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Subjectivity, Self and Marginality

Kerala is considered as one of the intellectual areas that attempts to transcend the limits imposed by the colonial, nationalist and social-reformist frames in the realm of social science research. There has been considered endeavors in recent times to move away and go beyond the grand narratives of the earlier molds by forging new paradigms and making fresh thematistions. The shift in focus to the wide-ranging transformations of Kerala in the cultural sphere as beckoned by modernity has been a plausible location to launch investigations that can exceed the exercises of writing the biography of nation in regional terms. The reliance on predominantly official archive has also been apprehended as a limiting factor to alter the focus to various cultural productions that were considered as infidel or defective formerly. Such resources began to be used more imaginatively to disentangle the cultural conditions of their production and the influence they in turn exert on the context, instead of picking-up 'truthful facts' from them and make sense of the underlying processes from 'outside'. The multiple ways in which modern self was constructed and sustained, with definitive positions of subjectivity and marginality, is one of the areas that come under the reflection of new scholarship on Kerala. Along with the modes of structuring new forms of self, the resources and sensibilities that made it possible, belonging to both exterior and interior realms, explicated the cultural terrain of modernity as extremely contested and negotiated. The new spaces and new meanings constellated in the cultural politics of modern and contemporary Kerala are thus explored with its local

and universal constituents. The set of articles figuring in this issue positively belong to this new genre of writing and deal broadly with the intersecting issues of subjectivity, self and marginality. The cosmopolitan, vernacular, abject, contingent and hard-working subjectivities are unraveled in their specific locations alongwith an attempt to read a narrative of the nation against its grain. The articles herein foreground the multiple engagements within the Malayalee world, as subjects and objects of modernity, and complicated mediations of identities and competing notions of publicity involved in the same.

Dilip Menon takes us to a form of modern Malayalee subjectivity that conscientiously attempted to outdo its local affinities to a universal/cosmopolitan terrain, as represented by the intellectual maneuvers of Kesari Balakrishna Pillai in his self-stated capacity of a *sankramachintakan*. As a go-between thinker, Balakrishna Pillai placed himself at the interstices of the world, where both Europe and India remained just possibilities of useful translations and crossovers. Menon points out that English allowed him to have elective affinity with Europe according to his own priorities and he deployed European categories and techniques other than English in critiquing and re-forming the native politics and sensibilities. The colonial subject aspired to establish the unity of human behavior through art by beating debilitating distinctions that polarize East and the West. Pillai envisaged a difference without hierarchies and histories not subordinating to the universal and hence confidently domesticated Europe to deploy its traditions critically as a corrective force. As somebody who resisted the creation of a collective identity that would subserve a national imagery, his endeavour was to recover what was valuable from both European and Indian locations and thereby overstep the borders produced by colonialism and nationalism alike. Udaya Kumar, on the other hand, foreground the 'incoherencies' and ambivalences of a modern Malayalee self as represented in the political and literary writings of Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai. Oscillating between the rhetoric of self-sufficiency and self-insufficiency of the literary field, the genres of scandal writing, political allegories and literary reviews of Ramakrishna Pillai expresses his multiple belongings and shared obligations. Going beyond what has been circulated through the appellation, Udaya Kumar points out that Swadeshabhimani's writings were not exemplary with images of national pride. Exhibiting the limits of the universal claims of public sphere, Pillai brought an array of vernacular issues to the public, often defining the sense of decorum associated with the public domain in his own terms. Camouflaging the underlying caste prejudice in a new vocabulary of accountability of public office and literary authority, Pillai attempted to dignify his critique against the alien Diwans and writers of other castes in a modern language. Udaya Kumar highlight the fact that what one see in the writings of Pillai are not very much a conflict of modernity and tradition, but a vernacularisation of the public sphere.

The next three essays focus on the gender dimensions of modern and contemporary Malayalee subjectivity. G. Arunima takes a different route to understand the cultural meaning of satire and by reading the satirical writings of EV and Sanjayan she questions the often-held view that satire is invariably a powerful medium for social critique. She argues that it is important to understand the contingent subjectivity of the satirist to track the strands and nuances of laugh. The satirical writings engage with colonial modernity and urbanization and expose the complicity of the modern subject with its simultaneous subversive and conservative demeanors. Nonetheless, the laughing subject here is invariably male and particularly Nair, where the laughter was particularly against the social expectations of womanliness and masculinity, trivializing political dimensions of gender by wrapping it up with laughter. In a historical context where 'rights, relationships and identities were yet in the process of ordering' the humour subtly displays the anxieties of masculinity. This anxiety, according to Arunima, was expressed through humour violence pitted against

constructed figures of 'dominating' women, 'society ladies', weak men who allows themselves to be dominated and 'hubbies' as against modern *bhartavu*. The crisis of masculinity continued in the post-reform phase too as Ratheesh Radhakrishnan demonstrates in his study on the historical constitution of a masculine public sphere in Kerala with special reference to the modern Nair subjectivity. By reading a literary text and a film, *Nalukettu* and *Elipathayam*, he finds problems of adapting to modernity as the primary reason that spawned the crisis of Nair masculinity. Seeing it retrospectively, Ratheesh postulates that it was principally the masculine anxieties that accorded primacy to women's question in the Nair reform rhetoric. The embryonic Nair masculinity in M.T's novel fashions itself by radically breaking away from his matrilineal past and by making use of the modern economy. The reclamation of the past is to erase it with modernity for an open future, albeit the fact that the mobility of Nair men is still with its limits- impaired by a powerful recast of caste and religious loyalties in the wake of modernity. Detached by a temporal gap of more than two decades, the Nair male protagonist of Adoor is sedentary, caught in the rattrap of matriliny, devoid of labour lost his mobility within the taravad and is incapable of negotiating the exterior. The impossibility of Nair men at this stage, according to Ratheesh, encapsulates hampered dreams of mobility of Nair masculinity. J. Devika's powerful evocation takes us to the contemporary scenario, locating the shady sites within the established categories of marginality in Kerala. Marginal existence takes 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' forms and the former is accorded with a position of deprivation to come under the elite pastoral care authority. The category of women contains non-acceptable sites within, space of abject, a domain of abnormality and impossibility. The figures of prostitute and an 'incurable feminist' are identified in the discussion as two sites of abjection, who are transgressing the rules of marginality as set by the elite sensibility, and thereby denied with full citizenship. A prostitute, particularly a self-assertive prostitute like Nalini Jameela, by discarding the reformist cognisance demands citizenship and status as productive workers for sex-workers, only to jeopardise her 'outlier' status and face the outrage of the elite convictions. Devika argues that both the politicised abject, though a significant amount of difference separates them, resort to strategies of their own, in their own terms, of combating their marginality and elitist insolence. The paper by juxtaposing prostitute figure against the modern wife and incurable feminist against the elite middle-class feminist calls for a re-visioning of politics beyond the entrenched notions of Developmentalism and reformism.

The arrival of modernity and capitalism also resulted in the constitution of a hardworking, productive and assiduous self as one see in the new Syrian Christian subject. V.J. Varghese in his article attempts to see reconstitution of the Syrian Christian community in the historical context of migrations for agriculture and mobility within Kerala, with special reference to the migration to Malabar, which allowed the subject to claim modern dispositions. This represents a by-lane within a particular historical time, when the nation was powerfully articulated upon with its own subject and marginal locations. Satish Poduval's exercise herein reads V.P. Menon's *Integration of Indian States* and exhibits how the narrator-citizen constructs various 'regions' in the image of the new nation and thereby imposes a singular History over its heterogeneities with the support of a Statist anthem of unity. The text in celebration of the labour of integration, along with a textual labour of configuring an Indian reader-citizen, presents a range of complex spatial strategies deployed by the Indian state to fabricate a territorial and cultural nation. The narrative simultaneously produces the nation on the one hand and its 'regions' on the other, only to articulate the latter as a necessary evil and render categories like Muslims, regional satraps, tribal communities and the insurgent peasantry as villains who refuse to subjugate to the righteous nation. Apart from banking on the moral and political backing of the national leaders and foregrounding the concerns of security, Satish finds that, the narrative construe Muslims as invaders and India as a Hindu territory

with a history from time 'immemorial', mainly by drawing from the colonial fiction. The paper also brings out the diametrically opposite spatial strategies of integration for the elite and the subaltern groups, espousing the former while subduing the latter. By underscoring the overriding concerns of unity and security and through a careful 'pathologisation' of 'other' locations, the governmental rationality as one see in Menon's text prescribe conditions of citizenship as well.

This special issue on 'Subjectivity, Self and Marginality' yet again relate the sustained predilection of TAPASAM for interdisciplinary scholarship and new paradigms. The issue also includes three book reviews apart from the regular feature of '*From the Archives*'. DilipRaj's review of Dilip Menon's *The Blindness of Insight* engages with the provocations offered by the book and makes a careful critical reading of it. Bindhulakshmi Pattadath critically reads another important book on Kerala, *The Enigma of Kerala Women*, edited by Swapna Mukhopadhyay, by foregrounding its potentialities and further possibilities. Scaria Zacharia offers a literary reading on a collection of poems by Sugathakumari complied in the book *Manalezhuthu*. We hope that this issue of *Tapasam* would give you a profitable reading, and then needless to say, it would be enormously valuable for us to receive your comments and criticisms.

V. J. Varghese
Issue Editor

A Local Cosmopolitan: "Kesari" Balakrishna Pillai and the invention of Europe for a modern Kerala

Dilip M. Menon

"Writing pages in history books means playing havoc with geography."

Daniel Pennac, *The Fairy Gunmother*

Literature today cannot be contained by the countries and the languages in which they are written. The works of Turgenev have transformed the literature of France and those of Chekov the literature of England. We know how profoundly works from English and Bengali have stirred our own [Malayalam] literature.

M. P. Paul, *Sahityavicharam*, 1953

It is not often that one man and his writings change forever the sensibilities of a people. In the decade of the 1930s, in the state of Kerala in southwestern India, A. Balakrishna Pillai (1889-1960), the erudite and politically committed editor of the Malayalam literary journal, *Kesari,* created a new literary aesthetic that veered the imagination of an entire generation of Malayalis towards continental European literature. It was as a critical nationalist that he imagined this seemingly paradoxical enterprise. The thirties' were the high noon of Indian nationalism but Kesari rejected the dominant nationalist paradigm of the spiritual idealism of Gandhi. His first collection of essays evocatively titled *Navalokam* [New World][1], published in 1935, lamented the fact that individuals and institutions in south India were unaware of French, Russian and other literatures in European languages which were far more revolutionary and aesthetic than

anything that English literature had to offer. He proceeded to imagine a Europe that in his eyes reflected a political sensibility committed to a radical, egalitarian modernity. It was not the figure of a "hyperreal" Europe (to use the current cant) that he summoned up and critically deployed against both the colonial violence of the British as well as the narrow certainties of nationalist politics. It was a recovery of Europe through particular literary figures and traditions that embodied a search for a better literature and a more just future. His essays spoke about Marcel Proust, Honore de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert and Guy de Maupassant from France; Henrik Ibsen from Scandinavia; the Italian and Japanese Futurists; and Mayakovsky from Russia among others across Europe and Asia. Kesari enlisted them as compatriots in the creation of a canon that would arouse Malayalam literature from its classical stupor to a recognition of everyday realities and injustices. Europe was not an exalted place, nor was it a metaphor. It was a resource at hand as also a space of elective affinity for Pillai. At the same time, he also brought Asia within the embrace of his imagination; essays on transient local poets were peppered with comparisons to Chinese classical writers and Japanese futurists. This essay will explore the meaning of this local cosmopolitanism as Pillai fashioned and perhaps continued an idea of an always already connected world that transcended the geographies generated by colonialism and nationalism. Europe, indeed the world, became provinces of Kerala; provinces that had done rather well for themselves in the realm of the imagination.

Time and Space: Nations, borders and cosmopolitanism

To revisit this time of the shaping of borders through political ideologies is also to ponder on the dubious concreteness of notions such as Europe, nation and region and to emphasize instead their porousness and conjunctural nature. Over the 19th and 20th centuries, nations were assiduously invented as territorial entities with definite boundaries through the acts of imagining, writing and political mobilization. Ethnicity, common ancestry, the historical experience of oppression or marginalization by foreigners, language; all of these were summoned up as the binding agents of a people within a landscape to which they were organically attached.[2] The subsequent congealing of a national imagination in the structures and ideologies of the nation-state meant also the emergence and consolidation of a pedagogy of the national.[3] Diverse peoples had to be taught to be citizens, and the abstraction of an individual identity coterminous with the national was asserted through a diverse portfolio: public ritual, museums, holidays, school syllabi, foreign policy and wars over borders. Both the conceiving of national territory as well as the national citizen are better understood as contingent and enduring projects (the daily plebiscite referred to by Renan) rather than teleologically as the construction of a unitary national identity. Within the space of putative nations there is an attempt to dissolve differences via what Balibar has termed the "constitution of a fictive ethnicity" through discourses of affinity around language and race. This manouevre contains within itself the 'confrontation' and 'reciprocal interaction' of '*ethnos,* the "people" as an imagined community of membership and filiation, and *demos*, the "people" as the collective subject of representation, decision making, and rights'.[4] Alongside this proleptic manouevre is the parallel one of imagining spatial limits. It is one of the ironies of the post colonial world that newly independent nations have been so invested in the arbitrary borders drawn for them by their former colonial masters. As Balibar perceptively points out, the drawing of borders within Europe was 'originally and principally a way to *divide up the earth*...a way to export the "border form" to the periphery'.[5] These shadowlines demarcating peoples and cultures, while policed by armies and a regime of passports have been notoriously leaky: refugees, migrant labour, militant groups and ideologies have always found a way through. However, borders are a 'condensation of impossibility and potentials' produced by the persistent and reproduced 'ambiguity of the notions of *interior* and *exterior*'.[6] Rather than concrete entities demarcating a state's territorial hubris, borders are better thought of as intersecting with multiple, "overlapping zones" of the circulation of ideas, peoples and material. Nations, porous at their perceived limits and plastic within, need to be reconceived as contingent formations always exceeding the rhetoric of states that seeks to reify multiple configurations of place as national space. Notions such as literary nationalism, or a national culture, formulated in response to the anxiety of foreign influence come to be complicit in tendencies towards 'seeing like a state' (to use Scott's memorable phrase). The dual nature of literary radicalism needs reiteration and we shall return to this later.

The organic connection of nation, peoples and territory is taken for granted by nationalist discourse and literary nationalism even as nations are assiduously invented. The imagination of autarkic spaces characterizes and comes to mark imperial nations as well, hence the writing of the standard histories of Britain in the 18th century without references to empire.[7] Characteristically, former imperial nations

cultivate an amnesia towards erstwhile spaces of empire and a nostalgia about imagined connections of affect. Former colonies suppress memories of spatial miscegenation in their search within for spaces untouched by the experience of defeat. That any nation exists, and can exist, only in relation to other nations is a rather obvious but necessary point to reiterate. Balibar's observation is apposite here: "Every map in this sense is always a world map, for it represents a "part of the world", it locally projects the *universitas*…"[8] The hegemonic national imagination habitually looks back and inwards generating indigenous genealogies in order to temper the anxiety of influences from a world outside. This anxiety expresses itself in a cluster of maneuvers. In 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote his *Discovery of India*, establishing an ancient continuity within Indian civilization; the Greeks, Turks and Central Asians were enumerated within a narrative of their indigenization on Indian soil. The larger map that he painted in his *Glimpses of World History*, written to educate his daughter while he was confined in prison, spoke about great civilizations like the Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Roman alongside the Indian. These great civilizations stood at one end of a trajectory, while the emergent nationalisms and anti-colonialisms of Asia and Africa stood at the other end, sandwiching the dystopia of European colonialism and world war. What was interesting was the imagination of ancient civilizations in a *parallel and benign* relation while modern European history stood in relation to the rest of the world in a *malign intersection*. Either way the world could be kept at bay; the story of India was extricable from unwanted accretions. The act of comparison arose from an anxiety such as Anderson describes in the case of Jose Rizal: "a new, restless double-consciousness which made it impossible ever after to experience Berlin without once thinking of Manila, or Manila without thinking of Berlin. Here indeed is the origin of nationalism, which lives by making comparisons".[9] Anderson, however, presents the in-eluctability of comparison in the time of empire without dwelling on the fact that it is symptomatic of nationalism that it generates a discourse of *comparison* rather than *connectedness*.[10] Histories of the multiple imbrications of territory and imaginations are recast in terms of the relation between discrete units. To speak about *connectedness* is also to speak about a notion of territory less in terms of a unitary coherence and more in terms of miscegenated spaces and, perhaps, times as well. It requires us to move behind the mystification of geography by history writing centred on the nation-form and to truly historicise geography. As Said memorably observed, 'none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography'.[11]

Mbembe, following de Certeau's insistence on understanding territory as a set of possibilities, argues that 'precolonial territoriality was an itinerant territoriality'.[12] We could say that territory is always thus. We too easily let the cartographic excesses of colonialism and the national worship of borders shrink the space of our conceptions of geography.[13] Continuing trade, travel and pilgrimage, knowledge seeking and labour migrations surely meant that colonies continued to be part of larger networks of circulation and remained open to intellectual influences from across this space. Both prior to the establishment of the colonial powers in Asia and Africa as well as much after the establishment of the ideological and institutional structures of colonial rule, Europe, in the figure of the colonizing nation, was never the only point of reference in the indigenous imagination. Anderson posits a closure of the colonized imagination brought about by imperial anxiety to seal their territories from the influence of other European powers. He observes that 'young people in Batavia (Jakarta) knew more about Amsterdam than they did about Cambodia with which their ultimate ancestors had once had close ties, while their cousins in Manila knew more about Madrid and New York than about the Vietnamese littoral…' [14] In his more recent work, Anderson has been more willing to work out the implications of what he terms as 'political astronomy': the idea that territories (seemingly bounded within the confines of terms like 'colony' or 'nation'), like stars, are compelled by the 'power of the gravitational fields of which they are ineluctable, active parts'.[15] Now there appears to be multiple, intersecting, geographies exceeding state determined borders; the world-ideology of anarchism and its 'vast rhizomal network' being only one such example.

Within South Asian historiography reactions to the unbearable heaviness of an earlier paradigm are evident. Historians engaging with the colonial state's archives alone succumbed to the official discourse of governmentality and generated a picture of hypostatized identities, territories and borders. Three broad positions are evident, shared across ideological affiliations, each serving as a supplement to the others. First, the paradigm of the settlement of land and peoples under colonialism, which developed an earlier understanding of colonial rule as being about the realization of larger revenues alone to posit a broad tendency towards the generation of peasants subordinated to the rule of law and property.[16] This perception of a colonial imperative - towards sedentarisation; suspicion of mobile groups; and a hardening of territorial boundaries - was buttressed by the second thematic. Work on prisons, colonial medicine, and

institutions for the insane drew heavily on a reading, albeit reductive, of Foucault's model of the generation of a discourse of the abnormal and of institutional apparatuses of incarceration and showed how the native body was subject to the scrutiny and discipline of the state.[17] A third thematic worked with the idea of a colonial discourse premised on a rule of difference that sought to classify, generate taxonomies and create hierarchies within native society. This theme is echoed too in Anderson as the construction of 'bounded serialities' working through maps and censuses to fix territories and identities.[18] The rooting of natives, as it were, seems complete in these narratives and the history of identities and imaginations in modern south Asia is subsumed in the history of colonialism. Arjun Appadurai reads this tendency as symptomatic of a larger European ethnological paradigm that elides the sense of native belonging with that of incarceration in places. A native is always traveled to within a heroic European narrative of discovery and adventure; the native does not travel.[19] It is not surprising therefore that the reaction to this problematic has drawn upon mobile and fluvial metaphors — circulation, counterflows and the like— and emphasized the continuing movement of peoples, material and ideas for which colonialism generated both enabling as well as coercive structures. Some traveled for pleasure and religious merit, others as indentured labour and within regimes of bondage.[20] Javed Majeed, has recently argued that Nehru, Gandhi and Iqbal defined themselves against the ethnographic representation of Indians as embedded in landscapes defined by power by writing autobiographies structured around the trope of travel. The delineation of a 'geography of subjectivity' meant the simultaneous recovery of cultures of travel as also defining India as a traveling culture.[21]

The idea of self contained spaces of influence presumes their organization under a regnant temporality as well. Indeed it is the drawing in of diverse out-of-time spaces into the time of 'Europe', 'universal capital' or the 'modern' that seems to awaken them out of their immobility and localism.[22] The notion of a singular time which comes to regulate the intellectual and material rhythms of the world outside Europe found its classic statement in *The Communist Manifesto*: 'National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the many national and local literatures, a world literature arises'. Anderson argues in his tendentious reading of Benjamin's formulation that a nation lives in 'homogeneous empty time'; simultaneity of experiences and their commensurability becomes the marker of oneness.[23] Whether it is the time of universal capital in Marx, or that of 'a profoundly standardized conception of politics…rooted in industrial material civilization'[24] as in Anderson, the utopian conception of One Time (as in Tolkien's *One ring to rule them all*) is invested with a concreteness that rides roughshod over the multiplicity of actual lived times. We are compelled to recognize time in its heterogeneity following Benjamin's observation that 'history is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogeneous, empty time…' but of the multiple recoveries of pasts through affinities imagined by the immediate present.[25] Concepts of universal and local; national and international; cosmopolitan and insular; or indeed, core and periphery have now to be read less as exclusive and exemplary but as coeval, contingent and miscegenated imaginations and spaces. We are speaking not of Braudel's mutually exclusive zones and levels of temporalities but interpenetrating times which do not allow of a core-periphery or a hierarchical relation. The utopian idea of a homogeneous world time, or indeed national time, can only be understood historically in the many ways that it is domesticated, appropriated and used.

While we no longer work with the idea of what Said termed 'an anthropological Eden in which men and women produced something called literature',[26] an idea of the literary is in danger of being overdetermined by the political and material, restoring the centrality of Western Europe to intellectual production elsewhere in the world. The turn to conceptualizing world literature, whether it has been in the remarkable works of Franco Moretti or Pascale Casanova, has also meant a recourse to world system theory with its neat lateral hierarchy of core and periphery.[27] While it is salutary to recognize that world literature like the world itself is 'one and unequal' at the same time, the core-periphery model reinstitutes earlier teleologies, linearities and a notion of unitary time. Moretti, adapting from Jameson, speaks about a *law of literary evolution*: 'when a culture starts moving towards the modern novel' and Moretti does not mean *The Tale of Genji* here, 'it's *always* as a compromise between foreign form and local materials'. This not very insightful observation (European form and local content: we could think about the derivative rendition within non-Europe of capitalism, liberalism, nationalism and a score of other seemingly 'European' artifacts with this formula) is modified by the addition of a third vector, that of local form. Under the guise of multiplicity there is only a transcendental law which disciplines diversity.

In Casanova, there is the idea of an 'international literary law', seemingly owing nothing to 'political fiat, interest or prejudice' but unconsciously political in conception. The acquiring of literary legitimacy, indeed literary existence itself, is conceived of as a relay race,

with the handing on of the torch from Spain to England through North America and Latin America till with decolonization Asian and African countries too join in. The theorization of an idea of 'world literary space' that generates literary frontiers independent of political boundaries, in the course of exposition, however, comes to be rooted in European historical experience and the 'development of the first European states'.[28] So does a notion of 'literary time' allow 'literature to free itself from political time'? First, the idea of a singular time is reinstituted – the 'Greenwich meridian of literature' – that 'makes it possible to estimate the relative aesthetic distance from the centre of the world of letters of all those who belong to it'.[29] Unsurprisingly, the meridian is located in the space of the European modern, which also cunningly appropriates to itself the mantle of literary precedence and, therefore, of age. To be modern, is to be ineluctably *modern-after-Europe*, since '*the only true moderns*…are those who are aware of the existence of this literary timekeeping and who acknowledge a world literary space' [emphasis mine].[30] A double burden therefore for non- Europe: to be forever late and to know too that they cannot keep time; time is kept elsewhere. So how does the 'periphery' then get to produce literature that will be recognized as 'truly modern'? Translation from the 'classics' whose literary capital is projected as 'nonnational and ahistorical'[31] becomes the means through which literary assets are diverted, 'importing to countries the modernity decreed at the Greenwich meridian'. [32] Writers in 'small' languages introduce the techniques and sounds of literary languages and through 'intranslation' engage in 'annexation and reappropriation of a foreign patrimony'.[33] Classics that have a 'nonnational and ahistorical' character are nationalized and literature outside Europe necessarily possesses a national flavour as opposed to the universal cosmopolitan character of the European archetype. It is not clear in this account where the act of translation lies; is it in the compulsive act of *localizing* that 'small' literatures perform? Are we back to the old chestnut: can non-Europe, in its literary production or otherwise, speak the language of universals?

In an earlier, expansive and apodictic formulation, Jameson had argued for difference by stating that 'all third world texts are necessarily …allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*'.[34] One of the problems facing Jameson is the method of apprehending an 'alien' text, a curious maneuver which attempts to distance and appropriate at the same time. This two-fold maneuver is evident in his attempt to present 'third world literature' (leaving aside the question of what the category of the Third World may mean at all) as an already known category to his audience because they have encountered it in previous eras of western literature. As a nuanced critique of Jameson by Rosemary George points out, one of the advantages of reading 'alienness' as national allegory allows for its easy consumption; moreover, nationalism comes to be presented as the only authentic cultural attribute of the non-western parts of the world.[35] The distinction that Jameson creates between third world and first world literature replicates and carries on the central symptom of western Marxism: its nostalgia for totality. The Lukacsian positing of the totality of imagination in the epic as against the fragmented present delineated in the novel is reprised by Jameson but in a curious dehistoricizing conflation. The third world novel is equated with the epic: the telling of individual stories in the third world novel 'cannot but ultimately involve the laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself.'[36] While Jameson's characterisation may be true of the literature of the mature moment of nationalism, George suggests that 'literature and even nationalisms move *beyond* this third moment.'[37]

This tendency to incarcerate literatures within the phantasm of a national space has come under considerable critique. Homi Bhabha's formulation that the discourse at the margins serves as a 'supplement' to the 'dominant discourse' and is antagonistic to the imperative to uniformity suggests that 'the nation' is precisely that which is not inscribed by the writing produced at the margins'.[38] As against unilinear, assimilationist narratives Bhabha suggests that those at the margins of nations 'disturb the ideological manouevres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities.'[39] He points to the porousness of borders and the processes of immigration and migrants that *unwrite* nations and national projects. Similarly, acts of translation of Europe at the margins do not only reproduce European form but creatively misrecognise both form and content adding western realist modes of apprehension to existing realist and mythopoeic forms.[40] In that respect, at least, Europe is always already provincialized and domesticated at the periphery, except in the mainstream national discourse, that allies its own desire for modernity with the ideal trajectories and categories of the European modern. For Bhabha, Appadurai and others thinking of global cultural and social relations are defined by the contravention of the boundaries established by the nation-state and what they conceptualise as a Eurocentric sense of time (of nations-yet-to-be and not-nations in a time of nations). The emphasis on cultural flows that sit typically athwart putative national boundaries, helps us too to move beyond a narrative of decolonization

that saw the construction of a national culture as being in Fanon's words, a 'special battlefield' against colonialism; a project that then legitimized the nation-state's ineffability. Bhabha's claim is extremely suggestive that it is in the differentiated time of writing that a time both inside and outside the nation can be inscribed. The task then is to conceptualise the '*interstitial*', that which lies athwart the national and envisages 'a certain affective and ethical identification with globality'.[41] If we accept the '*work of the imagination* as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity', territories come to be seen as a condition of possibility as much as constraint. Appadurai puts it well: the work of imagination is 'neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplined, but is a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern', permitting the history of modernity to be rewritten 'more as vernacular globalisation'. [42]

Interstitial thinking that translates, rewrites and domesticates the global constitutes too a performative cosmopolitanism that escapes both the incarceration in a notion of the national as also the linearity that conceives of the world as Europes that shall be. It proliferates times and borders; indeed, makes borders the very condition of thought. Given the miscegenated, postcolonial, globalised spaces of the present, one could well remark alongside Appiah that 'cosmopolitanism isn't hard work; repudiating it is'.[43] However, the idea of cosmopolitanism seems so much a creature of Europe and its liberal traditions that its very use creates suspicion of a reinstitution of a Eurocentric paradigm. Kant's cosmopolitanism presupposes that it can be thought out from one geo-political location; that of the heart of Europe and indeed, 'plagued the inception of national ideology with racial prejudgment'.[44] It appears to suggest a forgetfulness of material inequalities, of global hierarchies and the acceptance of an idea of identities that are 'at large' and not rooted anywhere.[45] The exigent task is recuperate a 'critical cosmopolitanism' from within the projects of modernity itself which engages with the issue from the multiple locations of colonial difference.[46] At one level, the exercise consists in the pragmatic move to be 'archivally cosmopolitan…to say "Lets simply look at the world across time and space and see how people have thought and acted beyond the local"'.[47] Pollock's suggestion allows for an accommodation with the diversity of historical practice, rather than a wrestling with the iniquities of a reified ideological proposition. As Pollock puts it, we need to think about cosmo-politanism as 'something people do rather than something they declare' and to emphasize precisely its Janus faced nature. It is directed towards two audiences: 'one unbounded and potentially infinite in extension, the other practically finite and bounded'.[48] It is precisely this locally rooted cosmopolitanism that declares affiliation with other worlds and places which needs to be recovered; literary cultures are characterized by what Pollock terms as 'practices of attachment'.[49] I would like to argue that the expression of an elective affinity towards Europe is accompanied by a 'vernacula-risation', rather than a mere translation from, of the European modern where vernacularisation is 'a new way of doing things with texts especially written literary texts, in a stay-at-home language…'[50] It is this hybridization of culture that represents the real challenge not only to a Eurocentric universalism but also the 'nativist cultural face of national liberation movements'.[51]

Interstitial thinking and local cosmopolitanism

'The antiquated idea of nationalism is weakening everywhere', observed Balakrishna Pillai in his characteristically apodictic manner in the 1940s, 'and the idea of one nation that extends over the globe has arisen. The fruits of my research may help in preparing people's minds to accept and propagate these new ideas; my research may indeed help destroy the feeling of the superiority of their own cultures that people of many nations entertain in their minds'.[52] The creation of a new sensibility towards the world was imminent even in Asia and his part was to play the role of what he termed as a *sankramachintakan* or go-between thinker (what Bhabha would have called "interstitial"): a translator across cultures. It is this sense of being at the interstices of the world that characterized his thought, where there was nothing distinctly or essentially European or Indian; just the possibilities of translation and crossovers. Interstitiality was an ethical imperative that allowed for a transcendence of territorial belonging towards a recognition of a responsibility towards the world. 'Art can assist in many important ways in actualizing the new world that is coming into existence. It is only if the people of Kerala believe that the western world needs it support in continuing what it has done to create this new world, that they can be of any real assistance'.[53] Pillai stressed that the translation of world literature into Malayalam was an exigent task for precisely this generation of affinity. An English education exposed one to the vast archive of an authentic and significant literature and there was not much to be gained by making the issue of the obvious importance of access to English education an emotive one. English was as good English could be used; knowledge of the English language allowed one access to French, Scandinavian and other great literatures. Pillai was not very convinced of the greatness or even usefulness of English literature; in his scheme of

things the French novel, German music and the Russian dramatic tradition were the exemplars.[54] The only appreciative references are to the emergent Modernist trend in England, but even here Virginia Woolf is presented as a pale version of Proust and Wyndham Lewis seen as important inasmuch as Vorticism reflected the aspirations of Italian Futurism. The question that Pillai posed was this: how could the people of Kerala best help the western world in its endeavors of imagining a new world through art and literature? In the space of literary endeavor and creativity everyone was an equal; colonialism had not managed to stultify that aspiration. Europe was a library of categories and techniques to be drawn upon in the creation of a new world, because certain tendencies in Europe too were engaged in that very act of negating tradition, conservatism and social stasis that in Pillai's eyes characterized the project of achieving the modern.

