability. Rape becomes one of the clear facts of women's lives. Women are either already raped or already rapable. This incessant vulnerability might have helped initial attempts to consolidate the category of women, projecting it as a group that faced common forms of oppression despite their differences in location and social endowments. However, the consequences of such reductions and simplifications continue to haunt the feminist mobilisations in Kerala. It drew up, for instance, a very limited scope for women's agency. It would be pertinent to note in this context that when the feminist narrator revisions the woman reader from Kokila to Radhamani, she also effects significant changes in her social location. Radhamani is not a travelling salesgirl like Kokila; she is a secluded housewife. The streets are not spaces that she can easily access. In Methil's rape-plot Kokila climbs up the stairs to Nachcheelan's house. In Sara Joseph's story this is neatly reversed: "...from the workshop downstairs, spanner in hand and his clothes besmeared in oil and soot, Murukesan came intruding into the room" (Joseph 68, 42). I had remarked earlier that the scene of a woman, in sheltered privacy, lost in a book deliberately replays stereotypical figurations of woman's reading. It must also be noted that such a figuration allows Radhamani to audition as a non-transgressive woman. It helps her dodge possible criticisms that she invited the rape upon herself. Unlike Kokila, it cannot be said that she climbed up, rang a bell and (thereby) invited violence upon herself. To present herself as a cogent victim of rape, as a recognisably violable body, Radhamani has to be shown as having renounced mobility. Such figurations of women also foreclosed the representation and reconstruction of women's bodies and pleasures. Except for the early,

and all too brief, period of remembered pleasures, the body is endlessly experienced here as an encircling situation, as a locus of violence. The weight of all that has occurred, one upon the other over twenty-six years seems to have forever divided Radhamani, so that there is little hope that her mind will ever flow into her body again.

The mobilisation of women as a homogenous category, irrespective of internal divisions and unequal allotment of privileges, is again one that has proved impossible to sustain. The collective "we" has proved to be too hastily and too lazily conceived. Especially, when this collective was expected to extend easily and effortlessly from the individuated figure of Radhamani. Typically, Radhamani has all the bearings of the subject that feminism in Kerala has tended to address. She is middle class, literate, privileged caste (nair), ensconced in domesticity— and in all these ways the archetypical proto-feminist subject of Kerala. To expect that Radhamani stands in for every woman reader, alternately, to expect that every proto-feminist would share and identify with her social coordinates, vulnerabilities and desires has proved to be a facile and unsustainable fantasy.

The enunciations of gender as radical difference, as the mode of carving out the man-woman binary, have been unproductive in other ways as well. In Methil's story Nachcheelan, the man who raped Kokila is a cobbler by caste. He gains social and economic mobility through a series of unsavoury transactions. When Kokila comes to his door on that fateful day, we are allowed entry into the insides of his mind. And as readers we baulk at the crudeness of his gaze, his thoughts. What marks them is not just the blatancy of sexism, but also his "caste"-ness. It would appear from the narration that even when Nachcheelan has forsaken the vocational chores enjoined upon his caste, the supposed "baseness" of his caste stays with him. It seems to impel his gaze and the manner in which he dissects Kokila. It is to be noted that we are not allowed similar entry into the minds of other male character around Kokila. We do not know how Senthil, her lover looked upon and seized her body. Nor do we know whether the male narrator—who after a point in the story abandons his invisibility and waylays Kokila—gazes lustfully upon her. These men, moreover, do not appear to be inescapably

caste-ed. The narrator of Methil's story suspects that at least some among his readers would take objection to the manner in which Nachcheelan has been characterised. In fact, he chooses to directly address these skeptical readers. Significantly, Sara Joseph's feminist narrator cannot be counted. She does not deem fit to re-read the figure of Nachcheelan or the way in which he has been casteed. It can only be surmised that this has not been adjudged as a "problem" for feminisim at the time. In fact the scapegoating of the working class man proceeds unchecked in Sara Joseph's story. Murukesan, it will be recalled is a grease-smeared mechanic. Insofar as these feminist enunciations present gender as radical alterity (Woman/Man), there is no space within it to explore gender as relational, inter-subjective, polyvalent, multiple or as scored through by "other" social identities, structures and discourses. These appear to fall outside the purview of gender and therefore of critical feminist re-readings.

Finally, I would want to re-focus attention on the feminist narrator. We have seen that she delegitimizes received meanings; that she displays a healthy suspicion of conventions and formal structures. It has however to be noted that she fails to problematise and critically appraise her own modes of story-telling. We have seen how she exposed the modes by which authority is inscribed into Methil's master-narrative. She effectively contests the power that it holds by demonstrating that reality is not simply reflected but is constituted in language. However, she does not bring these insights into the scene of her own narration. Her mediation of women's voices appears to rest on the assumption that women's writing can represent women's experiences in a transparent fashion.

Neither does she open up her textual position to the kind of scrutiny to which she subjects the master-narrator. Given the determinative role she plays—as the chief pedagogue, as the one who mobilises and trains a community of critical women readers—the feminist narrator is the one who shapes the perceptual field for re-reading. She is the one who initiates, selects, organises and signifies. It would seem imminent therefore that she, and the authority she claims, becomes subject to critical analysis. This, however, is not the case. The feminist narrator might explore fictionality as a theme, she might examine the ideological complicity of the signifi-

cation process. But, when it comes to her role, her narration and re-significations, there is an uncritical confidence in the "real". There is a wilful naivety in the configuration of the feminist narrator, spokes-person, pedagogue, re-reader. It is this I submit that needs to be further examined in order to understand the impasses not only of pennezhuthu in Kerala but also of feminist enunciations at large.

Notes

I gratefully acknowledge the ready help offered by Ratheesh Kumar PK, Shamshad Hussain and Ratheesh Radhakrishnan.

1 These, it will be recalled, were largely limited to a few conclaves of writers, some seminars, and a spurt of debates in journals and magazines.

2 "Women are not willing to curl up in the limited light it [pennezhuthu] throws," reports a magazine feature on the subject of woman-writing. See, K.R. Mallika, "Sanjakale Bhayakunna Ezhuthutharangal (Literary Stars Who Fear Labels)". Chandramati is quoted as expressing much the same sentiment in M. S. Ajikumar, "Pennezhuthendathu (What Woman Should Write)". Other women are reported to have aired similar opinions on many different occasions.

3 Translations from Methil's story are mine. For Sara Joseph's story I have consulted the translation made by Jayasree Ramakrishnan Nair (with inputs from Niharika Gupta) in *Onion Curry and the Nine Times Table*. However, I have sometimes considered it fit to alter these translations. On all occasions I have first provided the page numbers of the story in Malayalam and thereafter the page number of the above English translation.

4 Kokila listens to an oral narration of the story. While the difference between an audience of an oral telling and a written one is not without significance, in this paper I do not propose to animate these differences. I shall therefore be referring to both Kokila, as well as Radhamani as "readers".

5 At the end of Methil's piece the narrator of the story takes the place of Senthil, her first lover who, we earn, has died in a motor accident. The erotic relationship between the narrator and his female protagonist is something that calls for analysis. But I have occasion to merely gesture to it in this paper.

6 The Mathura rape case involved the custodial rape of a sixteen year old tribal girl by two policemen. The Supreme Court of India held that Mathura had raised no alarm and that there were no visible marks of injury on her person. It thereby surmised that there was no struggle and therefore no rape. Following the acquittal of the accused, there were widespread protests by women's organizations from various parts of the country which ed to reforms in the rape law.

7 In this section I have usefully drawn upon Sharon Marcus insightful essay "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention" where she theorises what she calls the rape script and its implications.

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‘Globalisation is ruining us’: neo-liberal capitalism, Islamic reform and business in Kozhikode (Calicut), South India.

Filippo Osella
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This article explores relationships between religious and economic practice in Kozhikode, a medium sized city in Kerala. We are examining local debates concerning the apparent decline of the ‘bazaar economy’ in the face of the onslaught of globalization and the consequent emergence of a ‘new economy’. The latter is felt locally to be over-determined by capital and entrepreneurial practices connected, either directly or indirectly, to the combined effects of migration to the Gulf countries of West Asia and to the post-1991 liberalization of the Indian economy. We argue that public debates underscore the production and articulation of specific economies of morality and affect. We also perceive a drawing together of seemingly divergent orientations, sensibilities and practices – namely those commonly associated to reformist Islam and what in recent literature has been described as ‘neo-liberal global capitalism’. Discussing some of the tensions, contradictions and slippages which inform Kozhikode Muslim’s engagements with and experiences of economic change, we emphasize the contingent and contextual articulation of economic and religious practices which defies univocal causalities or predictable relations of elective affinity

Introduction

This article explores relationships between religious and economic practice in Kozhikode, a medium sized city in Kerala, on the south-western Indian coast (also known with the colonial name of Calicut).[1] Specifically, we are examining here local debates concerning the apparent decline of the ‘bazaar economy’ in the face of the onslaught of globalization and the consequent emergence of a ‘new economy’. The latter is felt locally to be over-determined by capital and entrepreneurial practices connected, either directly or indirectly, to the combined effects of migration to the Gulf countries of West Asia and to the post-1991 liberalization of the Indian economy. We will argue that public debates like this underscore the production and articulation of specific economies of morality and affect. We also perceive a drawing together of seemingly divergent orientations, sensibilities and practices – namely those commonly associated to reformist Islam and what in recent literature has been described as ‘neo-liberal global capitalism’.

The apparent confluence of these orientations and practices amongst Kozhikode Muslims might not be surprising. Historically, trade and commerce have been Kozhikode’s most important economic activities. Muslims, in the absence of significant local Hindu or Christian trading communities, have participated energetically. Trade and commerce also hold a much wider relevance for local Muslims, who explicitly associate these activities to the spread and development of Islam in the region, and also to its later renewal, via commercial interactions with Arab merchants and scholars. This long term relationship is doubly significant: while a few Kozhikode Muslims claim direct descent from Hadrami (Yemeni) Sayyed traders who settled throughout northern coastal Kerala (Abdul Sathar 1999; Dale 1980; Freitag 2003; Ho 2006; cf. Miller 1976: 255ff), many others see themselves as the descendants of marriages between local upper caste women and the Arab Muslims who regularly visited or settled in the city. These claims, common currency in Kozhikode, articulate a discourse of the inseparability of economic practice [trade/commerce], religious identity as Muslims, and Arab descent. Like other Muslim trading communities across the Indian Ocean (Fanselow 1996; Simpson 2006; cf. Mines 1973,1975), such a relationship is in turn deployed to assert class and status distinction firstly from non-Muslims (who cannot claim an essentialised ‘natural’ orientation towards trade and commerce) and then from other Muslims (see Osella & Osella 2008;

cf. Bayly 1989: 71ff; Fanselow 1996; McGilvray 1998; cf. Mines 1973, 1975; Vatuk 1996).

Rather than dismissing such a sense of self and group identity, which brings together religious and economic practice, as a lingering of primordialist or premodern attachments - an all too common move in popular and academic representations of Muslims in India and beyond - we will argue that it expresses a very complex and contemporary involvement in transnational processes and relationships. Local self-representation, then, urges us to trace out another analysis: a direct relation between a self-styled 'natural affinity' towards trans-oceanic trade and Muslims' successful transition from bazaar to cutting-edge global business (both in India and in the Gulf countries of West Asia, where large numbers of Malayalis have been migrating since the 1970s oil boom). As among Rajat Kanta Ray's and Markowitz' 19th century bazaar merchants (Ray 1995; Markovits 1999, 2000), time honoured trading skills learnt in Kozhikode's bazaars have been sharpened by participation in Gulf economies and then redeployed in Kerala to forward business there. At the same time, long-term participation in and familiarity with trans-oceanic Islam has fostered affinities towards Islamic reformism and a revived *dar-ul-Islam* (see Osella & Osella 2007). This heightened sense of the self as a Muslim, in turn, underpins community-wide projects of self-transformation. While business, entrepreneurship and economic success are increasingly standing at the core of a Muslim identity and of contemporary reformulations of Muslim morality, material progress and religious reform have become intertwined indices of modernity and class (Osella & Osella 2009; cf. Sloane 1999; Deeb 2006). New styles of entrepreneurship - which combine meaningful activity in God's world, material success and moral connectedness – have come to be seen as the exemplary contemporary way of being a modern, moral, Muslim. Predictably, those who fail either to `modernize' or to make the most of life's chances – for instance, old style bazaar traders and the working classes - are increasingly marked out as morally lacking, and thereby become the object of reformist intervention.

As one might expect, the production of a discourse linking religious virtuosity to economic performance cannot but be fraught

with unevenness, slippages and tensions. While family capital and 'know-who' remain at least as important as the 'know-how' of modern management, rising competition has undermined many local businesses. But even for the most successful amongst the new elite of transnational entrepreneurs and professionals, participation in the global economy is not a straightforward affair. In the Gulf, Indian Muslim entrepreneurs have to operate within hierarchies of race and nationality running against the grain of those neo-liberal ideals of meritocracy and open market competition to which these men are apparently committed. And while back in India the most successful transnational businessmen are celebrated as the embodiment of a bold and competitive 'Global India Plc' - through the prestigious awards conferred to them, for example - they are simultaneously marginalized, as Muslims. Meanwhile, at home in Kerala, they are often stigmatized as aggressive speculators. Similarly, appeals to pan-Islamism and a Muslim brotherhood made at home to encourage mutuality and to express community solidarity, might sound hollow to many migrants whose experience in the Gulf is that of 'second class Muslims'. To complicate matters even further, in Kerala - as in the Hindu hegemony of India more generally - open support to pan-Islamic ideals increasingly draws accusation of disloyalty to the nation (Hansen 2007).

Contradictions revealed by practice cannot be explained away by using a framework of defective or incomplete penetration of modernising projects, in business as much as in matters of religion. Neither the Gulf Cooperation Council countries nor India are marginal or external to the development and workings of neo-liberal capitalism. Their rapid development and economic success, for example, based upon substantial deregulations of labour markets, puts them at the forefront of a global capitalism seeking unfettered access to accumulation. What we find here is that the universalising discourse of neo-liberalism - the dream of self-regulating markets disembedded from social, cultural or political straight-jackets – is at its very heart utterly implicated in the production of practices – central to its global working – which differentiate and advantage players on the basis of anything but purely economic criteria. Strict regulation of migration and a fragmentation of labour markets according to hierarchies of race and ethnicity, for example, are

intrinsic to the operation and success of GCC economies. And in Kerala, as much as in the Gulf, modern technocratic 'know-how' remains indissoluble from bazaar-style social skills of 'know-who'. The importance of social networks and social identities to business is by no means an unusual or imperfect moment in the wider sweep of the neo-liberal project but is, we argue, a foundational feature of economic practice under global capitalism (see, eg Harvey 2005; Granovetter 1985; Thrift 2005). Meanwhile, in Kerala as elsewhere, Islamic reformism emerges within the 'modern', as a universalistic and rationalising orientation (often, though mistakenly, compared to the Christian reformation). As we have argued elsewhere, reformism is articulated in a complex dialogue with (at times in opposition to) colonial and postcolonial 'western' modernities, whereby an orientation towards universalism – through notions of pan-Islamism, or of Muslim brotherhood – has to contend on the one hand with regimes of difference based on race, culture, class and gender, and on the other with the inevitable determination of specific historical contexts (Osella & Osella 2008).