Balakrishna Pillai founded the literary and political tabloid weekly *Kesari* in April 1930 in order to open up the imagination of the Malayalis to a wider world of politics, literature and self fashioning.[55] His credo was that there was no intrinsic connection between the greatness of artistic production and the fame of nations; a nationalist celebration of India's ancient civilization was not enough.[56] Apart from his editorials in *Kesari*, Balakrishna Pillai wrote extensively on literary trends and the imperative for a new literary aesthetic in the pages of the *Mathrubhumi* weekly, which had close associations with the nationalist Congress party. This paper looks at the essays of the 1930s which marked a significant intervention in the Malayali imagination; the themes he explored in this crucial decade of mass nationalism in India were ones that he would return to throughout his life: modernism, religion and mysticism, western and eastern aesthetics and Freud. The readership of *Kesari* extended beyond the Malayalam speaking regions of Travancore, Cochin (both Princely States) and Malabar (a district of the Madras Presidency in British India) across the ocean to the Malayali diaspora in Malaya and Burma.[57] A typical issue would contain reports on recent political developments with reference to the Congress and Gandhi; brief articles on science and scientific miscellany (archaeological discoveries, the age of the universe); popular lore and pseudo-science (suicide among animals, reading faces for character, infamous female murderers); internationalism and current affairs (the Depression, Five Year plans in Russia, developments in Turkey, the decline of Labour in Britain); marriage and sexuality (particularly articles by Havelock Ellis and Bertrand Russell); and of course, European literature. Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* was serialized through the issues of 1931 while Prosper Merimee's *Carmen* ran through 1931 and 1932; almost every issue carried a translation of short stories by Maupassant, Chekhov, and Alphonse Daudet among others. Balakrishna Pillai drew upon contemporary literary and political journals in English as a barometer of an emerging literary aesthetic and for tracking emerging movements like Vorticism and Futurism. The provenance of translated articles is not always given, but there were referenced articles from journals like *Spectator*, *Contemporary Review*, *Athenaeum*, *The Modern Review*, *Nineteenth Century Review* and the *Illustrated London News* and even the *International Journal of Ethics* for an article on progress by John Dewey.

The lead essay in *Navalokam* titled *Keralakalum Fyucharisavum* [Futurism and the Arts in Kerala] straight away assumed a stance against the emerging nationalist consensus around Gandhi. 'Once Gandhi assumed leadership of the Congress, Indians who had hitherto engaged with spirituality in all aspects of life other than the political, began to introduce spirituality into politics as well…after the gradual failure of this unprecedented experiment…it would not be an inappropriate moment to examine whether the situation can be remedied by an injection (*kuthiveppu*) of materialism'. Pillai castigated this Gandhian manouevre for its retreat from the realities of the world into a vision of a redemptive past. 'Just as in political life, the excess of spirituality…has given birth, among Indians, to a reluctance to face realities, a disposition towards dismissing the present while being intoxicated by a sense of past glory and a tendency towards inactivity'.[58] This dissonance (*apasvaram*) in a vision of public life retarded progress in India making it lag behind its Asian compatriots, China and Japan. In synchrony with the emergent socialist current on the Indian political scene, Pillai argued that the only way Indian art could be rejuvenated 'is if a group emerges that is sympathetic towards socialists, communists and anarchists'. This large gesture towards radicalism was accompanied by a more specific prescription: 'the need to look towards a group that emerged 25 years ago in Europe; Futurism, which can be translated as *bhutakaalaviarudhyavaadam* in Malayalam'.[59] This gesture of affiliation was at once an appropriative one; the Malayalam translation rendered Futurism as an 'ideology opposed to the past' rather than a gesture towards the contemporaneity of the future. In India too, a Futurist movement was needed since, like Italy, it had become a 'museum of antiquities'. Therefore, 'a hatred towards the past and the ancient, a determination that only the details of contemporary life will be made the subjects of art, a revolutionary

disposition; it is only in these that Indian futurism and European futurism must bear a similarity'.[60]

The fundamental difference was that futurism in Europe arose as a reaction to the modes of realistic representation that had emphasized the outer aspects of objects and events alone; it therefore, concentrated on 'the inner energy of contemporary life'. In India, on the other hand, the concentration on the inner aspects of existence meant that the artist's exigent task was to emphasize external form, environment and circumstance. Indian art was to be saved from mysticism and a retreat into the spiritual that exalted national poets like Tagore exemplified calling attention instead towards the social (as in Shaw) and the 'uneventfulness of everyday life' (as in Chekhov).[61] Pillai was clear that great art would arise only from a transcendence of binaries such as the inner and outer, matter and spirit, therefore futurism could 'only be a temporary mode (*taalkaalika margam*) towards this end. Citing Gino Severini that a picture is neither about a scene or story, nor about happiness or sadness, Pillai ripostes that neither is it about Matisse's arabesques or mere geometrical configuration as in Cubism alone. The answer to what art was about or should be for was not in a recovery of humanism, for 'one cannot describe one person's life in terms of another person's life and experience'. Nor could it be in the naïve recovery of a social function for art such as nationalist and socialist ideologies required.

The idea of Futurism was deployed to clear space within the looming discussions on literary endeavor and its worth. Pillai's use of a European resource was strategic: 'when the old is destroyed, Futurism will become superfluous'. There were three issues raised in the essay to which Pillai would return time and again in a spiraling strategy, where each moment of return was also marked by an elaboration of a key idea. One theme that ran through his *oeuvre* was the question of whether literature required an addressee. Following the contemporary American critic, Max Eastman, he described Futurist literary endeavour as similar to the behaviour of children as described by Piaget: children talk to themselves and the listener is just an occasion for speech. There may be a reader, but the Futurist writer ignores him, the 'words of the artist do not perform any social work'.[62] The second theme related to the relative role of the intellect and the instincts in creativity. The dominant Gandhian mode of nationalist self fashioning required a disciplining of the instincts and the sublimation of sexuality; a position that Pillai was consistently to counterpose to his own credo: 'I do not regard the sex life of man as a part of the mean portion of his nature. A sex symbol is as natural and noble as any other so called noble impulse'.[63] Domination of the body by the intellect allowed only the depiction of stillness, while yielding to one's instincts (*janmavsanakal*) permitted the depiction of movement arising from feelings.[64] Futurism subordinated the mind to the instincts and in this, Pillai argued, they followed Freud. Earlier in a seminal essay in *Mathrubhumi* titled *Kalayum kamavum* [The arts and sexual desire], he had argued that Freud's psychoanalysis was particularly relevant for Kerala, because of the Romantic impulse in contemporary Malayalam literature.[65] The third theme concerned the question of Romanticism-in a textbook translation the emphasis on inspiration, subjectivity and the individual- but rendered by Pillai as *vaicitryavarnanareeti* or the mode of describing the strange, odd and wonderful. It located the Romantic impulse in a radical individualism, verging on the eccentric: 'instead of succumbing to and reveling in the artistic habits of his time, the Romantic artist uses his own imagination to create what he wishes to'.[66] For Pillai, sincerity, integrity and emotion were central as also the rejection of old habits of mind and established values.

His essay *Frenchnovalum Maupassangum* on the French novel and Maupassant, confronted the question of the possibility of a 'world literature', the idea that Goethe had inaugurated in 1827, in conversation with Eckermann. For Pillai, it was a post Babel vision of a world with a multiplicity of languages that delayed the emergence of a world literature. However, in an unequal world, literature by 'looking at all humans equally' created an utopian space of exchange above 'life's struggles, competitiveness, hatred and sadness'. Literature was both a reflection and a transcendence of the human condition; while it narrated difference, it aspired to unity. So how was one to render the 'unprecedented beauty' (*apoorvamaayathanu ramaniyam*) of other customs in other literatures- whether in Dickens, Gogol, Maupassant or Kenjiro Tokutomi? One strategy was through translation from the major languages of the world. 'As a result of this, a language develops particularly if it is its infancy (*balyadasha*). It is the lack of such translations that is the main cause of the backwardness of Malayalam literature in comparison with other languages'. [67] It was necessary to translate the classics of world literature as models (*mathrikakrithikal*) but the enterprise would be rendered meretricious if all that was done was to 'tailor literature from other countries to Indian needs by changing circumstances and names'. However, what was to be done in the absence of a tradition, for instance, of the social novel? Writing later in the 1940s, Pillai looked back to when in 1921, Balzac's *Eugenie Grandet* was translated as *Shandilya* and Eugenie was

made Malayali so that she would find acceptance. Translation had to take on the job of transforming the content as well.[68] and French and Russian literatures were to be appropriated through the form of the novel: 'the French novel', Pillai felt, 'in its aesthetic fullness is an extremely beautiful work of art'.[69] However, Malayalam literature, still in its infancy had unfortunately chosen to look towards English literature unlike Japan where French and Russian literatures were the benchmarks. Japan had emerged in the 1930s as a model for Asian modernity and here the appropriation of French and Russian literature came with the imprimatur of a country that had beaten the west at its own game as it were.

In writing about Futurism, Pillai had seen the childlike combination of inwardness with an insouciant engagement with the world as representing wholeness in the way of being of the self. He himself veered between retreat and action and over the years cast his intellectual activity as his intervention in the world. In a note titled "My psychological nature" written later in his life, he put it succinctly, "I was not born an ascetic but I gradually became one." His mode of asceticism was however one in which "the ideal was to subdue self for the good of humanity i.e. by bringing into effect a social, political, economic and art revolution."[70] What exactly did Pillai mean by the subduing of the self? If literature was, as he believed, a medium of self understanding, then how was the self to be recovered even as it was disciplined? He saw modernity as inaugurating an excavation of the self which made evident that "promiscuity is in the nature of things, the fundamental reality." Human beings were characterized by an "erotic eagerness" and Pillai argued that only an art that recognized this could lead the way forward. He deprecated the tendency of English literary critics to see as a failing the sensuality that suffused French literature and argued instead that English novels did not attend sufficiently to the importance of sexuality in the life of a human being.[71] In the third essay, *Manassastranovalum Marcel Proustum* [The psychological novel and Marcel Proust] Pillai argued that the most significant developments in European literature in the first three decades of the 20th century had been the engagement with psychoanalysis and what he termed the 'disintegration of personality'.[72] Pillai was to put this more strongly in 1938, 'in the west god has been replaced by a new orientation towards space and time through the writings of Marx and Freud'.[73] The conceptual apparatus of psychoanalysis had demonstrated that the individual was not a unified whole; rather he was an unraveling knot torn by internal contradictions and instincts that ruptured his civilized veneer. The

novels of Stendhal and Dostoevsky were pioneering in their engagement with a psycho-analytical paradigm *avant les lettres*. Pillai then proceeded to elaborate on what he felt was Freud's distinctive contribution to an understanding of the human psyche. The struggle between instincts and the civilizing process was what led to the repression of the former in the un-conscious; and often it was emotions related to sexuality that were thus relegated.

It is in his discussion of Proust and Freud that Pillai brings together a discussion of self, modernity and literature. He saw Proust as the pioneer who introduced psychoanalysis into narratives of everyday life by showing how even strongly felt emotions were half-remembered and half-invented from the echoes of a remembered past.[74] That the self who narrates is itself the result of a narration proceeding from an unconscious that resisted convention and social expectations challenged the very notions of a stable self that had been central to the discourses of social reform as well as nationalism. Reformers reacting against the essentialism of caste had generated narratives of infinite possibility in which selves evolved towards perfection. One kind of narrative was a pragmatic one that saw education and equality of opportunity as leveling the playing field and removing distinctions. Another was a spiritual one such as that of Narayana Guru that addressed the unity of all selves and stressed the possibility of knowledge of selfhood in order to lift the veil of ignorance that separated man from man. Both narratives stressed consciousness and will; humans could know who they were through acts of intellection and reflection. These were gendered narratives as well in that were largely about the reconstitution of masculinity, and domesticity tempered by love was the trope through which women could perceive themselves. Issues of sexuality were sublimated into issues of marriage and heterosexual normativity. The dominant nationalist mode had been one of self restraint, of ruling the passions and senses in the creation of the *satyagrahi*. Here celibacy had been the lodestar; the *ashram* rather than the home. For someone like Pillai who rejected the mysticism of Gandhi and believed in assisting the "polymorphous perverse erotic nature" to discover and assert itself, these were unsatisfactory and unimaginative solutions which had no real understanding of the human being. In several essays he spoke about how the influence of psychoanalysis had made the deep description of sexuality in all its manifestations (*sakala laingikajivita vashangalude sookshmavarnana*) one of the distinctive features of the modern novel so that Andre Gide and Proust in particular could write about homosexuality without embarrassment or sensationalism.

Neither contemporary Indian politics nor the English literary archive (Pillai recognized the existence of novels like Radclyffe Hall's *The well of loneliness* and Elizabeth Bowden's *The Hotel* as honourable exceptions)[75] seemed to offer much in terms of radical possibilities for reconstruction of a modern self cognizant of sexuality in all its variance. As Pillai wryly put it, 'One cannot read only literature produced by the healthy; genius is often situated in those of a nervous disposition'.

It was in his essay *Sundarakala, paschatyavum paurastyavum* [Aesthetics: western and eastern] that Pillai made his most detailed case for the responsibility of art in establishing the unity of human endeavour. There was a need for transcending the debilitating and futile distinctions between East and West which instituted hierarchy rather than mere difference; rather a difference that was imbricated in hierarchy. While there were differences within Europe and indeed within Asia in musical, literary and architectural traditions these were governed as much by questions of national character as environment and civilizational characteristics. For instance, Pillai argued that the Greeks thought of god as the supreme human therefore they sculpted the human form divinely. On the other hand the Hindus who thought of humans as incomplete gods did not make humans the models for their gods. Hindus who believe in reincarnation do not make monuments for the dead as do Muslims; hence, no Hindu Taj Mahal! This belief in many lives also meant the absence of tragedies in Sanskrit; the idea of tragedy was rooted in the idea of one life and the excess of emotion invested (*vikaarateekshanata*) in the idea of death.[76] So what then was the rejoinder to the proposition that the difference between eastern and western art was the former was idealistic while the latter was realistic? Pillai made a distinction between realism as a mode of representation and realism as a choice of a particular subject. So with regard to Japanese art, when Kano and others between the 17th and 19th centuries, created the *Ukiyo-e* or Floating world of painting, realism was adopted only inasmuch as subject matter was concerned. For Pillai, it was not so much the reality of the representation, but the reality of the apprehension through an inner vision (*jnanadrishti*) that was the crux. Western art was satisfied with the vision of the external form alone and not concerned with the experience of the unity of viewer and viewed; it was precisely this limited viewing that allowed for the greater technical skill of the western artist. His discussion deserves quoting in full:

> Indian art theorists divide objects into *drstam* and *adrstam*; the first dealing with real objects and the second with the real though unprecedented, and the unreal and imaginative. Both of these classes of objects cannot be seen in their real form either physically or mentally. We can only see how they seem to us. It is this seeming-ness (*tonnal*)-if one were to put it another way, the form that the eye or the mind sees, not the actual form that the object possesses in either the actual or the mental world-that the word seeing (*drishyam*) connotes. The duty of the artist is to create a likeness (*chhaya*) of this scene, that is to say it is not to show a thing but how it seems to him. This is what eastern theorists of art call realism (*sadrishyam*).In this view the photograph is something that gives birth in us the vision or feeling of something-like-that object (*saadhanathe pole thanney*). Contrary to this, a picture based on the photograph can only convey the feeling of seeming-ness that we have when we see a photograph. Eastern art does not merely consist in producing an exact copy; it is a creation-an independent creation of the feeling of seeming-ness that an object generates. In the western view, on the other hand, the photograph is not an object that gives rise to seeing; it is a copy or image in itself...In a copy one can only render the external sense of it. Since those in the east see everything as an illusion (*maya*), eastern artists like the Chinese and the Japanese even when adopting realism, do not strictly conform to a realist mode, it is transformed into the realism of idealism.[77]

The 'realism of idealism' meant that the very act of translation from the western form, or of western content, was rendered problematic even impossible. Translation was not a rendering of a western original (Maupasssant, the idea of realism), it was a rendering of the affect generated by that object. Tagore's statement is apposite that when Indian artists draw 'we draw ourselves'. Translation was not about the carrying over of cultural value into an impoverished canon, it was about domesticating and vernacularising it, creating a relation that moved beyond a hierarchy of vision. This emphasis on an inner vision that appropriated the perceived objects and representations of the world was not a counterposing of a seemingly 'Hindu' aesthetics to a 'western' one. In his discussion of Proust and Freud, Pillai had radically questioned the very idea of a whole, stable inner self. 'Depending on our physical state and the

speed of our thought, we change from moment to moment'.[78] The self was located at the interstices of states generated by perception and emotions. While there could be a possibility of moving towards an universal symbolism, Pillai was pessimistic about the prospects for 'transcending the difference generated by the divergent value accorded by west and east towards the emotions'. He was conscious though, that the ignoring of external reality and a reliance on an inner perception, however fragmented and transient, was the product of an exclusive rather than a 'democratic spirit'. Eastern works of art could only be appreciated by those aware of the aesthetic; an excess of *dhvani* (depth, allusion) and *vyangyam* (irony). An excess of allusion and density destroyed the social good (*samudayika gunam*) of art.

The democratic impulse would come from rendering the everyday and the mental struggles of individual actors in society. Modern drama was the best form for a new living literature (*jivalsahityam*) to adopt; the stage was like an orator's stump through which the collective could be addressed.[79] 'Modern European drama was the creation of Chekhov, Strindberg and Ibsen', observed Pillai, and was characterized by an engagement with the everyday, ideas rather than action, a revolutionary questioning of morals, and the abandoning of individuals for types.[80] For Pillai, all of these were rendered possible by the demise of religion in Europe and the creation of a space for the emergence of a secular art. 'If we are to look at the objects of artistic attention from the beginning of the twentieth century, they would include nude women; copper vessels; vegetables like the tomato; children; street cornersr; apple orchards; places of recreating by the sea; bankers; fashionable women and so on. Ordinary (*nissaara*) events, ordinary objects, fragments, eccentricities (*kirukkukal*)... and an unconcern with religion, theories of aesthetics and systems of morals'.[81] Pillai argued that presenting objects in a pure unmediated way (*shuddharoopam*) was an ideology in itself: 'the momentary experiences that each human being experiences are the only experiences that matter; to put all of these moments together and represent them as the total of an individual's experience is wrong, and the principles that arise from an assumption of the sum total of human experience are based on error'.[82] Recovering or constructing an experience of a collective could not be the basis for an artistic enterprise; the search for coherence would bring back a religious ideology and authoritarianism in another guise. 'There has been a return of an art oriented towards religion in the third decade of the twentieth century, inspired by Bolshevism and Fascism. Instead of the earlier idea of God, community has been deified'.[83]

Criticism in the moment of nationalism is generally seen as tied to the language of an 'Indian mode of responsibility'; indigenous thinking is seemingly in a state of animated suspension between European modernity and a non-modern inheritance of categories.[84] As Milind Wakankar has suggested recently, the idea of an impasse occludes the fact that this is also an inaugural moment in which new concepts are being generated. Instead of concepts such as negotiation, ambivalence and compromise, we need to look at the unprecedented aspects of thinking at this juncture. [85]Pillai resisted both a hermetic national tradition as well as attempts to create a collective identity that would subserve a national imaginary. He drew upon Europe as a corrective and domesticated its intellectual history, deploying categories critically. His translation was not just an act of historicizing Europe but of juxtaposing histories and asking the question: how could his intellectual endeavour enable a recovery of what was valuable from both a European and Indian tradition. How could there be difference without hierarchy; histories that were not subordinated to a universal; and the recovery of individual experience without subsuming it in collectivities such as the nation.

Notes:

1. Balakrishna Pillai is consciously echoing the title of *Brave New World* written by Aldous Huxley of whom he was a great admirer.
2. There is an extensive literature on nationalism and its inventions of which I list the ones that have been the most useful to me: Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism;* Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities;* John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*; David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature*; Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*. For a geneaology and critique of organicist metaphors of the nations see Pheah Cheng, *Spectral Nationality*.
3. See Eugen Weber's classic *Peasants into Frenchmen* as also Srirupa Roy, *Beyond belief*; Carol Gluck, *Japan's modern myths*.
4. Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form" and *idem*, "At the Borders of Europe".
5. Balibar, "At the Borders of Europe", p.7.
6. *Ibid*, p.7, 4.
7. For a representative critique see Antoinette Burton, "Who needs the nation? Interrogating British History", Also Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, "the history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowings; never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing or lending with absolute debtors and

creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences, and inter-dependencies…" p.261-2.

8 Balibar, "The borders of Europe, p.221.

9 Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons,* p.229. As Harootunian succinctly puts it, 'Anderson's specter has only a singular temporality… measured from one, base timeline, since…true time was kept by the modern West'. Harry Harootunian, 'Ghostly comparisons: Anderson's telescope', p.146.

10 See for the distinction between comparative and connective history, Martin Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents.*

11 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.6.

12 Achille Mbembe, "At the edge of the world: boundaries, territoriality and sovereignty in Africa", p.263

13 For an otherwise intelligent exposition that however, takes colonial remaking of space through mapping for granted see Mathew Edney, *Mapping an Empire*.

14 Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons*, p.5

15 Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags,* p.1. See his gentle but sharp autocritique where he reflects on his earlier comparative method that downplayed interconnections: "such is the Chaldean elegance of the comparative method, which, for example, allowed me once to juxtapose "Japanese" nationalism with "Hungarian", "Venezuelan" with "American", and "Indonesian" with "Swiss".

16 See C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars* and *Indian Society and the Making of British Empire* and for a modified skepticism towards colonial aspirations of control, *Empire and Information*. Also Eugene Irschick, *Dialogue and History.*

17 David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*; James H. Mills, *Madness, Cannabis and Colonialism*; Waltraud Ernst, *Mad Tales from the Raj*; Satadru Sen, *Disciplining Punishment*; Clare Anderson, *Legible Bodies.*

18 Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist among Historians* and *Colonialism and its forms of Knowledge*; Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind*; Edney, *Mapping an Empire.*

19 Arjun Appadurai, "Putting hierarchy in its place", p.37. Also Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.7.

20 Michael Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism*; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Claude Markovits *et al*, *Society and Circulation*, Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy ed. *Decentering Empire.*

21 Javed Majeed, *Autobiography, Travel and National Identity.*

22 There is an extensive critique of this trope of sleeping beauty awakening to the kiss of the prince which marked a certain strain in anthropological literature; for a formidable exposition see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other*. For a critique of the subsequent rendering of histories of the world through European categories see Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*.

23 This, despite Benjamin's explicit stricture that a concept of historical progress rooted in a notion of homogeneous empty time must be critiqued and must involve a reevaluation of the 'concept of progress itself'. Walter Benjamin, 'On the concept of History', p.395.

24 Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons*, p.29.

25 Benjamin, 'On the concept of History', p.395. See also Partha Chatterjee's incisive critique of Anderson in his 'The nation in heterogeneous time'.

26 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.52.

27 Franco Moretti, 'Conjectures on world literature' and *Atlas of the European novel, 1800-1900*; Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters.*

28 Casanova, *The world republic of letters*, pp. 11-12, 3.

29 *Ibid.* p.88.

30 *Ibid*. p.94.

31 *Ibid*. p.15.

32 *Ibid*. p.134.

33 *Ibid*., p.17-18, 235-6.

34 Frederic Jameson, "Third world literature in the era of multinational capitalism", p.69.

35 Rosemary M. George, *The politics of home*, p.103, 108-09.

36 Jameson, 'Third world literature', pp.85-6. Aijaz Ahmad rightly points to the illegitimate conflation of 'nation' and 'collectivity in Jameson's argument. As he rightly points out, 'If we replace the idea of the "nation' with that larger, less restrictive idea of "collectivity", and if we start thinking of the process of allegorization not in nationalistic terms but simply as a relation between private and public, personal and communal, then it becomes possible to see that allegorization is by no means specific to the so-called Third World'. Aijaz Ahmad, 'Jameson's rhetoric of otherness and the "National Allegory"'.

37 George, *The politics of home*, p.117.

38 *Ibid.*, p.186.

39 Homi Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation' in Bhabha ed. *Nation and Narration*, p.300.

40 For the artifice of 'translation' of the European novel into indigenous languages and the abandonment of this artifice in the actual writing of early

Indian novels see Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality*; Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia ed. *India's Literary History*; Dilip Menon, 'Caste and Colonial Modernity: reading *Saraswativijayam*'.

41 Homi Bhabha, 'Unpacking my Library…Again', p.201.

42 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large,* pp.3-4, 10.

43 Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism,* p. xx.

44 Walter D. Mignolo, 'The many faces of cosmo-polis', pp.735-6.

45 For a concise and intelligent critique of particular theorizations of cosmopolitanism in the contemporary world see Timothy Brennan, 'Cosmo-theory', p.659-693.

46 Mignolo, 'The many faces of cosmo-polis', p.724, 741.

47 Sheldon Pollock, Homi K.Bhabha, Carol A.Breckenridge and Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Cosmopolitanisms', p.586.

48 Sheldon Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and vernacular in history', pp.593-4. Appiah makes a similar proposition when he states that 'cosmopolitanism and patriotism, unlike nationalism, are sentiments rather than ideologies'. Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Cosmopolitan patriots', p. 619.

49 Pollock, 'Cosmopolitan and vernacular in history', p. 594.

50 *Ibid.* p. 606-7.

51 Pheng Cheah, 'Given culture', 293.

52 Quoted by M.N.Vijayan, 'Introduction' in Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai *Kesariyude sahityavimarsanangal* [Kesari's literary criticism] henceforth *KS,* p.7.

53 Quoted by Vijayan, 'Introduction", p.8.

54 '*French novalum Maupassangum'* [The French novel and Maupassant] *KS*, p.49.

55 Three volumes of the *Kesari* survive, for the years 1930-2, of which the issues for 1932 are unreadable because of the brittle quality of the paper. The volumes are held at the Appan Thampuran Library, Thrissur, Kerala.

56 'The Swiss with their wonderful landscapes, traditions of tales and so on bore us to tears. All they have been able to produce are cuckoo clocks and mechanical devices of great intricacy' in '*Mathavum Kalayum*' [Religion and Art], *Mathrubhumi*, June 29, 1936, *KS*, p.278-9.

57 See issue of *Kesari*, 3 June 1931. A translation of a short story by Guy de Maupassant was submitted from Rangoon, by a certain K.P.Shankara Menon, B.A. *Kesari*, 2 September 1931.

58 '*Keralakalakalum Fycharisavum' KS*, p.37.

59 *Ibid*., p.38

60 *Ibid*., p.43-4.

61 In passing Pillai states that Malayali poets should derive inspiration from Emil Verhaeren, the Belgian poet whom Marinetti adored as the 'glorifier of machines and tentacular cities', but this vision of the beauty of industrial society is not pursued further. For a discussion on Marinetti and Verhaeren see Shirley W. Vinall, 'Marinetti, Soffici and French literature', pp. 15-38.

62 '*Keralakalakalum Fyucharisavum*', p.41

63 'My Psychological Nature', *KS*, p.30.

64 Witness Marinetti: 'I taught you to hate the museums and the libraries in order to prepare you *to hate intelligence*, reawakening in you divine intuition...', quoted in John J. White, *Literary futurism*, p.336.

65' *Kalayum kamavum*', *KS*, p.257.

66 *KS*, p.38.

67 *KS*, p.48.

68 '*Purogamana sahityam*' [Progressive Literature] (1944), *KS*, 399.

69 *KS*, p.49.

70 *KS*, p.29, 30.

71 '*Frenchnovalum Maupassangum*', p.51-2. Pillai cites the view of an unnamed English critic that in the modern English novel, the hero is a 'eunuch with a swollen head'.

72 *KS*, p.62.

73 Introduction to *Svatantra Keralam* [Free Kerala] by Bodheswaran, *KS*, p. 404-5.

74 '*Manassasatranovalum Marcel Proustum*', *KS*, p.65.

75 '*Manasika apagrathananoval*" [Psychoanalytical novel] in *Noval-prasthanangal* [Movements in novel writing] (1947), *KS*, pp.193-4.

76 '*Sundarakala- paschatyavum paurastyavum*' , *KS*, pp.73-4.

77 *Ibid*., pp.76-7

78 '*Manassastranovalum Marcel Proustum*', p. 65.

79 '*Jivalsahityathinte sanketikarupam'*, *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, August 30, 1937, *KS*, p.315.

80 'Introduction' to Ibsen's *Ghosts* (1935), *KS*, pp.261-7 and '*Ibsenum adhunika yuropean natakavum*' [Ibsen and contemporary European drama] written as an Introduction to *Prethangal* [Ghosts] trans. AK Gopala Pillai and A. Balakrishna Pillai, *KS*, pp.268-73. Consider the celebration of these diverse juxtapositions with a more traditional critic's skepticism towards the non-auratic modern experience. Ramachandra Shukla in his 1909 essay, 'What is Poetry?': The kind of aesthetic effect that can be obtained from these [the swelling of a river, cloudburst, fog, fleeing in panic, leaping with greed...feeding someone by hand, immersing in fire]cannot be had from

mills and factories, warehouses, stations, engines, planes, donating money to an orphanage, filling fraudulent papers for bankruptcy, turning a car's ignition key, or fanning the coals in a trains steam engine".

81 '*Matavum Kalayum*' [Religion and Art] *Mathrubhumi*, June 29, 1936, *KS*, pp.277-8.

82 *Ibid*., p.280.

83 *Ibid*., p.280-81.

84 G.N.Devy, *After Amnesia*; Sudhir Chandra, *The Oppressive Present*; Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu traditions*.

85 Milind Wakankar, 'The moment of criticism in Indian Nationalist thought', pp.987-8

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The Public, the State and New Domains of Writing: On Ramakrishna Pillai's Conception of Literary and Political Expression

Udaya Kumar

The word 'public' has been in frequent use in India for more than a century.[1] In fact, the extent of its usage prompted an Indian writer in English, Arundhati Roy, to suggest some time ago that in contemporary India 'public' had indeed become a Hindi word.[2] Roy's point was not specifically about Hindi speakers, and we may, without distorting her sense, extend her argument to other Indian languages as well. The Indian appropriation of the word 'public' has probably involved more than a simple act of borrowing or even cultural translation. The vernacular uses of the word seem to be referring to a new entity, embedded in a set of relations different from those inhabited by its English counterpart. Roy indicated this when she said that in India the word 'public' appeared often in opposition to 'sarkar', a word that signified governmental authority in all its guises and forms. The space that separates the senses of these two words has been politically fraught in India, and its negotiation has looked quite different from the moves we associate with the bourgeois public sphere in Europe. This appears to suggest that not long after its emergence in the west, the philosophical concept of the public sphere began encountering the limits of its universal claims. Imperial expansion and colonial governance seem to have led to a deterioralization and irremediable contamination of the concept of the 'public sphere,' and colonies like India were the sites where this process took place.

These concerns press upon us with a certain urgency in the context of a revival of interest in the notion of the 'public sphere' in

Indian literary scholarship, especially in studies that engage with the history of print culture in modern India. Francesca Orsini's *Hindi Public Sphere* and Veena Naregal's *Language Politics, Elite and the Public Sphere* announce this in their titles, while works like Vasudha Dalmia's *Nationalization of Hindu Traditions* are clearly shaped by this interest.[3] These studies present a new and complex picture of India's literary modernity, mapping a variegated field of actors and contestations. In this, they effect a shift in focus from earlier scholarship that had by and large privileged an opposition between the new norms introduced through colonialism and a native, beleaguered sense of tradition. Recent work on the experience of modernity in centres of colonial rule such as Bengal has also highlighted the tensions between competing notions of publicity.[4]

There are other interesting complications as well. Ways in which the public sphere was configured in the major colonial cities in India were arguably different from the shapes they assumed in other, less prominent, locations where a different set of mediations were at work. In native states such as Travancore, for example, British domination gained strength in the nineteenth century. However, even in a context of reduced autonomy – perhaps because of it – the sovereignty of the princely state continued to be affirmed in a range of cultural symbols and discourses. How does the emergent notion of a public in such spaces differentiate itself not only from the state and the individual but also from the categories of the community and the subject-population? As often pointed out, the public sphere was defined in the Western context in opposition to the 'private' domain, which in turn was identified with the realm of the family.[5] Interestingly, this process seems to have taken place at a time when the family was quickly becoming a key instrument in modern technologies of governance, or 'governmentality'.[6] Do these relationships obtain with equal valence when we turn to the emergence of a modern notion of the public in India?

These are some of the questions which form the background of this, rather brief, discussion of an important figure from early twentieth-century Travancore, K. Ramakrishna Pillai (1878-1916). Ramakrishna Pillai is widely known by the appellation 'Swadeshabhimani', or 'one who is proud of his country'; this was the title of one of the several newspapers he edited. In September 1910, Ramakrishna Pillai was exiled from Travancore on account of his sustained and severe criticism of high officials in the government, especially the Diwan, in issues of *Swadeshabhimani*. The paper was banned and the printing press, owned by Vakkom Maulavi, confiscated.[7] Ramakrishna Pillai spent the remaining six years of his life, plagued by bouts of ill-health, in Madras, Palakkad and Kannur. It was during this period that an organisation of Malayalis settled in Malaysia conferred on him the title 'Swadeshabhimani' at a function held in Palakkad in 1912. In spite of repeated references to the 'desam' in the lore that surrounds Ramakrishna Pillai's life and work, his writings do not lay much stress on national pride; it is another set of values, centrally associated with his notion of the 'public', that he emphasises. His thanksgiving speech while receiving the award gives a clear indication of this. Referring to observations made by other speakers about his exile from Travancore, Ramakrishna Pillai said:

> I do not feel sad in the slightest in this matter, except at the remarks made here to the effect that [my exile] had possibly caused me grief. My being born in Travancore was merely a matter of divine decision. Travancore is no more than an atom in size on this globe, let alone within the infinite universe, which is the true domain of god's governance. If a human being can consider the entire world his home, let his bones fall where they will; there is no cause for him to grieve.[8]

These lines show a wilful denial of the bonds of geographical feeling that usually unite the patriotic subject to his country. At the same time, this gesture of refusal also opens on to a different set of moral sentiments and ideals. These are articulated within the context of Ramakrishna Pillai's life. At a very early age, as a student in Trivandrum, Pillai became attracted to the profession of political journalism. When he decided to take on the editorial responsibilities of *Keraladarpanam* in 1899, he faced strong opposition from his maternal uncle, who banished him from home. Newspapers were of recent origin in Malayalam at that time and offered no attractive prospect for a secure career. The first newspaper in the modern sense of the term in Malayalam was *Keralamitram*, which commenced publication from Cochin in 1881 under the ownership of the Gujarati businessman and printer, Devji Bhimji.[9] Its editor was a young man called Kandathil Varghese Mappila, who later became one of the most important names in the history of Malayalam newspapers.[10] The aim of *Keralamitram* was to bring before the notice of the people cases of corruption in several government departments of the Cochin State. Devji Bhimji ran his newspaper without interruption for fifteen years. In the meantime, other newspapers began appearing in Kerala: *Keralapatrika* started publication from Calicut in 1884 and *Malayala Manorama* from

Kottayam in 1890. In Trivandrum, the capital of Travancore, a newspaper by the name of *Ramarajan*, published by Oduvil Kunjukkrishna Menon, appeared in the late 1890s, but survived only for two years.[11] Attempts to start another newspaper – *Vanchibhupanchika* – ran into rough weather, following disputes over ownership rights between the editors and the publisher. It is in this context that *Keraladarpanam* appeared on the scene. Ramakrishna Pillai, twenty-one years old at that time, was offered the editorship of the new venture, and he enthusiastically accepted.

In its inaugural issue, *Keraladarpanam* tried to differentiate itself from its predecessors and contemporaries. Ramakrishna Pillai argued in his first editorial that most of the newspapers were ignorant of their responsibilities and had shied away from their proper task of advising the administrators and educating the population.[12] In some sense, these two roles of newspapers remained central to Ramakrishna Pillai's career as an editor. Editors of newspapers had the duty to make a certain kind of information available to their readers and to expose corruption in the government to their judgement. At the same time, the newspaper also had another function to perform – that of educating the people and making them capable of judgement. These twin principles – communicative and pedagogic – occupied Ramakrishna Pillai in his first editorial. They determined not only the content of newspapers; language and style were involved in this too, since they were inseparable from the pedagogic function of newspapers. These two objectives of a newspaper defined the complex nature of its way of addressing its readership. The newspaper's mode of address was predicated on the existence of a public, whose judgement it facilitated. At the same time, it also had to produce a public, as readers – in their contemporary state – did not possess the criteria and the capacity for judgement. The pedagogical address of the newspaper had a constitutive function – that of shaping a public from a population.

We might pause for a moment to look at a problem of translation. The word *janam* in Malayalam stands for the idea of 'people.' *Janasamkhya* – or, literally, the number of people – is the modern Malayalam word for population count. *Pothujanam,* combining the prefix *pothu*-, which signifies 'general' or 'common' with *janam*, comes to have the sense of a 'general public'. Another compound word, used synonymously was *janasamanyam* – once again, *samanyam* adds a sense of the 'general' to *janam*. It is possible that the entry of the word 'public' into Malayalam use took place in the context of modern

governmental initiatives, like the creation of public roads and the institution of a Public Works Department. The word 'public' in both these instances is translated by the prefix *pothu*- in present-day Malayalam: *pothunirathu* for public road and *pothumaramathu vakuppu* for Public Works Department. Ramakrishna Pillai's writings use the two Malayalam words – *pothujanam* and *janasamanyam* – to refer to the public as a collective agent. The English word 'public' also appears in some of his Malayalam writings, where they refer, in the main, to social spaces that can be contrasted with domestic interiors. For example, elite women who come out of their houses into the open to watch a royal procession are described as 'appearing in public.'[13]

Janam or 'people' are transformed into *pothujanam* or the 'public' through a process of address and education. In 1903, in the opening editorial of his new newspaper *Keralapanchika*, Ramakrishna Pillai reflected further on these ideas. "Newspapers have, in the main, two duties," he wrote. "First, to form public opinion, and second, to obey the opinion of the public." He argued that in our country, the first of these duties had greater importance. Ramakrishna Pillai had an explanation for this: "here, people have not really grasped the nature of the relationship between the State (*rajyam*) and the public (*pothujanam*)." He argued:

> Therefore, it is the responsibility of newspapers in our language to guide them in obtaining just demands from political authorities and in finding resolutions for their complaints and wants. It is also necessary to obey public opinion in certain matters; in these too, newspapers have a mediating role to perform. To alert the public about the deeds of the government, to point out if there are defects and inadequacies in them, to inform the government if the public has been put to hardship by the corruption of public servants, and to communicate to the state the desires of the public – what are the principal duties of newspapers but these?[14]

Thus, there is a tension – or, if one were to push the argument, a paradox – inherent in the nature of the address performed newspapers: they were to represent a public which did not as yet exist; the public was constituted through the very act of address. A sense of this tension persists in Ramakrishna Pillai's writings till the very end. In his public life as an editor and campaigner, Ramakrishna Pillai developed his ethics within various contexts of address: to members

of his caste, to political subjects in Travancore, and to Malayali readers. It is the nature of this address that I shall try to examine in the following paragraphs.

In an early period in his public life, Ramakrishna Pillai took part in some of the contemporary efforts at community consolidation among the Nayars. C. Krishna Pillai, a major figure in the Nayar movement in Kerala in the early decades of the twentieth century, was an important influence on Ramakrishna Pillai in those years. Malayali Memorial, a memorandum submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore in 1892 demanding adequate representation for various non-Brahminical communities in government employment, was spear-headed by the Nayars. This campaign marked the emergence of a new rhetoric that drew on the numerical strength of population groups revealed in newly available census data. Ramakrishna Pillai participated in these efforts for a brief period of time. While he was the editor of *Malayali*, published from Kollam, he played an active role in some of the campaigns of Nayar mobilization. He travelled widely in central Travancore and gave the principal address at a conference of the Nayar Samajam in Chertala in 1905. This was later published under the title *Nayanmarude Sthithi* (The Present Situation of the Nayars). Several moves typical of the Nayar movement of the times can be seen in Ramakrishna Pillai's discourse – for example, the celebration of a glorious heritage of Nayar valour centred on figures like Raja Kesavadas and Ayyappan Chempakaraman Pillai, the bemoaning of the state of decline into which the Nayars had fallen in his own times, and an appeal in support of modernising initiatives in industry, agriculture and commerce, which cited Germany and the United States as examples of a prosperous modernity.

My purpose in referring to these campaigns is limited: I wish only to isolate a form of address that Ramakrishna Pillai took from the Nayar movement and adapted for a new set of uses in the years to come. One could argue that this mode of address also involved constitutive or productive functions. The signification of the word 'Nayar,' as in the case of 'public,' involved a paradox. Moving away from its earlier designation of an identity arising from one's birth or *jati*, the sign 'Nayar' came to refer – in the language of Nayar reform – to a site of shared memory and possible collective initiatives. Ramakrishna Pillai's address was both a part of such initiatives as well as an appeal to initiate them. This needs to be understood in the wider context of the discursive re-articulation of *jati* (caste) as *samudayam* (community) in the caste reform movements of the time. The Nayar reform initiatives of the turn of the century gave a specific inflection to this trend by proposing a close identification between the newly emerging Malayali identity and the Nayar identity being forged by the reformers. Chattampi Swamikal's *Prachina Malayalam*, in opposition to the Brahminical texts on the origins of Kerala such as *Keralolpathi* and *Kerala Mahatmyam*, claimed that the Nayars were the original owners of the land of Kerala.[15] C. V. Raman Pillai's novel *Marthanda Varma* (1891) represented a new historical mythography for the Nayars, which was elaborated more fully in his two later novels *Dharma Raja* (1913) and *Ramaraja Bahadur* (1918-19).[16] These novels chose the consolidation of Travancore by Prince Marthanda Varma and his successor Rama Varma in the eighteenth century as the main theme of their narratives, focusing on the strong affective and ethical bond between the king and the principal Nayar protagonists who provide protection to the king and sound governance to his subjects.[17] In fact, Raman Pillai had planned *Dharma Raja* and *Ramaraja Bahadur* as the first two volumes of a trilogy centred on Raja Kesavadas, the valiant and clever Nayar minister of Rama Varma.[18]

I do not wish to discuss in detail the historical imaginary mobilised by the Nayar movement; my intention here is mainly to draw attention to a new figuration of the Nayar subject as administrator (a figure that assimilates and exceeds the valiant warrior) and a new ethical relationship between the King and the Nayar minister in this imaginary. This can be understood in the light of the political campaigns against the appointment of non-Malayali Brahmins as Diwans and the power they exercised in the government of Travancore. Raman Pillai's own career as a novelist was punctuated by his efforts as a political campaigner. He wrote a series of articles in the press on the rule of Travancore by non-Malayali Diwans under the title *Videshiya Medhavitvam* (Foreign Domination).[19]

It is important to recall the importance of the position of the Diwan in the Travancore government at that time. His role was not limited to executing orders given by the Maharaja; he initiated or shaped most of the important decisions. After the British gained substantial political control over Travancore in the early nineteenth century, the king was obliged to seek the approval of the British Resident in appointment of Diwans. For a short period of time in early twentieth century, the Resident took over the powers of the Diwan as well. With the reduction in the powers of the Maharaja, the Diwan became the most important individual figure in determining the shape of governance.[20] An independent legislative body existed in Travancore,

but was in its infancy in Ramakrishna Pillai's time. Although a Legislative Council was established in 1888 under the chairmanship of the Diwan and comprising officers of the government and some nominated non-officials, its decisions were not mandatory. The king had the right to "disallow any bill passed by the council and render it of no effect."[21] In 1905, another legislative body, the Sri Mulam Assembly or Prajasabha was established, to enable the Maharaja to "ascertain at first hand the wants and wishes of His people through their representatives, and also to elicit their opinion" on various measures of governance.[22] The enlargement of franchise in elections to the Assembly, and the vesting of statutory powers with the Legislative Council, did not take place in Travancore till the 1920s. Thus, what we find in Travancore in the first decade of the twentieth century is the emergence of new structures of governance shaped by the indirect rule of the British alongside an older discourse of sovereign power. The Diwan exercised decisive powers in policy making as well as administration in this scheme of things. It is against this backdrop that we can understand the focus of the Nayar campaigns on the nationality of the Diwan, and the arguments advanced by Ramakrishna Pillai for redefining the role of the Diwan in relation to the sovereign and his subjects.

The rule of Travancore by Brahmin Diwans from Maharashtra, Mysore and Madras was a prominent issue in Nayar campaigns. However, Ramakrishna Pillai effected some interesting transformations in the tropes of the political discourse generated by this movement. An early manifestation of this is seen in an editorial that he wrote in *Keralapanchika* in 1903. The immediate aim of the editorial was to justify the right of newspapers to criticise government officials. However, Ramakrishna Pillai also argued for a new conception of the relations between the public, governance and the press. "It is well known," Ramakrishna Pillai began, "that a proper awareness of the relationship between masters and servants has not yet arisen in this country. On account of this defect, servants are sometimes prone to assume the postures of masters and masters those of servants."[23] One may at first sight mistake this for a reference to the relations between the Maharaja and his subjects, or the Maharaja and his Diwan. However, there is an interesting turn in the sentences that follow: it is the rulers who are the servants; and the subjects are the true masters:

> A 'public servant' (*pothujanadasan*) is the servant of the public (*janasamanyam*). The public is a group that has not yet acquired a definite form. We know that it is through newspapers and public addresses that this formless collectivity openly expresses its opinions. I do not need to say that in our state, it has been rare to hear public opinion expressed in speeches and addresses. Here, people are neither ready, nor inclined, nor desirous of speaking before the public. Newspapers have been performing this function instead.[24]

We can see here some moves typical of Ramakrishna Pillai's writing. Complaints against the rule of non-Malayali Diwans have been transformed into an argument about accountability in public office. There is also a clear shift from a model of sovereignty and subjection to a new model in which the bureaucracy is not the servant of the sovereign, but of the public. However, the public itself is unformed as a collective, and its recognisable unity is dependent upon the newspapers. The public as a collective comes into existence when it assumes the position of the subject in relation to public opinion, articulated by the newspapers. Of course, the newspapers shape public opinion not as they please, but in a complex relationship of constitution and obedience.

The sequence of events which led to Ramakrishna Pillai's expulsion from Travancore in 1910 was the consequence of a strand in his journalism that was closely tied to these arguments. In pursuing this strand, he lost the support of several prominent members of the Nayar movement, including C. V. Raman Pillai. Ramakrishna Pillai's criticism of the Travancore bureaucracy no longer had the form of the Nayar-led demand for the appointment of natives to high positions of governance. In fact, a target of Ramakrishna Pillai's most severe criticism was a Nayar, Sankaran Thampi, the manager of the palace who wielded considerable influence over the Maharaja, Sree Mulam Tirunal. *Swadeshabhimani* was vocal in its criticism of Thampi's indulgence in corruption, bribery and illegitimate exercise of power.[25] However, it was Diwan P. Rajagopalachary who formed the most prominent target of Ramakrishna Pillai's political criticism. His campaigns against Thampi and the Diwan highlighted a number of scandals surrounding their activities. In his confrontation with the Travancore Government, Ramakrishna Pillai used the genre of 'scandal writing' as a prominent mode of political publicity.

The word 'scandal' refers to an event that causes public outrage; it can also be used in the sense of a malicious representation of other people's private lives. The use of scandal as a tool for political publicity in Ramakrishna Pillai's journalism was linked to

both these senses. Some of his criticisms were directed at the public functioning of Thampi and Rajagopalachary. Some others invoked events from their private lives. For example, Sankaran Thampi had a *sambandham* relationship with a Nayar lady in Trivandrum. Later, this lady entered into a new alliance with Sree Mulam Tirunal, the Maharaja of Travancore. Rumours suggested that Thampi himself had negotiated this arrangement. Ramakrishna Pillai highlighted this as an example of the reprehensible moral decline in the conduct of those who occupied the highest positions of power. Diwan Rajagopalachary, the principal target of Pillai's criticism, was portrayed as an indiscriminately lascivious and uncultured man who, by his public conduct, dishonoured the moral dignity of the women of Trivandrum.[26] This concerned elite Nayar women in particular, as the Diwan had cause to appear in public in their presence on many occasions.

It is important to remember that the mode of scandal writing oscillates between the explicit and the suggestive. Sometimes details, dates, etc. are mentioned and the persons involved identified. Generally, this is done in instances where indubitable evidence, verifiable by the public, is available. At other times, in the absence of such evidence, reports of scandals adopt a language of hints directed at an implied knowledge already possessed by the public. Here, the public is indeed a formless, amorphous entity. Few members of this undefined group – perhaps none of them – may actually possess the information alluded to in the report. However, newspaper reports of scandals also perform an interpellative function. Invoking an imprecise network of gossip and the untraceable transfer of information through hearsay, they give the individual reader the sense that everyone else is in the know or at least some people are in the know. The reader is invited to join this group by assenting to share a body of non-explicit knowledge. Appearance in the newspaper confers on such information the shape of public knowledge. Once this is done, it can legitimately become an object of public moral outrage.

In making this point, I am less concerned with Ramakrishna Pillai's methods of newsgathering than about the particular way in which public truths are produced in scandal writing. The truth claims made by the journalism of political scandal, as we have seen, involved an imprecise but convincing sense of public knowledge. A distinction between discursive claims about truth and those about information seem to be in play here. However, this also leads to an increasing attenuation of the demarcation between gossip and reporting, and between private knowledge possessed by individuals and public

knowledge shared and used by all as objects of moral indictment. Scandal reporting thus pushes what is perceived as the legitimate boundary of representation in a newspaper, dragging into the public gaze sordid details from the private lives of powerful individuals. Ramakrishna Pillai would argue that the press is forced into this unenviable and embarrassing task by serious lapses on the part of public servants. At times, such lapses were directly connected to their performance in public office, and were therefore public events. On other occasions, when the alleged failing concerned their sexual or marital lives, private conduct was presented by the newspaper as an inseparable part of public image. In short, for Ramakrishna Pillai, people in public office could not lay claim to a private life that was immune to moral scrutiny by the public. A public person could not really claim to have a private life.

These discursive moves also complicate distinctions that we are prone to draw between the domains of news and fiction. In the early years of the public uses of print, a newly emergent body of readers negotiated such distinctions in ways that were markedly different from those adopted in our times. In a recent study of early print culture in Goa, Rochelle Pinto made a strong argument regarding the difficulty in establishing sharp differences between the uses of various print genres such as government notifications, news writing, pamphleteering and fiction.[27] A similar problem arises from the very nature of scandal reporting as a form of political criticism. Even when readers may regard lapses in the private lives of high officials as public scandals, their appearance in newspapers may cause them embarrassment as it violated a sense of decorum associated with the public domain. Hence the obliqueness and suggestiveness, which preserve the sense of public decorum by de-realising or insufficiently specifying the matter referred to.

If such forms of representation shift the border of the territory of 'news' on a map of truth claims, an equally interesting shift can be seen on the other side of the border, in the domain that we call 'fiction.' Alongside Ramakrishna Pillai's journalism on public scandals, a genre of political fiction began emerging in the first decade of the twentieth century in Travancore. Ramakrishna Pillai was an active participant in the production and circulation of this genre. He contributed to it as an author; and he published some of the most controversial political novels of the times. These novels seldom find a place in modern academic canons or even in literary histories of the Malayalam novel, which have by and large been shaped by a

specific set of aesthetic and socio-historical assumptions about Kerala's modernity. Normative expectations of aesthetic form have often impeded a careful academic consideration of the complex and problematic relations between literary and political publicity in the history of Malayalam writing. As in many other cultures, the early print history of literature in Malayalam did not work with a stable opposition between the imaginary and the real. The eighteenth chapter of *Indulekha* clearly shows the ease with which elements from non-literary discourses could make their way into novels without much regard for the economy of storytelling. *Lakshmikesavam*, another novel written in the late nineteenth century, included a chapter comprising no more than an itemised summary of the provisions of the new Malabar Marriage Act. The political novels of Travancore in the 1900s and 1910s provide exacerbated instances of negotiating the borderline between the proper domain of fiction and reality.[28] C. V. Raman Pillai's 'social novel' (*samudayikakhyayika*) *Premamrtham* (1914) can be seen as working with and transforming the representational strategies used in some of the more contentious political novels of Travancore.[29]

Two novels published by Ramakrishna Pillai and created much controversy in Travancore were *Parappuram* and *Udayabhanu*, both written by a former teacher of his, K. Narayanakkurukkal. Parts of these novels were originally serialised in *Swadeshabhimani*, and later published in book form by Ramakrishna Pillai. Both contained thinly veiled representations of scandals surrounding the Travancore court, alongside images of high ideals proposed as a source of moral regeneration in the future. *Udayabhanu* reworked the theme of the Mahabharata war, relocating it in contemporary times and using it as an allegory of recent political struggles. Both these novels generated their effects by suggesting to their readers, without openly affirming, parallels between figures presented in the narratives and persons in the real world. In this, their mode had striking parallels to the representational techniques of scandal writing. Like scandal writing, these novels appealed to an implicit public knowledge, a so-called 'open secret' that everyone was expected to recognise and no one to speak directly about. The novels sold well and led to considerable public discussion. The first volume of *Parappuram* was sold out in four months, leading to a second impression. When the second volume of *Parappuram* came out in 1908, Ramakrishna Pillai addressed the responses of readers to the first volume in a Publisher's Preface:

> It is not unusual for the mental mirror of an author to present images of his familiarity with the land, community and political regime he lives under. And literary works are indeed an image of an author's mind. It is not events that have never occurred in the world that we find in novels. Therefore, we must not consider the characters of a novelist solely as his creation. Nonetheless, one should not be able to identify who these characters specifically refer to.[30]

Thus the aesthetics of the political novel requires readers recognise the similarity of the world of fictional representation to the real world, without asking too many questions about specific parallels.

> When an author creates a character with his imaginative powers, combining various experiences, what is the need to say that it is about a particular person? Is it not enough to consider whether the story is in accordance with the way of the world?[31]

This argument for the relative autonomy of the literary world, or at least the lack of one-to-one correspondence between it and the real world, is turned into a device for protecting these novels from charges of libel. Ramakrishna Pillai tries to turn the tables on those who accuse him of slandering public figures, treating their arguments as indicating a lack of literary cultivation and an inner sense of guilt. "Just as a thief thinks that everyone he meets is a police constable, some people have been struck by similarities between the conduct of certain characters in this novel and their own ways of living."[32] It is only such readers who think that the book presents them in a bad light.

This argument, and the way in which the genre of political satires worked in Travancore, seem to imply two distinct notions of publicity. As interventions in the political field, these novels were indeed thinly disguised representations of people and events the real world. However, since they were 'literary' works, one could not criticise them on the basis of such parallels. That would merely betray an uncultivated, infantile mind which did not possess the aesthetic qualifications needed for this refined mode of public enjoyment. Literary publicity thus denied too close a connection with the real world of politics, and in that sense, marked its distance from the world of pamphlets and newspapers by claiming for its representations an aura of the ideal and typical. However, the literary work could indeed be made use of in the political field; events presented in the quasi-

imaginary space of the novel might direct political – not literary - criticism to the real events that they alluded to. This was possible because a shared notion of the public informed both literature and politics: the readers of novels were also politically interested readers of newspapers.

Many of Ramakrishna Pillai's early essays on literary works show us the coordinates within which critical activity operated in his times. We need to note that the distinction between reviews (which introduced new books with an assessment of their merits and defects) and the more ambitious enterprise of poetics (which sought to reflect on the principles that govern literary arts) was not central to the field of criticism at his time. Critical discourses oscillated between general reflections and particular observations, often without much effort to bind the two together. They formed part of a larger mission with a pedagogic intent: the critic sometimes offered prescriptions and proscriptions to his readers; often, he presented his activity as *bhashaposhanam*, or a service of nurture rendered to his language and literature. The publication of books, newspapers and literary periodicals, in this sense, occupied a space adjacent to the state's efforts to enrich language through textbooks and syllabi. The textbook committee, set up by the Travancore Government in 1865, was chaired by Kerala Varma Valiyakoyil Thampuran. Alongside composing poems in Sanskrit and Malayalam and translating the Dutch novel *Akbar* into a notoriously high-sounding Sanskritized Malayalam, Thampuran also wrote books for children in a remarkably simple language.[33] Many prominent authors wrote their books with the hope that these would be chosen as textbooks. Ramakrishna Pillai himself authored two such volumes – a book on Malayalam grammar called *Balabodhini*, and one on arithmetic, *Ankaganitam*. He was disappointed that the latter book was not approved as a textbook, and suspected foul play in the selection.

A review that Ramakrishna Pillai published in *Malayali* in 1903 was on a textbook – the Malayalam Reader prescribed for the First Standard. Some of his observations are instructive:

> On page 37, it is written: 'By cutting and tapping the bud of the coconut tree, an alcoholic drink called toddy is drawn by the Ezhavas.' Here the inclusion of the word 'Ezhavas' is unnecessary. This is equivalent to insulting an entire community. Toddy is drawn not only by the Ezhavas but by several others as well. There is no rule which requires that wherever coconut trees exist, the Ezhavas can also be found. In addition to the information on drawing a sort of alcohol from the coconut tree, what is the need to mention who exactly draws this toddy? … If this is permissible, why not also add that toddy is drunk by this or that community.[34]

The propriety of names might not be so relevant if one's sole concern was with the teaching of grammar and vocabulary. However, textbooks were also public documents, and such mention was also an event in the public use of language. Criticism needed to pay attention to both these dimensions: rules internal to discourse, which justified the appropriateness of certain statements, and discourse as an event in the world, where the referents of words and statements testified to the pressures of the real on language.

In confronting literary texts, criticism faced a similar problem. On the one hand, literary texts had to be analysed and judged according to a set of rules intrinsic to literary discourse, and readers needed to be trained in ideas of felicity and appropriateness. On the other, literary discourse also possessed a public character, and its effects went beyond the field legislated by properly literary criteria. This created a sense of self-insufficiency in literary criticism. Even as it valorised literary rules, it was also compelled to engage with another set of rules of appropriateness that belonged to the world of public address in general. Ramakrishna Pillai's own critical writing was often pulled in both these directions. He wrote a long review of Kappana Kannan Menon's novel *Snehalata* in 1916, a few months before his death. The ambivalent status of the novel is described in the following way:

> Novelists narrate realistic or imaginary sequences of events, and *Snehalata* is an idealised, imaginary story. However, the story has been told as if it happened within the Nayar community in Trivandrum. The names and histories of some living persons have also been mentioned without the least concealment. Nonetheless, one also finds certain institutions and practices which are not seen anywhere in our country, let alone among the Nayars.[35]

Since the author described neither a real situation, nor a purely imaginary state of affairs, his picture seemed to indicate an ideal, or "certain models which appear to satisfy Kannan Menon."[36] According to Ramakrishna Pilliai, this gave rise to two problems: firstly, was it possible to realise these models or ideals in the Nayar community as it existed in his times or even in the near future? The answer to

that question could be found only by solving a second issue, namely, whether these models were worthy of realisation, whether they were desirable for the Nayar community. In other words, the problem of the mode of representation could not be adequately tackled within the realm of literature, and one was pushed towards the life of the community within which the question of the desirability of specific ideals could be raised. Kannan Menon, following several well-known English novels of the nineteenth century, had made his heroine the governess at the home of a wealthy Nayar widower who spent most of his time away from home, thus devising a narrative which, with happy inevitability, concluded in their love and marriage. Ramakrishna Pillai found these elements unacceptable to the Nayar community. If the Nayars adopted arrangements such as the employment of governesses as means to the "sacred station of conjugality," they should also be prepared to face the moral iniquities that such practices had given rise to in "wealth-intoxicated" and "selfish" western societies.[37]

Ramakrishna Pillai turned this discussion to the advisability of changing the marital practices of the Nayars, a hotly debated topic in his times, and argued against the conduct of weddings without the permission or involvement of the bride's family. Even if Nayar organizations were to agree to such innovations, this would only weaken the fabric of the Nayar community. "These actions of Snehalata may be appreciated in western societies, founded as they are on the doctrine of individuality (*ekaikatva pramanadhishtitham*). However, the Nayars, who value the singular unity of familial life, will find that the principles of their community do not permit their adoption."[38] We must remember that this was written at a time when the structure of the Nayar family was undergoing major changes in Kerala. Ramakrishna Pillai belonged to a new generation of Nayars who were moving away from matrilineal joint family forms to new arrangements of conjugality and domesticity.[39] These changes, according to him, did not reduce the importance of the family for Nayars; in this they stood in contrast to Western, individualist societies. The book review, however, concluded on a more positive note. Firstly, the representation of love in Kannan Menon's novel did not involve the "revolting dirt" of the srngara of physical union (*sambhoga*); it was filled with the "pure camphor fumes" of thoughts on spiritual union. And if Menon's models were not worthy of emulation by the Nayars, this was no criticism of literary art in general; rather, it was the result of a defective application of literary imagination.[40] Literary texts might represent an ideal rather

than a real world; but there were principles that ought to guide the construction of such ideals, and those were indeed grounded in the real world of life practices within human communities. This, as we saw, was a matter of public, non-literary contestation. Thus, the tension between the freedom of literary imagination, which could be legislated over only by itself, and its embeddedness within the larger context of the community was an inescapable dimension of the mode of publicity specific to literature and the arts. As we saw, Ramakrishna Pillai invoked the autonomy of literary space when confronted with charges of defamation; but when the literary work touched, even in an idealistic vein, upon practices seen as important to the contemporary life of his community, he invoked an opposite principle, stressing the limits within which literary imagination, on account of its public role, ought to function.

We come across these issues again in a review of the Malayalam translation of G. W. M. Reynolds's *Mysteries of London* made by the well-known poet Nalappattu Narayana Menon. Reynolds was a favourite of the reading public in various parts of colonial India, and *Mysteries of London* was translated into several other Indian languages as well, including Marathi, Tamil and Bengali. Priya Joshi has argued that Reynolds's novels produced in his readers a strong hatred against vice and inequality, and that in the context of colonial India the British represented many of the attributes of the evil aristocracy portrayed in them.[41] As we saw, it was not the colonial power but the non-Malayali Diwan who formed the principal target of Ramakrishna Pillai's political criticism in Travancore. Ramakrishna Pillai began his review by summarizing the assessment of Reynolds's work by the English literary public. Although most readers agreed that Reynolds was successful as a creative artist (*kavi*) in his interpretation of nature, external and internal, there was no consensus among them regarding the moral impact of his work. Some argued that Reynold's account of the sexual profligacy of the aristocracy, by the sheer power of his descriptions, attracted his readers to their immoral ways. Others contested this on the ground that Reynold's narratives clearly condemned such acts and thus guided readers away from them. For Ramakrishna Pillai, these responses pointed to a further problem: was it permissible to depict the private affairs of individuals who occupied prominent positions in society? Some argued that one should not violate public decorum and cause injury to the accused; hence it was advisable to refrain from expressing unpleasant truths. Ramakrishna Pillai rejected this view:

> How did truth become unpleasant? If truth is one of the dharmas of the divine, on what ground could it be unpleasant? Truth, in itself, is not unpleasant. It can be considered unpleasant only in relation to the person about whom it is said. ... One who indulges in wrongdoing and harms society, whether he is the lowest of the low or the most powerful lord, should be treated like the excrement of the community; there is no need for the community to defer to his sentiments.[42]

Evidently, this principle was central to Ramakrishna Pillai's own journalism and literary activity. In addition to publishing K. Narayana-kkurup's political allegories, Ramakrishna Pillai also wrote some narratives of his own in this genre. *Narakathil Ninnu* (From Hell), published in 1914, is an example of this.[43] This novel was the first in a series of books that he planned for publication. The aim of the series, titled 'Kalpitakatharamam' or the garden of imagined stories, was to present before the readers enjoyable (*rasapradam*) and informative (*vijnanapradam*) stories endowed with literary quality. *Narakathil Ninnu*, however, was the only book to come out in this series. The novel presents Sanku Pillai and Saravana Swamy, thinly disguised representations of Sankaran Thampi and Anantharama Iyer – the two bureaucrats that Ramakrishna Pillai considered prime examples of corruption in Travancore Government. After Saravana Swamy's death, Sanku Pillai begins receiving letters from him, which seem to have been sent from hell! Hell, according to these letters, is not an uncomfortable place in the least. Set up by Yama, who was defeated by God and ousted from heaven in a strange reworking of the Christian imaginary of *Paradise Lost*, it competes with heaven in prosperity and comfort, and is also more lenient in admitting into its fold many of the sinners denied entry into heaven. Saravana Swamy passes muster for entry into hell, and he seems to be hale and hearty there. However, even hell denies entry to some sinners: these are people who, after committing the worst crimes, do not show the slightest remorse in their entire lives. This marks the difference between the two major characters. Although both of them led morally reprehensible lives, causing untold harm to the community, Saravana regrets his sins and tries to make amends in the last years of his life. Sanku Pillai, who yearns for admittance to hell, is denied entry as he led a life of unrepentant evil. After his death, in the concluding pages of the novel, we find the letters from hell and the diaries of the two major characters reaching the immoral Diwan, who keeps them under safe custody, away from public gaze. The novel allegorises not only political corruption in contemporary Travancore, but also the function of literature

in placing before the public true discourses suppressed by corrupt power. The ideas expressed in the review of Reynolds and those that govern Ramakrishna Pillai's literary compositions show the same principles at work.