Recent studies have traced out capital's attempts to harness moral discourses produced within various religious traditions to foster novel work ethics and labour practices in tune with the demands of global markets (Osella & Osella 2008; Sloane 1999; Rudnyckyj 2009; Haenni 2005; Feillard 2004; cf Vanaik 1997; Bagchi 1991). At the same time, researchers have identified the emergence, on a global scale, of religious practices and theologies seeking to harness and control the opportunities engendered by global capitalism (see, eg Coleman 2000, 2004; Watson 2005; Wiegele 2005; Bornstein 2002; Gifford 2004; Bialecki 2008). In Kozhikode, both processes proceed alongside each other, forcing us to analyse them together: emerging entrepreneurs employ the discourse of reformist Islam to shore up and legitimise their long term economic interests, at the same time as Islamic reformism publicly asserts its authority over, and critique of, entrepreneurs' economic practices (Osella & Osella 2009). This, we argue, is neither unusual nor exceptional, but, on the contrary, it reveals the shortcomings of current social theory. Drawing on Geeta Patel's analysis of the relationship between sexuality and capital in post-liberalization India, we suggest that people do not engage in

economic practices as already 'moralized' subjects, in the same way as capital does not occupy "a space external to and distinct" from – collective and personal – morality (Patel 2006: 26; see also Srivastava 2007; Devika 2007, 2009). It is not academics alone, however, who indulge themselves in essentialist and dichotomizing understandings of social practice, nor is such a 'work of purification' exclusive to modernity (Maurer 2008; cf Latour 1993; Mitchell 2002). Social actors themselves do often objectify economic action and religiosity as separate socio-moral domains whose interaction is of wider concern. Yet, in other historical contexts, such an opposition is softened or dissolved altogether. In this article we want to shift attention towards the contingent production of the discourses and practices through which 'religion' and 'economics' might be fashioned as mutually exclusive or as inevitably encompassing each other. In the rest of the article, then, we will explore debates concerning the apparent decline of Kozhikode's bazaars and the emergence of a new economy, unravelling in the meantime the social and economic history of the city's Muslims.

Kozhikode Muslims and the bazaar economy

Located on the south-west coast of India, Kerala has a population of 32 millions, split between various Hindu (54%), Christian (19%) and Muslim (25%) communities. With roughly half a million inhabitants, Kozhikode is Kerala's third largest city and, although Muslims are not the majority, situated in the region of greatest concentration of Muslims, it is considered to be the Muslim capital of Kerala.

Kozhikode has been entangled with the circulation of people, ideas and goods across the Indian Ocean for all its history. It was prosperous with maritime trade from the tenth to the fifteenth century, developing rapidly over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a commercial hub between West Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia (Bouchon 1987, 1988; Das Gupta 1967; McPherson 1993). Like other Indian Ocean port cities, pre-colonial Kozhikode had a noticeable population of visiting or resident merchants from the east (China, Java and Ceylon) and the west (Egypt, Yemen and Persia). At the time of Ibn Battuta's visit in 1342, the chief merchant and harbour master was one Ibrahim from Bahrain,

suggesting a strong Arab presence, confirmed by the existence of two mosques and a qazi (Muslim judge) of Arab origins (Dale 1980: 27). Almost a century later, the Chinese Muslim traveller Ma Huan reports that in Kozhikode 'many of the king's subjects are Muslims and there are twenty or thirty mosques in the kingdom', adding that the king employed two Muslim administrators. "In Calicut" Enseng Ho writes, "the Hindu ruler hosted four thousand foreign Muslim traders in the fourteenth century" (2007: 351). Arriving in 1498, Vasco de Gama began a long and bloody struggle to wrench away control of pepper trade from the 'Moors', Muslim merchants from Egypt and the Arabian peninsula (Barendse 1998; Bouchon 1987,1988; Das Gupta 1967; cf. Subrahmanyam 1997).

While the presence and activities of a substantial Arab Muslim commercial community is well documented, the role played in trade by local Muslims is unclear. What is known, however, is that resistance against Portuguese conquest coalesced around Malayali Muslim seafarers headed by the famous Marakkars (Kurup & Mathew 2000). The Portuguese fleet never managed to control trade from the Malabar coast: Arab dhows and Malayali boats - manned by predominantly Muslim crews - invariably defied sea blockades and, whenever the opportunity arose, disrupted European trade through so-called 'piracy'. By the early 19th century, oceanic trade was firmly in British hands and intra-coastal commerce (to Bombay and Surat/Kachch) became dominated by Gujarati-owned and manned boats. But, as testified by Arab-sponsored building of a number of mosques in the city (Shokoohy 2003), Kozhikode Muslims and their Arab partners continued to move goods between Malabar and the Arabian Peninsula, a trade deemed by the British as of little economic importance. By the late 19th century, Malayali Muslims lived predominantly along the Malabar Coast or in towns and villages on the banks of rivers, all locations through which trade could be conducted.

From the 19th century until the middle of the 1980s, the colonial and post-colonial economy gave a major boost to local trade: Kozhikode became a world centre for timber export and, later, the centre for the commerce of copra. Emerging as a major rice market in the region, the city also saw a resurgence of trade from

the Arabian Peninsula. But when Kozhikode Muslims talk about the heyday of trade and commerce in the city, they are invariably referring to a relatively recent period, from 1947 to the mid 1980s.

Apart from a handful of merchants who either were directly involved in Arab trade or held lucrative contracts with the colonial administration to provide timber for the railways, colonial trade was dominated by Gujarati (Hindus or Muslim Bohras) 'forwarding agents' who bought goods on behalf of - mostly - Mumbai companies; similarly, the wholesale commerce of rice, grains and pulses was in the hand of a few Karachi-based Memon-owned companies. The vast majority of local Muslim bazaar merchants either acted as middle-men between these 'forwarding agents' and producers - for example, for coir, copra/coconuts and spices - or they acted as retailers for rice bought from Karachi wholesalers. It is only the late colonial period which saw the emergence of a small wealthy local Muslim middle class - mostly timber merchants and Gulf traders - largely anglophile and modernist in orientation, supporting both Islamic and British-inspired reform initiatives in, for example, the introduction of modern and rationalising practices in education, business and family life.

The removal of the colonial trade regulations which had penalised local business, together with an expansion of internal demand, boosted trade in Kozhikode's bazaars during the post-independent phase. Fortunes were made and the city's economy thrived. Take, for example, P K,[2] one of the largest of Kozhikode's rice wholesalers. Originally from a town some kilometres north of the city, the business's founder joined the Kozhikode office of a Karachi-owned company as a junior clerk in the 1930s and was eventually sent to Rangoon, from where most rice was imported. After the Japanese invasion of Burma, he returned to Kozhikode jobless and, with some savings, started his own small rice retail business in the bazaar. Business developed rapidly after independence: responding to a dire scarcity of local produce, he began to import rice from Burma - a trade which he quickly monopolized through contacts and expertise gained during his Rangoon years - and, later, from Nepal. In the 1960s he was joined by his sons and son-in-law and the business expanded yet again.

Like many others, PK began to act as 'commission agents' (see below) for Andhra Pradesh mills which had no contacts outside their own state; PK used their local contacts to sell rice on the mills' behalf, in return for a percentage of the sales' value. While India's post-independence planned economy regulated the circulation of rice within India to the advantage of big mills, the `Licence Raj' regime allowed for the building of wholesale monopolies in the bazaar, headed by those who had the capital and political connections necessary for receiving trading licences from the government. PK were amongst this group, and they further expanded the business by gaining - though connections with local politicians - contracts for the distribution of rice to the state government's ration shops. Within a few years, `PK Traders' had started a number of rice and flourmills. The business was eventually partitioned amongst the sons of the founder. In the 1990s, one of them moved into steel production, now owning three steel plants, in south India and UAE.

In the copra bazaar - where spices and coconut products are traded - we find a similar story. As in the nearby rice bazaar, business here used to be concentrated in the hands of a few traders closely related through kinship and marriage. During the colonial period these were predominantly 'middle-men' who bought up coconuts or pepper directly from producers on behalf of 'forwarding agents', mostly of Gujarati origin. The latter purchased commodities on behalf of buyers - at a price fixed by the latter - which were often British-owned companies. Bombay buyers would pay a set fee – a commission - to the 'forwarding agent'. The lifting of colonial regulations which had limited local traders' exports, together with an exponential expansion of demand on the national and international markets, boosted trade in both the copra bazaar and the timber trade.

Meanwhile, the most lucrative side of Kozhikode trade actually came from smuggling: during the two world wars it was tyres, petrol and gold which went from Kozhikode to the Gulf; but from the 1950s onwards - until the 1990s liberalization of gold imports - gold moved once again in the opposite direction, from the Gulf to Kozhikode.[3] Gold smuggling certainly brought enormous

riches not only to those directly involved in various roles in this trade,[4] but to the whole Kozhikode Muslim community, eventually overtaking timber, spices or rice as a site of capital accumulation.

The decline of the bazaar

In the late 1970s, the timber trade declined as a result of nationalization of hardwood forests. Following the Gulf oil boom, the last Arab residents left Kozhikode and Arab ships stopped coming altogether to the city, leading to the eventual closure of all port facilities and warehouses. Meanwhile, Kozhikode bazaars have apparently become all but a shadow of what they were in the 1960s and 70s. As in the rest of Kerala, since the 1980s, Kozhikode's economy has become dependent upon the revenues and remittances of Gulf migration.

Bazaar traders commonly impute the decline of business to globalisation - claiming with one voice that 'globalisation has ruined us'. Here they offer us a predictable narrative, in which time honoured practices are made obsolete by technological innovations and aggressive competition. Rice traders argue, for example, that major changes in wholesale distribution had a deleterious effect on business. Following the post-1991 economic liberalization's abolition of the licence system, rice mills no longer need to rely on local 'commission agents'. The latter received large stocks on credit and settled bills only after selling all the rice. Mills nowadays sell directly to customers - wholesalers and retailers alike - through 'canvassing agents', who gather orders and collect payments within two weeks from delivery. Such canvassers are employed by non-local agencies, often operating right across south India. This change has affected the bazaar in a number of ways. Firstly, while local traders have to pay ready cash for rice deliveries in order to benefit from mills' discounts, market competition is such that they normally give up to six months' credit to their own clients. Secondly, competition has increased. This is not simply because newcomers have entered the bazaar on the strength of Gulf remittances, but is also due to canvassing agents' willingness to sell rice anywhere - around nearby towns and rural areas - bypassing the bazaar altogether, a change made possible by the expansion of road transport and by ready access to mobile phones & the internet. To retain their buyers,

Kozhikode traders have no alternative but to lower prices and offer long-term credit, moves which limit both profits and cash flow. Thirdly, in the late 1990s the railway line to Kozhikode closed down for a number of months following a train crash. Rice had to be downloaded further south, in Trichur. This city's Christian entrepreneurs were quick to exploit the opportunity, offering discounts and lower handling charges to Kozhikode's usual bazaar customers, eventually turning Trichur into a competing rice market. These changes, effectively undermining the monopoly and regional centrality of Kozhikode's bazaar, have affected mostly medium and small traders - that is those traders who have a smaller capital at their disposal and rely heavily on regular cash returns from clients - forcing a number of them out of business. Wholesalers such as PK, mentioned earlier, simply shifted to cash-only sales or moved out of the bazaar altogether.

While the rice bazaar is slowly turning into a predominantly local market - a transformation accelerated by the recent arrival in the city of two national supermarket chains - the adjacent copra bazaar appears to be in terminal decline. This is a Muslim-dominated business where traders' skills and experience are paramount in order to take advantage of 'forward buying/selling'. Traders receive orders months in advance of the actual delivery, at a price fixed according to current rates. If for any reason producers' prices go up, traders lose money - often fortunes, if the orders are large - and vice versa. Until the end of the last century, Kozhikode traders had the upper hand: buyers had to rely on their services and sellers did not have the means to monitor the daily movement of prices on national or international commodity markets. Moreover, traders operated as a cartel, refusing to pay suppliers above agreed prices. But technological innovations and economic liberalization have brought substantial changes here as well. The main suppliers of Kerala pepper are Christian planters from the mountain district of Waynad, an area relatively isolated from the coast. Many members of this highly educated community migrated as professionals to the United States. Nowadays, planters can either use the internet or telephone directly to their relatives in the U.S. to check the daily fluctuation of commodity markets. They can then decide prices or, indeed, whether to sell at all or to hold their

commodity in storage: pepper can be treated and stored for several years. Better roads have also allowed these Christian planters to sell directly to exporters in the port city of Ernakulam or in neighbouring Tamilnadu, bypassing Kozhikode bazaar altogether. At the same time, following liberalization, the Indian pepper market has been flooded by cheaper imports from Vietnam and Indonesia.

Copra is not faring any better either. Replacing coconuts as Kerala's main export, copra has been sold to local and national oil mills since the early 1950s. A drastic reduction in trade is due here to several factors. On the one hand there has been a decline in supply - disease has badly affected Kerala crops; planters (again, mostly Christians) are also relocating their activities into low labour cost areas outside the state. On the other, the 1990s introduction of cheaper imported palm oil has led to a reduction in local demand. In the meantime, the big north Indian buyers have expanded their operations, approaching producers directly and forcing prices down.

Is 'globalization' the problem?

Surely traders' pessimistic reflections on the decline of business are commonplace in bazaars across the world, wherever success depends on keeping competitors and sales-tax officials at arms' length. And yet, as the chamber of commerce's figures confirm, the volume of trade has indeed declined and many traders have gone out of business, apparently as the result of the deleterious effects of globalizing markets. This straightforward, and perhaps familiar, explanation is shared by both local traders and their archenemies - the unionised bazaar labourers – finding themselves for once in agreement. But this simple explanation, commonplace as it may be in the political propaganda of groups as diverse as Kerala's Communist Parties and Islamist organizations, hides as much as it reveals about Kozhikode Muslims' participation in contemporary economic life. After all, the city's bazaars have always been embedded in wider commercial networks, hence all but local; as we have seen, Kozhikode Muslim businesses - from timber and spices to gold and, more recently, Gulf migrants' companies - have long thrived on the back of long term relations with Arabs and participation in the colonial economy.

And while traders have seldom determined the conditions under which their business is conducted, they have over time developed and deployed sharp practices - of which they are deeply proud - to make the most of new chances. An orientation towards risk-taking and opportunism is indeed the essential attribute of success which, Muslims argue, differentiates them from traders of other communities. Most of our bazaar friends would readily admit that business is a game of chance, where you might win - with god's help - or lose with equal ease as prices rise and fall unpredictably. To be sure, increased competition is resented, especially from non-Kozhikode newcomers who can rely on Gulf remittances to subsidy business, but only to an extent. Newcomers, however, are chided more for their incompetence than their aggressive practices. One of Kozhikode's former pepper's kings – who went bust in a multimillion forward buying deal with Russia - reminded us many a times that unlike inexperienced newcomers panicking at the slightest market fluctuation, Kozhikode traders know how to keep steady nerves and to weather even the most severe financial setbacks.

That these bazaar Muslims have never lacked either the skills or the resolve to profit from the various opportunities opened up by novel and fast moving markets - just as they did in colonial and post-independence times - is indicated by the peculiarities of the current crisis. Usman and his partner Faizal are an example of how, even with a modicum of initial capital to invest, attitude, experience and contacts can still make a business thrive. In his teens, Usman joined his sister's husband as an errand boy in a small rice shop, where, along with learning the ropes of bazaar trade, he built an extensive network of 'well-wishers'. After eighteen years with his brother-in-law, he took over a moribund tapioca flour mill-cum-wholesale shop with his childhood friend Faizal who had returned after years of migration. Faizal's modest savings and tenacity - cultivated in Tamil Nadu, Mumbai and, later in Bahrain - together with Usman's expertise, quickly turned the business to profit. To maintain a healthy cash flow, they personally visit clients - in rural areas and adjoining districts - to collect payments for credit sales.

At first sight, then, those most affected by the bazaars' crisis would appear to be those businesses whose owners did not

have enough capital and expertise to withstand competition or manage credit sales. But in Kozhikode, boom-and-bust businesses are not necessarily cause of despair or disgrace. Gulf migrants - keen to find investments for their savings - regularly form partnerships to finance relatives' or friends' shops and stores. Availability of Gulf-earned cash is such that it is commonplace to find traders rapidly moving from one failed business to a new and hopefully successful one - often in activities as diverse as rice wholesaling and shoe retailing or fast food catering, all done in an attempt to cash in on new fashions. But although it is undoubtedly true that the recent influx of Gulf remittances has led to reckless investments, trade in Kozhikode bazaar has always been risky and open to the vagaries of chance. During previous periods of commercial growth - in the early 20th century, for example - Kozhikode Muslim traders and businessmen, worried by the possibility of bankruptcy that and wary of colonial driven reforms of marriage and inheritance system (Lindberg 2009: 92-3), protected their sprawling mansions, shops and warehouses by either registering them in their wives' names or by setting them as *waqf* donations, protected as charity under Islamic law. In other words, processes associated with contemporary forms of globalisation have produced just as many continuities as breaks in bazaar traders' practices. The current moment only appears anomalous or particular if one takes a very short term view of history.

New orientations towards business and entrepreneurship

Business partnerships - where both profits and losses are shared by investors (Tripp 2006) - and diversified investments are common strategies utilised to spread and manage risk. So, we find that many of the same bazaar traders who claim to have been brought to their knees by the decline of the bazaar have in fact long since changed their activities. Over the last twenty years, urban land and plantations have become the preferred destination of such investments, as in the case of KV. He can be found sitting in his Beach Road office, an old colonnade building from where his father and father's father ran their trade with Arab merchants. Starting out as a timber merchant, by the late 19th century KV's grandfather had set up business as a 'commission agent', buying local goods

on behalf of Arab traders. He left a thriving business, which was partitioned between the sons, amongst them KV's father. KV's father took on Arab trade, which brought great fortunes from the 1940s to the 1960s thanks to the gold trade. KV has a similar inclination for business. He married the daughter of one of his father's closest business partners - Malabar's undisputed 'timber king' - and joined his father's export business in the mid 1950s after sitting for BA exams. As the Arab trade eventually died out in the 1970s, he began to branch out into new commercial activities: a pharmaceutical company, jewellery franchises, real estate and rubber and coconut plantations, which he runs together with his sons. PK, whom we encountered earlier, did likewise: from wholesale of rice, he moved onto flourmills and, eventually, into steel production.

These two cases might be dismissed as exceptional, examples of the particular personal abilities of some entrepreneurs who successfully mobilize bazaar skills and capital to make the most of emerging markets. But it is here that we discern a profound shift in the way Kozhikode Muslims evaluate and make sense of economic practices. Like the contemporary Malaysian and entrepreneurs and Indonesian industrialists and management consultants discussed by Patricia Sloane (1999) and Rudnyckyj (2009) respectively, who sharply criticise 'old-style' fatalism, limited horizons and corruption – framing it as unIslamic because wasteful of the opportunities given by God – people like KV and PK would wish to see others follow their lead and take a more dynamic approach to business. An emerging public discourse attributes the relative 'underdevelopment' of Kerala Muslims, and of Muslims worldwide, not only to their alleged aversion to 'modern' education, but more generally to their failure to plan a long-term 'systematic' life.

"Muslims in Kerala are certainly more advanced than in Uttar Pradesh or Bihar," argued Abdul Qader, a successful frozen food exporter, "But actually, we should be comparing them with other Malayali communities. In Kerala, Christians have the highest education because of their connection with missionaries; next come the Hindus. But Muslims are only now realising the importance of education. When our young people go to the Gulf, they only get

low jobs; white-collar jobs only go to those who are educated. Even now, Muslims stop studying after SSLC or Pre-degree to join a business. They have no patience and want to make money immediately. Other communities are prepared to wait longer before getting employment." Here lack of ambition, an inability to defer gratification and outright laziness are marked out as deleterious to individual and community advancement. "Kozhikode Muslims like to enjoy life," Abdul Qader continued, "[T]hey are only interested in sumptuous houses and food. If a man makes money, his sons will spend everything, leaving the grandsons only debts to repay." What needs cultivating, instead, is a `get out and go for it' attitude, a mix of hard work, persistence and ambition; this, note, is an attitude which ties in happily with much of Islamic reformist discourse.

Orientations towards individual responsibility, energetic activity and self-advancement are all part of the moral self cultivated by reformists. While Islamic reformist organizations have only 10 percent of Kerala's Muslim population formally affiliated as followers, over the last thirty years they have set the agenda for the community in general, especially in Kozhikode. Nowadays, all Kerala Muslims recognize the need for moderate reform - from education, business and employment, to family life and everyday sociality: for the sake of community 'progress'; to compete with more developed Kerala Hindu and Christians; and to be self-reliant in the face of a national politics dominated by hostile Hindu fundamentalist parties. Reformist efforts to transform religious practice are embedded in a wider project of self transformation through an active ethical engagement with life as a whole, from self-presentation to employment. After all, reformists argue, "How can you be a good Muslim if you are poor, ignorant and oppressed?" While Quranic and shari'ah obligations (such as *zaqat* or the injunction to care for orphans) are taken as examples of Islam's preoccupation with social responsibility, reformists try to re-shape obligations into more engaged forms, such as using centrally-collected *zaqat* funds to provide the poor with the means to make a decent livelihood. In Kozhikode, there are a host of 'community' organizations which, as well as arranging Quran reading groups, nowadays campaign for and support children's formal education and organise regular camps or seminars to educate and inspire local Muslims. Through speeches

on how to live a moral, active and rationalised Muslim life delivered by community leaders, educationalists, public health workers or people felt to be useful community role-models, Muslims are introduced to the idea that they should be aiming for a 'systematic life'. At the same time, spoken English, personality development and leadership courses are regularly organized to equip the already educated with the interpersonal skills deemed necessary to successfully participate in an increasingly competitive economy - in India as much as in the Gulf - forwarding community progress whilst satisfying the demands of middle class life.

Sadarudheen describes his busy daily schedule with great pride: managing his own furniture-making business, acting as a part-time sales agent for a pyramid-selling scheme, while carving out time in the evening to help his sons with their school homework. Although he is not a reformist, he often compares with satisfaction his efforts, "to give my family the best" to the attitudes of those many Muslim men who "sit the whole day in the bazaar chatting and drinking tea" and then proceed to spend every evening with friends, returning home only late at night, when the children are already asleep. While new forms of conjugality and family life are being promoted by reformists, bazaar-specific forms of everyday male sociality have become the target of public critique.

Bazaar sociality

In a Muslim-dominated neighbourhood such as Thekkepuram – bordering the bazaar area - where trade and commerce are the main cultural, if not economic, referents of many men (see Osella & Osella 2007) face-to-face relationships are valued and cultivated on a daily basis. Timber, rice, copra or spice merchants, as well as other men involved in these businesses, are connected through overlapping webs of kinship and friendship - often spanning across generations - forming partnerships to expand business or to enter in new ventures. Trust and credit, central to success in the bazaar as much as in emerging businesses, depend directly on merchants' reputation and connections (Osella & Osella 2009; cf Haynes 1987, 1991; Bayly 1983; Ray 1995; Markovits 1999, 2000). Indeed, Hindu and Muslim competitors alike fear Muslims' ability to mobilise substantial capital through relations of kinship and friendships. To

a large extent, then, business, kinship and friendship are inseparable, part and parcel of the bazaar economy, and crucial to community identity.

Forms of everyday of male sociality have been produced historically at the intersection of bazaar economy, matrilineal kinship and practices of gender segregation.[5] When men talk about the heyday of the bazaar – from the 1940s to early 1970s – they never fail to mention that the demands of business were such as to require traders and their staff to spend days and nights in their shops, eating and sleeping there for days on stretch as business required. Not only did they entertain clients – Gulf Arabs in particular – but feasted each other in their warehouses on a regular basis. Philanthropic projects underpinning Kozhikode Muslim's modernism in the first half of the 20th century drew inspiration form the business interests and socio-political aspirations of competing groups of bazaar traders. In the meantime, political as well as religious sectarian affiliations unfolded along similar lines, connecting men through trade, kinship and friendship. In other words, Thekkepuram's political and economic history – the sudden emergence of business alliances between men belonging to traditionally competing *tharavadus*, for example – cannot be fully explained without taking into consideration the long-term unfolding of affective relations between men.

But bazaar life had also a much lighter side. In the evening men gathered in rooms above bazaar stores and shops (known locally as *mugalil sanghams*, literally upstairs associations), to gamble and drink alcohol. In the precursors of today's 'community centres' and a variety of other formal and informal expressions of male sociality – which existed alongside the more established and exclusive venues of the upper middle class and elite, such as the Cosmopolitan Club and the Cricket Club – fortunes could be won or lost at cards, while gambling debts and alleged cheating led to fights and, on a few occasions, murders. These were the days when trade was buoyant and the bazaar was awash with the profits of gold smuggling. At the height of bazaar expansion, gambling stood as a metaphor for trade, underscoring the rewards and pitfalls of risk taking, while reminding traders that success depends on chance and luck as much as on business skills.[6] Gambling,

like trade, is about competition, players reinforcing friendships or making enemies with equal ease. Nowadays, all but a few of these clubs have closed down; those remaining keep a low profile. Open for only a couple of nights a week, they provide men a discreet space for card playing, accompanied by a few drinks and some hotel-delivered food.

Forms of everyday male sociality which developed in the early 20th century have dwindled because they are no longer sustained by the requirements of a bazaar economy which nowadays neither attract investments nor produce long term employment for the younger generations. Since the 1970s oil boom, men in the 18 to 50 years bracket have been migrating in droves to the Gulf, to the extent that, putting it simply, there are not enough economically and socially active men left in Thekkepuram to reproduce organized forms of sociality. And yet, local discourse attributes the decline of *mugalil sanghams* to the success of open critique articulated, in particular, by Islamic reformist organizations.

The moral crisis of the bazaar

The crisis of Kozhikode bazaars, then, is represented to be moral as much as economic. While no one would think of bazaar traders' rule-bending as immoral - it is generally taken for granted as necessary common practice to all business people - the bazaar no longer embodies community aspirations for the good life, where ambitions have grown more expansive. Trade and business in general remain at the core of ethnic identity and masculine personal ambition, but it is now imagined in a new configuration, beyond the bazaar. The latter, associated now through memory either to the decadent forms of westernised colonial modernity or to the past of unreformed Islam, is marked as inherently 'traditional' and morally lacking. It is perceived as a fetter to a future of progress, whose referent is the Islamic modern of the Gulf or, increasingly, of Malaysia and Indonesia. Various forms of 'social work' have become the expression of a more sober, engaged and morally acceptable male sociality.

In the middle of the 20th century, Kerala middle-class Muslims produced themselves as modern through a generalized distancing

from 'tradition', be it social, economic or, indeed, religious. Undoubtedly, reformists' success and influence comes down to their ability to join forces with the modernizing middle-classes on a platform of socio-religious reforms. This orientation towards reform led eventually to a confluence of interests and orientations on issues of community progress. While only a few amongst the new breed of entrepreneurs, businessmen and traders we discuss are involved in organised reformist piety movements, most nevertheless strive to live (publicly) moral lives. And yet, while they seek ways of embedding their business practices within an Islamic framework of ethics and moral responsibilities, at the same time they are committed towards re-orienting local Muslim subjectivities and practices towards the requirements of neo-liberal capitalism. In other words, an orientation towards self-transformation through education, adoption of a 'systematic' lifestyle and a generalized rationalization of practices - which has acquired wider currency amongst Kerala Muslims following reformist's influence - is mobilized to sustain novel forms of capital accumulation.

Unsurprisingly, emerging entrepreneurs and businessmen invariably talk of their success as depending solely on their hard work, dedication and business skills, where 'traditional' Muslim skills of the bazaar are refined with the adoption of modern business techniques - learnt in the Gulf as much as at the desks of management institutes - to achieve success. The PS group is owned by four young brothers (two commerce graduates, the other two high school drop-outs) who, together with their MBA educated sister's husband, have monopolized the Kerala palm oil market in the space of a few years. Their father - who was one of PK's partners and married the latter's sister - died when they were still at school. As soon as elder brother finished college, he used inheritance money to start a rice wholesale shop in the bazaar, soon joined by his three brothers. In 1994, following economic liberalization, they were able to buy a moribund government-owned flourmill which they rapidly made profitable by sacking all the Malayali unionised workers and replacing them with illiterate Muslim labourers brought in from Bihar, in north India. By 1998 they had acquired another three mills and started to import palm oil from Malaysia, soon making a fortune by becoming the sole palm oil suppliers to

government ration shops. Eventually, they built two sprawling refineries and nowadays import palm oil by the tanker full. Elder brother has no doubts that without innovation and investment businesses disappear. "The bazaar cannot be turned to profit because the work force is too expensive and the labour practices are too old," he argued, "our business, on the contrary requires cutting edge expertise. We import millions of rupees-worth of palm oil every month; we check every two hours the price of oil on the international commodities market and buy accordingly." "To make savings" brother-in-law explains, "we are implementing backward and forward integration of our business, so we have our own lorries, refineries and we have also bought the company that developed our computer system. As soon as the state government gives us approval, we plan to start our own palm plantations here in Kerala and hope to develop our own port facilities. To do well you must be a trendsetter. The problem in Kerala is that people want to copy successful businesses, but have no expertise."