If the status of fictional narratives involved a constitutive ambivalence, could reading ever function as a purely literary act? Would interpretation and commentary also need to deal with their own status as public utterances? Would not an exclusive preoccupation with literary criteria lead to interventions of questionable consequence in the public discursive field? These issues seem to have accompanied Ramakrishna Pillai's literary criticism very often. I shall limit my discussion to two or three well-known instances of this. Ramakrishna Pillai wrote a highly hostile review of one of the first modern plays in Malayalam, *Mariamma*, written by Kocheeppan Tharakan. The title of the review is revealing: "Suriyani Mappilakalum Mariamma Natakavum" (Syrian Christians and Mariamma Natakam).[44] Acerbic in tone, the review expressed surprise at the audacity of Kocheeppan Tharakan, a clerk working at *Malayala Manorama*, in entering the literary field "merely by virtue of his relationship to the owner of a literary magazine." C. Anthappayi, who wrote the Introduction to the play, was compared to a *dallal* or an agent, like those who throng the boat jetty to lure passengers into leaky boats, advertising that they were safe and sound. The review argued that *Mariamma* was the most vulgar play that had appeared in Malayalam till date.[45] A criterion of literary decency was invoked for condemning the play, but as an utterance before the general public, the review was dominated by its attack on the cultural claims of Syrian Christians. It was as if Ramakrishna Pillai's use of literary criteria only served to discredit the efforts of a community to participate in the literary public sphere. The appearance of the derogatory "Suriyani Mappilakal" in the title, and the identification of the author and the reviewer by the jobs they held, were both irrelevant to the task of a 'pure' literary criticism. Their prominence in the review was in marked contrast to Ramakrishna Pillai's own arguments about the politics of mention, as we saw in his views on the use of caste names in textbooks. Ramakrishna Pillai thus problematically combined the role of a literary arbiter and that of a partisan of one community engaged in a contest with another community over the cultural field.

This problem resurfaced, even more visibly, on another occasion, when Ramakrishna Pillai wrote a hostile review of Pandit K. P. Karuppan's play *Balakalesam*, written for a competition held in

connection with the sixtieth birthday of the Raja of Kochi. The play, which appeared with an introduction by T. K. Krishna Menon, and sponsored by Kochi Sahitya Samajam, secured the first prize in the competition. Ramakrishna Pillai was entrusted with the task of judging whether it merited publication by the Samajam. His detailed, adverse report took the form of a book review, which was then published in the literary magazine *Mangalodayam*.[46] After criticising the lack of a unifying plot in the play, Ramakrishna Pillai went on to show that many of the similes in the play were not complimentary to the Raja. Karuppan wrote a response to this, admitting that his play was not flawless, but also expressing surprise at the excessive hostility of the review. He compared Ramakrishna Pillai to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the severity of his judgement, and to a magician in his ability to transform by the power of words a 'Kalpavrksha into common grass', and a 'Kamadhenu into a donkey'. T. K. Krishna Menon also joined the debate, arguing that Pillai's hostile review had an undercurrent of caste prejudice against K. P. Karuppan who belonged to one of the fishing castes in Kochi:

> [T]hinking that no one would respond, he let out a severe and hostile review. That is when Mr. Karuppan entered the scene. Undeterred by the threat, this lowly and helpless fisherman (Valan), gauged the depth of the waters and gave back the blows one by one.[47]

This provoked a severe response from Ramakrishna Pillai, who criticised Krishna Menon's overruling of the committee's report regarding the play. The focus of the discussion shifted from the literary merits of the play or the caste prejudice that underlay Ramakrishna Pillai's review, to the institutional functioning of literary associations. In such a discussion, Ramakrishna Pillai could argue for proper institutional procedures uncontaminated by patronage or by the self-will of those in office. The *Balakalesam* controversy highlights some of the problems in determining the relations between the literary domain and other forms of publicity. In Ramakrishna Pillai's interventions one can see signs of this in the shifting idioms of caste partisanship, strategic uses of techniques of literary reading, and a self-righteous argument for proper institutional functioning.

If attitudes to other castes and communities formed the background of Ramakrishna Pillai's reviews of *Mariamma* and *Balakalesam*, animosities within the Nayar camp formed the context of his virulent criticism of C. V. Raman Pillai's later writings. Ramakrishna Pillai began as an admirer of C. V.'s work. Presumably on account of the latter's proximity to Sankaran Thampi, Ramakrishna Pillai's attitudes to C. V. changed into suspicion and hostility. Ramakrishna Pillai criticised the highly Sanskritized artificial style used in C. V.'s *Dharmaraja* and even expressed the doubt that, given the low literary merit of this work, C. V. may not have been the real author of the earlier masterpiece *Marthandavarma*. Ramakrishna Pillai was equally critical of *Kuruppillakkalari*, C. V.'s satire on women's associations in Trivandrum. After highlighting the gender prejudice in the play, Ramakrishna Pillai picked on the cover of the book for special sarcastic attention. The cover page carried images of women engaged in various activities: playing the piano, pounding paddy, gazing at a mirror, sweeping the floor, etc. Since the author's name was printed in the middle of these drawings, Ramakrishna Pillai wondered if C. V. wanted to be identified as the overseer of these women, like a low palace official (*achikkuruppu*) who supervised female servants. He even went on to argue that the cover implied disrespect to the Maharaja, which apparently frightened C. V. enough to ask the publisher to change the cover page. In his remarks on the cover of C. V.'s play as well as in his reading of verses of *Balakalesam*, we find Ramakrishna Pillai using the technique of literary interpretation in an ironic way, pushing it beyond the limits that the author had set, in order to generate contrary or nonsensical signifieds.

The protocols of the book review were used in these instances for a public mocking of the author. We can see here a set of relations similar to what we found in scandal writing and political allegories: the real issues of contention were not directly avowed, but ironic interpretation and virulent condemnation took the review away from the usual norms of literary exchange to other, more vicious forms of public contestation. The literary public sphere thus became a proxy site for fighting non-literary wars. The literary text came to acquire a totemic value: it became a pole on which could be hung a range of other desires and revulsions. Yet, it was the publicly avowed autonomy of the literary that allowed it to acquire this totemic value without ever directly acknowledging it in public.

In this paper, I tried to examine some of the ideas of publicity that runt through Ramakrishna Pillai's interventions in political journalism and literature in Travancore in the early decades of the twentieth century.[48] As we saw, the political relation between the state and the people was central to his conception of the public. Newspapers stood in a paradoxical relation of representation and constitution vis-à-vis the emergent entity of the public. On the basis

of Ramakrishna Pillai's arguments on literary and political publicity, I have tried to highlight a sense of ambivalence as central to his views on the nature of public discourses put into circulation by new print genres such as the novel and the newspaper. At times, he selectively invoked arguments for the autonomy of literature, using them to aid him in his political criticism. At other times, he drew upon an opposite position highlighting the nature of literature as public utterance, stressing its inhabitation of a field of communitarian and political contestation. I have argued that he drew upon this ambivalence in his use of a distinctive form of political publicity (scandal writing) and a specific genre of literary publicity (allegorical novels) that intervened in the political field.

What does this equivocal conception of print genres at the time of their emergence in locations like Travancore tell us about the nature of the public sphere? I feel that it allows us a gateway from the past, as good as any, into the Indian uses of the public as a vernacular word. As we saw, an unremitting political relationship with the state ran through Ramakrishna Pillai's ideas of the public. All public utterances, as they circulated in new genres of print ranging from scandal writing to novels, bore on their surface marks of their rough passage in a promiscuous real world – a world of competing communities and voracious political actors. The claims of reasoning in political arguments and those of aesthetic autonomy in literary debates, with all their pedagogic value, did not escape this irremediable contamination. In fact, they were no more than particular ways of negotiating one's passage through a strife-torn world. The sphere of publicity, for Ramakrishna Pillai, was a space of wily negotiations with double-voiced utterances. The discursive public domain was not marked by its separation from a real world where power was exercised in its naked violence; its seeming autonomy was an effect of the specific, strategic rules according to which the political game was played out there. Ethical ideals were often proposed in a universalist language in this space. In Ramakrishna Pillai's life they assumed the form of a highly individuated commitment to what he saw as the moral values of public life. However, this should not detract us from noting that in the new world of print publicity, such ideals were forged as tools for popular intervention in intensely partisan political conflicts. The canny space of publicity allowed new forms of discursive action which brought together the apparently opposed claims of autonomy and instrumentality. Insofar as 'public' is a vernacular word in India, it carries to this day this ambivalence.

Notes:

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at a conference on "The Idea of the Public Sphere: The Fate of a Philosophical Concept in the Age of Globalization" at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi in March 2006. I would like to thank my interlocutors at the conference for valuable criticisms and clarifications.

2 Arundhati Roy, "Tide? Or Ivory Snow?: Public Power in the Age of Empire", *Democracy Now*, 24 August 2004. Roy says: "In India, the word public is now a Hindi word. It means people. In Hindi, we have sarkar and the public, the government and the people. Inherent in this use is the assumption that the government is quite separate from 'the people'." Internet. url: http://www.democracynow.org/static/Arundhati_trans.html

3 See Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*; Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth-Century Benares* and Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elite and the Public Sphere: Western India under Colonialism*.

4 See, for example, Partha Chatterjee, "Two Poets and Death: On Civil and Political Society in the Non-Christian World".

5 See, for example, Jürgen Harbermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopaedia Article (1964)." For a fuller discussion, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*.

6 See Michel Foucault, "Governmentality."

7 Vakkom Abdul Khader Maulavi (1873-1932), learned in several languages including Arabic, Tamil and Sanskrit, made several important socio-cultural interventions in Travancore. He founded many publications, including *Muslim* and *Al Islam*, which addressed issues of reform among the Muslim community. He started *Swadeshabhimani* in 1905. Swadeshabhimani Press, confiscated by the Travancore State in 1910, was returned to Maulavi's descendants only in 1958, after the formation of Kerala State and the assumption of power by a Government led by the Communist Party. For a biography of Maulavi, see Haji M. Muhammadu Kannu, *Vakkom Maulavi*.

8 Quoted in K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadeshabhimani*, p. 249. All translations from Malayalam texts are mine, unless otherwise specified.

9 The first periodical publication in Malayalam was not *Keralamitram*; it was *Rajyasamacaram*, which was published by the Basel Mission from Tellicherry from June 1847. This was followed by *Paschimodayam* in October of the same year, again an initiative from the Basel Mission. The first non-missionary initiative in this area came from the publishers of the English newspaper *Western Star*; a Malayalam supplement called *Paschimataraka* was appended to it in 1864. *Keralamtiram* was the first

periodical to public items of news regularly. For a detailed account of these and other early newspapers in Malayalam, see G. Priyadarshan, *Malayala Patrapravartanam: Prarambhaswarupam*. Also see E. V. Ramakrishnan, "Varthamanappathrangaludeyum Achadiyanthrangaludeyum Vyapanathode Malayaliyude Sahityasamkalpan-galilum Bhashavyavaharangalilum Sambhavicha Mattangal."

[10] For a biography of Varghese Mappila, see A. D. Harisharma, *Kandathil Varghese Mappila*.

[11] See B. Kalyani Amma's brief biography of K. Ramakrishna Pillai, published as prefatory material in *Vyazhavattasmaranakal*, p. 31.

[12] K. Ramakrishna Pillai, "Patrangalude Chumathala" [The Duty of Newspapers], *Keraladarpanam*, M. E. 1075 Cingam 30, reprinted in the Appendix to K. Ramakrishna Pillai, *Vrthanthapatrapravarthanam* (1912), 4th edn., pp. 208-11.

[13] See Ramakrishna Pillai's editorial "Garhyamaya Nadatta" [Reprehensible Conduct], in *Swadeshabhimani* on 24 August 1910, quoted in P. Kamalamma, ed., *Swadeshabhimaniyude Sahitya Sapraya*, p. 187.

[14] Editorial in *Keralapanchika*, M. E. 1076 Medam 10, quoted in K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadeshabhimani*, p. 47.

[15] See Chattampi Swamikal, *Pracina Malayalam*

[16] C. V. Raman Pillai, *Marthanda Varma; Dharmaraja* and *Rama Raja Bahadur*.

[17] For a discussion of this aspect of C. V. Raman Pillai's work, see my "Valour, Subjection and Submission: C. V. Raman Pillai's Historical Imaginary and the Project of Retrieval."

[18] See P. K. Parameswaran Nair, *C. V. Raman Pillai*.

[19] See C. V. Raman Pillai, *Videshiya Medhavitvam*.

[20] E. M. S. Nambutirippad argues that the king's position became relatively irrelevant for the stability of governance in Travancore during this period. The Diwan was far more important in the actual administration of the land according to principles approved of by the British. See *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*, pp. 161-6.

[21] T. K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, *Vol. II: History*, p. 683.

[22] Diwan V. P. Madhava Rao's address at the first session of the Sri Mulam Assembly, quoted in T. K. Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual, Vol. II: History*, p. 683.

[23] K. Ramakrishna Pillai, "Nammude Pothujana Dasanmarum Varthamana Patrangalum" [Our Public Servants and the Press], *Keralapanchika*, M. E. 1077 Kumbham 12, reprinted in *Vrthanthapatrapravarthanam*, p. 211.

[24] Ibid., pp. 211-12.

[25] See Ramakrishna Pillai's editorial in *Swadeshabhimani*, 14 April 1909: "Sankaran Thampiye Nadukadattaruto" [Should Sankaran Thampi Not Be Expelled from the Country?], reproduced in part in P. Kamalamma, *Swadeshabhimaniyude Sahitya Sapraya*, pp. 159-63. Pillai argued in this piece that Sankaran Thampi's propensity to appoint ineligible candidates in government jobs in return for bribes had led to increased acrimony between various communities in the land.

[26] See K. Ramakrishna Pillai's editorials from *Swadeshabhimani*, especially from late 1908 to 1910, cited in appendices to K. Ramakrishna Pillai, *Ente Nadukadathal* and K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadeshabhimani*. See in particular, "Garhyamaya Nadatta", reproduced in part in P. Kamalamma ed., *Swadeshabhimaniyude Sahitya Sapraya*, p. 187. The incidents leading to Ramakrishna Pillai's expulsion from Travancore have been the theme of a play, *Swadeshabhimaniyude Nadukadathal* [The Exile of Swadeshabhimani], by Poojappura Krishnan Nair, performed in Trivandrum in May 1956. The play has subsequently been published by Current Books, Trissur, in 1957.

[27] Rochelle Pinto, *The Prospect of a Public: The Coming of Print in Colonial Goa*, unpublished Ph.D thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 2005.

[28] See O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*; Komattil Padu Menon, *Lakshmikesavam*. See also G. Arunima, "Glimpses from a Writer's World: O. Chandu Menon, His Contemporaries, and Their Times"; and my "Kazhchayum Vayanayum: *Indulekhayum* Chihnavyaparathe Sambadhikkunna Chila Prasngangalum."

[29] C. V. Raman Pillai, *Premamrtham*. For a discussion of some aspects of representation in this novel, see my "Seeing and Reading: Some Questions of Visibility in the Early Malayalam Novel."

[30] K. Ramakrishna Pillai, "Onnam Pathippinte Mukhavura", p. iii.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] See my paper, "Modern Malayalam Writing and the Shaping of Its Pasts."

[34] *Malayali,* M. E. 1079 Tulam 29 (14 November 1903), quoted in K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadeshabhimani*, pp. 89-90.

[35] K. Ramakrishna Pillai, '*Snehalata*', p. 117.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 118.

[38] Ibid., p. 120.

[39] For an account of the literary and personal communication between Ramakrishna Pillai and B. Kalyani Amma prior to their wedding, see B. Kalyani Amma, *Vyazhavattasmaranakal*. Their wedding was one of the

first where innovations – including garlands and rings – were introduced into the ceremony. See K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadeshabhimani*, pp. 101-2.

[40] Ibid., p. 123.

[41] Priya Joshi, "Culture and Consumption: Fiction, the Reading Public, and the British Novel in Colonial India", *Book History,* 1:1 (1998), p. 214.

[42] Ramakrishna Pillai, "London Kottarathile Rahasyangal" [Secrets from the London Palace], *Atmaposhini*, M. E. 1090 Karkitakam (1916), reprinted in *Swadeshabhimaniyude Granthanirupanangal Sahityalekhanangal*, p. 126.

[43] K. Ramakrishna Pillai, *Narakathil Ninnu*.

[44] Keralan (K. Ramakrishna Pillai), "Suriyani Mappilakalum Mariamma Natakavum", *Malayali*, M. E. 1079 Kanni 3 (19 September 1903). For a discussion, see K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadeshabhimani*, pp. 88-9.

[45] Ibid., quoted in K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadeshabhimani*, p. 89.

[46] K. Ramakrishna Pillai, "Balakalesam", *Mangalodayam*, 6:5, p. 121.

[47] T. K. Krishnan Menon, "Balakalesavum K. Ramakrishna Pillai Avarkalum" [*Balakalesam and Mr. K. Ramakrishna Pillai*], *Keralodayam*, 23 February 1915 and 2 March 1915, quoted in K. Bhaskara Pillai, *Swadeshabhimani*, p. 275. Ramakrishnan, E.V. 2000. " Varthamanappathrangaludeyum Achadiyanthrangaludeyum Vyapanathode Malayaliyude Sahityasamkalpangalilum Bhashavyavaharangalilum Sambhavicha Mattangal" (Transformations in the Conception of Literature and Uses of Language among Malayalis, Occasioned by the Spread of Newspapers and the Printing Press), in M. N. Vijayan (ed.), *Nammude Sahityam, Nammude Samuham 1901-2000*, Vol. 2, (Our Literature, Our Society), Trissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, pp. 480-504.

[48] This discussion needs to be extended to two other related areas. Firstly, Ramakrishna Pillai's writings on women and the domestic sphere, such as *Bharyadharmam* and his essays in *Sharada* need to be studied in the context of the changes in family structures, gender roles, and ethics in Kerala. Secondly, we also need to look closely at writings that relate to a global world of public criticism, including his biographies of Marx and Benjamin Franklin and his book *Pauravidyabhyasam* (Civic Education). The discussion of these themes, important as they are, has to be postponed to another occasion.

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Shifting Sands: Satire, Selfhood and the Politics of Laughter

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Laughter's universality makes it one of the hardest subjects to unravel. Essentially destabilizing, it can also, depending on the context perform a conservative and valorizing function. Studying satire therefore needs sensitivity to this obvious duality of laughter - the principal emotion that is evoked by it. Particularly within Western analyses, satire was seen until almost the 1960s as a rhetorical and moral art, which attacked vice or folly, and tried to persuade its audience that something was reprehensible or ridiculous. Even though in a formal sense it utilized exaggeration or fictional genres, it was still rooted in the 'real world', as there were always moral standards that were a prerequisite for satire. Since then, rethinking the question of morality amongst other things has meant that the understanding of the relationship of satire and society too has undergone a change. For instance, one of the central questions being addressed by scholars studying satire is whether it subverted, or sustained, the dominant social order. As noted by David Nokes, at the heart of satire is a paradox – that even though satirists are often the ones to expose the venality and corruption of society, satire itself is never an instrument of change. It is this paradox that makes satire "two-toned" [1] – a weapon and a toy – one that utilizes public ridicule but only to find a resolution in laughter.

However, much of the work on satire assumes a fixed subject position for the satirist, which to my mind does not engage with its contingent nature. This contingency has implications for developing a theory of selfhood in relation to satire. In this paper I shall attempt a preliminary formulation that shifts the focus of understanding the self from authenticity and inwardness to contingency, publicity and

theatricality. However, this is not to claim that such contingency takes away from moral basis of satire; indeed it is this difficult coexistence that makes the question of selfhood in relation to satire a truly vexed one. The particular context of 1930s Kerala, and the extraordinarily popular newspaper columns of EV (Krishna Pillai) and Sanjayan (M.R. Nayar) is conducive to such an analysis as it encompasses many complex and divergent elements that were the staple of the colonial 'modern'. It is now well accepted that both the processes of the creation of the self and subjectivity, as indeed that of the creation of 'difference' (the 'other', on grounds of gender/race or class, amongst several indices) were integral to the 'project' of modernity. However, the colonial experience of modernity, as has now been extensively studied, did not correspond to the grand 'project', but developed a life of its own. Consequently, discussions on selfhood and difference too require factoring in the specificities of the colonial experience. But that apart, satire as a response to colonial modernity was also a constant play with what was happening 'to us', or what could be seen as the collective 'self'. Hilarious and parodic, this exploration of selfhood resolutely defies being pinned down to an authentic identity but constantly plays with the absurdity of both constancy and change. In many ways, the satirist's selfhood is quite unique – as one observing, and commenting on the frailties, foibles and injustice in society, and yet being dependent on a community of laughter. In that sense it is similar, yet distinct, from two different kinds of subject positions – that of the judge, on the one hand, and of the revolutionary, on the other. Like the judge, the satirist too makes a judgement yet the impact is markedly different, because although laughter alters one's relationship to a situation, it cannot ultimately make any structural transformations within it. Again, when one examines the task of the satirist with that of the revolutionary, it is evident that the satirist can adopt different roles and poses for unmasking societal indignities; however, this is done by being a solitary spectator and raconteur. The revolutionary on the contrary must be transparent and undertake a reformatory role – and is, in the end, a collective participant in the process of change.

Satire, therefore, works on several divergent, and sometimes contradictory, principles. Effective satire is located within a societal and moral context (and in that sense has a contextual 'fixity') yet it also appeals to a community of laughter. This 'community' though contingent, continues to critically inform notions of selfhood in relation to satire. The satirist cannot survive without a community of laughter, and therefore always assumes a situated self. However, the contingency of the community, and this situatedness, also makes the satirist's

position ambivalent, slippery and shifting – thereby making it impossible to deem satire as either purely subversive, or completely conservative. In fact, humour often lies in an under/overstatement of fragility – of "play", and a critical self-consciousness about that subject position. This aspect of satire is particularly obvious in the case of the humour of marginalized groups.[2]

I would therefore suggest that it would be productive to compare the parallel between the satirist's selfhood and theatricality. Three of the intrinsic enablers of laughter – the situation, the play with language[3], and its mechanics[4] - are also essential components of theatre. Exaggeration and language play are both the staple ingredients of satire and of theatricality. Besides, these along with other elements like the use of roles or masks questions the fundamental basis of modern (particularly Western philosophical) notions of selfhood as resting on something fixed, or what is known as an *identity*. Satire/theatricality draws attention to the problems of recognition (essential to identity) and appearance (which is the basis of theatre). To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, the self disappears into personality without being grounded on an "underlying character". The effect of such a phenomenon would necessarily be the creation of a dis/continuous self identity. Additionally, unlike melodrama or stardom where 'personality' is always in excess of the self, in satire/parody it is always about a warped, almost not quite whole, self. The 'self' presented is one that is transparently one with quirks, kinks and chinks. In fact, not only does satire (in its theatricality) undermine the notion of identity, it also, as the opposite of 'disciplining' (as the 'comic self') subverts our understanding of the process of the creation of subjectivity. This is particularly evident in the multiple forms of deploying the "I" or the use of the first person narrative in the satirical text. The satirical "I" or self is one that is at once speaker and audience, victim, voyeur and narrator. This strategy allows that writer flexibility in subject positions that complicate one's understanding of the humorous context.

The early 20th century Malayali satirists like EV and Sanjayan were located in a world of rapid transformations. Urbanization, anonymity and social, moral and legal changes were all rampant in this period. All aspects of life were undergoing dramatic changes. Family structures were changing under pressure from both state intervention in terms of the framing of new laws and people abandoning older conventions for reasons of convenience (like moving away from the 'joint-family' in the countryside to the towns in search of jobs) or ideology (the belief, especially in the case of the matrilineal families, that matriliny was a barbaric relic of the past).[5] Caste organisations that had begun mushrooming in the late 19th century had become integral to the social reform movements of the early decades of the 20th century. This meant a marked difference in the sense of self-perception among members of different caste groups, and the growth of a nascent identity politics centred on caste. However the larger nationalist politics in India from the 1920s began to transform political identities in Kerala too, and caste organisations had to contend with the force and power of these ideas. The changes of this period were not restricted to the social and political sphere alone, but were evident in a wide range of economic transformations too. The combination of commercial growth and demographic shifts meant the growth of new towns, infra-structure, and personnel associated with these. Local administration in the towns, even in places which were under direct colonial rule like Malabar in Kerala were handled mostly by Indians by this period. 'Modern' life meant all of this - from changes in familial identities to the creation of new professional lives. Satirists like EV and Sanjayan, along with the prose form that enabled their satirical columns, were the products of this modernity; alongside, there were the enabling contexts of an emergent public sphere and the growth of a print culture. EV's own life, and the various professional personae that he embraced (journalist, member of Legislative Council, lawyer, writer) itself is indicative of not only the changing times, but its many possibilities. The satirist's humorous self was situated precariously, watching, weighing, and commenting on the messy reality that seemed to be emerging out of this turmoil.

The satirist's column is not unlike theatrical soliloquy, where his public ruminations become the occasion for a much wider reflection:

> More dust than Madras; more slush than Kochi; … more mosquitoes than Wayanad; a stink worse than a sardine factory; a nose accustomed [to the smells of] Kozhikode municipality office will find a tiger skin sweet smelling; an eye once used to it will look upon any dirt with fondness; its air, water and earth carry all the germs as yet unknown in the 'three worlds' [*tribhuvanam*]…apparently Kozhikode has the plague in certain areas. I'm not at all surprised. Only plague, isn't it? That's what I'd say….[6]

What had been at the turn of the century a space of possibility and release had become a part of everyday drudgery. In that sense the world of 1930s Kerala inhabited by EV and Sanjayan was a far cry from that of the romantic novelists of the late 19th century.[7] While cities and

urban landscapes had been associated with a strange and exotic anonymity earlier, now they were domesticated, lived -in, spaces. Sanjayan, who worked in the Calicut municipal office (other than being a journalist and newspaper editor) spent most of his 'real' career as a satirist lampooning the local administration and its functioning:

> [This is a spoof on a school text-book] A picture: the description: smoke or haze; below that the lesson begins: what is this? Hell? No, this is the municipality. There are houses and people inside this, one chairman, one commissioner, many councillors and so on. But you cannot see any of this because of the dust…Municipality gives us dust. Dust is red in colour, stings the nose and is very good for one's health. Satirists may write all kinds of things about this [the municipality]. Then it bites and scratches them….[8]

Sanjayan makes urban development appear like an absurd and nonsensical joke. But at its heart lay the uncomfortable truth that the colonial government had generated an unworkable megalith that in the name of progress was making life difficult instead. EV went to the heart of the matter in his pungent piece, *Neethiyum Niyamavum* [Law and Order]

> The law is apparently meant to protect individualism. What a big deception that is! What does the law really destroy? In actuality, the freedom of the individual. Municipal laws, traffic laws, criminal laws - thanks to these hundreds of marvellous laws no one dare step out of their houses in peace. Is this the test of individual freedom?[9]

By lampooning 'law and order', and the belief that these created and protected 'individualism', EV was undermining the central edifice of colonialism. But this did not mean that he was endorsing anarchy or abetting lawlessness, or indeed celebrating the rationality of the free individual, as is clear from his analysis of these questions in *Vyakti-Samudayam* [Individual-Society]:

> The word 'individual' has acquired almost universal status with the publicity its has received from newspapers. Publicists claim that a collectivity of individuals is society, or that everything that is good for the individual is also beneficial for society. I somehow tend to differ from this point of view. A society has certain values that give it its character;[but] it needs some laws too. An individual does not need these. [For instance] a wise guy steals, makes money, and becomes a millionaire. His wealth is a result of that sinful act. Now if a society were entirely composed of thieves – how would that affect its [collective] wealth? [Take the following scenario] As one neighbour steals from another, a third man on the road snatches it from him and runs off but is robbed on the way by a fourth, who in turn falls prey to the cunning of a fifth man who appropriates it from him, while a sixth gets ready to take it off his hands – if that society is full of thieves and tricksters then how will any one of them become rich? Thus we can see that what might be beneficial to an individual is decidedly harmful for society.[10]

The object of ridicule in this piece, unlike the one earlier, is of course the free, and 'unbound' individual. In part, it can be read as a critique of colonial subjectivity which was seen as creating the fantasy of individualism that could survive without commitment to society. But, as with most of EV's and Sanjayan's pieces, the focus is not so much on the political context of societal change (colonialism and so on) but more on aspects of affect that were created by the experience of colonial modernity. Here the allusion is to the modern confusion about what it means to be an individual.

He goes on to further develop this idea in the same piece:

> Europe, following on from Darwin, believed that society progressed on the basis of natural principles. However, that was very erroneous. 'Benjamin Kidd' wrote a book in 1895. He said: "Idiots! No society can develop on the basis of your science; the progress that we witness amongst human beings today is the result of religion". Religion does not mean rituals that ridicule science or one's average intelligence. Religion says, "do unto others what you want them to do unto you". Not that you should wear your sacred thread on the left shoulder, or turn to the east and pray; that is not religion. Therefore, a religious sensibility or righteousness is necessary for a society's progress. This is not necessary for an individual's immediate gratification.[11]

The suggestion here is that society is not so much about progress as about mutual commitment and responsibility. The anxiety generated by the fracture of such a notion of society is what is being addressed by these caricatured accounts. The desired social self is one that is relational, without necessarily forcing the erasure of individuality or difference. However, modern life creates desires that cannot be met

without destroying the fabric of the old and the familiar; the result is a hybrid that is worthy only of ridicule.

In any number of instances, be they about the superficiality of "political activists."[12], the narrow and destructive parochialism of sectarian politics.[13], or the corruption engendered by 'colonial modernity', EV's and Sanjayan's ironic assessment reminds one of how vexed the experience of modernity can be.