The PS Group, not unlike other Muslim businesses which have emerged in the last 15 years in both Kerala and the Gulf (Osella & Osella 2009), embodies a novel orientation towards progress which, just as in the middle of the 20th century, builds upon a convergence between middle-class practices and Islamic reformist discourse. Reformism, via the central tropes of enlightenment, education, rationality and so on, has become imbricated with more generalised ideas about progress which resonates with middle class aspirations. Many reputed traders are winding down their commercial activities simply because their sons - university educated following reformist influence - are no longer interested in pursuing bazaar business. But PS Group's enthusiasm for the sharp business and labour practices of global capitalism also reveal the unfolding of a (class) specific road map for the community's development. Ordinary Muslims are encouraged to embrace 'modern western education' and to learn English in order to compete in the global labour market, but they are also asked to accept flexible labour practices, the key to future employment. However, unlike the Turkish or Malaysian cases, Islamic reformism in Kerala, strongly influenced by state-wide progressive politics, has not yet abandoned condemnation of the excesses of western

capitalism. If anything, international political events of the last 10 years have sharpened critique. Only an Islamic renaissance, reformists argue, can rid Kerala of the social problems - decline of family, consumerism, pornography - brought to bear on Muslim lives by globalisation, and in the meantime set the basis for counteracting 'western imperialism'. What is envisaged, as in the (often faintly romantic) talk about a revitalised *dar-ul-Islam*, is a properly Islamic globalized modernity which provides a moral framework for capitalist activity.

Conclusions

In this article we have discussed some of the tensions, contradictions and slippages which inform Kozhikode Muslim's engagements with and experiences of economic change. The ethnography we presented suggests a contingent and contextual articulation of economic and religious practices which defies univocal causalities or predictable relations of elective affinity. We have mapped out the emergence of an economy of morality which, at times, draws together neo-liberal and Islamists' orientations in the pursuit of community and individual progress. This takes the form of a generalized distancing from what are locally perceived as 'outmoded traditions' in economic and religious practices alike. And yet, the relationship between discourse and practice is complex and contradictory. In the making of the PS Group's success, for example, extensive familial and political connections are recognised to have been as important as was the commitment to modern technocratic 'know-how'. A number of Kerala Muslim entrepreneurs have made it big in the Gulf because, as we have argued elsewhere, they have combined cutting edge management techniques with networking skills. They thrive in the Gulf because they understand the politics of *wasta* and have developed close relations with Arabs, but they also benefit from close links with politicians, who support their investments in Kerala. Eventually, success in the neo-liberal economy depends just as much on connections, games of chance and luck as it does on technocratic management and rational calculation. At the same time, a good dose of calculation and pragmatism informs engagement with the ethical demands of Islamic reformism. Entrepreneurs needing to rely on modern

banking argue, for example, that the sin of usury (*riba*) applies to lenders and not to borrowers, leaving them free to rely on bank or government loans to expand their businesses. Reformism, likewise, is never disembedded, but is also always deeply inflected by the specific historical and socio-political context in which it develops; so that, for instance, the orientation of transnational movements such as Jamaati-I-Islami on crucial issues such as women's participation to communal prayers varies considerably not just between India and Pakistan, but also between north India and Kerala (cf Huq 2008; Shehabuddin 2008). In practice, then, even Islamist organizations make compromises, shift position and offer pragmatic concessions which might take them away from their own avowed policy fundamentals.

We have also argued that local discourse underscores the inseparability of economic practice from religious identity and descent. In drawing connections and suggesting continuities – albeit imagined and mediated through novel orientations and sensibilities – between former glories and aspirations for a future of 'progress' and success, it charts trajectories for dealing with what are locally perceived to be the shortcomings and challenges of the present. As we have demonstrated, Kozhikode traders and entrepreneurs are neither external nor peripheral to 'globalization'. On the contrary, they are, as they are always been, deeply concerned with exploiting existing opportunities and creating new forms of capital accumulation well beyond the confines of the 'local'. Discussions about the deleterious effects of globalization, then, are not simply reflections on the transformation of the bazaar economy and the emergence of new players. They emphasize that economic success depends on and articulates with the unfolding of complex local and transnational relations to which social actors participate simultaneously as subjects and objects. For instance, given existing hierarchies of class race and ethnicity, most Kerala Muslims working in the Gulf can either claim participation in the neo-liberal economy or in a wider *dar-ul-Islam*, but not to both simultaneously, and very often to neither. Meanwhile in India, where Muslims are tolerated as long as they remain a poor and illiterate minority, linking religious and economic practices together might be altogether dangerous. Finally, the conversations and debates that we have

presented in this article suggest that Kozhikode Muslims – unlike economists or Wall Street traders and bankers – recognize that economic rationality and pragmatism are not morally neutral. Economic practice – requiring as it does specific subjectivities, embodied disciplines and structures of feeling to produce and reproduce itself – is necessarily wedded to notions of morality, even at the point of asserting its radical 'amorality' and disembeddedness. At the same time, our respondents' experiences and reflections underscore the centrality of specific forms of material exchange and of economic engagement to the objectification of everyday religious experience (cf Coleman 2000, 2004; Keane 2008; Bialecki 2008).

Notes

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2 To maintain the anonymity of informants, we have used either changed or initialized their names.

3 Circulation of gold between the Gulf and South India has, of course, a long history, stretching well back to pre-colonial and early colonial times (see Barendse 1998; Prakash 2004).

4 This was chronicled in the famous novel *Arabi Ponnu* (Arab Gold; 1993) by M.T. Vasudevan Nair and N.P. Mohamed.

5 For reasons of space we will focus solely on bazaar economy

6 See Mammootty's recent portrayal of the eponymous Kozhikode 'lucky gambler' in the 2006 Malayalam movie *Thiruppugulan*.

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■

Shaping the Life: Kerala Youth in a Changing Socio-economic Order*

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This paper aims to locate the idea and experience of modernity among the youth in Kerala. Drawing on ethnographies, particularly personal narratives, the paper argues that the idea and experience of modernity of the youth are in conflict—interlinked with 'tradition' and interfaces with 'modernization'. Further there seems to be subtle differences in the way in which caste, class, gender and geographical locations affects one's idea and experience of modernity. The paper suggests that reasons for this need to be located in the larger socio/economic processes by which modernity is 'fractured'.

I

The attempt here is to understand the idea and experience of modernity, that conflicts and converges among the youth and to explore the role of caste, class, gender and geographical locations in explaining such 'discrepancies'. Further we also try to link the influence of contemporary socio economic developments on the idea and experience of modernity. It proceeds through personal narrative of the youths, from diverse socio-economic background and geographical situation, presently living in the northern part of Kerala.

By modernity, we mean 'an attitude which represent universalistic norms and where one's achievement counts more than

family background and connections' (Gupta, 2000). Differences occur in the idea and experience of modernity, when situations or aspirations induce an individual to use their 'identities' for personal gains, which in turn are influenced by the socio-economic factors. We have attempted to understand modernity in the context of larger societal changes like (re)inventing of identities, either through strengthening of caste-based movements, pro/anti reservation debates along side broader economic changes. For the purpose, the idea and the experience of modernity among the youth was probed. Though we define the idea of modernity as non-absolutist or evolving in nature, evidence from the case studies indicate youth subscribing to a genre of modernity which is distinct in idea/notion and experience/practice. In practice, 'unadulterated' ideas of modernity of youth's are often compromised, legitimising behaviour patterns that benefit them. Changes brought by globalization are central to this study. Withstanding the question whether globalization is beneficial or not, its impact on economy and culture influencing attitudes and lifestyle of the people in general and youth in particular cannot be negated.

The centrality of market in everyday life was a phenomenon that became more visible in India during the post 1990s, following the liberalization and privatization policies that facilitated globalization. This was followed by the withdrawal of the State from a variety of welfare spheres like education, health and employment. However the 'new economy' created jobs that demand specific education/skills and proved beneficial to a smaller section of the society. The youth are in a dilemma regarding how to encounter these changes, particularly with respect to opportunities and challenges they offer, immediately affecting their education and employment choices. Cultural globalization on the other hand operates through the global network of media and helps in spreading peculiar 'youth styles', creating a notion of 'modern' in the possession and consumption of certain goods and services—ranging from mobile phones to mini cars and even food habits. At the same time youth strongly hold and practice, 'conventional beliefs and attitudes' in social relations, especially when it comes to crucial decisions like choosing their life partner. The youth thus apparently straddle between tradition and modernity according to one's convenience.

Unraveling the concept of modernity reveals that it was often used with reference to the socio-economic and intellectual transformations that the western world has undergone. For instance, "modernity" is defined as a set of philosophical, political, and ethical ideas that believe in the possibility of creating a new world through secular reasoning and techno-scientific exploration (Pathak, 1998, 2006). The concept gained momentum during the Enlightenment period and later developed through the discourse initiated by Kant, Giddens and Durkheim, to name a few. Modernity came to India as part and parcel of the colonial project, which projected 'West' as superior, often creating discomfort among Indian intellectuals. Although initially accepted as a universal concept, contemporary critical scholarship, questions this dominant paradigm, enabled with studies based on specific cultural contexts that problematised modernity in its relativity, which might accepts colonial attributes but at the same time engage with contextual specificities. This has been often described as 'modernity at large', 'vernacular modernity', or 'alternative modernity' with the opinion that the experience of modernity has to be contextually determined and has it own relative dimensions.[1]

For instance Chatterjee (1997) calls our attention to the existence of multiple modernity and stress the peculiarity of 'our modernity', which is formed by specific circumstances and social practices in India. Joshi (2001) rejects the idea of an 'ideal-typical' modernity and focuses on its multilayered nature as evident among the emerging middle class in colonial Luknow, during 1880 to 1930. He shows how the same people/organizations and newspapers at any given time expresses commitment to universal values, like meritocracy and gender equality, and simultaneously promote 'tradition' that enhances their status and draws exclusionary lines defined by such parameters as birth, gender, and religion, leading to a 'fractured modernity'. Pandian (2002) is concerned with the implications of identity politics in the context of modernity and points towards the contradiction offered by the concept of Chatterjee's 'nationalism' as the nationalist invocation of Vedic tradition against the colonizers would accommodate vast sections of Indians only as inferiors within the nation. He argues that the conscious act of bringing caste into the domain of culture prevented any discussion of caste

in the colonial public sphere. However, there were isolated attempts to recover a space for the language of caste mainly in the writings of Ambedkar and E.V. Ramaswamy. The Dalit writers had to 'step outside modernity' to speak about their own caste. The modernity as practiced in India hides caste in public but vehemently practices it in private life.

Gupta (2000) is concerned about 'mistaken modernity', where people associate 'modernity' rather loosely with symbols of modernization. And the mode of relations in our society continues to be based on family connections, privileges of caste and status. For him even the idea of 'multiple' modernity is problematic as it fails to explain what is contemporary and what is modern and by this claim everyone can be modern in one's own terms. Modernity is not an unadulterated good or a finished project. Globalization too is seen as a localizing process, where by different communities appropriate the materials of modernity differently; a process made possible by the widespread influence of media and large scale migration and influencing the formation of 'modern subjectivities' (Appadurai, 2002). It is also argued that by delving deep into the process of globalization it is possible to re-invent tradition by a process of reflexive modernization (Pathak 2006).

Engaging with the specific context of Kerala, Osella and Osella (2000) elaborate that the *Ezhavas* (an ex-untouchable caste) sought to improve their position by accumulating economic, symbolic and cultural capital through employment, religion, politics, migration, marriage and education and assert their right to mobility, often in the face of opposition from their high status Christian and *Nair* (an upper caste) neighbors. This study also examines how the *Ezhavas*, through repudiation of their nineteenth century identity and in search for mobility, have come into a complex relationship with modernity, colonialism and globalization and suggests that *Ezhava's* modernity and identity are in conflict. More recent studies also points out that 'new-globally inflected spaces of consumption' are structured by post–colonial preoccupations about tradition and modernity, differentially effecting men and women (Luckose, 2005).

With such a theoretical understanding, empirical part of this paper attempts to situate the kind of modernity that work among youths in Kerala. As mentioned above, at any point in it's history

there would be factors simultaneously imparts and fractures the idea of modernity, in every site. For instance, during the late 19th and 20th century, modern education and various social movements have tried to impart a notion of 'modernity' among the people of Kerala. The present era of increased competition for education and employment, together with the revival of various caste/religious organizations and increased influence of these groups in politics and economy, have directly or indirectly encouraged youths to negotiate and use their caste, class and gender identities for personal goals. The present paper intends to understand such intricacies that fracture the idea and experience of modernity among the youths in Kerala. We have attempted to trace this by specifically exploring youths' socio-economic aspirations and how they tackle inherited/structured, advantages/disadvantages (emerging from caste, class, gender and geographical location) to attain it. Though earlier studies on other contexts (Kripal, 1976; Pandey, 1984 and Lakshminarayana, 1985) touch upon some of these issues, there exists a gap in the literature particularly with regard to the experiences in recent period.

The paper is organized in five sections. The Section following this situates the study in the specific context of northern Kerala; Section III deals with the concepts and methodology used; Section IV reflects over the personal narratives and evidences from the field and the final Section concludes.

II

The location of the study is the state of Kerala, where as in the case of many other Indian states, youth eloquently interfaces with the traditional and modern life styles. The socio-economic aspirations of the youth and their tactics to attain socio-economic status have to be analyzed in the background of the specific development trajectory of the state.[2] Amongst the various paradoxical development patterns, the existence of widespread unemployment along with high educational attainments has emerged as a major problem in the state (Mathew, 1997; Prakash and Abraham, 2004). It is in this specific setting we try to inquire, how the aspirations and strategies of youths to attain socio-economic status/capital are formulated.

Geographical location has an important role in creating differential experiences of 'development' to youths, influencing their perception and aspirations and thereby their lives. In the context of Kerala, youths and their perceptions have to be located at their larger habitations—that is, presence of Communist ideology, progressive state policies etc (which would have a cultural and ideological base) apart from the caste, class and gender dispositions. The state can be divided geographically into northern, central and southern Kerala and they were three different political entities during the colonial rule. The northern Kerala (formerly *Malabar*) was under the direct British rule; the central and southern parts (erstwhile *Cochin* and *Travancore*) were princely states. The *Travancore* state has implemented various welfare oriented polices and programmes benefiting the common man. Historically, southern Kerala has witnessed the emergence of various socio-religious movements (SRRMS) including lower and upper caste movements, like the *Nair Service Society*[3] (NSS), *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sanga*[4] and *Shree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam*[5] (SNDPY). Many of these organizations started demanding various provisions for development and the positive correlation of various SRRMS and social development in the princely state is noted earlier (Tharakan, 1992). The practice of nominating the representative of castes to *Sri Mulam Praja Sabha*[6] came into vogue; Ayyankali was nominated to the popular assembly in 1912 (Gladstone, 1984). Various SRRMS especially SNDPY and NSS continue to wield significant influence in Kerala's politics. This implies that with the presence of various SRRMS, caste and its discriminative practice were acute in southern Kerala and eventually having an effect on the people when democracy intersects with caste/religious politics. Many a time youths have association with such organizations in their social life and are aware of such organizations' nexus with political parties.

Malabar, being under the direct British rule, on the other hand, was more authoritarian and was particularly oppressive towards peasants/tenants. The Communist movement, with its genesis in the peasant/tenant movement, originated in Malabar and the region continues to be a stronghold of CPI (M) [Communist Party of India (Marxist)] in the electoral politics of Kerala. The highly politicized milieu of the region these days often lead to frequent tension between the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS)[7] and the CPI (M).

As various parts of Kerala have their own historical and geographical specificities, all three regions have distinct development patterns and outcomes apart from social relations, though only a few studies have attempted to capture such intra-state differences (Kabir, 2002; GoK, 2006).

Socio-cultural, political and ideological differences across the regions in relation to caste, class and gender networks would have differential effects on the youths. The present paper would focus on the youth presently living northern part of Kerala (including those who originally belonging to southern side). How youth conceive the idea of 'being modern' and at the same time contradict the 'modern' behavior? How do these discrepancies interlock with their aspirations related to education, employment and marriage and how do the changing socio-economic forces and networks alter it? These are some of the pertinent questions to be unraveled from the narratives under consideration to unpack the multiple levels in which modernity expresses itself in Kerala.

III

Youth is a demographic concept that has got both biological and sociological connotations. As a biological category it relates to an age group that is transiting between childhood and adulthood. As a sociological category it consist of several groups, whose characteristics is determined by class, caste, gender, marital status, parenthood, employment, geographic location, with variations across time. Here we define youth as those belonging to the age group of 15-29 years and by this definition around 27 per cent of the Kerala population belongs to this category (GoI, 2001). By aspiration we mean, what they plan to achieve in their life. It is presumed here that, consumerist culture and increased competition in the education and labour market has lead to a general pessimism among the youth, which in turn has resulted in the emergence of a kind of value system that legitimizes all sort of strategies, though they are socially undesirable, to attain their desired wants and satisfactions.

Though the youth as a concept has various disciplinary backgrounds, for the analysis here we have taken this as an interdisciplinary object, so as to see its multiple visibilities in the contemporary

society. Therefore, the study has adopted an interdisciplinary approach with insights from ethnographic way of looking at a social science object. Specifically, we have chosen the personal narrative method of ethnography, where each respondent speaks of themselves addressing to our questions and comments. It is collected through a friendly conversation and the fieldwork was conducted during May, 2007.

The Science and Arts colleges, professional institutes and the Kannur University campus, all located in Kannur, a northern district of Kerala, constitute our study area. As pointed out earlier, our study attempts to capture how geographical locations influence one's idea and experience of modernity. However, during our field visit it was found that colleges and university in Kannur attracts a significant number of students from central and southern regions of the state, as revealed by the regional composition of students in the selected campuses. Hence this study is not constrained by a complete exclusion of the southern and central parts of Kerala.

We have chosen youths in the colleges and universities under the assumption that they are likely to be influenced more by the 'modern way of changes', which will in turn be reflected in their various aspirations. However, few respondents who have passed out from college during the last two years and presently employed were also covered, with a presumption that they will be in a better position to reflect on their experience of modernity as distinct from the idea/theory. The respondents were selected by giving due consideration to caste, class, gender and geographical area to compare and contrast their attitudes across their social and physical locations and accordingly understand their advantages and disadvantages. Although during the study, researchers engaged in formal and informal conversation and conducted a few informal group discussions with the students, the analysis presented here is primarily based on ten personal narratives. The personal narratives engage mainly with informants' notions of modernity, their positioning, their spending habits, educational status and reasons for their choices. In addition, their future educational and occupational aspirations, marriage preferences, the ways in which they intend to achieve it and their views on a variety on contemporary issues like the reservation debate, etc, figure in the narratives.

IV

Of Globalization: Encountering Dilemma

Sukumar[8], a *Nambiar* (an upper caste) boy represents certain aspects of youth, in relation to his indecisiveness while talking about the actual working of certain ideologies or notions of modernity. Keeping his Marxist leanings, he expresses desire for modernization; it can be even through information technology (IT) revolution. Caste is problematic, that he is aware of, but never admits that it works in social life. The denial of caste itself can be interpreted as an indication of an undisputable presence of 'caste that permeates in the society'. He conceives Marxist ideology as a doctrine, through which equality can be attained by reducing the gap existing between classes. It can be viewed as a problem of the social structure that legitimates only conventional methods of understanding the society and there are caste and class dimensions to this behavior. On the one side, one can see materially well off people living with all comforts and preaching Communism. At the same time, there are plenty of deprived people also preaching and working for the Communist party. The material disparities and related social structures push people into a dilemma to take strong positions. At certain point they tend to loose faith in the ideology they believe in. So when socio-material differences are high, convictions are tentative and wavering. *Preman* who belongs to a Scheduled Tribe opines that they want to be independent. Their dependency is forced upon them by the material and social conditions rather than their choice. He recognizes the importance of moving out of the *Adivasi* settlement and the need to migrate to cities/towns for education. But, he is not sure how far he would be successful in acquiring modern skills though he is ready to take that challenge. It is interesting to note that when we discuss the question of modernity, acquiring English language is found to be the most important element. *Preman* chooses the path of English to modernity. Though he nullifies the recent *Adivasi* movement for land and states that he does not have faith in political parties, he is a member and secretary of the youth wing of *Janata Dal*.[9] What is important here is that certain kind of political affiliation is essential for people to live in a highly politicized society like Kerala. Even when people nullify things on any ground, at another

point they are forced to accept certain aspects of it. It is a fractured decision about the social life. This may be a crisis in a transition stage; that the youths have not fully came out of their family/society bound life style on the one hand and they did not reach upto the requisites of a market driven society on the other. This allows them to see *Reliance* as a problem on the one side and expresses anxiety about its products on the other. Such ambivalences are evident in many narratives.

Prabheesh who is an ardent supporter of CPI (M) narrates the story of a person who wants to make a better life by migrating to the Persian Gulf. On the other side he speaks against privatization and its adverse impacts on poor people. He blames globalization and privatization primarily as it creates undue wealth to multinational companies like *Reliance*. But at the same time he possesses the same company's mobile phone. This has to be read along with the public discussions on globalization in Kerala, which by and large see it as a dragon that would injure everybody and this make the youth view globalization as something bad. But knowingly or unknowingly, they are on the track of utilizing it or enjoying its benefits. Left wing supporters are against it but are not quite sure about what are part of globalization and what not. But it is true that there are also youths who are not just bothered about these things. What comes out from the narrative is that political party affiliation and involvement in societal matters create certain notions about the working of contemporary social and economic world. *Sumith* agrees that one cannot prevent globalization, as it is a phenomenon that has got the support of Capital and State. He also notes that youth in his locality is active in left politics, but at the same time participate in traditional rituals and practice religion. CPI (M) also silently supports these two worlds of ideology, allowing the youths to engage with two binary opposite social worlds. The new economy created due to the gulf money has also resulted in new organizations like National Democratic Front (NDF) working with a communal ideology. It is pointed out that even watching a cricket match between India and Pakistan in a local club can create tense situation, as one tends to identify their respective religion with nations in the playground.

Education and Employment

Kerala development experience is paradoxical with high educated unemployment. It is in this specific context the question of education and employment and youth's idea and experience of modernity become relevant. In the last decade a lot of professional educational institutions have come up in the state, under various religious or caste-based organisations. This, however, has in some way intensified the present crisis, a lot more people get professional education and the employment situation in the state has remained the same or worsened. The case studies reveal that educational choice for the youth especially those belonging to the lower class/caste is often not a well thought out decision. It is often a result of the available options within a set of socio economic constraints. In many cases aspirations gets largely conditioned by family members' opinion and one's identity in terms of caste, class and gender. For instance, the case of Prabheesh, who had great admiration for teaching profession and like his father became a teacher. For *Rajasree*, a girl from *Vishwakarma* caste, her decision to pursue Law was taken by her father, to satisfy his unfulfilled dream. While those from gulf migrants' household by and large want to migrate and earn money. So they choose courses which can make them competent in the expatriate job market. There is a general admiration for professional education especially that of medical and engineering courses. Most of students have attempted medical or engineering entrance exams and many noted if they were born in financially affluent families their choice would have been different. For example, the case of *Sumith*, a final year LLB student made an off hand comment that he would rather prefer to work as an auto driver or any other occupation, than that of working in an exploitative situation, which taps his labour unpaid. Yet another kind of dilemma is visible in *Farzania's* narrative. *Farzania*, after completing her graduation in Economics, subsequently pursued to do her post graduation. She wanted to join the Department of Economics at Kannur University, but ended up in the Department of Anthropology. Then she made up her mind to do Anthropology. The new subject chosen and her lack of seriousness in it reveals that it is just a matter of spending time before marriage. Neither *Farzania* nor her family expects any thing from her Post-graduate degree. Unlike earlier times,

she agrees that the opinion of girls is also sought in the family on matters like education. She belongs to a rich *Muslim* orthodox family. They do not even own a television, as religion discourages watching movies and related programmes. For a Masters' student of Anthropology studying society and culture, an important visual medium of learning is prohibited. She found herself unable to break these barriers even while doing her Masters in Social Sciences..

The experience of modernity among the youth can be seen as an outcome of the processes of institutional settings, which opens up possibilities of entry into socially and economically accepted life of his/her generation. During the course of our interview many respondents were excited the way in which people coming closer through the processes of globalization, at the same time was dissatisfied with the fact that they have to migrate elsewhere to find employment. They blame the previous governments for not initiating necessary measures to create adequate employment which forces them to move out for making their living. *Vijaya George,* a *Syrian Christian* wants to become a fashion designer—a modern and lacerative job according to her.

> ……..I am considered to be modern. Because I do things according to my decisions. I lead a better life than many of my peers. I will have a good degree in my hand, wear jeans and casuals, got a mobile phone, own a computer and so on……..

She likes wearing new forms of dresses but the fact is that she do not want to invite problems by doing so, as "our men in society is so irritated towards such dresses," as she puts it. She also expresses her desire to move out to cities—to seek a metropolitan life.

Manoj, a *Thiyya* boy says that if he wants to get a job in Kerala he has to use his caste and class identity, but he claims he is not happy to use them. Again he takes a position that if there were enough opportunities available or had the state was sufficiently modernized, he need not have to use his caste identity to fetch a job in the state. It is also evident in many narratives that youths have a clear preference for government jobs, as it tends to provide more security and prestige. *Sudhakaran* works in a private firm, but trying hard to get into the government service. The ongoing changes

do not bother him much in this regard and he is not only for modernization but also new forms of opportunities that are available due to globalization. While *Sudhakaran*, claims he has not benefited from his caste identity, he conveniently forgets that his rank in the supplementary list for police job, is secured based on his OBC (Other Backward Caste) identity. Many youths hold the view that educational or job reservation is not a good method of ensuring social justice, it rather creates hatred among them. For instance look at the argument put forth by *Rajasree*. She expresses strong points against the policy of reservation and fails to understand the larger socio-economic condition of India. She belongs to an OBC community and is against SC/ST reservation. She also points out that reservation creates hatred among youths against the reserved categories. In her case it emerges from her personal experience of not getting admission for a course due to her caste. Her point that reservation is not benefiting the poor may be valid in certain situations. It also shows a lack of social consciousness and understanding of the politics of reservation. But the larger truth remains that reservation policy is one of the best mechanism at present available to us as many other instances like that of *Sukumari* suggests. Whether the beneficiaries were able to tap its benefits properly is a different story.

Marriage

Kerala was one the most caste-ridden societies in India. The working of various socio-religious movements has greatly improved the situation in comparison to other parts of the country today. But there are studies pointing out that caste operate at very subtle level in Kerala society and the discrimination based on caste is still prevalent. The perception of marriage varied among the youth with whom we interacted, but with a strong underbelly of caste. Most of them denied the operation of caste in Kerala society and more vehemently negated it as something they or their family practice. Most of them said that they do not have any problem in marrying from any caste, indicating their 'broad mindedness'. However they confess that due to societal pressure and their unwillingness to hurt their parents' sentiments they would prefer to marry from their own caste. So most of them gave us an impression that the modern outlook they posses with respect to marriage, the freedom to choose their life partner, is restricted in practice and this is often explained in terms

of pressure from family. What we can sense yet again is a notion of fractured modernity, where people use different values or ideas, sometimes watertight or interlinked in their private and public life. Though aware of the changes happening around, they prefer to have conventional types of marriage, which according to them ensure smooth family relations. *Manoj* is all against dowry and is of the opinion that it is something really 'bad'. He even goes to the extent of illuminating us about the different possibilities available for the youth in the present computer age to find their life partners. However if someone asks him how he plans to find his life partner, will get an answer that he will be prefering to get things arranged by his family and elders in a traditional way. The youth is not unaware of the vast opportunities thrown open by information technology in this regard, as one respondent noted:

> ……now things are changing. In this age of globalization, people can even find life partners through Internet. But I would still like to go for arranged marriage, which may help me to solve many other problems that come out from modern lifestyles. Love is fine but love marriage is problematic

Yet another factor that decides the marriage is class. This is by and large in contrast with the attitude of the older generation. Earlier, the perception was that it is impossible to marry someone from a lower caste than yours. But now this seems undergoing interesting reconsiderations as explained by *Vijaya George*, one of our respondent:

> ……they (family) do not have any problem in me marrying anyone, even from a different caste or religion. But *they have a problem if the person is not from same or upper class. These days class matter than caste. I am used to a certain kind of life style, which is difficult to compromise. After all we have only one life, who want to suffer?*

The response above was that of a girl coming from the south and economically well off. But this is not the situation in the case of other respondents. For instance the case of the Muslim girl included in the study was very different. She notes:

> ……may be as I was born and brought up in a very orthodox way I never felt uncomfortable with all these. Somehow I feel

> I have not thought very seriously about life or not reflected upon what I hear……I do namaz five times a day. You see I wear veil**.** After my marriage I may even wear burka**.** My sister and my mother also wear it. But I don't find a problem in all these; rather I am comfortable with it. …….. I am not sure how much my decision has been influenced by religion and society.