> The sole reason for all the mills in the world to produce paper is in order to write letters of recommendation [here the word used, *shuparsha*, from the Persian *sifaarish*, has the added meaning of nepotism]. Three quarters of the paper produced in Travancore is used in this manner. Similarly, trains and motors [cars] are kept in operation in order to ferry those seeking favours to and fro. Why is that with increasing modernisation such favours are more in demand? Because for every thousand equally qualified people there is only one position. Now earlier this wasn't so. For every thousand jobs you could get only one person. And with all these qualified people around, 'recommendations' are the only solution….now there may be people who may not take bribes. But there is no one who ignores a letter of recommendation. A man who has no relation with society need not occupy a position of power. And if there is even a little tie, 'recommendations' will immediately trickle down that. And thus [the logic of] 'recommendations' rule the world.[14]

The object of laughter here is the infinite resourcefulness that 'traditional' societies displayed in their adapting to a changing way of life. In exposing the complicity of the 'modern subject' with the rulers in a shared desire for power, EV is at once pointing to both the corruptibility and vulnerability of modernity. Part of the 'project' of late 19th century colonialism was to create free, rational, Enlightened individuals. Once transformed these subjects were to be offered a part in the colonial meritocracy, albeit through 'proper' channels. However, modernity is too seductive to be sampled in such controlled ways; moreover, as a state of flux, it allows for infinite variations of the norm. It is only in satire that one finds such a trenchant critique of modernity, particularly where the focus was on what was happening to "us" or the modern (Indian) "self". In a hilarious parody of the new obsession with 'meetings', EV wrote

> If you were asked what is the most atrocious in the rituals of the modern world you would, even before the question was completed, begin chorusing, "Meeting, meeting! Oh yes, its definitely meetings"…. There's a certain format now associated with these things. Its absolutely necessary to have one chairman, two speakers and a chap to do the vote of thanks. Depending on the reformist zeal and insistence of the members themselves, the speakers themselves could be of three kinds; one of course could be a lady [the term *strijanam* is used here ironically];the chairman can be opposed; garlanding may happen then and later; special musicians may be invited to sing the inaugural hymns and panegyrics to the king [*maharajamangalam* here refers to the songs to the raja of Travancore and not the British 'crown']; many things could happen….[15]

It goes on in this vein to rip apart the forms and rituals that had become an integral part of modern public life in Kerala. What is interesting here, apart from the ridicule of ceremonies of this kind, is the fact that such events were obviously a common occurrence. The reader is a part of the shared world of experience; moreover, through this fictive kinship of laughter is established a sensibility that defines itself in opposition to the predictable, repetitive, and ridiculous aspects of modern communal life. Nevertheless, EV's suggestion that a woman as a speaker was the absurd equivalent of all the other forms of pomp reveals that the laughing 'self' here remains male. Another version of the same discomfort can be found in *Sanjayantte prethyeka vijnapanam* [Sanjayan's Special Publication][16]

> Since women are bound to be present in the meeting, we turn towards them for a long time and hold forth on the taxes we pay, [display] our boundless knowledge, [speak on] women's education, their right to vote, cookery tips, care of the children and ways to maintain the current fiction that husbands are superior while we all know that they are really mere servants…

And in another piece on a fictional meeting, he parodies a male 'social reformer's' speech

> Now let us think a bit about women. Women want as much power as men, and men say that they'd have been happy with even as much as women; in the middle of all this madness one must choose one's words with care. Women should not be called *abala* [powerless, also a Sanskrit synonym for 'woman'] - I am a strong votary of that view. The other day (by this time the laughter is loud that some five or ten words are

> lost) I found that whatever else a woman might be, she is not an *abala*.[17]

Neither EV nor Sanjayan would have been against education for women or extending the right to vote to them. Nevertheless, there are multiple layers of discomfort and meaning here that reveal how complex this modern notion of masculinity and male identity itself was. By equating the pedantic and the formal with more political issues there is a manner in which the latter get trivialised. There is a hint here that those who make speeches are not the *real* votaries of the issues they speak about. And there is some truth to that cynical assessment.

Gender and humour remains one of those challenging areas that does not lend itself it easy analysis. A superficial and simplistic interpretation of EV and Sanjayan would assume that there is a predictable gendering, with laughter directed against women, and all that they appear to represent. However, a closer reading reveals a complex dynamic at work, where the satire, and the assumed laughter, moves across different registers. Often the laughter is not so much against women, but more against societal expectations of womanliness or masculinity.

> I know a man who manages to get his own end with just tears. That state is slightly distinct from that of a lover. He is a regular wife-beater. Or else he does everything that will make her loathe him until her dying day. We may begin to wonder how these two will ever live together. That's when this clever fellow enters the scene, weeping copiously. "Oh my darling! O!O! Did I break those teeth! Oh those teeth…! Ayyo! My heart breaks…!" Then one must bellow like a bull. Fall at [her] feet. "My darling! Please don't be angry with me! I…" And then cry without stopping. Women and tears are born of the same womb. No two siblings have such a bond. Both are deeply satisfied by the downfall of men. So there's no harm in using some onions even. But make sure it doesn't smell. How does it matter if you howl like a dog for an hour! After that you can kick her for an entire year![18]

In an essay that is purportedly about the practical art of lovemaking, EV succeeds in addressing such serious issues as the emotional complexity underlying domestic violence, with a lighthearted touch and great effectiveness. However, in many pieces his tone becomes excessively derisive, and appears to border on misogyny

> When I heard this prefix [dear] I wanted to see who this lovely 'dear' was. There she emerged, this black thing, as large as a haystack, and that strange hair. O lord! What a shame that this poor fool [the husband] has no better way of resolving his dependence [unemployed status] except by calling this monster 'dear'.[19]

Herein lies the complicated, troubled relationship of the male satirist and the female subject, who, almost as though in a moment of revelation unmasks himself and lets go of that tricky first person narrative that had hitherto been used to embody multiple personae. It is as though he identifies not only himself, but also his audience too, as distinctly male. Susan Gubar, in a very early feminist reading of Augustan satire (particularly Swift) argues that monstrous women represented male dread of women, and male anxiety of female control. Yet, she goes on to argue, that the woman is not simply the "other", but also " a fascinating alternative, a way of leaving the burdens of self and excellence behind". The monstrous female is then a sign of the satirist's self-division.[20]

Developing on this argument if one is to re-examine the context that created the apparent misogyny in EV's humour, there appear to be other ways of reading the satirical text. For large sections of the Malayali population this was a period of a bitter and conflicted relationship with marriage, family and kinship. In the first four decades of the 20th century several 'family regulations' were enacted by both the colonial state in Malabar and the princely kingdoms of Cochin and Travancore accommodating changes that enabled the partition and division of family property. It paved the way for the move to render the nuclear family as a natural and moral choice. Within the dominant matrilineal community, at this period in the throes of change, the late 19th century self-flagellation in terms of barbarism and female promiscuity were replaced by the figure of the power-hungry 'modern' woman who reduced her husband to the status of a hen-pecked wretch. Underlying this significant change in the representation of woman as 'dominant wife' rather than as polyandrous and promiscuous lies the social fact that many more nuclear families were now in evidence. Earlier the battle had been to institute legal, monogamous marriage; now, humour of the sort that targeted women by representing them simply as domineering wives (and ugly to boot) pointed to the extraordinary anxiety that the steady disappearance of the matrilineal system seemed to generate in the masculine mind. The Nayars, the most dominant protagonists amongst the matrilineal community had spent the better part of half a century dismantling the system. However, the alternatives,

like most things modern was not merely unfamiliar but also unsavoury. The locus of this humour and self reflexivity is peculiarly Nayar, and male, displaying an anxiety about the crisis of masculinity. Matriliny, for its most ardent detractors had meant a loss of status for men; unfortunately, the new system too seemed to have done nothing to restore their sense of self. The verbal violence masquerading as humour that is directed against women is equally against those weak men who allowed themselves to be dominated.

Notably, such humour that constantly regulated the 'natural' home space revealed how tenuous this naturalness was. While love and marriage had remained the cherished hopes within the late 19th century romantic literature, for most 'modern' (particularly urban) 20th century Malayalis, nuclear families were no 'haven in a heartless world'. As with all novelties, these new kinds of families too had had lost their original charm and were a necessary part of life. Yet rights, relationships and identities were yet in the process of ordering, and this now provoked an anxious response.

> Fashionable women - pardon me, one should not call them 'women' - ladies, do not hesitate like this [here he is parodying forms of address] My husband (*bhartavu*) they say firmly [the word husband is used here in English and the Malayalam word included parenthetically]. You can guess easily why they prefer to call their men "husband". If he is referred to as her man ("*bharthavu"*) one might mistakenly imagine that this bumpkin had some control over this modern woman. That would be entirely untrue and would infuriate her considerably. Therefore, this creature is converted into "husband" and dismissed. Apparently, some even call them "hubby" and "hussy".[21]

The humour here is complex and layered. On the one hand, it is quintessentially about the crises of colonial modernity. Even as the Malayali man was desperately throwing off the shackles of barbarism and tradition and willingly entering the modern world of opportunity, he found himself tripping over the unexpected hurdle of the 'modern' woman. The modernity in her reminded him uncomfortably of his own compromised position within a colonial context. The only escape possible here was to retreat into a nostalgic world of indigenous masculinity untainted by Anglicisation. On the other, the piece would not work without its word-play – and at one level, its subversive use of English undermines its importance, and of all those social changes that might be suggested by its use. As a satirical piece, this works

because of its clever language use, and not so much because it directs it attention towards the crisis of Malayali modernity. The *bhartavu* vs "hubby" face-off, as part of a clever language, allows one to laugh even without identifying with the subject matter. It is these multiple registers that complicate the question of selfhood in relation to satire, as the community of laughter need not be constituted by those who identify with the satirist's sentiment.

The potential for the shifting subject positions of the satirist - as narrator and the audience, bully, victim or voyeur - thus allows for a developing a textured thesis of the self that encapsulates both appearance and reflection. The satirist's judgement may dissolve in effervescent laughter, yet its residual discomfort does not allow the possibility of a superficial subjectivity or a cohesive identity.

Notes:

1. David Nokes, *Raillery and Rage: A Study of Eighteenth Century Satire*.
2. Chicano satire, http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/center/events/satire; Sigmund Freud, *The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious*.
3. Freud's *Joke* is one of the most detailed early discussions of the relationship between semantics and the unconscious.
4. Henri Bergson, *Laughter:an Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*.
5. G. Arunima*, There Comes Papa: Colonialism and the transformation of Matriliny in Kerala, Malabar, c.1850-1940*, Chapter 5.
6. M.R. Nair, "Kozhikode Municipality", *Sanjayan*, Vol 1, p. 5.
7. See for instance the difference with the excitement in *Indulekha* when Govinda Kutti Menon gets Madhavan a job at the Madras secretariat for Rs.150 a month, O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha* [English translation by W. Dumergue], p.119.
8. Nair, "Paadhapustakam" [Text Book], *Sanjayan*, Vol 1, 9. This passage is a take off on the standard Malayalam text for children, on 'the cow', which reads a bit like, the cow gives us milk, which is white in colour and good for our health.
9. "Neethiyum Niyamavum" [Law and Order] *Evyude Chiriyum Chinteyum* [EV's Laughter and Reflection, henceforth *CC*] Vol.1, p.18. In this paper I have used EV's pieces from *Chiriyum Chinteyum* and from "Chiriyum Chinteyum" republished in his collected works entitled *EVkrithikul* [EV's Works]. Footnotes will indicate the edition used.
10. "Vyakti-Samudayam", *EV krithikul*, Vol. 1, p.275-6.

[11] Ibid. p.276.

[12] "Netakanmar" [Leaders] *CC*, Vol.2, pp.68-75.

[13] "Samudayapranikal" [Social Workers] *CC*, Vol.2, pp.29-36.

[14] Ibid.; "Shuparshashastram"[The Science of Recommendations], *CC*, Vol.2, pp.25-8.

[15] Ibid.; "Meeting chadangu" [The Meetings Ritual], *CC*, Vol.1, p.1.

[16] Nair, *Sanjayan*, Vol.1, p.12.

[17] Ibid.; "Prasangathinte baaki" [The Remainder of the Speech], *Sanjayan*, Vol.1, p.16.

[18] EV, "Prayogikashringaram" [Practical lovemaking] *EVKrithikul*, pp. 55-6.

[19] Ibid.; "Pennupirannonmaru" [Men; literally those born of women] *CC*, Vol.2, pp. 203-207.

[20] Susan Gubar, "The female monster in Augustan satire", pp. 380-394.

[21] "Pennupirannonmaru", p. 206.

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Of Mice and Men: The Futures of Nair Masculinity in a Post-Matrilineal Modernity

Ratheesh Radhakrishnan

Historians of British colonialism in India have noted that social reform movements have always deployed women as the terrain on which the conflict between tradition and modernity has been launched. Both colonial public policy and the reform measures by Indian social reformers did continuously foreground 'women's issues' as domains for immediate political intervention, be it in the case of 'sati' (Lata Mani 1989) or the Age of Consent Bill (Sinha 1995) among others. It has been the discursive resolution of the women's question through the organisation of the public and the private as separate domains that enabled the nationalists to present themselves in a political opposition with the colonial administration leading to the historic national movement in India. The binary public/private was further infused with other binaries such as material/spiritual, world/home, outside/inside and significantly masculine/feminine (Chatterjee 1989: 237-243). Existing historical work on Kerala also points to the salience of this framework in our understanding of social reform movements with certain important differences (Devika 1999).[1] In various community-based social reform initiatives in the region, especially among the upper and middle castes, it has been the 'women's question' that was foregrounded as the space on which questions of modernity were being addressed.[2] Thus among the Nambudiris, women's education, widow remarriage, mobility of women outside the familial space etc. and among the Nairs, reform of the conjugal system that was called *sambhandam* and the shift from a matrilineal system of property relations to a patrilineal one, became the focus of reformist zeal. These issues were used as a platform where larger questions vis-à-vis

community identities were forged and the transition to modernity was made possible. One of the issues that has received scant attention from scholars has been how the public that gets constituted as masculine has been structured historically in different regional contexts in India during and after the nationalist period.[3] What were the specific ways in which men negotiate the public that is thus constituted? If it was nationalist politics that animated the Bengali public sphere from the latter half of the nineteenth century, what were the concerns that come to constitute the masculine public in other historical and cultural contexts? In an early attempt to unravel the constitution of a regional public that comes to be addresses as the public sphere in Kerala, this paper tries to address this question in the case of Nair community in the period after the days of social reform.[4]

This paper looks at a period 'after' the reform movement among the Nair community in Kerala. Rather than being a historical inquiry into the said period, the paper attempts to identify some of the significant narrative elements and conceptual moves that constitute the imaginary of a Nair future through the analysis of the early novels of MT Vasudevan Nair and the early films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan. It will be suggested that these have a larger significance in the ways in which the history of the Nair community, in relation to modernity, could be retold from the vantage point of the contemporary.[5]

The paper is interested in the narrative of a crisis that is supposed to be faced by men in the Nair community as constituting the discourse of masculinity in the wake of social reform that had seen a shift in some significant aspects of the social organisation that they were familiar with. I employ the notion of 'masculinity' to understand how these concerns are tied to the attempt to produce (male) protagonists as exemplars of that historic moment. Here masculinity does not refer to certain universalist assumptions of power, aggression, violence etc. On the other hand, 'masculinity' is a normative domain within which, in a specific historic and social context, bodies are gendered male. Even though this paper takes up male characters as the point of departure for its discussion, it needs to be noted that there exists no automatic link between men and masculinity. The suggestion that "…everything pertaining to men can be classified as masculinity, and everything that can be said about masculinity pertains in the first place to men" (Sedgwick 1995: 12) is misleading.[6] It is the contention of the paper that because the burden of negotiating the 'public' and the 'material' is placed in the domain of the masculine, it becomes imperative that we concentrate on male characters. The notion of the

'crisis of masculinity' is understood here as a narrative trope rather than a category that validates the anxieties of men.[7] The paper looks at how a notion of crisis of masculinity is mobilised to navigate a critical historic moment in the texts that will be analysed.

As a short hand I call the crisis in masculinity as the crisis of adapting to modernity. The notion of modernity that is employed here is not that of a normative model of modernity as it has been theorised in contexts that are outside the one that is under examination, but one that gets narrativised with post-reform narratives. The paper tries to pull out certain tropes related to the axis 'matriliny – modernity – masculinity' from literature and cinema that consciously attempted to represent the history of Nairs. The elaboration of these key terms will be undertaken through the analysis of the texts. I would like to anticipate one central theoretical positioning that is to emerge in the analysis of the texts. This is the reproduction of the obvious opposition between a certain notion of modernity and the matrilineal system within these. Such juxtaposition, as will be examined in detail later in the paper, allows for the elevation of this form of modernity (the one that is narrated in the texts) into the valorised vantage point from where the history of the Nair community could be retold.

The first part of the paper tries to quickly sketch the changes that happened in the lives of Nairs in Kerala due to colonial intervention. Looking at two texts produced in the second half of the 20th century – the novel *Naalukettu* (1958) written by MT Vasudevan Nair and the film *Elippathayam* (1981) directed by Adoor Gopalakrishnan – I argue in the second section that it is mobility which is seen as the desired characteristic for Nair masculinity of the period in question. This mobility in turn is understood in relation to the changes in familial structures and in new moral codes that were imposed on marriage and conjugality.

I

The existence of matriliny as a system that governed property relations and sexual organization in Kerala has been of great interest to anthropologists and historians working on the state[8] and has also contributed to the production of a popular myth about Kerala as a 'female dominated society'.[9] In such a system, property was handed down through the eldest woman of the family. The system was called *marumakkathayam* in Malayalam, suggesting the centrality of the nephew, (*marumakan*) and by inference the uncle (*ammaman*), in the structure, thus underscoring the lineage through the mother, who is

the link between the two. The conjugal system, which was called sambandham, allowed the woman to stay in her own family home while her male partner had visiting rights.[10] This allowed her children to be seen as part of her family (rather than her partner's) and to be the inheritors of the property controlled by the uncle. The women, it has been suggested, had an important role to play in the ownership and management of the property.[11] One of the reasons for the scholarly interest in matriliny has been the fact that it was one of the most visible sites of colonial legal intervention in Kerala and also because it was "… the only kinship system in the world to be abolished" (Arunima 2003a: 1), in this case by the initiated by the colonial legal machinery and completed by the post-colonial state.

One of the recent works on matriliny describes it as it existed in the days before the intervention of the colonial legal system:

> Conceptually, a matrilineal household was composed of people related to each other in the female line. In other words, relationships were traced through the mother; at any given time, membership of the household would consist of all women and their children and grandchildren. They would live and eat together, but more importantly, they would hold joint rights to the family property. Inheritance again, was traced through women, which implied that women had the right to receive and bequeath ancestral property. Men of the household, be they brothers, sons or nephews, had a right to a share of the family property only while living in it, which they could not bequeath to their wives or children (Arunima 2003a: 10).

The existing literature points to the fact that at least for some communities in Kerala which followed matriliny, especially the Nairs, a radical break had occurred in their kinship patterns and property relations, engendered by a modernizing colonial zeal.[12]

> The emergent legal discourse, both textual and procedural, altered power relations within the *taravad* between men and women: it also transformed the nature of authority and property rights. The events of these decades were critical not only because irrevocable changes were taking place in the lives of matrilineal Nayars – but also because they demonstrated the possibility of state intervention into what is often considered to be the 'private' sphere. (Arunima 2000: 114)

The various legislations enacted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries initiated on the one hand by the colonial administration and on the other by the princely states, marked the shift to a system that could be termed patrilineal.[13] This change was seen both by the colonial administration and the social reformers as an evolutionary move. The shift from matriliny to patriliny was represented as a shift from primitivity to modernity.[14] The shift was a gradual one and was completely in place only by the 1970s.[15] Land reforms initiated by the two Left governments in the state in the 1950s and 1960s, which among other things decided ceilings on land holdings and attempted to transfer ownership of land from the landlords to the tenants, was also a factor in further ensuring the collapse of the system.[16] This disallowed the existence of large land and property holdings that supported the large joint families which were the backdrop of the matrilineal system. The joint family system that was the norm thus disintegrated as a result of the radical restructuring of kinship and property relations.

Let us now move on to examine what was at stake for a discourse of masculinities as far as the collapse of the matrilineal system was concerned. At one level it can be safely assumed that men were to gain by this process. The crisis of authority and control faced by young Nair men in relation to matriliny has been noted by Praveena Kodoth (2003, 2004a). She argues that the reform in matriliny was an attempt also to "produce 'men' out of those who lived as useless entities under the matrilineal system" (Kodoth 2004a: 27). O Chandu Menon's much discussed novel *Indulekha* (1889) is an example of a narrative that demonstrates how the social reform context during the turn of the century in Malabar was also a period of radical refashioning of Nair male identity. Madhavan, the hero of the novel, is pitted against the decadent Suri Nambudiripad, a Brahmin, whose 'unacceptable' sexual advances are facilitated by matriliny. It is worth noting, as an aside, that even the mobility that Nair men seem to have developed over the years, an issue we will have occasion to come back to later, is modelled on Madhavan's experiences outside Kerala. Madhavan could be seen as the prototype of the Nair man as represented in later writings in Kerala.

The story of the collapse of matriliny is sometimes presented as one of a shift from the power of the women to the power of the men. The question of power is more complicated than this narrative allows for, if we take into account the various ways in which both matriliny and patriliny function. It needs to be noted that the men were not at a complete disadvantage in matriliny, as the uncles (or the *karanavars* as they were called) and the nephews did potentially stand to gain.[17] An attempt to understand masculinity in the wake of shifts in kinship

patterns need not necessarily peg its arguments on how power functions in the family. That at most can only be one of the issues involved. To put the issue in more precise terms, it is the burden of the shifting social structure, which seemingly has to be negotiated by the men in the community, coupled with uncertainties related to issues of power, which could potentially create a crisis in masculinity. The resolution of the women's question in the Nair reform rhetoric functioned as a foundation for resolving masculine anxieties in relation to notions of community and, more importantly, those of domesticity, property etc. The emergence of newer economic and social structures, especially in the period after the social reform movements, did leave a lot to be desired for the Nair men in consolidating their social position and power, especially in relation to other communities.

I would like to propose that the major shifts which took place within the time span of a century – between the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth century – or more presented a crisis for Nair men, one which called for a radical refashioning of the self. The crisis was one of adaptation – adaptation to modernity. In this context modernity was understood primarily in relation to two changes: (a) changing family structures, that is, the formation of nuclear families and the resultant restructuring of economic activity within and without the family and, (b) the way female sexuality came to be understood in the context of new conjugal models. The move away from joint families to nuclear families as the normative structure of modern conjugality was the most important change that happened at this time. New notions of romantic love and conjugality intrinsically connected to the formation of the nuclear family produced notions of female sexuality, especially in the form of moral norms like monogamy, which were quite different from those of the earlier days. Though the reform period did see important shifts in the above cited directions, it was only by the late 1970s that the integration of Nair men into modernity and the new economic fields like the emerging service sector was complete. I would like to propose then, that the issue of a projected crisis of masculinity is foundational to the various narratives around matriliny that have been in circulation in Kerala through this period.

II

This section of the paper proceeds using the works of the novelist MT Vasudevan Nair[18] (hereafter, MT) and the early films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan[19] (hereafter, Adoor) to think through the narrative production of this crisis in Nair masculinity. MT's *Naalukettu*[20] (1958)

and Adoor's *Elippathayam* (The Rat Trap 1981,) will be analysed in detail in this paper, with occasional references made to the other works produced by them. Both MT and Adoor are two figures who have consistently produced texts about Nair history and who are also considered to be the most important figures in their respective fields. Though these texts present themselves as pertaining to a Nair history, this aspect had been more or less ignored by most of the commentators who represent these works as referring to a feudal past common to all Malayalees.[21]

It needs to be noted that instead of revisiting the colonial period and the matrilineal tradition that was in place at that time, this paper attempts to focus on the latter half of the twentieth century, a period that had by then seen a number of changes in relation to social reform, the advent of the Communist movement and the formation of the state of Kerala. Land reforms, initiated by the Communist government through the 'Land Reforms Amendment Act of 1969', was the culmination of a process of state intervention into property holdings, which had their beginnings in the colonial period (Kodoth 2001: 297-298). By this time the Nair community had invented the figure of the father, who had been hitherto absent for all practical purposes from the Nair familial structure, and, in Robin Jeffrey's words, the "decline of the Nair dominance" (Jeffrey 1975) in relation to its traditional locations of power was almost complete.[22]

The section focuses on the ways in which kinship is understood in the Nair context in the narratives produced by MT and Adoor, and the possible linkages one could make with the matrilineal past. The notions of masculinity that are produced, I suggest, present the possibilities a historical moment offers to Nair men. What was the changed context that these narratives were responding to, and what were the exemplary subject positions they offer? Let us look for clues in the texts themselves.

"It's Me Appunni, Son of Konthunni Nair"

MT's Naalukettu (1958, hereafter NK) begins by presenting the protagonist's thoughts thus:

> I will grow up. I will grow up and become a big man. My hands will be very strong. Then I don't have to be afraid of anyone. I can stand with my head high. When someone asks, "Who's that?" I can say without stuttering and stammering – "It's me Appunni, son of Konthunni Nair"(*NK*: 7).[23]

The invocation of the absent father in the first paragraph of the novel presents us with a parallel or, as I will argue, a contrast to the much-discussed Ravi Varma painting titled *There Comes Papa* (1893).[24] The painting shows a Nair woman holding a child pointing towards the outside of its frame, with a pet dog on the floor, also looking in that direction. Arunima understands the painting, created before the invention of the conjugal couple of the kind it was attempting to portray among Nairs in Kerala, as a sign of the "growing patrilineal sensibilities" (Arunima 2003a: 1) of the artist and suggests elsewhere that the gesture of the figure in the painting "can be seen as a metaphor for the uncertainty that matrilineal families were undergoing at this time in Kerala" (Arunima 2003b: 65). The painting represents the newly imagined form of the family – one of the transformations that were happening in the late nineteenth century in the Nair community.

As suggested earlier, an understanding of what happened in the sixty-five years between 1893 and 1958 should enable a different explanation for the absence of the father in MT's work in comparison to the same in Ravi Varma's. The most important development during this time was the passing of the Madras Marumakkathayam Act 1933 which legalised all *sambandhams,* hitherto seen by the colonial legal system as not constituting marriage. The ritual of *pudamuri* or the offering of a piece of cloth by the man to the woman, which the Act named marriage, was now to be carried out in the daytime (unlike the earlier practice of it being carried out in the night) in an attempt to make it a public act, now under the purview of the law. The Act "sealed the demise of the households by legitimizing its partition into branches, by either a male or a female member, as well as *ratifying the right of wives and children to inherit a man's property and succeed to it*" (Arunima 2003a: 177, emphasis added). This therefore allowed for the formation of smaller households with the male as the head. The husband and the father were thus legally produced by this Act.

In *There Comes Papa* the diegetic space of the painting does include a father in a space outside the frame but inside the narrative. In sharp contrast, in *Naalukettu*, the father exists only in Appunni's memory, as his ideal.[25] If the father was an immediate future in Ravi Varma's painting, he is already the past in MT – a character that precedes the narrative. But here again comes another twist to the tale – Konthunni Nair's place in the established Nair order is that of a rebel. This rebellion, which becomes a model for Appunni, whose success in life is in negotiating his own illegal location in the familial structure, is of significance as it is imperative for him to leave the *taravad* in the course of the narrative. Appunni's obsession with his father is not a direct response to the absence of the father in a matrilineal system as suggested by some commentators (Tharamel 1999: 36-37). Since the absence of the father was never recognized in the matrilineal context it could not have been part of the cultural memory of a boy born much after the colonial-legal invention of the father. This is a father who can only be envisaged in the context of modernity – a father who makes himself present in defiance of tradition. The mother-centred family of Appunni is not a replica of a matrilineal household but the remnant of a failed 'modern' experiment. Thus the past in which Konthunni Nair exists is not the same past which was the high point of matriliny. This presents us with two different temporalities which are imagined in the novel, two pasts, two significant pasts for the modern Nair man – one that includes Konthunni Nair's triumphs and failures, and the other of matriliny.

Konthunni Nair was a modern man like the father for whom the woman is waiting in the Ravi Varma painting. His (modern) 'vices' included having tea at a teashop run by a Muslim ("drinking tea itself was considered wrong in those days") eating with lower castes, gambling and drinking (*NK*: 16). Let me quote a rather long passage from the novel where Appunni imagines his father through the memories of the latter's contemporaries.

> Konthunni Nair was a well-known dice player.
>
> Even today there will be dice play under the banyan tree during Onam, Vishu and Thiruvathira. The game is between people from Kudallur and Perumbalam villages.
>
> The bigwigs of the game are all gone. Only the youngsters are left. The old men in the village say that 'these days the spirit of the game is gone'.
>
> When I hear the sound of the dice in someone's hands, when I hear the cheers, it's my father who comes to my mind. More than pain, the thoughts make me proud.
>
> There has been only one player in the village who could call a number and get it on his dice. It was his father.
>
> "My friends – I saw it with my eyes. It was the last round game with the Perumbalam guys. Marar is the player on the other side. They need just three to win. If we lose, our pride is gone. There is no point in remaining there. All our players are dropping out with fatigue. We only realized later that they had done some

> black magic with the help of Mannan Choppan. We need thirty-two to win. Achumman was standing looking at the sky with the dice in the hand…
>
> 'All is lost, my God!' – To tell the truth Achumman also had no confidence to play. If we don't win in that round, we are done for. He looked at me and said – Kutta, the pride of the land is in trouble!
>
> But Achumman was not ready to give up yet. He was some guy! He turned around and asked loudly. 'Is there anyone among the youngsters?'
>
> It was then the voice was heard – 'Give me the dice, uncle'.
>
> It was Konthunni Nair!
>
> Marar and company were calling all the gods in the land loudly, to distract us. Their sound could be heard at a distance.
>
> *'Why should I pray to that useless woman?' – Konthunni Nair hit his chest and abused loudly – who was he abusing? The Goddess*. He was shivering with excitement when he said it. He closed his eyes, prayed for a bit and threw the dice – a crystal-clear twelve.
>
> His eyes were all red. It was a scary sight.
>
> He threw again – again a twelve.
>
> Played again – two threes – six.
>
> He threw his last dice, turned around and walked saying – here's your win. The dice stopped turning when he reached the steps at the end of the plot. We all looked – it was a win!
>
> *There will never be a man like that!*' (*NK*: 15, emphasis added)

The way in which Konthunni Nair's 'vices' and his irreverence are narratively linked is visible in this extract. The significance of the defiance of the goddess, an important invocation of female power, is obvious. Konthunni Nair emerges as a modern man both in his defiance of the past by indulging in vices like gambling, as well as in his defiance of the 'Mother Goddess' – an important image for a system headed by women. It is in this context that Konthunni Nair emerges as the model for a normative masculinity as far as Appunni is concerned.

In the early part of the novel where Konthunni Nair is remembered, we see a repetition of the affirmation of his masculinity through exclamations similar to that in the passage above. In the above extract it was the famed dice player Kuttan Nair talking about Konthunni and his masculinity, whereas later we see another character, Koonan Chathu Nair, saying the same in connection with Konthunni's courage to elope with Ammukutty, Appunni's mother. He says, "A man like that will never be born again" (*NK*: 18). Chathu Nair remembers how Konthunni Nair replied when asked whether he was afraid of Ammukutty's family – "Chathu, *I am a man. There's only one death after you are born*" (*NK*: 18, emphasis added).

In the novel, Konthunni Nair's aggressive masculinity is produced as the ideal by positing the equally aggressive Muslim man as the other.[26] Saithalikutty, the alleged murderer of Konthunni Nair, is constantly evoked by Appunni for most of the early part of the novel as a form of undesirable masculinity, as Konthunni Nair's alter ego. The fact that it is not a form of masculinity from the earlier matrilineal order that is posited as the other of Konthunni Nair is significant. This further illuminates the earlier point that Konthunni Nair's identity is structured not in relation to matriliny but to modernity. The representation of masculinity in relation to the Muslim man as the other comes later in the novel. This is in reference to Bapputty, a minor character in the novel.

> Everyone looked at Bapputty with anxiety. There was fire in his eyes. He never hesitates to do anything. He has already been the accused in three criminal offences. Though he has been put in jail only once, *he believes that 'the Kannur jail is for real men'* (*NK*: 86, emphasis added).

It is important to note that Bapputty's belief that 'the Kannur jail is for real men' is a comment by the narrator and not something that is said by him. MT Ansari has demonstrated how mainstream Malayalam literature has always posited the Muslim man as the 'other' in producing ideal modern hero types (Ansari 1999, 2002).[27] Discussing NS Madhavan's highly acclaimed short story *Higuitta* (1990/1993), he argues that the othering of Muslim men has provided the frame in which modernity has been worked out in Malayalam literature.[28] I suggest that, in *Naalukettu* there is a shift in this tendency identified by Ansari – an issue I come back to later in the paper.

Appunni's identity as a ten-year-old boy allows for the presentation of a character that represents at once a lineage and a future. It is interesting to note that in most of MT's important works of the time, be it the one under discussion or the widely acclaimed *Kaalam*

(1969) or even his short stories, his protagonist is a young boy. The *bildungsroman* mode of story telling allows the author to present the contexts of social change as a narrative of 'becoming a man' (it is never a woman!) and at the same time as if it is a story merely of growing up, by not foregrounding gender.[29] For example *Kaalam*, MT's subsequent work explicitly deals with the classic motif of modernity, i.e. the theme of the emergent urban economies, and attempts to work out the space for the Nair man in it through Sethu, the protagonist who grows up into middle age from a schoolboy in the novel.[30]

Appunni in *Naalukettu* lives with his mother Ammukutty who was ostracized by her family for marrying Konthunni Nair, who was from a poor Nair family. Appunni's parents did in fact construct the modern conjugal unit of the nuclear family, but the narrative begins by presenting that as a failed attempt, because of Konthunni Nair's untimely death.[31] To represent the present moment of the narrative as one that signals change, both the systems, in this case matriliny and the modern nuclear family, need to be represented as unstable and it is for Appunni to stabilize either or both. The novel represents Appunni as imagining his future as part of two possible systems. One is the mother's family and the matrilineal system it represents – which many of the characters in novel remind him as being his rightful space – and the other, the route to modernity which has been opened up by his father.

The memory of the past glories of the matrilineal system is alluded to in the novel either as memories of the older characters in the novel or as the narrator's 'memory' of the breakdown of an earlier social system. The novel describes the *taravad* just once.

> It is said that tens of thousands of measures of paddy were grown in front of that *taravad*. All that was a long time ago. It was during the time when *muthachi* had her second husband that the *taravad* was broken up and distributed. Apparently there were sixty-four members when the division took place.
>
> A household with sixty-four members!
>
> At that time the *taravad* consisted of two *naalukettus*. More than half of it has been broken down by now. What remains is the *naalukettu* where the goddess is supposed to be residing. The granary is still there. And so is the compound wall. (*NK*: 19)

As for the sexual organization in the now non-existent system, the novel mentions it in passing in relation to the oldest character in the novel: "There is not a single soul in Kudallur who doesn't know the *muthachi* (grandma) of Kottil. *She had three husbands in her youth. She didn't have any children. The first husband left her and she left the other two*" (*NK*: 14, emphasis added). Appunni chooses to leave the world of the memory of a glorified past to choose his father's legacy. He does this not necessarily out of conscious deliberations, but in a context where he realizes that he has no role in the world of the *taravad*. This choice – the choice of an individuated system over a community-oriented system – after his failed attempts at integrating with mother's *taravad*, is the future for him. Appunni, interestingly never shows any love for his mother who had taken as many risks as his father in her life. Distancing himself from her, Appunni's search is for a father. Even his attempt to reclaim his mother's *taravad* is nothing more than an attempt to replace the memory of his father with another kind of authority. And interestingly enough, he finds his father figure in Saithalikutty, the murderer of his father and a Muslim.

As was noted before, the Muslim man is at once presented as the 'other' of Nair masculinity (exemplified by Konthunni Nair) as well as the representation of the modern in the beginning of the novel. The entrepreneurial qualities of the Muslim community are commented upon many times in the novel. The first signs of modernity in Kudallur are the developments in the shop run by Yusuf.

> Lamps have been lit in the shops. Most of them are old 'fourteen number' lamps. *Only Yusuf's shop has a petromax lamp*. That is the biggest shop in the village. It is only there that crackers are sold at the time of Vishu. A *new tailor has come to the village* from Pattambi. He is the first tailor at Kudallur. He sits in Yusuf's shop sewing *on his machine* (*NK*: 9, emphasis added).

Saithalikutty, who appears many times in the novel at moments when Appunni is completely lost, is another Muslim entrepreneur who has left the village and has been running a shop in the hill area of Wayanad. It is he who, later in the narrative, helps Appunni get a job on an estate. Thus, even though it is the Muslim man who is produced as the 'other' for the Nair man in the earlier moments in the novel, the blurring of this distinction seems to be part of MT's project of imagining a modern Nair male identity. VC Sreejan, in his analysis of the novel argues that, Saithalikutty, by suggesting that Appunni has the legal right to his mother's *taravad* and by asking "why do you think we have courts and *vakils* in this country, child?" (*NK*: 98), actually provides the "… *necessary* entry of the notions of rights, legality and systems of legal safety into the scene" (Sreejan 2003: 72, emphasis added).[32] Even though Saithalikutty and the other Muslims are presented merely as catalysts

in a modernizing moment for the Nair man, and despite the fact that the ending of the novel presents us with the modern household in a landscape devoid of outsiders (both Muslims and the lower castes), the narrative does move away from the demonising of the Muslim man as the other. The fact that Appunni is able to forgive Saithalikutty but not his uncle (both of them villains for him for wronging his father and mother respectively), a fact identified by literary critic George Onakkur as a flaw in characterization which creates a feeling that the narrative is non-realistic (Onakkur 1986: 167), can be explained in this context: It is imperative for Appunni to appropriate the economic structures of modernity, exemplified in the narrative of the Muslim man, along with an active denial of matrilineal structures.

Appunni's move from being merely Appunni to being recognized as Appunni Nair (and later to being called VA Nair during his days working on the estate) is initiated by Saithalikutty. Saithalikutty refers to Appunni as Appunni Nair in the same letter that informs the latter that he might have a job waiting for him at the estate (*NK*: 157).[33] Thus the moment of Appunni's growing up – growing up to be worthy of a caste name – and his movement outside the village, happen at the same time. It needs to be noted here that the undervaluing of the matrilineal past throughout the narrative is not a disengagement with caste identity. It is rather the reformulation of the caste identity, one that is recast in the wake of new social structures – new structures of power and economy. This is the 'modern Nair man'. The contrast between the triumphant Appunni and the tragic heroes of the later novels written by MT is also worth mentioning here as it has implications for the way the modern Nair man is imagined. In *Asuravithu* (1962), the protagonist Govindankutty's tragedy is signalled by the fact that he goes beyond redemption as the crisis he faces vis-à-vis the changes in matriliny makes him convert to Islam, while in *Kaalam*, Sethu does not engage with his own caste location as he gives up the village for the city and is lost in its treachery. These two novels do suggest that the mobility which is desirable for the modern Nair man has its limits. Caste and religious identities are still important for him in negotiating modernity.

The various directions that Appunni take in the novel are significant for the future envisaged for the modern Nair man. He leaves his mother, fails to reconnect with the *taravad* and its matrilineal history, and ends up on an estate as a clerk with the help of a Muslim. A process of negotiation with the rapid shifts in the social structure is evident in these movements. He continues the tradition in which the production of Madhavan in *Indulekha* as the ideal man was executed. Appunni travels out of his traditional space in order to work at the estate, but returns to reclaim his tradition – only to modernize it. For Madhavan it was Indulekha who had to be reclaimed, and for Appunni it was a larger heritage, which had to be rebuilt.

We saw earlier how a text produced in the late 1950s has to produce a past in order to reclaim it as a future, in comparison to one produced in the late 1890s where the imagining of a future is at issue. In *Indulekha*, as in *There Comes Papa*, the radically changed/changing system, similar to what is evident in *Naalukettu*, is absent for obvious reasons. In the former set of texts, what was being made possible was the "engendering of individuals" (Devika 1999) in the context of the reform of a community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[34] Thus the reform of the system was carried out to produce modern subjectivities rather than to restructure the system itself. By the time *Naalukettu* got written, it was possible for the narrative to suggest that the social structure itself needed remoulding. The individuals, MT seems to tell us, can mould themselves differently only with an active re-imagining of social structures.[35]

The triumphant Appunni, at the end of the novel, executes the most symbolic of actions for the new Nair man. He buys his mother's *taravad*, presents it to his mother, and announces his decision to break it down to build a new house:

> The young man stopped when he reached the front step and said to the woman behind him:
>
> "Mother, you can go in."
>
> Noticing her hesitation, he said, "You can go in confidently."
>
> The thin woman, hair streaked in grey, stepped into the front yard.
>
> ….
>
> Getting inside, the woman said.
>
> "It's so dark inside, Appunni"
>
> "It's dark even in the daytime. The ghosts of the *karanavars* must be moving around in here."
>
> Mother looked at him anxiously.
>
> "Mother, don't be afraid. We should make arrangements to break down this *naalukettu*. *We need a small house with a lot of air and sunlight*."

> "Break it? The goddesses reside in here."
>
> *He laughed loudly*. The sound of the laughter echoed on the broken walls, the dilapidated pillars and the dark corners of the house. (*NK*: 190-191, emphases added)

Appunni's laughter at the mention of the Goddess could be seen as a re-enactment of the earlier response of Konthunni Nair towards the Goddess during the dice game. This irreverence is an act that reclaims a history – one that needs to be reshaped into a future – a modern one – where one resides in a space "with a lot of air and sunlight". The call is one to imagine new spaces which are more inclusive and open to the changes around it, unlike the closed and exclusive nature of the *taravad.* Here domesticity and its space are delinked from the religious, which did govern earlier forms of architecture of Nair households.[36] Contrary to the argument forwarded by Onakkur who, in his character-based study of the novel, suggests that it is the nature of Appunni, unforgiving towards people who had wronged him, that makes him suggest the breaking down of the *naalukettu* (Onakkur 1986: 168), I argue that the last chapter is necessitated by the fact that Appunni sees himself as part of a modern future in which even the memory of the older system has to be erased.

K P Appan argues that the optimism presented by the ending of the novel is weak as it is devoid of "any higher philosophical consciousness or of the shadows of the epic sorrow that is called life" (Appan 1988: 33). Here, Appan, a modernist critic influenced by existentialism, is pointing to a lack in relation to a presupposed notion of radical change that he envisages. Disagreeing with this progressivist reading, VC Harris argues that the ending cannot be considered optimistic at all, as it is based on a "regression from the revolutionary moves made by his father" (Harris 1999: 83). He goes on to suggest that, "in spite of the fact that Appunni's return appears to be a revenge, it is nothing but a reconciliation which is marked by the dark shadows of nostalgia" (*ibid*: 83). It is important to note that Harris also ends up isolating the last chapter of the novel in trying to measure the value of its optimism in relation to the notion of a radical break. The comparison of Appunni with the father, who leaves the traditional space of the Nairs, is done without taking into account the changed conditions within which Nair identity is being negotiated in the novel. Rather than attempt to measure the value of such moves, as is the practice of both Appan and Harris, I suggest that we should elaborate the conditions within which the argument is being made in the narrative.

Madhavan and Indulekha could move to the city of Madras and form a new conjugal unit in *Indulekha* and Konthunni Nair could move out of the *taravad*, whereas Appunni has to build his house on the ruins of a social system in *Naalukettu* to complete the collapse of the older system. It is important to note that Appunni had made the move outside the system, during his days working on the estate, before coming back to his village at the end of the novel. The return is an additional move which should be seen in relation to the developments during the period of the novel and examined vis-à-vis the larger narrative of the novel.

It is evident that the crisis of masculinity presented here is resolved at one level by reorganizing property. This is also evident in the context of a secondary narrative in the novel – the story of Kuttammama, Appunni's uncle. His position in the family, that of the nephew of the *karanavar*, is presented as one of powerlessness since he is doomed to be in the care of his uncle till the latter's death. The rebellion of Kuttammama happens when the *karanavar* is about to throw Appunni, who had left his home and his mother by then, out of the *taravad*. Kuttammama empathizes with Appunni's situation and seems to respond to it in terms of his own emasculation arising out of lack of control over property. He goes on to demand a bifurcation of property and brings in the law in the garb of a *vakil* to oversee this. He says to the *vakil*: "What if the property is shared? Then it's each for himself. Don't advise me otherwise; I am not going to listen. *I am almost thirty-eight years old. I too am a man. In that house, even the kids don't listen to me…*" (*NK*: 105, emphasis added). He goes on to map a caste metaphor onto the notions of masculinity by comparing his propertyless state after years of hard work with the men of the *cheruma* caste who at least get some rice or oil for their work.

The link between caste hierarchy and the discourse of masculinity, where one reinforces the other, is foregrounded in this episode. Here the complexity of the discursive regime of masculinity becomes clear. For Kuttammama, who is negotiating the power structures of what is left of matriliny, has to deal not only with the *karanavar*, that is, his uncle, but also with lower caste men. Here not only is a crisis of masculinity linked to a caste metaphor, caste actually gets articulated in terms of masculinity. Kuttammama's sense of emasculation vis-à-vis his lack of control over property forces him to compare himself to a *cheruman*. As it is emasculation that provides the context for this comparison, I argue that in this instance, caste hierarchy is understood in terms of notions of masculinity. This provides

interesting insights into how in this narrative, normative masculinity is delinked from physical work and strength and tied instead to status and power.

Kuttammama does succeed in breaking the matrilineal household and in creating a nuclear family, but he fails to transform his future, since unlike Appunni, he doesn't have the means (including modern education) to become part of an emerging modern economy. A new nuclear family is produced at the end of the novel – a nuclear family that is constructed in the context of Appunni's complete integration into modernity, and one that will not have to carry with it the shadows of the traditional familial system. This is the difference between the nuclear family that Konthunni Nair (or even Kuttammama) had tried to construct and the one which Appunni did. The latter is complete in the context of an absolute adaptation to modernity which is signified by his occupational mobility, the new form of employment and the construction of the new house.

The other significant aspect in relation to Appunni's masculinity is his relationship with women. Explored in detail in *Kaalam*, the link between masculinity and female sexuality is hinted at in *Naalukettu* in significant ways. Starting from the reform movement within the Nair community, one of the issues that was high on the reform agenda was the regulation of female sexuality by the imposition of new moral codes. The primary cause of concern for the reformers was the immorality attached to *sambandham* in the context of notions of monogamy and marriage circulating through the colonial/missionary apparatus. During the discussions of the Malabar Marriage Commission of 1890 – 1891, the reformers in the Nair community argued against matriliny also on the grounds that such a reform would help in "…protecting the virtue and chastity of women"(Arunima 2003a: 139).[37] The sarcastic representation of the Brahmin Suri Nambudiripad in *Indulekha,* who visits the heroine's *taravad* to have a *sambandham* with her, could be seen as a direct attack on the Nambudiri – Nair sexual relationships that were part of the practice of *sambandham*.

In *Naalukettu*, Appunni's response to the news that his mother Ammukutty, after years of widowhood, is having an affair with Sankaran Nair, offers us some insights into the ways in which women's sexuality came to be understood among the Nairs after the reform initiatives. It is curious that Appunni should react to this news with such vehemence, and run away from home leaving his mother alone, as such a relationship had been a historically accepted practice among the women in the Nair community (remember *muthachi* who had three husbands). This can be explained only through the narrative's strong

resistance to a history that has any positive reference to matriliny. Sankaran Nair's act of moving in with Ammukutty, in keeping with the best of matrilineal traditions, is thwarted by a flood that uproots the latter's house. During the floods, Sankaran Nair saves Ammukutty. The narrative leaves their future ambiguous only after giving us enough indications that they would move in together and live in the man's house, as suggested by the norms of modern conjugality.

The other instance where Appunni encounters female sexuality is when Amminiyedathi[38], his cousin – the daughter of his maternal uncle – initiates him into sex in the maternal *taravad*.[39] It is during a ritual performance to appease the snake gods that Appunni sees the naked torso of Ammini and becomes conscious his desire for her. Dilip Menon argues that this moment is one where "femininity is at its fullness" (Menon 2005: 51) because this encounter happens in a space that is "of natural time and of uninterrupted matriliny"(*ibid*: 51). This incident, Appunni's one real encounter with matriliny, continues to haunt him through the narrative till we see him as a young man on the estate (after which that memory is never replayed) as his first and only sexual experience in the novel and also because of its illegitimate nature as Amminiyedathi is older than him. But again the significant fact is that the encounter happens in the *taravad* – a space where such 'illegitimate' encounters are common. And further, the fact that this encounter is never remembered after his integration into modernity suggests that even this is a memory that has to be erased as being part of a 'fallen' system. His life outside the village is represented as a period of self fashioning- a period devoid of any distractions like romantic/sexual encounters- which would help Appunni become the modern Nair man.

Thus, by making such a radical break from any possible links with his matrilineal past, Appunni emerges triumphant. MT's heroes, of which Appunni is an important example, foreground the possible future of Nair men after matriliny and the emergence of modernity.[40] Here mobility and the resultant refashioning of the self is combined with a reclaimed caste identity marking his success within modernity.

Of Mice and Men… and Matrilineal Rat Traps

Adoor's *Elippathayam* presents a different perspective on the same period in the history of Kerala – a period of the last phases of the collapse of matriliny. A tale of the crumbling joint family in the wake of the collapse of matriliny, this film further backs up the argument that has been proposed, i.e. that masculinity is foundational to the texts dealing with the post-matrilineal, post-land reforms Nair society.[41] Unlike

Appunni in *Naalukettu*, the protagonist of this film, Unni (Karamana Janardhanan Nair), is a middle-aged man trapped inside a disintegrating *taravad* with his two sisters, Rajamma (Sharada) and Sreedevi (Jalaja).

The films opens with the credits sequence which shows in detail the ruined state of a *naalukettu* in eighteen successive shots. Unni, the protagonist is introduced in a sequence where he is shown crying out that a rat has fallen on him. The trapping of this rat is then shown in detail and finally it is drowned in a pond. Furthermore, the film ends with a sequence where Unni himself is caught like a rat and is drowned in a pond with the same haunting background score. Thus rat and trap become metaphors for the Nair man and the *taravad*, which are in a state of collapse. Unni's sisters, and the other characters in the film who visit the *taravad* now and then, constitute the world in which Unni lives. Rajamma, Unni's sister, a more or less mute character in the film who dies just before its ending, points to the collapse of a familial structure that had supported the likes of Unni till then. Her significance as the last of a tradition is signalled by the fact that it is her death and not Sreedevi's elopement that seals its demise. Unni's life, as represented in the film, is devoid of labour and is full of reference to a hierarchical structure of power – a system that apparently provides Unni with a claim to power as the *karanavar* of the family.

Here are some interesting sequences in the film that signal the crisis that Unni is facing. The first is when we see Unni sitting on his chair reading the newspaper. He notices a cow that has entered the compound and is eating the coconut saplings. He refuses to get up from his seat, but makes all kinds of noises to scare the cow away. The cow continues to eat, and finally after long contemplation about the course of action, Unni calls Rajamma for help. She comes and drives away the cow instantly. Unni's complete immobility even inside the *taravad*, is in stark contrast with Rajamma's mobility. A second instance is when Unni is on his way to attend a wedding. He walks for a distance and finally reaches a place on the narrow road with a shallow puddle. We see a young boy with a heavy load on his head easily crossing the water. Unni, on the other hand, is confused about whether to walk over it or not. He thinks about what to do next and finally decides to go back as he imagines the puddle to be an obstacle – the limit to his mobility. A number of such revealing sequences drive home the point of Unni's lack of mobility.

As suggested earlier, from the early days of reform, the mobility of Nair men has been an important part of their relationship with

modernity. Though in a novel like *Indulekha*, it is also the spirit of nationalism that prompts the writer to make the hero Madhavan travel through North India (Panikkar 1998: 139), I suggest that by the 1980s travel and mobility had become metaphorically linked to Nair male identity. The mass movement of (mostly) Nair men towards the various metros like Delhi, Bombay and Bangalore, happened in the first two decades after the formation of Kerala and continued well into the 1980s.

The narrative does not even present Unni as a character who is comfortable and mobile inside the confines of the *taravad*. In contrast to Rajamma, Unni is completely incapable of any action inside the *taravad* and in contrast to Sreedevi he is unable to negotiate the exterior. The different ways in which mobility is represented in the film is evident in a sequence where Sreedevi sees an airplane in the sky. Rajamma runs outside to see it but fails (reminiscent of Durga in Satyajit Ray's Bengali film *Pather Panchali* (1955) who falls down and is thus unable to reach the speeding train along with Apu) and the sequence does not involve Unni at all. The sequence is significant in that it is only Sreedevi who is able to move out of the *taravad* later in the film. Rajamma's lack of movement to the outside, on the other hand, is not necessarily because of a lack of desire to do so, but by the inability caused by her complete insertion in the domain of matriliny and the *taravad*.

The only character in the film to display any marker of modernity is the Gulf-returned Mathaikutty. While the women, especially Sreedevi, are charmed by him, Unni responds to him with full sarcasm. His response is that of the typical traditionally landed elite to the newly rich. The aspirant to modernity in the film is definitely Sreedevi. She, unlike Rajamma who waits for a relationship to happen, is in love with someone and finally elopes. It is interesting that Unni is not very upset about this. He is the one who has to witness the completion of the collapse of the joint family and he seems to be taking it as his historic responsibility. The film thus presents a clear binary between the world of the *taravad* and the outside understood in terms of pre-modern and modern.

It needs to be noted that unlike in MT's work, here it is the younger woman and the Christian man who represent a modern future. The Nair man is by definition outside the reach of this modernity. The one Nair man in the film who is the representative of the future modern is not presented in a good light. Ravikuttan, Unni's nephew who displays the markers of modernity in his clothes and his habits, is shown as a caricature. In his reading of the film, film critic I Shanmughadas claims that it is Ravikuttan who symbolically breaks the traditional authority vested in Unni when he breaks his torch (Shanmughadas 2001: 10).

Unni's emasculation is presented in the film in his inability to respond to Meenakshi, a woman of the lower caste who makes very overt advances to him. One such incident is followed by Unni looking at an advertisement for an aphrodisiac in the newspaper. This emasculation, presented in the form of sexual inability, is related to his immobility. The caste inflection of the narrative is also foregrounded in this instance, where immobility gets tied to the inability of the Nair man to have a relationship with a lower caste woman (the most 'natural' sexual encounter considering their social positions!). Every other character in the film who is mobile – this includes Sreedevi, Ravikuttan and even Meenakshi – seem to be comfortable while dealing with their desires.[42] Unni's inability to channel his own sexual desire in the film is symptomatic of a larger crisis. This is the crisis of immobility – physical and historical.

The crisis faced by Nair men is understood as one related to an inability to adapt to modernity. This presentation of the problem is visible in other films of Adoor also. In his first film, *Swayamvaram* (1972), Adoor narrates the story of a couple who have eloped from a village to a city. The inability of the protagonists to adapt to the life in the city culminates in the death of the hero Viswam. The last freeze frame of the film is of the wife, after the death of her husband, looking at the camera, which suggests that the end is open for interpretation. Such an ambiguous end suggests that the problem of adaptation is something that she will have to deal with head on, unlike her husband who has left the narrative in failure. The sequences at the beginning of *Swayamvaram*, where both Viswam and his wife are shown visibly excited about their future together, are shot entirely inside a moving bus, foregrounding the link between mobility (the space of the bus) and modernity. Sreedevi's escape from the *taravad* and Unni's death could be seen as paralleling this representation in the earlier film. Thus it is interesting that in Adoor's early films it is the women who are endowed with the responsibility of negotiating modernity.[43]

The two issues that we have been tracking in relation to masculinity – that of family and female sexuality are central thematics in Adoor's film. The sexuality of Meenakshi and the desires of Rajamma and Sreedevi are central to the overall sense of crisis that the film presents. Unni's inability to respond to the love letter that he finds on Sreedevi's table is significant. The cut away from the love letter to Rajamma – a cut that follows Unni's eyes – is telling in this context. It depicts his acknowledgment of female sexuality but also his inability to deal with it. He cannot survive without Rajamma. In two separate sequences in the film Unni is shown waiting for hot water to be prepared for his bath. In the first Rajamma makes him the hot water but he complains that it has gone lukewarm. In the second instance he is awaiting the preparation of hot water and Rajamma is ill. His elder sister Janamma who is visiting refuses to indulge him and leaves him with his oiled body. Janamma is a woman who has moved out to her husband's house but would like to be part of the economy of her own *taravad*. She is presented as a scheming character (played by Rajam K Nair, an actress known for her vampish character roles), whereas Rajamma who remains in her house in the best of matrilineal traditions is presented in a sympathetic light (played by Sharada who is popularly called *dukhaputhri* or the 'ever-sad daughter' in Malayalam cinema).

Unni is trapped in the rat trap of matriliny – the *taravad*. Like all rats who continue to thrive in ruins, Unni is not dead after he is drowned like a rat in the pond. The torch, broken by Ravikuttan by the end of film, is the only remnant of the life of traditional authority which Unni is left with. We encounter this torch being used by a number of characters at various points in the film where we see it used to arrest the movement of others. But with that torch, he can at best illuminate himself for the spectators, by the end of the film. The move by the end of the narrative to change the spectatorial response from sarcasm towards Unni to empathy with his condition makes the film a tragedy. Adoor's film, I argue, represents the 'tragic' end of a man signalling an equally 'tragic' end of a system. Let me narrate another sequence from the film, which tilts the balance by shifting the identification of the spectator with the outside, to the inside. This is a sequence immediately after Rajamma's death. Unni is shown sitting thinking in his armchair. The shot cuts to the exterior where we see a child trying to run into the compound of Unni's *taravad* and her mother running behind her and preventing her from entering it. With the external world and the *taravad* now separated out as two geographies and the external world isolating the *taravad* and by extension the social system it represents, Unni becomes the recipient of the last blows to matriliny.

I end this discussion of the film with some ideas about the reasons for the change in the way the future for the Nair man is envisaged between the two texts. It is significant that the films by Adoor and the later works by MT show a similar pessimism vis-à-vis the future of Nair men (Menon 2005: 55). What historical developments could have intervened in the period between the late 1950s and early 1980s? One can only speculate, since the issue needs separate and detailed research. The presence of Gulf-returned Mathaikutty in *Elippathayam* could give us some clues in this direction. The change in the economic structures which allowed for men from communities like Tiyyas and

Muslims to move up the economic ladder seems to have hampered the dreams of mobility of Nair men. The limits within which Appunni's mobility is organized by MT in *Naalukettu* could have by the 1980s become restrictive. The negative portrayal of these Gulf returnees in Adoor's early films and in MT's later films like *Vilkanundu Swapnangal* (Dreams to be Sold, dir: Azad 1980) could be an indication of the difficulties faced by Nair men in the wake of a production sector which has now moved away into the Persian Gulf.[44] A detailed discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Masculinity and Matriliny

It is clear that the narrativisation of matriliny in the texts under discussion has depended heavily on questions of masculinity. The crisis engendered by the collapse of the matrilineal households is represented here as a crisis of masculinity. While MT in the late 1950s attempts to imagine the possibilities of a historical negotiation, Adoor participates in the decline of Nair dominance narrative through his protagonist Unni who is unable to negotiate change. The ruins of matriliny are the backdrops of both these texts. But it is very clear that in *Naalukettu* what is being represented is the possibility that the *taravad* itself could be demolished to build a modern house, whereas in *Elippathayam* the modern possibilities lie outside the physical space of the *taravad*. Unni's re-emergence from the water like a wet rat at the end of the film suggests that the ruins of the *taravad* or its memory will survive as a space where the spectres of matriliny continue to exist.

The ways in which the memories of matriliny and the tropes that constitute Nair modernity survive in the region is yet to be studied. This could be done only by tracking the specific discourse of modernity that sustain the imagining of a region we today call Kerala. It would not be surprising at all if we come to conclude that the torch that was shone to illuminate Unni's face at the end of Adoor's film actually brings to relief the face of 'Malayalee modernity'. The casted nature of this discourse is yet to be unravelled. That indeed is the next step.

Notes:

1. One of the significant differences is the introduction of a set of qualities that were understood as masculine as feminine. This discursive move complicated the spatial ordering of the public and the private.
2. Reform movement among the lower castes in Kerala had a history different from that of the upper castes, especially when it comes to the foregrounding of issues of womens emancipation. The primary issue that was being addressed in the reform movements of lower castes included the movement to dine together and to abolish untouchability and unseeability.
3. The suggestion is that the work on nationalism and other historical moments have not addressed the masculine nature of the public sphere that was constituted at the time. There has been some work that has looked at the emerging public sphere during colonialism with masculinity being one of the many issues that constitute it. These works does not think through the nature of this relationship. For example, see Gupta 2001.
4. The literature on the public sphere in Kerala often follows the Habermasian model of the emergence and fall of the 'bourgeois public sphere' (Habermas 1989), with the significant difference that it is the proletariat and not the bourgeoisie who has the role of the protagonist here. This narrative is usually followed by the story of its collapse because of the influence of popular culture (Ramachandran 2006).
5. It is my contention that there is a larger significance for the unravelling of Nair modernity for understanding the history of modern Kerala. I argue that the normative modernity that is taken for granted in Kerala is a rather secularised form of Nair modernity which has in time gained hegemony over other experiences of modernity in the region. The elaboration of this argument will have to be undertaken as a separate project. Such an exercise is beyond the scope of the paper.
6. One of the significant problems with the emerging literature on masculinity in India is the conflation of studies on men and studies on masculinity. A detailed critique of the anthropological studies on men is beyond the scope of this paper. For more sophisticated formulations of the question of gender and masculinity, see Butler 1993, 1995; Halberstam 1998.
7. The use of the crisis narrative' in the study of masculinity has been a contentious issue. Many have suggested that taking up the crisis narrative seriously only validates male power (Collier 1995: 13-17). On the other hand, I argue that the crisis narrative should be taken up seriously as a trope that sustains the discourse of masculinity. The issue surely is not one about whether there exists a 'real' crisis, but about understanding its deployment in the discourse.
8. See works by Saradamoni 1999; Arunima 1996, 2000, 2003b; Kodoth 2001a, 2004a; Gough 1952, 1959; Fuller 1976; Jeffrey 1975 and others.
9. The history of matriliny coupled with statistics regarding female literacy has contributed to the production of Kerala for people outside the state as a 'female dominated society'. One of the common mistakes that allows for such a construction is the popular conflation of matriliny with 'matriarchy'. Matriliny refers to a system where property is handed down through the mother, where as 'matriarchy' refers to a system where social/ family

structure is controlled by the mother (as opposed to patriarchy, which is the rule of the father).

10 A *sambandham* typically involved the giving of a cloth to the Nair woman by the man – Nair or Nambudiri. This ritual was called *pudamuri*. Though *sambhandham* was more often than not arranged by the families, both the man and the woman had the liberty to discontinue the relationship at any point, and the male members of the woman's family had little say in the matter. It should be noted that it would be erroneous to call this conjugal system a marriage, as marriage is a specifically modern arrangement based on modern law.

11 The extent to which the women had a say in the matters relating to ownership and management property in the matrilineal system is a contested issue. But the various authors on the topic do agree on the fact that there was some amount of control available to the women.

12 Though matriliny was practiced by many social groups other than the Nairs, the present paper focuses only on the latter. This choice is made because of the Nair-centredness of both academic and popular writing on the subject.

13 The role of both the colonial government and the princely state are important as Kerala as we know it today was divided into three regions, the princely states of Travancore and Cochin, and Malabar which was part of the Madras Presidency.

14 For example, the Syrian Christian community, one of the communities which was patrilineal, was projected as an example of modernity and unexplained connections were made between their prosperity and the fact that they were patrilineal.