For her everything is being decided by her family; of course her opinion was sought, but not given any weightage. The case of Sukumari, a dalit, on the other hand, exhibits the limits of education to engage with the socio-political system.

> ……as a dalit woman, sometimes I feel education has created more problems for me…. I could not tolerate many day to day things going on in my family or in my colony, like the strategic tricks played by political parties and men's behavior towards us……. Education has also created problems for me to get married. I might not get an educated man from my caste or class…… To benefit from reservation requires connections, ability to bribe the officials and assert to attain it as a right. Many times I failed to do so…..

She feels that her higher educational qualification has 'disabled' her in even getting a good life partner. According to her, the youths are more into spiritual way in colonies where *Sukumari* resides. Boys in the colony go to *Sabarimala* pilgrimage each year drawing money from private moneylenders who charge exorbitant interest. On the other side, their families are in penury. Though many have questioned the reservations to SC/ST, including some from OBC groups, the situation *Sukumari* faces is stringent in terms of the material conditions of her Colony. She is a Graduate of Commerce from a regular college in Kannur, but could not study further. However, she tries to get into the government service through the special recruitment scheme of the state. She justifies reservation policy on the basis of lack of material conditions to certain sections of society. She has only five cents of land with a hut in it. But, her OBC neighbor is having at least twenty five cents of land and she points out the differences in the ownership of land between caste groups by citing her own socio-economic context. In the colony she does not have any privacy to do her morning routines. "Did you ever

live in a house where you do not have privacy? These are our conditions" - she reminds us. We are trying to overcome these conditions through the reservation; that too struggling with the state institutions even to get our caste certificate. Unlike many other youths in the discussion, *Sukumari* questions the existing unequal material conditions, and the role of caste and its logic of graded inequality. Though changes are taking place in youth's attitudes and modern objects including dresses are available cheaply, it hasn't rally reached her Colony and hence modernity remains to be heterogeneous experience at large. She is firm on her conviction that the reservation policy is the best mechanism to check and balance our society.

V

The conceptual and contextual discussions centered on modernity and its link with social acts has always been a concern of Social Scientists. In its ideal form modernity is a condition that believes in the possibility of creating a new world by way of secular reasoning and techno-scientific exploration. This has reached India through the colonial intervention, as part and parcel of exploitative Colonial rule. But it ignited a notion of modernity inhabited by enlightened human being and ruled by the idea of rationality. The major role in this process of transformation was played by English education and consequent imitation of the western life styles and thinking. Though it can be considered as universal, its experience was not similar when it buffeted the lives of people living in different space and time. It produced different effects on different groups of people; with significant inter and intra county variations in the idea of modernity. The formulations like 'modernity at large', 'vernacular modernity', or 'relative modernity' are the results of approaches to disentangle the concept of modernity in its locational specificities. It is argued that what we ideally perceived as modernity is not translated into practice. The existence of multiple modernities and the peculiarity of 'our modernity' have been emphasized from such a relative perspective. The simultaneous existence of modern and non-modern also brings forth the idea of a 'fractured modernity'. Indian modernity is not different either, as it works in heterogeneity; this may be referred to differently as 'mistaken modernity' or 'our modernity'. The experience of modernity as felt and practiced currently by

the youths in Kerala reflects such a dilemma—a mismatch between the idea and practice. The textual interpretation of the personal narratives of the youths in this paper reveals this contradiction between the utterance and the practice.

It may be because of the fact that they are not fully free from traditional values, and at the same time not fully into the modern way of life and ideals. In consequence they tend to engage with both worlds, straddling between the two and resulting in conflict. There are subtle differences in the way in which caste, class, gender and geographical location affect one's idea, experience and aspirations on questions related education, employment and marriage. Their social embeddedness does not allow a free entry into modernity, pushing them to a state of dilemma and experiencing a 'fractured' modernity. It can also be concluded that youths in Kerala are not fully belong to either tradition or to modernity. They may be on the route to a full modernity but not fully disconnected from traditional values.

Notes

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1 For further discussions see Appadurai (1996); Chakravarty (1999, 2000, 2006); Chatterjee (1995, 2000) and Padgaonkar (1999).

2 The unique development experience of the State is well documented. The Kerala Model of Development as characterised by low economic growth and high human development with relatively less class, caste, gender and regional disparities was first captured in a study conducted by Centre for Development Studies in 1975. However public finance crisis faced by the state during late 1980s created much concern on the 'limits to the Kerala model of development' and many studies vehemently started critiquing the model, challenging its sustainability and bringing into attention its many drawbacks. For details see special issues of the *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 25, 26 and 27, September 8 and 15, 1990; series of articles in *Monthly Review* 42(7) and.43 (7), 1991; and *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 30 (1, 3 and 4) 1998. For recent debates see Kannan, 2005; Chakraborty, 2005 and GoK 2006 among others.

3 Organization formed by the *Nairs*- an upper caste in Kerala.

4 Ayyankali, a member of *Pulaya* (lower caste), who formed the organization to unite *dalits* in Kerala.

5 A backward caste (*Ezhavas*) organization which fought against untouchability and preached the message of 'One caste, One religion and One god for men'.

6 Popular legislative assembly of *Travancore.*

7 The organization believes in Hindu nationalism and works for the revival of Hindu tradition.

8 The names of the respondents are not real.

9 This is the name of a political party.

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■

COMPLEMENTING THE BOOKS

പുസ്തകപൂരണം

കേരളപഠനസംബന്ധമായ പുതിയ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരണങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചു വായനക്കാരോ ഗ്രന്ഥകർത്താക്കളോ എഴുതുന്ന പൂരണക്കുറിപ്പുകൾ ഈ പംക്തിയിലേക്കു ക്ഷണിക്കുന്നു.
- പത്രാധിപർ

ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര
ടി. ഡി. രാമകൃഷ്ണൻ

പബ്ലിഷേഴ്സ്: ഡിസി ബുക്സ്
വിതരണം: ഡിസി ബുക്സ്
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ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര

സ്കറിയാ സക്കറിയ

മലയാളനോവലിന്റെ ചരിത്രത്തിൽ പലതുകൊണ്ടും ശ്രദ്ധേയമായ കൃതിയാണ് ടി. ഡി. രാമകൃഷ്ണന്റെ *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര*. എന്തെല്ലാമാണ് ഈ നോവലിന്റെ പുതുമകൾ?

നോവലിന്റെ തുടക്കത്തിൽതന്നെ നോവലിസ്റ്റ് പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുന്നു: "ഇത് ചരിത്രമല്ല. കേട്ടുകേൾവികളും കെട്ടുകഥകളും നുണകളും ചേർത്ത് ഒരു കഥ പൊലിപ്പിച്ചെടുക്കാനുള്ള ശ്രമം".

നോവലിസ്റ്റ് ഇങ്ങനെയൊരു മുന്നറിയിപ്പ് എഴുതേണ്ടിവരുന്നത് എന്തുകൊണ്ടാണ്? അത് നോവലിന്റെ രചനാശൈലിയുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട പ്രശ്നമാണ്/അല്ലെങ്കിൽ സൗഭാഗ്യമാണ്. ചരിത്രപ്രതീതിയുണർത്തുന്നതാണ് ടി. ഡി. രാമകൃഷ്ണന്റെ നോവൽശില്പം. അതിപുരാതനവും അതിവിദൂരസ്ഥവുമായ ചരിത്രം, ഒപ്പം കുന്നംകുളത്തിന്റെ ചരിത്രം. ലോകത്തിൽനിന്നു കുന്നംകുളത്തേക്കു വരുന്നതിനിടയിൽ കേരളചരിത്രമാകെ നോക്കിക്കാണുന്നു. ഇതു ചരിത്രമല്ലെന്നു വായനക്കാരെ പ്രത്യേകം ഓർമ്മപ്പെടുത്തേണ്ടിവരുന്നു. അത്രയ്ക്കു ചരിത്രാത്മകമാണ് ആഖ്യാനശൈലി. ചരിത്രത്തിൽനിന്നു കടന്നുവരുന്ന കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളും സംഭവങ്ങളും സുലഭം. പക്ഷേ ചരിത്രത്തോടൊപ്പം വളരെയേറെ ഭാവനയും കലർത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ഉദാഹരണത്തിന്, നോവലിന്റെ ഇരുപത്തൊമ്പതാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിൽ രണ്ടു പടിയോലകൾ വിശദമായി അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. നസ്രാണികൾ തങ്ങളുടെ ചരിത്രസംവേദനത്തിന് ഉപയോഗിച്ചിരുന്ന രേഖാരൂപമാണ് പടിയോല. കുന്നംകുളത്തെ ആർത്താറ്റു പടിയോല (പു. 289–291) ചരിത്രപ്രാധാന്യമുള്ള മൗലികരേഖയാണ്. എന്നാൽ നോവലിൽ തുടർന്നു കാണുന്ന അടുപ്പൂട്ടി പടിയോല (പു. 294) ശുദ്ധ ഭാവനാസൃഷ്ടിയാണ്. ഇവ രണ്ടും ഒരേ മട്ടിൽ കോർത്തിണക്കിയാണ് നോവൽ മുന്നോട്ടുപോകുന്നത്. സത്യവും മിഥ്യയും വേർതിരിക്കാനാവാത്ത പഴമയുടെ ബലത്തിൽ മുന്നേറുന്ന ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ തിരയും ചുഴിയും വായനക്കാരനെ ബഹളസന്തോഷത്തിലാക്കുന്നു. ചരിത്രവും ഭാവനയും വേർപിരിച്ചെടുത്ത് ടി. ഡി. രാമകൃഷ്ണന്റെ നോവൽ വായിക്കാനാവില്ല. രാഷ്ട്രീയ കാർട്ടൂണിൽ ചരിത്രവും ഭാവനയും കലർന്നുണ്ടാകുന്ന രൂപാന്തരമുണ്ടല്ലോ അമ്മട്ടിലാണ് *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര*യിലെ ആഖ്യാനഗതി. ഇതു യാഥാസ്ഥിതിക ചരിത്രഭക്തരെ ചൊടിപ്പിക്കും. ചരിത്രം വളച്ചൊടിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു എന്ന് ആക്ഷേപിക്കാം. *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര* ചരിത്രകാരൻ കണ്ടെത്തിയ ഫോസിലല്ല, നോവലിസ്റ്റ് നിർമ്മിച്ചെടുത്ത കഥാപാത്രമാണെന്ന് ഓർമ്മിക്കണം. ആ കഥാപാത്രത്തിന്റെ നിർമ്മാണത്തിനു ചരിത്രശകലങ്ങൾ സുലഭമായി ഉപയോഗിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു എന്നുമാത്രം. ചരിത്രവും നോവലും തമ്മിൽ ഭാവിയിൽ ഇത്തരമൊരു ബാന്ധവം ഉണ്ടാകുമെന്ന് കെ. പി. അപ്പൻ എഴുതിയിരുന്നത് ഓർക്കുന്നു. കാർട്ടൂൺ സ്ട്രിപ്പുപോലെ ചരിത്രത്തെ വക്രീകരിച്ചുപയോഗിക്കുന്ന നോവൽ ശൈലി വരാനിരിക്കുന്നു എന്നായിരുന്നു അപ്പന്റെ നിരീക്ഷണം. സാഹിത്യഭാവനയിൽ ചരിത്രത്തിനുള്ള സ്ഥാനവും മാറും. ചരിത്രത്തെയും ചരിത്രവ്യക്തികളെയും പ്രകോപനപരമായി മാറ്റിമറിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് അതിനെ പുനരാഖ്യാനം ചെയ്യുന്ന രീതിയിലേക്ക് കഥയും നോവലും നീങ്ങാം. കുഴിച്ചുമൂടപ്പെട്ട ചരിത്രത്തെ പ്രകോപനപരമായി ഭാവന ചെയ്തുകൊണ്ടുള്ള കലാസൃഷ്ടികൾ വരാൻപോകുന്ന നൂറ്റാണ്ടിന്റെ തുടക്കത്തിലെങ്കിലും പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട സാഹിത്യശൈലിയായി മാറും. സി. വി. ചരിത്രത്തെ കണ്ടതുപോലെയല്ല അടുത്ത നൂറ്റാണ്ടിലെ നോവലിസ്റ്റ് ചരിത്രത്തെ കാണാൻ പോകുന്നത്. സമകാലികതയുടെ കഥ വിസ്തരിക്കാൻ വേണ്ടിയായിരിക്കും അയാൾ ഭൂതകാലചരിത്രത്തെ വീണ്ടും ഉപകരണമാക്കുന്നത്. ചിലപ്പോൾ ചരിത്രത്തെ ടെലിവിഷൻ കാർട്ടൂണിസ്റ്റിന്റെ അനുഭവത്തിലേക്ക് കടത്തിവിടുന്ന രചനകൾ ഉണ്ടാകാം. കാല്പനിക കവികളും സർറിയലിസ്റ്റുകളും യാഥാർത്ഥ്യത്തെ സ്വപ്നമായി മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ കഴിയുമോ എന്ന് അന്വേഷിച്ചതുപോലെ ചരി

ത്രത്തെ ഒരു കാർട്ടൂൺ എന്ന നിലയിൽ മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ കഴിയുമോ എന്ന തമാശ നിറഞ്ഞ ചോദ്യം അടുത്ത നൂറ്റാണ്ടിന്റെ കലാപ്രതിഭ സൃഷ്ടികളിലൂടെ ഉന്നയിക്കാൻ ഇടയുണ്ട്. (*ഇന്നലെകളിലെ അന്വേഷണ പരിശോധനകൾ*, കെ. പി. അപ്പൻ, പു.86). നോവലിന് ഇന്റർനെറ്റിനോടുള്ള ഘടനാപരമായ സാമ്യം കൂടി ഇവിടെ എടുത്തുപറയേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. അറിവിന്റെ ശൃംഖല പ്രവർത്തനമാണ് ഇന്റർനെറ്റിന്റെ മൗലികസ്വഭാവം. അനുസ്യൂതിയല്ല, സമാന്തരതയാണ് ഇന്റർനെറ്റിലുള്ളത്. മുൻപിൻ ബന്ധങ്ങളെക്കാൾ സമാന്തരബന്ധങ്ങൾക്കാണ് പ്രാധാന്യം. *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര*യിലെ ആഖ്യാനശൈലി ഇന്റർനെറ്റ് ഘടനയിലുള്ളതാണ്. താർക്കികയുക്തിയുമായി ഇറങ്ങിത്തിരിക്കുന്നവർക്കു അലോസരമാകും ഇത്തരം ഘടന. ഒപ്പം മൗലികതയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള പരമ്പരാഗത ധാരണകളെയും ഇന്റർനെറ്റ് തകിടം മറിക്കുന്നു. അറിവിന്റെ ഉള്ളടക്കത്തിലല്ല കൂട്ടിയിണക്കലിലാണ് മൗലികതയും ഭാവനാവിലാസവും. *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര*യിലെ അറിവുകളും വിവരങ്ങളും പല പല അറിവിടങ്ങളിൽനിന്നു ശേഖരിച്ചെടുക്കുന്നവയാണ്. അവയിൽ ഗ്രന്ഥങ്ങളും ഡിജിറ്റൽ സ്രോതസ്സുകളും ഉൾപ്പെടും. അത്തരം സ്രോതസ്സുകളിൽ നിന്നുള്ള അറിവുകളെ ഭാവനാത്മകമായി മറ്റു പലതിനോടും കൂട്ടിയിണക്കി അനുഭവവഴികൾ തുറക്കാൻ നോവലിനു കഴിയുന്നു. അങ്ങനെ നോവൽ ബൃഹദാഖ്യാനമായി മാറുന്നു. അതാണല്ലോ നോവലീയത.