15 The Kerala Joint Hindu family System (Abolition) Act was passed in 1975 and came into effect from 1 December 1976. One of the significant clauses of the Act is the one to convert joint ownership of property into co-ownership. This allowed individual members of the family to claim their share in the property as their own.

16 Land reforms in Kerala is another fascinating area that is understudied. The land reforms initiated by the first Left ministry in Kerala, and put in place during the second Left ministry in 1969 abolished tenancy. A ceiling of 10 acres was fixed for a family of five. For discussion on land reforms in Kerala see Radhakrishnan 1989, Raj and Tharakan 1983. For a discussion of land reforms in Kerala in relation to issues of gender see Kodoth 2001, 2004 b. Critics have argued that land reforms have in no way changed the status of the agricultural labourers from the lower castes in the state. See Prakash 2005; Kunhaman 2005.

17 Most of the narratives, both fictional and otherwise, present the role of the nephew as a figurative one. He is supposed to inherit. But when the uncle who is the *karanavar* is alive, the accusation has traditionally been that the fruits from the *taravad* property are spent on his own children – who usually reside in his wife's house. Thus the nephews are usually presented as an unhappy and dissenting group.

18 M T Vasudevan Nair is one of the most prominent novelist and short story writers in Malayalam. He has written nine novels and published a number of short stories. He has also written one play, and a number of articles and travelogues. Winner of the coveted Jnanapith Award, Nair has also written and directed many award winning films.

19 Adoor Gopalakrishnan is the first of the 'New Malayalam Cinema' directors. His first film was *Swayamvaram* (1972). He has directed nine features and has worked as director or editor in many documentaries and short films. A master realist, his films are internationally renowned.

20 *Naalukettu* refers to the architectural style used in the construction of Nair *taravads*. These were big houses with an open space in the middle and with small temples attached. Bigger versions were called '*ettukettu'*, '*pathinarukettu'* etc. For a discussion of this form of architecture, see Moore 1990 and for an analysis of matrliny through through the organisation of the *taravad*, see Moore 1985. For an analysis of the novel using the architectural style as an entry point, see Harris 1999: 80-85.

21 Most of the commentators, after referring to the specific caste location of these texts, try to argue for the universal relevance of these texts in an attempt to present them as 'great' works of literature and cinema. For an example of such a writing in relation to MT, See Premachandran 1996.

22 The narrative produced by Robin Jeffrey about the Nairs and the decline of their dominance does not pay attention to the ways in which their dominance was reorganized in relation to modernity. I suggest that instead of a decline, Nair dominance in Kerala shifted its base from the economy of Kerala to the emerging national economy, in the period after independence.

23 All quotations are from the 16th impression of the novel published by Current Books (Thrissur) in 2003. Translations, if not mentioned otherwise, are mine.

24 Most commentators on matriliny have noted the importance of this painting to the extent that Arunima's book on matriliny takes its title from it and the painting adorns its cover. Art historians have understood Ravi Varma's oeuvre as a location where renaissance realist conventions met the social reform/nationalist discourse in India.

25 The absent father is a trope often seen in MT's writings. A number of his short stories testify to this fact. The most interesting example of the writer's fascination with this idea is in his novel *Randamoozham* (The Second Turn, 1984a), a retelling of the *Mahabharata* from Bheema's viewpoint, which begins with a chapter where the protagonist Bheema imagines his father to be the god of wind, Varuna (the novel suggests that the divine

origin theory of the Pandavas is a myth and that they have real human parents – Bheema's being a tribal king). There cannot possibly be a better way to represent an absence than to refer to the wind. The absence of the father is always referred to as an important factor in MT's life. During his childhood, his father worked in Ceylon. See Basheer 1996: 13.

[26] The *karanavar* is not of much consequence to the construction of masculinity in the novel as he is of an older order. The new emerging masculinities had to be produced not in relation to a past but a present that functions as its other.

[27] Ansari produces a linear history without breaks about the othering of the Muslim man in Malayalam literature in two separate essays mentioning the works of Chandu Menon in the 1880s, Kumaran Asan in the 1920s, and NS Madhavan in the 1990s. Devika's attempt to read Uroob's novels in the same light has added to this argument. See Devika 2005. Though I am inclined to agree with Ansari that modernity in Malayalam literature is narrated by a process of othering Islam in most cases, I would like to suggest that there are significant shifts in the representation of the Muslim in Malayalam literature over the years. Vaikom Muhammad Basheer's writings and its influence on later Malayalam literature are yet to be investigated in relation to this. MT's own construction of Basheer as a father figure in his various writings is also worth remembering here. See for example Nair 1984b: 67-80.

[28] Ansari's critique of NS Madhavan's story sparked off a significant debate in Kerala in relation to what was termed 'communalisation of literature'. Madhavan then went on to suggest that it is the fact that Ansari hails from Hyderabad, for him a den of Islamic fundamentalists, which is behind the critique. I submit that the response Ansari received only goes to prove his point about Malayalam literature where the Muslim always embodies undesirable modernity.

[29] The only novel featuring a female protagonist that written by MT is *Manju* (The Mist 1964) which is not a 'growing up' novel. Significantly the narrative is not directly about the Nair community and is set in Dehra Dun. The novel employs the stream of consciousness mode to discuss 'hope' and 'waiting' as the basic conditions of human existence.

[30] This is true of his short stories also. Interestingly, MT has, in many of his memoirs and interviews, narrated the impact made on him by his own move from the village to the city of Palghat during his youth. The discussion of the child protagonist in MT's works has more or less concentrated on the child as representing 'innocence' and as an unmarked being. See Bevincha 1996. P Soman argues that the heroes of MT's works, especially the child protagonists, are modelled on his own life (Soman 1996: 110-111).

[31] It is a very compelling thought to think of MT's work as following from *Indulekha* (1889), as a number of tropes from the former seem to reappear in the latter. In *Indulekha*, the protagonists Madhavan and Indulekha move out of the matrilineal household to set up a modern nuclear family. The possible parallels with Appunni's parents are apparent.

[32] Sreejan's understanding of the idea of 'necessary entry' is different from the meaning that I attribute to it. His entire reading of *Naalukettu* is based on the idea that it is a narrative about fate, as exemplified in the coincidences and chance happenings in it. He relates chance to divinity and spirituality. I would submit that the necessity for the entry of law and the notion of rights can be understood only in the light of modernity.

[33] It is not only the reader who notes the reference to Appunni as Appunni Nair. Appunni himself points it out as an important moment in his life.

[34] Devika has argued that the public discourse that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Kerala had the construction of modern gendered identities as its primary objective. Based on a set of qualities termed internal and natural, gender as a system that governed social order was legitimised over caste and community (Devika 1999: 26-46). See also the article by P Udayakumar on the emergence of a notion of interiority in the writings of the social reformers of the Ezhava (Tiyya) community in Kerala. See Kumar 1997.

[35] MT's attempt differs from Chandu Menon's in that the former attempts to universalise his narrative in sharp contrast to the very community-based location of *Indulekha.*

[36] Dilip Menon suggests that this is the moment when Appunni becomes the representative of the universal human (Menon 2005: 55). Though I agree with this observation to the extent that the moment does represent him as the embodiment of modernity, the unmarked universal, I suggest, as discussed above, that the transformation happens much earlier. This happens at the time of his moving to the estate, where his travel beyond the local also marks the moment of his newly organized caste identity.

[37] For detailed discussion of the Malabar Marriage Commission see Arunima 2003a: 128-156; Kodoth 2001a: 362-384.

[38] The name is Ammini and the suffix *edathi* suggests that she is elder.

[39] The daughter of the maternal uncle is considered to be the traditionally prescribed bride for a Nair man. Though rare in contemporary times, such a relationship can still obtain immediate sanction among the Nairs.

[40] Sethu, the protagonist in *Kaalam*, on the other hand, presents us with the complexity of MT's heroes. His settling down in the city does not allow him

to be triumphant like Appunni in his encounter with modernity, but leaves him in a state of despair and remorse. This happens because Sethu, unlike Appunni, imagines the space outside his village as an end rather than a means to survive.

[41] Following the discussions around 'new cinema' in India, *Elippathayam* was seen as a film about the crumbling of the feudal system in Kerala. It was never seen as a narrative on the Nair community. For a critical inquiry into 'new Indian cinema', see Prasad 1998: 188-216, and for a discussion of art house cinema in Kerala, see Muraleedharan 2005.

[42] It needs to be noted that the representation of the lower caste woman as promiscuous follows a long tradition of representation in literature and cinema. See Rowena 2002: 34-37 for a discussion of the representation of Dalit women in early Malayalam cinema. Thus Sreedevi's relationship and elopement is realistically portrayed in the film where as Meenakshi's desires seem to be slightly caricatured. In the realist conventions of cinema like Adoor's this mode of representation could be read only as his commentary on the 'reality' that he tries to represent.

[43] It is more than a coincidence that the other character in *Swayamvaram* who is comfortable with modernity is Smuggler Vasu, who deals with goods smuggled from the Gulf. The men who have moved up in life by adapting to modernity in both the films are non-Nair men who have connections with the Gulf.

[44] It is only in the late 1980s, once it became evident that the remittances from the Gulf were what was sustaining an economy within Kerala, and when the film industry itself was being supported by producers who had links in the Gulf, that we see narratives with Nair men longing to go to the Gulf emerging in Malayalam cinema. Mohanlal has played the unemployed Nair hero planning or even actually going to the Gulf in a number of films, especially in those directed by Sathyan Anthikkad. For discussion, see Radhakrishnan 2006.

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Being Woman and Marginal in Contemporary Kerala

J. Devika

I

What is like to be a woman, and to lead a marginal existence within the present-day Malayalee society? Being both, I have asked myself this question many times. Of course, there are two questions, not really reducible to each other : in what sense am I woman? and in what sense am I marginal to Malayalee society?

Obviously, marginality exists in shades and shades. In Kerala, especially, we have divided marginal existences into 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' forms. This is however, not to deny the fact that the line dividing 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' forms of marginality has always been rather thin. The 'acceptable' marginal, in order to gain a degree of tolerance, must forever prove that he or she has not fallen into the ranks of the 'unacceptable' — only then will she/he be entitled to 'uplift', receive aid, welfare. All of these are available only to 'acceptable' marginals. However, the dividing line does operate, and often quite forcefully, and the above observation only confirms this.

Having been exposed to development talk for some years now, I am familiar with the term 'outlier', which is how marginality is conceived within the Kerala Model discourse, an important element in the reigning ideology of the modern elite in Kerala. 'Outlier' refers to those social groups, which have relatively poor access to social development — mainly to education, health, and the chances for upward mobility these promise. They are marginal mainly in the economic sense, in other words, they inhabit the waiting room of development. 'Outliers' are defined in relation with the dominant ideas of the good life, justice, and community; they lack the economic resources and the social and intellectual capital to achieve these.

There is a whole history to be written of how certain social groups came to inhabit the social and discursive spaces of the 'outlier' in Kerala. This will probably begin from the early colonial period, when earlier forms of marginality began to be transformed into 'outlier' status. Take, for instance, Francis Buchanan's characterisation of the Nayadis of Kerala:

> A wretched tribe of this kind buffeted and abused by everyone, subsisting on the labour of the industrious is a disgrace to any country; and both compassion and justice demand that they should be compelled to gain a livelihood by honest industry and be elevated somewhat more nearly to the rank of men.[1]

The Nayadis were certainly among the worst-oppressed in the hierarchy of caste; yet it is doubtful whether they were cast out in these terms — as 'useless' and 'parasitic' — before. Even in the 1960s, when groups of Nayadis still moved through Kerala's countryside, they were often recognised as possessing important skills, such as catching rodent pests, which were also eaten by them. Farmers often allowed them to camp in their land, so that they were ridden of pests and snakes. The larger socio-economic changes which precipitated the gradual destruction of social and economic relations that bound nomadic groups such as the Nayadis to the settled groups in the countryside led to the destruction of their livelihoods — or, in the elite perception, to their becoming 'useless'. Another chapter would probably start from the victories of leftist politics of the 1970s when these people were 'settled' in 'colonies' along with other formerly landless people: [2] Their established ways of life destroyed, their culture and social practices long-since denigrated as 'barbaric' or 'useless', subject to the state's and mainstream civil society's 'uplifting' endeavours, and little access to or equipment for emergent opportunities, these groups became 'outliers'. They (among other groups, like tribal and coastal communities) are, however, the 'acceptable' outcasts, upon whom the elite constantly exercises their pastoral authority. Their oppression, rights, 'voices', and redemption are unendingly discussed in elite circles, though such discussion rarely moves beyond the terms of debate set by the state, elite intellectuals, or technocrats. *Deprivation*, then, defines their condition as marginals; they become outliers through processes of deprivation.

The 'non-acceptable' forms of marginality, especially of women, are, so to say, *abject*. By 'abjection', I mean the social process by

which the normal, the possible, the dominant, the sensible, and the mainstream are produced and supported by the creation of a domain of abnormality, impossibility, subservience, and marginality. Abjection, remarks Judith Butler, "designates "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" zones of social life which are nonetheless densely populated by those who are not enjoying the status of subject, but whose living under the sign of the "unlivable" is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject.[3] Thus abjection refers to a very specific form of social exclusion and marginality, that which involves the shaping and designating of a domain of abnormality and impossibility.

Feminist re-searching into the history of the shaping of modern gender and patriarchy in Kerala in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has shown how the currently-dominant Womanly subjectivity emerged in and through a variety of discourses and institutions, including social reformism, the new patrifocal family, and radical politics.[4] This emergence clearly involved processes of abjection; thus, as the contours of the ideal modern wife began to emerge, so did the prostitute-figure, upon which several abjected qualities, such as sexual desire, were projected. It must be remembered that this latter figure was certainly not the *veshya* of classical sanskrit texts. Indeed, the elitist shaping of ideal modern womanhood in Malayalee society involved the 'disemboweling' of the *veshya*-figure. The latter's aesthetic and cultural attributes were removed, their allusions to sexual desire sanitized, and quickly absorbed into elitist ideal womanhood.[5] The prostitute-figure that emerged as the Other of the ideal modern Woman carried in herself all the 'waste' — she was not merely the Not-Woman, but the waste-dump of the Womanly ideal, into which were thrown such attributes as sexual desire and pleasure.

Unlike the 'outlier', the prostitute, the 'incurable' feminist, the same-sex identified person, the HIV/AIDS patient ,[6] and others — being abjected marginals — are rarely discussed (but frequently denounced) in the elite public. It is not surprising that many (elite) readers registered their reaction to the recent (rather acrimonious) debate over sex work in the Malayalam press as one resembling nausea. As Julia Kristeva has brilliantly argued, abjection is often involved with thoroughly visceral reactions. The abject is always something the dominant — individual bodies, bodies of people — tries to remove continually, for they are identified as sources of anxiety, discomfort, and most important, the dissolution of clear-cut boundaries. Abjects, she remarks, are often — like sweat, dead skin, or processes like ageing, but the abject often elides with the non-human too (like cockroaches or the skin on milk). The abject causes a great deal of anxiety precisely because it contains elements, which are necessary aspects of living, which, however, also cause anxiety. [7] Drawing on Kristeva, one could well argue that the objects of society may include stigmatized groups, which may signify 'dirt' and 'disorder' to the dominant. The prostitute-figure is saturated with sexuality and desire, both of which are necessary aspects of living; the will to order, however, demands that they be abjected. The abject, therefore, remains beyond the pale of reformist efforts.

Perhaps one could argue under post-Gulf migration conditions, combined with the impact of globalization in contemporary Kerala, abjection as a mode of marginalization acquires renewed strength. Indeed, if one takes even a cursory look at the transformation of geographical space in Kerala, the abhorrence of touch and the accentuation of vision that Zygmunt Bauman talks about would be in ample evidence.[8] The decline of neighbourhoods, the ubiquitous concrete walls separating homes (which replaced the bush-fences), the rising presence of walled enclaves, renewed drives to declare 'beggar-free' urban spaces, the ever-increasing 'capsular society', which consists of people living their lives mostly in 'capsules'[9], all indicate the thrust to distantiate and order people's interactions in geographic space. Indeed, coeval with this change is the tendency to blur the already-blurred dividing line between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' marginals, pushing ever-more groups from the ranks of the outliers into the ranks of the abjects. Those who are deprived and female are obviously the worst affected. This was quite visible in the public discussions around the suicide of a young dalit student of engineering, Rajani Anand, which followed the denial of support for her studies by the educational authorities, in which the question whether the dalits should be recognized as outliers or as abjects was implicitly posed. However, Rajani had to prove her outlier status in another way too: official investigations into her death included finding out whether she was still a virgin. As if the confirmation of Rajani's status as a deprived person and her location within an outlier required proof of her 'sexual purity'.

Since modern marriage functions as the institution that marks women as chaste (and hence closer to the feminine ideal) or wanton (closer to the prostitute-figure), those women who transgress the boundaries of this institution, irrespective of whether they actually engage in commercial sex work or not, are identified as closer to the prostitute-figure. Here too, there are 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable'

forms of marginality: the widow (and to a considerable extent, with certain crucial conditions including age, education and employment, and residence, the unmarried woman) is the 'acceptable marginal', while the divorcee remains the 'unacceptable' variety. These categorizations structure our readings of our socio-cultural past in an extraordinarily strong way. Thus it is common practice in popular writings and films in Malayalam to depict women in earlier marital arrangements, which were prevalent among many matrilineal social groups, as promiscuous, greedy for pleasures of all sorts, and unloving. Not surprisingly, for a woman who is only approaching middle age, rejecting an abusive marital relationship involves a dangerous border crossing, quite unthinkable without emotional and economic support from family or friends. For on the other side — the terrain of the marginals, hardly anything can be taken for granted. A tolerable existence is possible only through putting into operation a series of strategies against the elitist bulldozer, and the stability gained through these is necessarily fragile, and needs to be guarded constantly.

How is the 'incurable' feminist an abject? Here I think that it is important to specify that no feminist lives every moment of her/his life as 'feminist', especially given the fact that most (but, certainly, not all) publicly-identified feminists in Kerala do not belong to 'outliers'. It needs to be pointed out that social inclusion is extended to feminists on accord of their other attributes: we often gain through our class and caste status, our education and employment, and the fact of being respectably married matrons. In other words, when we are granted inclusion to everyday spaces of respectable social life in Kerala, it is on condition that our feminism remains abjected; we are, in those occasions, respectable wives, efficient mothers, or educated and higher-placed members of the group. In contrast, when we vocally and unambiguously assert our feminist politics in these spaces, we instantly feel the force of abjection. Feminism is abjected precisely because it questions set boundaries; it is not amenable to reformism; it raises questions that 'disorder' established institutions, faith and practice. In fact those feminists who stridently question gender difference and rally behind the slogan of equality are abjected all the more — as is amply evident in the case of one of Kerala's finest feminist intellectuals, K. Saraswati Amma. In contrast, those feminists who mount an equally vehement critique of patriarchy, but would espouse the slogan of difference, like Lalitambika Antarjanam and Madhavikutty, are far more acceptable to mainstream society, no doubt because it is relatively easier to disempower them, by reducing their re-visions to the dominant terms of gender difference.

II

If this is the case, how does an upper caste, upper class feminist who is a divorced mother and academic, living on her own, marginal to Malayalee society in general? How is she a woman? I think she will pass Test I. Born upper-caste into an upper-class family, she is obviously neither economically nor socially deprived — she does not belong to an outlier group. But she will fail Test II: in the terms of normal society, she is closer to the prostitute-figure, as a twice-divorced, not-yet-middle-aged woman living on her own. Worse, as an academic and a feminist, she also displays the attributes of the Rational Woman. As I mentioned in the previous section, for most of mainstream Malayalee society, this has been, since long, a monster whose gender can never be determined with any precision. But by virtue of her motherhood and willingness to perform caring labour, she may able to convince at least a few of her eligibility for the status of an 'acceptable' marginal. That is, she must work hard to gain and retain 'acceptable marginal' status. She needs strategies to constantly prove her eligibility for tolerance — to keep on giving hints about her sexually controlled and hardworking self.

How is she a Woman? A pass in Test I is of no help here — if at all, scoring high marks here would be a disadvantage, as it may give her the image of a dissolute social butterfly, a 'society lady'. Possessing attributes of the Rational Woman makes things worse — as it adds a further negative image of an aggressive manhater/career-pusher. Adding to this her failure in Test II ensures that she flunks in the Womanliness-exam. Therefore she needs to put into operation strategies that will help her to gain, again, the 'acceptable marginal' status, and maintain it.

A recent piece of research, which focused on feminists in Kerala and their coping strategies, highlighted some of the strategies through which such a feminist struggled to find space in mainstream Malayalee society. The researcher, Susanne Bygnes, observed that, '... this informant has chosen to live as if married twice, being a *home loving person,* taking good care of her two daughters and keeping in close contact with both her own parents and her in-laws. On the other hand however, she has chosen to leave both of her 'husbands' and determinately pursuing her career as *one of the few woman intellectuals around*. Thus, although she has consciously broken an array of norms by going against *whatever is normal*, as far as gender specific expectations are concerned, she also acknowledges the importance

of keeping good relations with the family'.[10] From Bygnes's account, this woman, clearly located at the margins of mainstream Malayalee society, seeks to challenge her marginality by laying claim to domestic space, and affective ties, which are usually the privilege of the woman located within the institution of marriage. Redoing the space and ties of the family and kin is her means of challenging patriarchal exclusion. She seems to harbour deep suspicions regarding the liberal-individualist vision of individual freedom, preferring, rather, to redo society rather than reject it. In doing so, the researcher observes, she rejects both the nurturing and the masculinist ideals of womanhood.

The similarity between the strategic appropriation of motherhood, family space, and kin ties in this account, and the strategies of combatting marginal existence described recently by the sex-worker-activist Nalini Jameela in her autobiography (2006) are remarkable indeed. The two women are obviously completely separated in their social and cultural location. The outrage expressed by many intellectuals, including leading feminists, when Jameela, a commercial sex worker and activist for sex workers' rights, published her autobiography in 2005 (revised in early 2006) may be read as outrage against an abject group's self-assertion, refusing even the status of an outlier. Jameela decried the state's efforts to 'rescue' 'fallen women'; nor did she crave inclusion within the respectable family-space. Rejecting the language of reformist 'uplift', she demanded that sex workers be regarded as full citizens and productive workers. Yet, while she rejected 'outlier' status defined by state-centric Developmentalism, she did claim subaltern status, by demanding for the prostitutes, the status of sex-workers, membership in the working class (here I define 'subaltern' as the politicized abject). However, the strategies through which she demanded subaltern status were complex; it was not pivoted on a simple rejection of dominant domesticity or reformist uplift. Rather, her effort was to claim for herself both domesticity and socially useful expertise, in effect asserting that these could well be constructed outside 'normal' society and reformism. Thus large sections of her autobiography (2006) are devoted to recounting her child-raising and negotiation with kin. Projecting the image of oneself as 'decent and domestic' has often been a strategy for gaining and retaining social acceptance in Kerala, however, Jameela's strategy is more appropriately read as calling herself 'domestic but not decent'. But while rejecting conventional domestic womanhood, she makes claims to 'rational womanhood' by maintaining that sex work may be rehabilitated as a kind of 'therapy', thus making a bid for a public, knowledge-based identity. Here too the similarity between Bygnes's Malayalee feminist, and Jameela, is palpable: both reject entrenched domestic roles, claim to redo them on their terms, and bid for a public identity focused on knowledge and expertise.

How to make sense of this similarity, especially given the fact that the trenchant attack on Jameela's writing was led by none other than prominent Malayalee feminists? Very clearly, these feminist activists had little in common with the feminist Bygnes interviewed for her study. Given the fact that feminism, even liberal feminism, which underlines current efforts to mainstream gender in governance, is still an abject in Malayalee society, how do we understand their determination to misrecognize the abject status of sex workers? In effect, these middle class, new-elite feminists claimed, in extraordinarily shrill voices, that if Jameela refused 'outlier' status, she must truly be a social scourge, for prostitutes, unless they consent to become 'outliers', must certainly be social scourges. Obviously, these feminists and Bygnes's feminist are positioned very differently vis-à-vis the institution of marriage. Some of the former drew directly or indirectly on their respectably-married-matronly status, blithely assuming that their success in forming less oppressive families was not really connected to their advantageous social position. In doing so, they project themselves as fully within the dominant — but able to transform it in their own terms — and thus entitled to launch a moralistic tirade. Their feminism, thus, would be devoted to making space within the dominant; they would have nothing to do with the immensely difficult project of politicizing marginality, without either glorifying it as 'liberating', or subsuming it under elitist reformism. (Both these moves are equally depoliticizing, as we have seen recently in the debate over sex work in Kerala). 'Inadvertent alliances' come into play here. When these feminists mounted a moralistic critique, the alliances they inadvertently formed with the conservative elite elements effectively effaced their feminism, with the result that for a change, they figured in the debate not as abjects, but as representatives of the elite. In contrast, Bygnes's feminist rejects the armour of respectable marriage, but is not willing to withdraw into an individualist shell; her strategy, therefore, is to set up claim the familial even when located outside the entrenched institution, by drawing up an alternate model. It is, then, possible that her 'inadvertent alliances' are not so much with respectable feminists, as with the abjected, including prostitutes.

Nevertheless, it becomes necessary to take note of the huge gap that separates Bygnes's feminist from Jameela. A crucial difference lies in their distinct efforts to reclaim the social. The former prefers to

retain her elite social circle, and network of kin, however, initiating and maintaining a constant process of dialogue with other members, even as she fashions a drastically different life. Here, her educational and career achievements — as also the fact that her concern for child-care is easily reducible to the terms of middle-class femininity —are the unstated advantages she relies upon. Bygnes's feminist, thus, shapes a 'social' within which she enjoys a certain minimal participation, even though she can never hope for full integration. Quite like the limitedness of the efforts of the polemical feminists (mentioned earlier) to make space within the dominant institution of the family, Bygnes's feminist's reconstruction efforts are limited to making space for herself, in her own terms, within dominant social networks — and this makes apparent its political limits. She does not seek to weave an alternate web of social ties.

In contrast, Jameela's situation involves much more virulent forms of exclusion. Recognizing implicitly that the 'acceptable' outliers would not be willing to build alliances with the abjects — sex workers — Jameela imagines the sex workers' association as a community/ family with affective ties and mutual obligations.[11] Her narration of the incident in which the sex workers were denied space near a dalit colony is telling indeed. The representatives of the dalits evoked precisely the visual similarities between dalit women and the sex workers to convince the latter that they should move. The similarities did not seem to unite; rather they were deployed precisely to harden the boundaries that separated the 'acceptable' outlier-group, and the 'unacceptable' abjects. There is no community into which the abjects can integrate themselves; caught in the disadvantaged side of the respectable/ unrespectable binary, they have to forge their own community.

I think that this has important implications for re-visioning politics beyond Developmentalism and elite sensibilities. The recent debate in Kerala over sex work did illuminate some of the yawning gaps that separate the abjected from elites interested in radical politics even those who would seek to build strategic alliances with the abjected groups. It revealed the will to dominance that so saturates the twin ideologies of the Malayalee new elite: Developmentalism and Reformism. I have argued that even those feminists who could make 'inadvertent alliances' with sex workers do not share their world and the oppression they suffer. This chasm which separates the two, the fragility of empathy — those interested in a new vision of politics cannot but take serious note of these.

Notes:

1. Francis Buchanan, A Journey from Madras through Mysore, Canara and Malabar, p. 144.
2. There is some work from USA and Europe which reveals that the allocation of special colonies for marginal groups works has often worked as a strategy for perpetuating marginalization. See Constance Perin, *Belonging in America*; David Sibley, *Outsiders in Urban Societies*.
3. Judith Butler, Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex", p. 3.
4. See for instance, Praveena Kodoth, "Courting Legitimacy or Delegitimising Custom? Sexuality, Sambandham and Marriage in Late 19th Century Malabar"; J.Devika, "Negotiating Women's Space: Public Debates on Gender in Early Modern Kerala, India"; Anna Lindberg, *Experience and Identity: A Historical Account of Class, Caste and Gender among the Cashew Workers of Kerala, 1930-2000*.
5. J. Devika, "The Aesthetic Woman: Re-forming Female Bodies and Minds in Early Twentieth Century Keralam."
6. It is hardly surprising that the campaigns in the media for the HIV infected very frequently focus on children or wives infected by their husbands. For a perceptive discussion on sexual docility, femininity and being Malayalee, See Sharmila Sreekumar, "Scripting Lives: Narratives by Dominant Women in a Southern State."
7. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.
8. Zygmunt Bauman, *Into the Image*.
9. Lieven De Cauter, "The Capsule and the Network: Notes for a General Theory."
10. Susanne Bygnes, "Questioning Modernity and Development: A qualitative inquiry on Women's emancipation in Kerala, India," p.56.
11. This is not to say that the sex workers' associations in the State have indeed become full-fledged communities in themselves. They have not. Yet it is important that this does not allow us to reject Jameela's imagining of the community as far away from realities. For it is the strategies by which marginal individuals negotiate for a degree of social tolerance that is of issue here. Nor is it possible to say that such imagining is unrealistic in itself.

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The Alluring Music of Labour: Modernity, Migrations and Recreation of the Syrian Christian Community

V. J. Varghese

Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.

(Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora")

Today Christians are the principal cultivators of this country… They have grown as cultivators by buying or leasing those lands discarded by everyone…All the success of the Christians in this regard is the result of their tireless and daring hard work.

(Editorial, *Malayala Manorama,* Aug 1&2, 1950)

Colonial modernity as a new material problematic offered persuasive enticements to the native communities to reconstitute themselves. The process of fashioning the modern involved a dual procedure of unsettling the old order of things and engineering structures that could eventually constitute the new by a qualified abandonment of the old. It is well known that as a result of colonial intervention and a consequent engendering of new social and economic structures, caste and religious groups developed into separate communities, each emphasizing their social and cultural exclusivity. The displacement of categories from their traditional niches also pitted them into competition with each other to establish a place of their own in the new order in one way or the other. The application of colonial technologies, in manifold sites and at multiple levels, resulted in the dissolution of the existing forms of identities and ties of

dependency to produce new forms of affinities, exclusivities and dependencies. An array of economic factors set in motion by the colonial intervention and its concomitant socio-religious compulsions, simultaneously enticing and offering new subjectivity-options to the native people, resulted in the making of novel community configurations. The emergence of a novel Syrian Christian identity by considered inventions too was made possible by the displacement of the old coincided by the creation of new economic and social resources with the arrival and consolidation of colonialism in Kerala. The present exercise briefly consider the transfiguration of the Syrian Christians under the buffets of religious colonialism and then, more importantly, the reconstitution of the community under the problematic of capital and market unfettered by the forces of colonial modernity. If the former exorcised Syrian Christians from their local caste location by providing for its entry into the cognitive world of universal Christianity within a new idiom of religious community, the latter allowed them to resort to self-representations as a community with all affiliated virtues of modernity. The attempt is to capture the contours of the new Syrian Christian subjectivity in the historical context of Syrian Christian migrations for agriculture and mobility within Kerala, with special reference to the migration to Malabar. This would yet again foreground identities as historical formulations, always transient, most often upsetting the primordiality generally attributed to them, and susceptible to the structural changes.