കുന്നംകുളത്തുകാരനായ ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര പതിനഞ്ചാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിൽ ആഗോളപ്രശസ്തനായ കപ്പലോട്ടക്കാരനും കുരുമുളകു വ്യാപാരിയുമായി ലോകം കീഴടക്കി. ഇന്നും കോരയ്ക്കു പിൻമുറക്കാരും അനുയായികളുമുണ്ട്. അവരാണ് പതിനെട്ടാംകൂറ്റുകാർ. അവർ രഹസ്യമായി സമ്മേളിച്ചു വിചിത്രമായ കർമ്മങ്ങളിലെ കോരയോടുള്ള ബന്ധം ഉറപ്പിക്കുന്നു. മൊത്തം വരുമാനത്തിൽ പത്തിലൊന്നു കോരപ്പണമായി രഹസ്യനിധിയിലേക്കു നല്കുന്നു. യുവതികളെയെല്ലാം വിപുലവും വിചിത്രവുമായ ചടങ്ങുകളിലൂടെ കോരപ്പാപ്പനു സമർപ്പിക്കുന്നു. പതിനെട്ടാംകൂറ്റുകാർക്ക് മതവിഭാഗങ്ങളിൽ തുടരാമെങ്കിലും കാതലായ ദൈവവിശ്വാസമില്ല. അവർക്കെല്ലാം ദൈവം കോരപ്പാപ്പനാണ്. ചിരുതേയിയും കണ്ടംകോരനുമുള്ള വേഴ്ചയ്ക്കിടയിൽ ദൈവവൃത്താന്തം മുളകുപുരാണമായി മാറുന്നത് നല്ല എരിവും പുളിയുമുള്ള നാടോടിക്കഥയുടെ ശൈലിയിലാണ്.

> "ദൈവത്തിന്റെ കാര്യത്തില് ആരെങ്കിലും നൊണ പറയുവോ അമ്പ്രാളെ. എന്നാൽ ഈ ദൈവണ്ടലോ നമ്പൂരാര് പറേണപോലത്തെ പട്ടുടുത്ത് പച്ചക്കറിമാത്രം തിന്നണ ദൈവല്ല. ഞങ്ങടൊക്കെ ദൈവത്തിനെപ്പോലെ കള്ള് കുടിക്കും. എറച്ചി തിന്നും. ക്രിസ്ത്യാന്യോളടെ കുരിശ് ദൈവത്തിന്റെ ഛായന്യാ. പക്ഷേ, എവിടോ ഒരു പിശകുണ്ട്. പള്ളീലെ അച്ചന്മാർക്ക് മൂപ്പരെ കണ്ണിന് നേരേ കണ്ടൂടാ..."
>
> "അതെന്താ...?"

"ഈ ദൈവാ കുരുമുളക് ഭൂമിലിക്ക് കൊണ്ടോന്നത്. അതുവരെ കുരുമുളക് സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലേണ്ടായിരുന്നുള്ളു. മൂപ്പരത് സൂത്രത്തിൽ മോഷ്ടിച്ച് കുന്നംകുളത്തെ കോരമാരക്ക് കൊടുത്തു. നിങ്ങള് ദ് വിറ്റ് കാശ്ണ്ടാക്കി സുഖായിട്ട് കഴിഞ്ഞോളാൻ പറഞ്ഞു. വെറുതല്ലാട്ടോ. അതിന് കോരമാര് മൂപ്പരക്ക് ചെലതൊക്കെ കൊടുത്തു. ഇപ്പളും കൊടക്കണുണ്ട്. ലോകത്തിലെ സകല അച്ചന്മാരും മെത്രാന്മാരും ചോദിച്ചിട്ടും അവർക്കൊന്നും കൊടുക്കാണ്ടെ കോരമാർക്ക് കൊടുത്തോണ്ടാ അവർക്കൊക്കെ ഈ ദൈവത്തോട് ഇത്ര ദേഷ്യം."

"പിന്നെ കോരമാപ്ലാര് പള്ളി നന്നാക്കാനൊക്കെ കാശ് ചെലവാക്കണതെന്തിനാ?"

''അതാ മ്പ്രാളേ കച്ചോടത്തിലെ സൂത്രം. പൊറത്ത് പള്ളീടെ ആളായിട്ട് നിക്കേം അകത്ത് മൊളക് ദൈവത്തിനെ കുടിവെക്കേം ചെയ്യാ. അപ്പൊ പിന്നെ മെത്രാന് മിണ്ടാൻ പറ്റോ?"

"നിങ്ങടെ ആൾക്കാരെങ്ങന്യാ ഇതിന്റെകൂടെ കൂട്യേ?"

"അതാ രസം. ഞങ്ങടെ അപ്പനപ്പാപ്പന്മാർക്ക് സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തില് കുരുമുളക് കൃഷ്യായിരുന്നു പണി. ദൈവം മൂപ്പര് കുരുമുളകിന്റെ കൂടെ ഞങ്ങളേംങ്ങട് കൊണ്ടോന്നതാ."

"അതാവും ഈ കറത്ത നെറല്ലേ?"

"അതെന്നെ. ഞങ്ങൾക്കും കുരുമുളകിനും ഒരേ നെറാ. സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തില് കുരുമുളകിന് കറുത്ത മുത്ത് ന്നാ പറയാ. അതോണ്ടാ കോരമാപ്ലാര് എന്നെ കറുത്ത മുത്തേന്ന് വിളിക്കണത്..."

ചിരുതേയി അവനെ കറുത്ത മുത്തേ എന്ന് വിളിച്ച് കെട്ടിപ്പിടിച്ചു.

തിരുവാതിര ഞാറ്റുവേല കഴിയുന്നവരെ കണ്ടംകോരൻ ഇയ്യാലെ കളപ്പെരേലുണ്ടായിരുന്നു. ആയിരം കുരുമുളകുകൊടി വെച്ചുപിടിപ്പിച്ച് അവൻ തിരിച്ചുപോയതിന്റെ പിറ്റേ ആഴ്ച ഇട്ടിക്കോര കളപ്പുരയിൽ വന്നപ്പോൾ ചിരുതേയി കണ്ടംകോരന്റെ കഥകൾ പറഞ്ഞു കേൾപ്പിച്ചു. ഇട്ടിക്കോരയ്ക്ക് ചിരി നിറുത്താൻ കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല.

"എന്താ ദൊക്കെ നൊണയാ?"

"ഹേയ് നൊണൊന്നൂല്ല. സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലെ കുരുമുളകിനെപ്പറ്റിള്ളൊരു കഥയോർത്ത് ചിരിച്ചതാ..."

"അതെന്താ ഞാനുംകൂട്യോന്ന് കേക്കട്ടേ..."

"സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലെ കുരുമുളകിന് ഭൂമിലെ കുരുമുളകിന്റെ പത്തെരട്ടി വലിപ്പായിരുന്നു. കഷ്ടിച്ചൊരു മുന്തിരീടത്രെണ്ടാവും നേരിയ ചുവപ്പുകലർന്ന കറപ്പ് നെറം. അതിന്റെ നീരിന് നല്ല എരിവാ. ഇത്തിരി മധുരോണ്ട്.

എത്ര കുടിച്ചാലും മത്യാവാത്തൊരു സ്വാദ്. ദൈവം ഹവ്വേ സൃഷ്ടിച്ച പ്പോൾ സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിലെ രണ്ട് കുരുമുളകെടുത്ത് നെഞ്ഞത്ത് വെച്ചുകൊ ടുത്ത് നീ യ്യിതോണ്ട് ജീവിച്ചോന്ന് പറഞ്ഞൂത്രേ... ആദ്യപാപത്തിന് ശേഷം ഏദൻതോട്ടത്തിന്ന് പൊറത്താക്ക്യേപ്പോ അത് കൊറച്ച് ചുങ്ങിച്ചെറുതാ യി. മധുരോം എരിവുമൊക്കെ പോയി. സ്വർഗ്ഗത്ത്ന്ന് ഭൂമിലിക്ക് വീഴണ ഓരോ കുട്ടീം ആദ്യം അന്വേഷിക്ക്യ ഈ കുരുമുളകാ."

"അസ്സല് നൊണേടെ മണംണ്ടലോ, ആരാ ങ്ങനൊരു കഥണ്ടാക്യേ?"

"മൊളക് ദൈവംതന്നെ. ഞങ്ങക്ക് കുരുമുളക് മോഷ്ടിച്ച് തന്നതിന് മൂപ്പരെ സ്വർഗ്ഗത്ത്ന്ന് പൊറത്താക്കി. പിന്നെ ഭൂമിലും നരകത്തിലുമായി അലച്ചിലന്ന്യാ. ഇടക്ക് ഇബടെ വരുമ്പോ ഇങ്ങനത്തെ ഓരേ കഥ പറേം." (പു. 129–130).

നാട്ടുപുരാണങ്ങൾ ഇങ്ങനെ നർമ്മമധുരമായി പറഞ്ഞുപോകാൻ നോവ ലിസ്റ്റിനു നല്ല വശമാണ്. ഒന്നാന്തരം വെടിവട്ടശൈലി! ഒരർത്ഥത്തിൽ കോരപു രാണമാണ് ടി. ഡി. രാമകൃഷ്ണന്റെ നോവൽ. കോരപുരാണം എന്നു പറഞ്ഞത് ഒ. വി. വിജയന്റെ *ധർമ്മപുരാണ*വുമായി ഇതിനെ കൂട്ടിക്കെട്ടാനാണ്. *ധർമ്മപു രാണം* അതിന്റെ വായനക്കാരിൽ അമ്പരപ്പും അമർഷവും ഉളവാക്കിയതുപോലെ ടി. ഡി. രാമകൃഷ്ണന്റെ *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര*യും ചൂടേറിയ പ്രതികരണ ങ്ങൾ ഉളവാക്കിയേക്കും. രഹസ്യസംഘങ്ങൾ മതപരമായ നിഷ്ഠയോടുകൂടി നടത്തുന്ന 'നരഭോജനം' ആർഭാടപൂർവം നോവലിൽ വിവരിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. മഹാ നഗരങ്ങളിൽ മഹാപ്രതിഭകൾ പങ്കെടുത്തു മനുഷ്യഇറച്ചികൊണ്ടുള്ള സദ്യ!

മറ്റൊരു വിവാദവിഷയം നോവലിലെ ലൈംഗിക വിവരണങ്ങളാണ്. പതിവു മറയും ശങ്കയും ഒഴിവാക്കി ലൈംഗികതയെ ഉത്സവീകരിക്കുന്ന രംഗ ങ്ങൾ നോവലിലുണ്ട്. ഭാരതീയസാഹിത്യത്തിലെയും കലകളിലെയും പാരമ്പര്യം പരിഗണിച്ചാൽ ഇതിൽ പുതുമയൊന്നുമില്ല. പ്രാചീന മണിപ്രവാളം ശീലിച്ച വർക്കും ഞെട്ടലുണ്ടാവില്ല. പാശ്ചാത്യ മധ്യയുഗസദാചാരത്തിന്റെ വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ കൊളോണിയൽ ആധുനികതയുടെ ഭാഗമായുണ്ടായ ലൈംഗികബോധം പിന്തു ടർന്നാൽ *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര* ലൈംഗിക അരാജകത്വത്തിന്റെ ചിഹ്നമാകും. ഈ നോവലിൽ പല മഹാന്മാരും മഹതികളും ഇത്തരം തുറന്നടിച്ച ലൈംഗിക തയുടെ പ്രയോക്താക്കളാണ്. ഏറ്റവും നല്ല ഉദാഹരണം അലക്സാൻഡ്രിയാ യിൽ പ്രശസ്ത ഗണിതജ്ഞയും തത്ത്വചിന്തകയുമായിരുന്ന ഹൈപ്പേഷ്യ. ഹൈപ്പേഷ്യയെ ചരിത്രത്തിൽനിന്നു ആവാഹിച്ച് നോവലിന്റെ കേന്ദ്രമണ്ഡപ ത്തിൽ പ്രതിഷ്ഠിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. പരമസുന്ദരിയായ ഹൈപ്പേഷ്യയെ ഉജ്ജ്വല ലൈംഗികബിംബമായി നോവലിസ്റ്റ് പരിവർത്തിക്കുന്നു. കോരപ്പാപ്പനെ ലൈംഗി കവഴിയിൽ മഹത്വീകരിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. സാമ്പ്രദായിക സദാചാരപാഠം എന്ന ധർമ്മം സാഹിത്യത്തിനു കല്പിച്ചാൽ *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര* സാഹിത്യശ്രേണിയിൽ പിന്തള്ളപ്പെടും. മാനവികതയുടെ പ്രകാശനമാണ് നോവലിസ്റ്റിനു ലൈംഗിക

ത; ഒപ്പം ഒരുതരം സ്പോർട്സും കലയും. മറ്റൊരു തരത്തിൽ നോക്കിയാൽ ഈ നോവലിലെ ആഖ്യാന ഊർജം എന്ന നിലയിൽ ലൈംഗികതയെ/ഗതിയെ/ശ്യൃംഗാരത്തെ പരിഗണിക്കാം. പ്രണയം എന്ന വാക്കിന് ഇവിടെ ഏറെ പ്രസക്തിയുണ്ടാവില്ല. നോവലിലെ രതിയെ അനുഷ്ഠാനവഴിയിൽ മനസ്സിലാക്കാവുന്നതാണ്. Gospel According to Cora എന്ന ശീർഷകത്തിൽ പതിനെട്ടാംകൂറ്റുകാരുടെ ദർശനവും നടപടികളും നോവലിൽ (പു. 242–247) വായിക്കാം. "പതിനെട്ടാംകൂറ്റുകാരന്റെ മുന്നിൽ രണ്ടേ രണ്ടു ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങളേയുള്ളൂ. കച്ചവടത്തിൽ പരമാവധി ആഘോഷിച്ചു ജീവിക്കുക" എന്ന പ്രസ്താവത്തിൽ ഇതിന്റെ സാരസംഗ്രഹമുണ്ട്.

നോവലിൽ അഭിരമിക്കുന്നവർക്ക് ഇതിനെ വാണിജ്യത്തിന്റെ ഇതിഹാസം എന്നു വിളിക്കാം. ആഗോളവൽക്കരണകാലത്തു വളർച്ചയും ലാഭവും ജീവിതമന്ത്രമായിരിക്കെ കുന്നംകുളത്തുകാരൻ കോര കച്ചവടത്തിലൂടെ നേടിയ വളർച്ചയുടെ കഥയ്ക്കു വല്ലാത്ത സമകാലികപ്രസക്തിയുണ്ട്. സാഹസികതയിലൂടെ ലാഭവും ഭോഗവും കൊയ്യുകയാണ് കോര. കുരുമുളകിന്റെ കഥ, കുരുമുളകുകൊണ്ടു ലോകം കീഴടക്കിയ മലയാളിയുടെ കഥ, കപ്പലോട്ടത്തിൽ മലയാളിയുടെ ഐതിഹാസികനേട്ടങ്ങൾ എന്നിങ്ങനെ എന്തെല്ലാം കാര്യങ്ങളാണ് ജനപ്രിയശൈലിയിൽ നോവൽ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്! നോവലിനു ചരിത്രത്തിളക്കം നൽകുന്നു ഇത്തരം പരാമർശങ്ങൾ. നോവലിനെ സമകാലികമാക്കുന്ന ഗാർഹികത (homeliness) ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്. ഭാഷയിലും പ്രതിപാദ്യത്തിലുമുണ്ട് ഗാർഹികതയുടെ അതിസാധാരണത. കോരപ്പാപ്പന്റെ പിൻമുറക്കാരുടെ സമകാലിക ജീവിതം വിലയിരുത്തുന്ന പ്രാഞ്ചിയേട്ടന്റെ പ്രസംഗത്തിൽനിന്ന് ഒരുഭാഗം:

"മാനത്ത് നക്ഷത്രക്കണ്ണോളുമായി നമ്മളെ എപ്പളും കാത്ത് രക്ഷിക്കണ കോരപ്പാപ്പന് സ്തുതി. അപ്പാപ്പന്റെ കരുണകൊണ്ടും അനുഗ്രഹം കൊണ്ടും നമ്മള് പതിനെട്ടാംകൂറ്റിക്കാരക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞകൊല്ലം മെച്ചംതന്ന്യായിരുന്നു. അതില് ഏറ്റവും പ്രധാനം പതിനെട്ടാംകൂറ്റിക്കാരനായൊരു കേന്ദ്രമന്ത്രി ഉണ്ടായീന്നതാണ്. കുട്ടന്റെ അപ്പൻ കൊച്ചൗസേപ്പും കേന്ദ്രമന്ത്രിയായിരുന്നെങ്കിലും അദ്ദേഹം ചോരോണ്ട് പതിനെട്ടാംകൂറ്റിക്കാരനായിരുന്നില്ല. തന്റെ ചോര ഒരു പതിനെട്ടാംകൂറ്റിക്കാരിക്ക് കൊടുത്തൂന്നേള്ളൂ. കുട്ടന്റെ അമ്മ ത്രേസ്യാക്കുട്ട്യേ വർഷങ്ങൾക്കുമുമ്പ് ഈ നിലവറേല് കോരയ്ക്ക് കൊടുത്തതാണ്. ലോകം മൊത്തായി കോരപ്പാപ്പൻ പണ്ടെ നമ്മളെ പടിപ്പിച്ച കച്ചോടത്തിന്റെ വഴി തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ഈ കാലത്ത് നമ്മടെ എടേന്നൊരു കേന്ദ്രമന്ത്രിണ്ടാവാന്ന് പറേണത് ചില്ലറ കാര്യല്ല. കുട്ടന് കോരപ്പാപ്പന്റെ എല്ലാ അനുഗ്രഹോം എപ്പോഴും ണ്ടാവട്ടേന്ന് നമക്ക് പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കാം.

അതുപോലെതന്നെ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട കാര്യാ കഴിഞ്ഞകൊല്ലം കച്ചോടത്തില്ണ്ടായ കേറ്റോം. സ്വർണത്തിന്റെ വെല കുതിച്ചുയർന്ന കാരണം നമ

ക്ക്ണ്ടായ ലാഭം എത്രാന്നറ്യോ? മറ്റ് കച്ചോടങ്ങളും ഒട്ടും മോശല്യ. കേരളത്തിലെ കള്ള്കച്ചോടത്തിന്റെ പകുത്യെങ്കിലും ഇപ്പൊ നമ്മടെ കൈയിലാ. അതില് കഴിഞ്ഞകൊല്ലത്തിന്റെ എരട്ട്യാ ഇക്കൊല്ലത്തെ ലാഭം. അര്യായാലും തുണ്യായാലും പെട്രോളായാലും സിനിമ്യായാലും പതിനെട്ടാംകൂറ്റുക്കാരന്ന്യാ കേരളത്തില് മുന്നില്. പൊറത്തെ കാര്യോം ഒട്ടും മോശല്യ.

"ഇദൊക്കെ ആരടെ കഴിവോണ്ടാന്നാ നിങ്ങടെ വിചാരം? ഒന്നും നമ്മടെ ഒരാളുടെ ഒറ്റക്ക്ള്ള കഴിവല്ല. എല്ലാം കോരപ്പാപ്പനൊരാളുടെ കല്യ്യാ. ലോകം മുഴോൻ കോരപ്പാപ്പൻ പറഞ്ഞതാ ശരീന്ന് സമ്മതിച്ചില്ലേ? കച്ചോടാ ഇന്ന് ഏറ്റവും വല്യേ തൊഴില്. ബാക്ക്യൊക്കെ അതിന്റെ താഴെആ. ഇപ്പൊ ഐയേയെസ് പരീക്ഷയ്ക്ക് മിടുക്കന്മാരൊന്നും പൂവ്വ്ന്ന്ല്യാന്നാ കേക്കണേ. എല്ലാവരും എം.ബി.എ. പഠിക്കാനാ പോണേ. അതെവടെക്കാ? അമേരിക്കേല്ക്ക്. പണ്ടൊക്കെ ഇവിട്ത്തെ കമ്മ്യൂണിസ്റ്റുകാർക്ക് അമേരിക്കന്ന് പറഞ്ഞാ പുച്ഛായിരുന്നു. ഇപ്പൊ അതൊക്കെ മാറി. മാറാണ്ടെങ്ങനാ? പണ്ട് ഹിന്ദുക്കള്ടെ എടേല് ബ്രാഹ്മണരും ക്ഷത്രിയരും കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടാർന്നു വൈശ്യർക്ക് സ്ഥാനം. ഇപ്പഴത്തെ സ്ഥിത്യെന്താ? കച്ചോടക്കാരൻ പറേണതാ ഇപ്പോ നിയമം. കച്ചോടക്കാരന് വേണ്ട്യാ നിയമം. പണ്ട് അടച്ചുപൂട്ടിവെച്ചേർന്നതൊക്കെ ഇപ്പൊ തൊറന്ന് കൊടത്തില്ലേ? എല്ലാവരും ഇപ്പൊ നമ്മടെ വഴിക്കുവന്നു കച്ചോടം ചെയ്യാ ലാഭം ഉണ്ടാക്കാ ന്നൊക്കെ പറേണതിലൊരു തെറ്റ്ല്യാന്ന് എല്ലാവരും സമ്മതിച്ചു. ലോകചരിത്രത്തില് ഇതൊരു ചില്ലറക്കാര്യല്യ.

"പണ്ടൊക്കെ എല്ലാകാലത്തും കൊറച്ചാളോള് നമ്മളെ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടിക്കനായിട്ട് ഓരോരോ ഫിലോസഫീം പറഞ്ഞ് നടക്ക്ണ്ടാർന്നു. ഇപ്പൊ അങ്ങനത്തെ ആളോള് തീരെല്യ. ഇനി വല്ല മുക്കിലും മൂലേലും ആരെങ്കിലുണ്ട്ച്ചാലും അവര് പറേണത് കേക്കാനോ അതനുസരിച്ച് നടക്കാനോ ആളെ കിട്ട്ല്യ. ആൾക്കാരക്ക് ഇപ്പൊ സംഗതി പിടികിട്ടി. പാപം ചെയ്താൽ നരകത്തിൽ പോണ്ടി വരുംന്നൊക്ക് പറേണത് ശുദ്ധതട്ടിപ്പാന്ന് മനസ്സിലായി. സ്വർഗ്ഗോം നരകോം ഇബടെതന്ന്യാന്ന് മനസ്സിലായപ്പിന്നെ ഇബടെ സ്വർഗ്ഗാക്കാനല്ലേ നോക്കാ? പിന്നെന്താ ജനിച്ചാ മരിക്കണവരെ ആഘോഷായിട്ടങ്ങ്ട് ജീവിക്ക്യാ. ഇപ്പഴത്തെ ചെക്കന്മാർ അടിച്ചുപൊളിച്ച് ജീവിക്ക്യാന്ന് പറേണ്ല്യേ അതന്നെ." (പുറം 273–274).

നമ്മുടെ സമകാലിക ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ മുക്കിലും മൂലയിലുമെല്ലാം തട്ടി ഈ വാക്കുകൾക്കു വല്ലാത്ത മുഴക്കമുണ്ടാവുന്നു.

നോവലിന്റെ ഘനഗാംഭീര്യം വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുന്ന മറ്റു പല ഘടകങ്ങളിതിലുണ്ട്. അനേകം ചരിത്രകഥാപാത്രങ്ങളുടെ സാന്നിധ്യമാണ് അവയിൽ ആദ്യം

എടുത്തുപറയേണ്ടത്. അക്കൂട്ടത്തിൽ ഏറ്റവും ശ്രദ്ധേയം കേരളം ഗണിതശാസ്ത്രത്തിനു നൽകിയ സംഭാവനകളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിശദചർച്ചയാണ്. കേരളാ സ്കൂൾ ഓഫ് മാത്തമാറ്റിക്സിനെക്കുറിച്ച് ഗീവറുഗീസ് ജോർജ് നടത്തിയ ശാസ്ത്രചരിത്രഗവേഷണത്തിൽ(ക്രൈസ്റ്റ് ഓഫ് ദ പീകോക്കിൽ)നിന്നു പ്രചോദനമുൾക്കൊണ്ടായരിക്കണം നോവലിസ്റ്റ് കേരളാ സ്കൂൾ ഓഫ് മാത്തമാറ്റിക്സിനു വലിയ പ്രാധാന്യം നൽകുന്നത്. ഇത് ഒരു ജനപ്രിയകഥയായി വികസിപ്പിക്കാൻ നോവലിസ്റ്റിനു കഴിഞ്ഞു. അതു നിസ്സാരകാര്യമല്ല.

ജനപ്രിയസാഹിത്യം ഇന്നു നവീന മാധ്യമസംസ്കാരത്തിന്റെയും സംവേദനതന്ത്രങ്ങളുടെയും പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ കരുത്താർജിക്കുകയാണ്. മലയാളത്തിലെ ഏറ്റവും കരുത്തേറിയ ജനപ്രിയനോവൽ എന്ന ബഹുമതി *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര* നേടിയെടുത്തേക്കും. ഇവിടെ മലയാള ജനപ്രിയനോവൽ ഉള്ളടക്കത്തിലും ആഖ്യാനശൈലിയിലും ഡാൻ ബ്രൗണിന്റെ *ഡാവിഞ്ചി കോഡ്*, *ദ് ലോസ്റ്റ് സിംബൾ* എന്നിവയോടു തോളുരുമ്മിനിൽക്കുന്നു. സമകാലിക സാങ്കേതികവിദ്യകൾ, ശാസ്ത്രീയ പുരോഗതി, ലാഭവെറി എന്നിവയെല്ലാം ഗൂഢസംഘങ്ങളുടെ നിഴലിൽ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ജനപ്രിയസങ്കേതം വിജയകരമായി പരീക്ഷിക്കുന്ന നോവലാണ് *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര*. വായനയിൽ അനുഭവപ്പെടുന്ന ഒഴുക്ക് (flow), അതിപരിചയത്തിൽനിന്നുണ്ടാകുന്ന ഗാർഹികത (home), സർവത്ര നിറഞ്ഞുതുളുമ്പുന്ന ആഹ്ലാദനിർഭരമായ ഉത്സവലഹരി (pleasure) - ഇവയെല്ലാം വമ്പിച്ച ജനപ്രീതി നേടിയ ജനപ്രിയ കലാരൂപങ്ങളിലുണ്ട്. അതേ പ്രത്യേകതകൾ ടി.ഡി. രാമകൃഷ്ണന്റെ *ഫ്രാൻസീസ് ഇട്ടിക്കോര*യെ മലയാളത്തിൽ ഒരു ബഹുവിചത്ര നോവലാക്കുന്നു.

ഇത്രയും വായിച്ചിട്ട് നിങ്ങൾക്കു വേണമെങ്കിൽ ക്ഷോഭത്തോടെ ചോദിക്കാം: "യാരിന്ത ഇട്ടിക്കോരെ?" വിശദമായി ക്ഷോഭിക്കേണ്ടവർക്കുള്ള പ്രസ്താവനയും നോവലിൽ (പു. 169) ഉണ്ട്: "സോറി, നിങ്ങൾ നമ്മുടെ നാടിന്റെ ചരിത്രത്തെ ഒരു ലൈസൻസുമില്ലാതെ എടുത്ത് അമ്മാനമാടുകയാണ്. അത്ര ലാഘവത്തോടെ സമീപിക്കാവുന്ന കാര്യങ്ങളല്ല ഇവയൊന്നും" (പു 169).

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തപസം
TAPASAM

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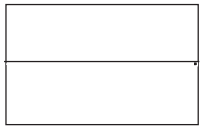

മുൻ ലക്കം : Vol III - Issue 4 April 2008