Religious Modernity and Production of the 'Syrian'

It was upon a hierarchical society of interdependent castes with definite economic, social and ritual functions for each category as prescribed by the political and moral landscape of *jati* regime, the new cultural technologies of colonialism were administered. The place and meaning of the so-called Syrian Christians were well defined in the moral and political order of pre-colonial Kerala. They called themselves *Nazranis* or 'Marthoma Christians' and profess their origin back to the tradition of the Apostle St. Thomas. The Church historians are rather convinced that St. Thomas preached the Gospel in the areas of Kerala, converted a number *Nambudiris*, established seven and a half churches and thereby founded the nucleus of Kerala Christian community.[1] Though there is skepticism on the veracity of the tradition as per the protocols of scientificity, it is doubtless that one of the central motifs around which the identity of the Syrian Christian community is constituted has been their consciousness of the apostolic origin.[2] It is also certain that the Malabar Coast had a Christian community at least from the 4th century onwards.[3] The local Christian community has got reinforced by the continuous streams of East-Syrian Chaldean Christian immigrants to the Malabar Coast for spice trade.[4] It was through these immigrant Christians, many of whom choose to settle down here, the native Christian community came in contact with the East-Syrian Patriarchate and subsequently adopted their ecclesiology. This led to the invention of a tradition of 'ordination', by which the East-Syrian, Persian, bishops got the ritualistic right of consecrating native aspirants to priesthood. This was followed by the adoption of Syriac as the liturgical language of the native church, which might have led to a situation where only those who could celebrate the Mass in Syriac were initiated to priesthood.[5] The ecclesiastical communion thus established brought the native Christians of Kerala under the ritualistic jurisdiction of East-Syrian Chaldean Patriarch of Babylonia, who held the Church in India as one of the provinces in the Patriarchate.

The adoption of an alien liturgy did not cut off the Church from its native cultural milieu. The faithful were not much troubled by the theological nuances of the Nestorian Syriac liturgy, as they were concerned much with the Church system developed indigenously. The Chaldean Patriarch's authority as a figure-head was limited to an uneventful vigilance in the canonical and liturgical issues apart from ensuring the communion of the Church with other apostolic Churches. The liturgy even underwent a process of translation in tune with the cultural setting of the region. The actual governance structure of the Church was evolved through a native ratiocination, with independent self-sufficient and self-governed individual parishes at the bottom, prompting many to label the system as 'truly republican'.[6] It is also pointed out that the native Christians enjoyed an amount of civil autonomy under the local kings of Kerala, the 'national' leader of the community, with *Jathikku Karthavyan* administering all civil affairs of the Church with the help of community assemblies namely *Palliyogam* at local level and *Pothuyogam* at 'national' level.[7]

In communion with East-Syrian Patriarch ecclesiastically but with a native administrative structure and practices, the Christians were rather completely built into the material and social life of the region. The majority of the community was engaged in mercantile activities, while the rest in agriculture and territorial soldiering. As either handlers or producers of spices and other commodities for which the Malabar Coast was famous for, the community enjoyed a lion's share of the region's foreign trade.[8] They remained as a single community, untouched by the spasms of internal schisms the Christians had

refrained from any insistent proselytising endeavour that could have ruffled the native social fabric. It is often held that in the native social hierarchy, the Christians occupied a similar status as the higher-castes and enjoyed many social, political and even royal privileges. They religiously observed the rules of ritual purity as the upper layers of the caste hierarchy and thus ensured their 'place' within the shared moral order of the region adjudicated by protocols of purity and pollution.[9] Their social status was often held as equivalent to that of *Nairs*, but enjoyed many privileges and benefits even the *Nairs* were denied.[10] It is said that the native Christians and *Nairs* intermarried as late as late 16th century.[11] Similar to their peers, they were excellent soldiers too and Christian soldiers were also sometimes called as *Nairs*. They were seen as a 'community of soldiers' at the arrival of the Portuguese as Gouvea at the close of the 16th century informs that the native Christians supplied an army of 50,000 gunmen to the Raja of Cochin.[12] Their archdeacon, the appellation given by the Persians to *Jathikku Karthavyan*, had his own *chaver* warrior guards in imitation of the princes and kings of the region.[13] By practicing local customs including a variety of ritual observances for upholding the caste purity the Christians claimed and maintained a high societal status.[14] They, like Hindu nobility, enjoyed the rare privilege to sit before kings, to ride elephants and to use 'muthukuda' (ornamental silk umbrella) for social and religious functions. Their men said to have dressed much like Nairs and their women much more modestly clothed than their Nair counterparts.[15] They were many often honoured patrons and sponsors of Hindu temple festivals and the Syrian Christian right to share the Hindu 'sacred space' was habitually acknowledged.[16] In conjunction with their position in the native society, the kings and chieftains made various privileges, rights and powers to the community from time to time. The best example is that of Tarisapally (Kollam) copper plates, where the governor of Venad granted a piece of land to the church along with many other rights and privileges, of which were the famous 72 privileges.[17] It was also provided for that, if the church felt any grievance it could take law into its own hands and hold in abeyance the collection of duty and weighing fee until the grievance gets redressed.

It was this long held individuality, autonomy and integration of the native Church and the Christians that were threatened with the advent of western Christianity along with the colonial powers. The Portuguese who came equipped with the *Padroado Real* right were deeply perturbed by the 'difference' of the native Christians, manoeuvred forcefully to 'reform' and 'reduce' the St. Thomas Christians in complete uniformity with the Western Catholic Church and bring it under Papacy. Alexis de Menezes, the Portuguse bishop of Goa, who was determined to purge the 'Nestorian heresies' and 'Hindu superstitions', with the support of the Cochin Raja forced the then 'Archdeacon' to convene a synod at Udayamperur (Diamper) in which the native Christians were brought under jurisdiction of the Pope and the Portuguese Jesuits. The Synod anathematised the East-Syrian Patriarch as heretic and schismatic, and the native community was made to swear that they would not admit anyone as their bishop unless appointed directly by the Roman Pontiff.[18] Bishops under the *Padroado* jurisdiction were appointed hastily to rule the native Christians subordinating the native Archdeacon to the former.[19] The synod can be seen as the first tangible historical signpost of religious colonialism, exerted methodically on the native church by way of terminating their individuality, nativity and local integration and bringing it under the Christianity universal.[20]

It took half a century and a little more for the native Christians to revolt against the universalization/latinisation to assert their independence and difference when they rejected the Roman suzerainty with the historic 'Coonan Cross Oath' in 1653. The Church, as a result, lost its long held unity and was fissured into two communities- one in communion with Rome and the other establishing a new allegiance with the Jacobite Church of Antioch. However, a majority of the rebelled community came under the Papacy again following the reconciliation measures under Joseph Sebastini and came to be called incognizantly as *Pazhayakoottukar* (the old community). The other group, whom the Carmelite, Sebastini was unable to win over, came under the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch (West-Syrian) following the work of Mar Gregorios, and came to be known as *Puthankoottukar* (the new community).[21] The internal strife within the native Christian community under external influence along with a new regime conversion resulted in the re-making of the community and seriously undermined the integration of the Christians in the politico-moral order of the region and traditional locations of power. The coalescence had gone further into wreckage by the nineteenth century when the native Christian community, specifically the *Puthankoottu* community came in contact with the spirited proselytising group called the Church Mission Society, whereas another Anglican missionary society, The London Missionary Society worked more among the lower caste people of the southern districts of Travancore. The attempt of the colonial establishments in Travancore and Cochin to transform the Syrian Christian community as a loyal client population and the preferential treatment given to the community for the same antagonised the other communities further.[22] The forceful campaign for the spiritual 'upliftment' of the community by the CMS by

wiping out 'popish superstitions' and 'heathenish practices' led to violence and the breaking up of festivals in many places. The conversions of lower caste people to Christianity by the missionary intervention and the induction of them into the category of 'Syrians' with a compassionate demand for equality of the lower caste converts also greatly disrupted the social status of the Syrian Christians in the traditional society where everyone knew their position. By 1880s, the de-integration was near total with several instances of riots and violence between Syrian Christians and caste Hindus and the former were by design excluded from the Hindu festivals and temple precincts. From then onwards, each categories firmed up their hitherto loose and flexible identities with fixed and exclusive corporate boundaries. It was not only between religious communities, but also between different sectarian communities within Syrian Christianity as one see in the pitched battles between the Jacobite Syrians and Romo-Syrians in 1890s and after.[23]

Meanwhile, concerned with an ambiguous social position within the native society and growing with annoyance under the Papacy, the *Pazhayakoottu* community resorted to a resolute struggle for autonomy under the Roman suzerainty. Their petitions for the continuation of their traditional rites and customs under a bishop of their own rite and nation, arguably in an attempt to reclaim their mislaid place in the native social fabric, was either turned down or deferred by the Roman authorities for a long time under the insistence of the Carmelite missionaries working in the native society who wanted to keep the native Christian faction under absolute Roman allegiance. Relenting to the sustained pressures, the Roman Catholic Church in 1887 decreed a ritual separation of the Syro-Malabar Catholics from the Latins, which was followed by appointment of ritual and national bishops for the former in 1896 and the constitution of a full-fledged Syro-Malabar hierarchy separating it completely from the Latin-Catholic hierarchy in 1923.[24] In 1930, a section under Mar Evanios left *Puthankoottu* group to form themselves into a separate rite in Kerala, who were 'more to the Syrian way', under Papacy. The newly formed group, Syro-Malankara Catholic, got its own hierarchy in 1932 leaving three separate churches under the Roman Catholic Church, two with Syrian and one with Latin rites in Kerala. The *Puthankoottu* community met with their first division even before this when a Protestant group who left the former under the influence of the C.M.S missionaries and came to be known later as the Church of South India. In the second half of the nineteenth century, another group summoning for more reforms with their protestant logics broke away from the *Puthankoottu* community and formed the 'Mar Thoma Church'. The rest were again divided

completely into two in 1911-12 as Orthodox Syrian and Patriarchate (Jacobite) factions, the former declaring itself as totally a native and independent church and later conceding its headship to the Patriarch of Antioch. Numerous little protestant groups who mainly drew their faithful through conversions and many of whom also claim Syrian Christian status, also added to the multifariousness of the Christian tapestry of contemporary Kerala.[25]

Thus the 'reforming' and 'purifying' interventions of Western Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, transformed the native Christina community into battling segments. The induction of lower caste converts too undermined the closely guarded 'purity' of the community, which induced the caste Hindus to distance from them and subsequently driven Syrian Christians and Nairs, who were equal in their social position in the preceding politico-moral order, to loggerheads. However, the down-turn in the society at large did not prevent them using 'Syrian' as a symbol of elitism within the social landscape of Kerala, their difference from the so called lower caste converts to Christianity, the Latin Catholics and the Dalit Christians. The appellation 'Syrian Christians', given by the Dutch missionaries to the community, was thus forcefully claimed by various denominations in the new problematic where their 'place' lost its earlier definitive and symbolic meaning. The vigorous articulation of the identity was an attempt to retrieve their misplaced 'place' in the native moral order resulted out of ruptures within and expansion through induction due to religious and cultural proselytization unleashed by colonialism.

New Material Context and Re-plantation of the Agency

It was concrete transformations in the material context that allowed the Syrian Christians to reinvent themselves into a new subjectivity in tune with the new economic problematic. The displacement from their traditional social niche allowed them to forcefully engage with the new economic order, relieved of the burdens of a debased moral order. The history of this transition is entangled in the history of capital and colonial modernity as it got structured in Travancore, the nerve centre of the Syrian Christian community. The modern history of capitalism, in the present discussion that of agrarian capitalism, in the colonies as one see in the case of Travancore, was not something indigenously generated but was conducted under the political economy of colonial rule.[26] The colonial regime brought major economic and social restructuring of the society which in turn produced new bases of group formation through a process of homogenising and othering simultaneously.[27]

Travancore's induction into the economic modernity was obliged by a systematic hollowing of the native crown and a considered colonial dictation of policies through its Resident. The British were successful in carrying out their plans through the office of the Dewan, appointment to "which was a gift of the Resident" and the governance was in such a way that in all matters of importance "the Resident ruled, the Dewan executed and the Raja sanctioned."[28] By the time the British visibly distanced from the internal affairs of the state by the early twentieth century, Travancore had gone a long way in the direction of change and modernisation. The British policy towards princely states was never pre-set once for all, but changed according to the political compulsions especially at the national level. Accordingly, the political trajectory of colonialism over Travancore has undergone changes from a phase of active intervention (1805-1857) to 'non-interference' (1905-1947) with a significant intermediary period of passive but effective intervention (1858-1905).[29] The native state and its people, entrapped in the colonial impasse and a resultant restructuring of its economy, choose to make use of the new problematic in the shaping but according to their own priorities. The making of a new discourse for change and modernisation in Travancore, an outcome of colonial regulative and pedagogic exercises and a complementary response from the receiving side, normalised the transformation and generated acquiescence for the same. It was this kind of a response that elevated the stature of Travancore in the colonial representations, from a state with "full of abuses" and a "capricious, oppressive and cruel" administration to that of a "model native state."[30]

As soon as establishing its political paramountcy over Travancore, though a series of treaties, the English East Indian Company, in an attempt 'to know' the geography of the native state commissioned a survey in 1816. In tune with the colonial attitude towards native landscape, the survey objectified the same and identified potential untapped areas for exploitation, resource mobilization and spaces that could be transformed into grounds for imperial agriculture with exotic varieties and plantations, to serve the empire.[31] This was followed by a plantation drive unleashed by the British in Travancore to bring the huge extent of land "abandoned to their natural state" to "human activity." This process of a passionate commercialisation of agriculture was done by manufacturing a congenial state policy towards a smooth materialisation of the same. The plantations established by the British in the eastern hills of Travancore, by reclaiming 'untaken' landscape in the form of forests, hills and 'wastelands' to cultivation and production, allowed the flow of global capital into the native economy.[32] Apart from the infiltration of global/metropolitan capital into Travancore, the making of plantations was aimed at serving the British commercial interests, but was done with rhetoric of modernisation of agriculture.

The Travancore state was quick in putting a promotive policy framework in place for the British capitalist planters, resulting in the creation of a new agro-economy that gave preference to the monoculture of 'western oriented' props over the earlier traditions of a poly-culture agronomy. The feeble political manoeuvrability of Travancore due to its subordinate position weakened the princely state and compelled to come out with various promoting interventions which include measures such as granting of land, ensuring labour supply, investing heavily for providing infrastructures to the remote planting regions and putting legal, judicial and police structures in place aimed at protecting the interests of the planters.[33] Along side availing enormous patronage from the Princely state in the form of land grants and tax concessions, the planters resorted to illegal measures encroaching large extent of land, where the native state was often a mute spectator or was forced to endorse the same.[34] Plantations were encouraged irrespective of all abuses, violence and unknown diseases also because of the fact that commercialisation of agriculture and rational utilisation of 'abandoned lands' was promptly getting wider acceptability in the native governmental apparatus and began to be viewed as the fitting developmental model for the state. The native response towards the European plantations and their ventures aimed at using the 'abandoned' landscape was also a result of arguably a befitting reciprocation from the native state- caught in colonial impasse and forced to support the colonial planting enterprises, in parallel it supported native inhabitants to make use of the emerging economic dispensation for their own benefit and progress. The subordination was thus coincided with a more imaginative manoeuvre to attract native population to cultivate for the world market in their 'own' land and thereby make use of the opportunity. The government offered land to the natives with tax concession, arranged for training to those who were interested in plantation agriculture and supplied coffee seeds and plants for ready use. The most important and far reaching step in this direction was the epoch making *Pattom Proclamation* of 1865. The so called 'Magna Charta of Travancore ryots' conferred full ownership rights on the tenant cultivators of the government land, subject to the due payment of land revenue.[35] The proclamation that made the holdings "private, heritable, saleable and otherwise transferable property"[36] inaugurated a new proprietary structure in the state based on individual ownership providing ample space for individual initiative and capitalization. At

another level, adding to the far reaching consequence of the proclamation, it potentially opened up all government land for colonization and appropriation. Since free transferability of the land was permitted, it became the most valued asset in the new economy for capital investment and a marketable commodity.[37] Being the absolute owners of the land, the peasants were entirely free to cultivate whatever they pleased and also were free to sell their properties to mobilise capital for new cultivations and move to new areas. Land shortly became the most desired form of wealth and the major source of livelihood in a reconfigured way.

The 'British Planters Raj' of the latter half of the nineteenth century steadily gave way to ascendancy of native planters by the early twentieth century. The native participation in the planting sector was especially through the Syrian Christians who outnumbered the Europeans in the case of rubber by 1930s both in acreage under cultivation and in the number of estates owned.[38] The Syrian Christians were particularly successful in this regard than any other communities in the Princely state. It was the political and material transformations brought about by colonialism, the challenges posed by it, which impelled the community to respond to a demanding situation supposedly in a befitting fashion. Colonialism and its technologies of change on the one hand displaced them from their traditional socioeconomic niches, but provided hitherto unknown possibilities in the form of a new political economy, that of agrarian capitalism. The characters often attributed to the Syrian Christians, like more 'enterprising', 'dynamic', and enormously flexible than others, should be comprehended by juxtaposing this material milieu in relation to their potencies already historically constituted. The collapse of the native state that always buttressed them also left the Syrian Christians as a community in an intricate situation. The de-militarization of Travancore severely affected them as they couldn't continue with their military service and the British dominated new commercial system jeopardised their hold over the commerce of the state.[39] The community had to recreate itself under such a compelling situation by prudently engaging and making use of the bourgeoning system. The training that many Syrian Christians got under the foreign planters, as supervisors, managers or clerks also allowed them to start their own enterprises and successfully run it. Christians were also at an advantageous position as the regions emerged as rubber plantation zones like North Travancore and Mundakayam already had a large number of Syrian Christians. It allowed them to quickly appropriate all potential lands and exploit it completely.[40] The large-scale land alienation of the

Nairs, especially following the Nair Regulation of 1924, helped the Syrian Christians to appropriate land from them too. The Depression of 1930s provided an opportunity to wealthy and land hungry Syrian Christians to get the lands abandoned by European planters cheaply. Syrian Christians' better access to financial resources than other communities as they had common funding like *chittis* or *kuris*, allowed them to save and borrow as per the demands of the situation.[41]

It was a section of the Syrian Christian community who ventured to challenge the dominance of the British in the plantation scenario of Travancore from a 'nationalistic' position. The intervention through the press, especially through *Deepika* and *Malayala Manorama* powerfully evoked annoyance as "Europeans are [sic] moving heaven and earth to all our available land."[42] Both the newspapers bluntly criticised the Travancore government for promoting the interests of foreigners by neglecting that of the natives. The issue gradually found its place in the discussions of Travancore Legislative Council where its members shared the concern that the new agriculture by the rational utilisation of native land benefited neither the state nor its people. In consequence, the Brooke Bond controversy of 1920s and the fierce debate it generated being the immediate provocations, it was decided to give preference henceforth to the subjects of Travancore in the allocation and registration of lands suitable for plantation cultivation.[43] The rhetoric of 'Travancore land for Travancoreans' was also reinforced by a discourse of patriotism as well, where utilization of 'our own' landscape became a patriotic responsibility and lethargy and lack of enterprise condemnable.[44] Attempts at mutating the native mentality was coincided on the other hand by a systematic withdrawal of the colonial administration from interfering in the internal affairs of the princely states. All these resulted in expansion of plantation at the behest of the native agency. Learning from the prevailing experience of getting encroachments legalised, colonisation of land by outright encroachments into hills, forests and wastelands went in a big way at this point. There was no waiting for the government notification to come and to get the land by legal way, colonisation often preceded legalisation. The fact that there was no specific law regarding the allotment and taxation of government land for rubber intensified the land hunger. Consequently Travancore remained the biggest achiever in the field of plantation during the first half of twentieth century when comparing with other South Indian regions directly or indirectly ruled by British colonialism. In the case of tea 52 per cent (50,296 acres) in 1925, 49 per cent (76,659 acres) in 1935 and 49 per cent (78,700 acres) in 1948 was the share of Travancore in the total acreage of

South India. In the case of rubber, the accomplishment of the state was even more impressive with 63 per cent (37,98 acres) in 1925, 67 per cent (49,553 acres) in 1934 and 72 per cent (110, 012 acres) in 1948, of the total acreage under rubber cultivation.[45]

Small-holdings, Famine and a New Social Imaginary

The growing acceptance of commercial agriculture and the resultant proliferation of plantations ostensibly implied a phenomenonal alteration in the landscape of the state as well. The plantation statistics alone would not be sufficient to explain the quantum of reclamation of land as the former normally takes only estates into account. The steady increase of the share of smallholdings in the acreage under rubber in India amply testifies the magnitude of area occupied by holdings as time progressed.[46] It was just 27 per cent of the total area under rubber in India, Travancore being the dominant player, but rose to 32 per cent in 1950-51, 43 per cent in 1955-56 and 66 per cent in 1969-70.[47] In spite of the huge increases in the acreage from 1955 onwards, the average size of the smallholding began to decline from then onwards which indicates more and more participation in rubber cultivation by clearing 'suitable' land for the same. The average size of small holding in rubber declined to 2.47 acres in 1975-76 from 4.2 acres in 1955.[48]

The virgin land 'available' in the princely state of Travancore was reclaimed not only for commercial agriculture but also for food crop production especially at a later stage when Travancore fell badly onto food shortage. For instance, the acreage of tapioca, which was considered to be a subsistence food when rice was not available in the required quantum, increased from zero acreage in the mid 19th century to 411500 acres in 1921, 575631 acres in 1931, 494142 acres in 1941 and 503522 acres in 1947.[49] At the same time the systematic efforts from the state to promote commercial agriculture at the expense of paddy cultivation transformed Travancore into a rice importing state.[50] The increase in the area under paddy cultivation was marginal at a time when population was increasing at a frightening pace.[51] Considering the low cost of production for the plantation crops and a promotive policy framework, the paddy cultivation was un-remunerative even during the days of the Depression when prices of plantation crops especially were falling down steeply. It was natural in such a situation that people preferred cash crops over food crops. It is estimated that when the acreage under paddy declined marginally between 1921 and 1947 in the Princely State, that of coconut increased by 30 pre cent, that of rubber increased over 100 per cent, that of tapioca by 25 per cent and that of tea more than 100 per cent.[52]

The Great Depression of 1930s offered unprecedented tribulations to the princely state in the form of fall of agricultural prices, indebtedness, monstrous unemployment, famine, nutritional diseases, deaths and so on. Rural Travancore particularly had fallen to severe agricultural indebtedness as a result of the dynamics of Depression. The increased investments on land in the preceding decade, due to high prices for agricultural crops in general and commercial crops in particular after the first world war, proved disastrous for the agriculturist as the wind of Depression swept in.[53] The agriculturists of Travancore were not considered "extravagant as a rule", and though the borrowed money was mostly invested quite imaginatively on land, forces beyond their control shattered all their dreams.[54] The economic peril was further aggravated with the commencement of the Second World War. The fall of Burma at the hands of Japan resulted in the cessation of rice imports from Burma to the state since 1942. The government intervention to regulate the food supply did not make any difference as the deficit of rice was enormously high.[55] On the face of shortage of rice, reliance on tapioca increased heavily. Articles, which were normally considered unfit for human consumption, were distributed to the consumers to satisfy their hunger.[56] Dearth of food and famine resulted in various diseases and excessive deaths. According one estimation actual deaths in 1940-41 were 1.03,872.[57] It was 1,00,692 in 1941-42 (registered 67,131), 1,20,956 in 1942-43 (registered 80,637) and 1,27,880 in 1943-44 (registered 85,253).[58] The government of Travancore resorted to 'Grow More Food Programme' by allowing the peasants to cultivate forests and wastelands, technically under some restrictions but practically none, for overcoming the food crisis. The 'forward looking peasants', mostly Syrian Christians who already developed a passion for land in the problematic of economic modernity unleashed by colonialism, took up the risk of cultivating malarial tracts of eastern Travancore than partial starvation and diseases. The land in the state was massively colonised for the same. And as per the Government statistics, by 1951, 98.1 percent of the total area available for occupation came under cultivation in the princely state.[59] By 1940s, the share of rice and paddy in the value of imports in Travancore began to decline significantly due to a resultant large-scale cultivation of supplementary tuber crops like tapioca. It fell from almost 50 per cent in 1927-28 to 28.5 per cent in 1940-41.[60] Once the land in central and eastern regions of Travancore got exhausted, the Syrian Christians,

mostly small farmers, began to migrate to the undefiled tracts of British Malabar, where almost half of the area available for occupation was yet to come under agriculture apart from wastelands and forests.

This general historical context explains the population movements inside Kerala, predominantly by the Syrian Christians, in search of cultivable land and the consequent alteration of the landscape. The depletion of forests in Travancore, is indicative in this regard. When Bourdillon prepared his report in 1892-93, 50 per cent of the land in Travancore was under forests,[61] which declined to 35 per cent by 1920s and to 32 per cent by 1940s.[62] Similarly areas where hill-cultivation (*virippu* or *malamkrishi*) was carried out completely disappeared from the cropping map of Travancore, when the enterprises to utilise it rationally had taken place.[63]

This kind of a spirited drive for land colonisation for economic mobility and the norming of land as the most valued asset had spawned a new discourse of development with a particular social imaginary as the its reason and consequence. The discursive formation, as argued earlier was getting structured right from the second half of 19th century, was immediately provoked by the unprecedented economic crisis and food scarcity of 1930-40s. The context was in support of such spatial movements for a rational/appropriate use of 'abundant' natural wealth around. The state endowed with one third of its area as reserved forests, was compellingly urged to throw open 'four or five hundred thousand acres of forestland' for cultivation, in view of the great benefits that would bring to its people.[64] There was parallel attempt within the Syrian Christian community to guard the property under their possession by campaigning against its 'fragmentation' by way of rebuffing women's right to father's property.[65] The area of reserved forests fenced off from human activity began to be seen as a curse especially at a time when "lakhs of people suffering without land for cultivation and to stay."[66] The contemporary imagination was convinced that they cannot resolve 'our food scarcity without suitably utilising the soil and manpower available here'.[67] The 'cultivation of all wastelands' along with modernisation of agricultural practice was held to be the right way to overcome poverty and food shortage by the Communists as well.[68] The underlying discourse of development was against the geo-spaces of hills, wastelands and forests and was for their expropriation for the cause of resolving 'our' crisis and ensuring 'our' development. A 'social imaginary' was in the making that was apathetic about leaving the landscape uncultivated and was passionately advocating migrations for agricultural expansion and prosperity.[69] A negative view of woodlands

and wastes went along with a feeling that being indolent, especially when the foreigners are appropriating the native land for their development, was nothing less than unpatriotic.[70] The migrant settlers in the undomesticated spaces who were waging a battle against the noxious nature and hard realities for the development of the country came to be seen as 'our national asset' who needs to be promoted by all means.[71] The other communities who were in competition with Syrian Christians in the domain of socio-economic development too went appreciative of the Syrian Christian darings and began to internalise similar path for the progress of the community. Between 1930 and 1960, migration and agricultural expansion had been discussed far and wide as a major solution for food scarcity, economic crisis and population growth, generating passionate responses from the Syrian constituencies.[72] The historical conjuncture was one where 'spatial movement' in search of wildernesses to be tamed by agriculture acquired a talismanic status as the emblem of progress.

Interiorization of the Community

The Syrian Christian community took maximum advantage of the new development discourse, and migrated to undomesticated areas in the form of hills, forests and 'wastelands'. The untamed areas of the eastern hills of Travancore and the 'feral' landscape in Malabar came under their enterprises by way of reclamations and settlement. The ruralization of the Christian community is by and large a modern phenomenon and was a result of this transformation of the community by re-defining its economic proclivities. Migrations in search of virgin land for agriculture and a market driven preferential change from black gold to liquid gold, from pepper to rubber, was central to the transformation. Though it was certainly the economic problematic as structured during modernity that resulted in the dislodging of the coastal/urban concentration of the community in favour of more interior locations, the process, arguably, had its inception in the pre-colonial time itself as explained by the movement of Syrian Christians to the inland pepper growing regions. But it was only 1961- with the preceding half a century making the makeover possible- the proportion of Christians in the rural areas outnumbered that of the urban areas while taking the state as a whole.[73] The transition was happening mostly with the low-density districts as the locus of change.

The rural areas of the districts of Ernakulam and Kottayam, the epicentre of Christian population in Kerala, attained an edge over their urban counterparts in terms of population as early as 1901 and 1921

respectively. In the Kottayam district, the rural proportion of Christians became 4,774 in every 10,000 as against 3,930 in the urban areas. The situation continued unaffected though with slender variation in the ensuing decades too- the Christian proportion in the rural Kottayam increased to 4,921 per 10,000 and to 4,181 in urban areas in 1931, only to reach 4,756 and 4,382 respectively 1961. The proportion of Christian population in the rural Ernakulam outnumbered their urban brethrens by 1901 itself with a proportion of 3,752 Christians per 10,000 as against 3,624 in urban areas of the district. The state of affairs remained uninterrupted in 1931 (4,306 and 3,721 respectively) as well as in 1961 (4,419 and 3,674 respectively).[74] The rural Christians outnumbered their urban counterparts in Trivandrum district by 1931. The proportion of Christians in the urban population of the district was 1,021 as against a rural proportion of 978 in 1901, which augmented to 1,494 and 1,910 respectively by 1931.[75] The district of Alappuzha realised the same two decades later when the rural Christian outstripped their urban counterparts in 1951. Here the urban proportion- which was 2,910 per 10,000- continued to be higher even in 1931 over the rural (2,869), only to reach a stage where the latter exceeded the former by 1951 (2,581 and 2,970 respectively) to retain the ascendancy in 1961 as well (2,586 and 2,899 in the same order). However, even by 1961, among the non-Malabar districts, Quilon and Trichur the urban Christians continued to enjoy a higher proportion than their rural counterparts.[76] But the Malabar districts was witnessing a more resolutely absorbing change as the four decades of heightened migration, between 1931 and 1971, brought a momentous chunk of Syrian Christians to Malabar in search of land and economic mobility. The migrants reconfigured the religious landscape of Malabar by establishing themselves in the ‘empty’ interiors, which was seen as vacant of modern religion through an application of transformative labour.

The tradition of the seven (and a half) churches supposedly built by St. Thomas is indicative at least in two senses with regard to Christian geography of Kerala: first, all of them were located along the coastal/trading centres of ancient Kerala and second, all but Palayur were in Cochin-Travancore area.[77] Palayur is considered to be situated in the erstwhile British Malabar, in Chavakkad of Ponnani taluk and in close proximity with the state of Cochin. By the time Innes put together his *Malabar* in 1908, the Christian population in Malabar was slightly over fifty thousand in number with a majority of them living ‘south of Ponnani taluk, and in parts of Palghat taluk which border on the Cochin state’.[78] Taluk-wise distribution of religious communities as of 1911 also supports this with a visibly disproportionate concentration of Christians

in the southern taluks of Ponnani and Cochin.[79] Apparently, above 70 per cent of them not only stayed in the south around the river Bharatapuzha (Ponnani river) but also was very much attached to the Christian community of Travancore-Cochin heartland.[80] The Christian community north of Bharatapuzha was even more negligible, most of them were the converted Latin Christians and Protestants and a few Syrian Christians and all of them mostly concentrated on the urban centres and towns of Malabar leaving the interior of Malabar almost a ‘heathen space’.[81] The Christian population of Malabar increased marginally from 53,017 in 1911 to over 54650 in 1921 with a lion’s share living in the extreme southern side of the district adjacent to the Christian heartland in Travancore-Cochin.[82] The total population increased to 65,894 in 1931, registering a progress of 20.6 per cent in the preceding decade alone, at a time when Syrian Christian migrants began to straddle into the landscape of Malabar. Among the northern taluks Wynad and Calicut registered noticeable progress, while Ponnani and Cochin continued to domicile the majority of Christians in the British ruled district. But an external reinforcement was clearly visible from the compelling growth it registered by 1951, in a single decade the strength of the community got almost doubled and reached 153,956 from 77,895 in 1941. This represented a decennial growth of 97.69 per cent with 118,886 out of the total lived in rural Malabar and the remaining 35,070 in urban.[83] Out of the 88,275 people enumerated as born in Travancore-Cochin, 78,148 people found their abode in rural Malabar while the urban Malabar accommodated 10,127.[84] The rural tracts of Wynad, Kottayam, Kurumbranad and Calicut taluks, which had rather insignificant Christian population one or two decades earlier, are shown with numerous contingents of people born in Travancore-Cochin states. Wynad taluk that attracted the migrants the most, had the highest number of Travancore-Cochin born people in its population, with rural Wynad holding as many as 23,482 Christians as against a mere 3844 in 1931.[85] With the formation of Kerala in 1956, by integrating Travancore, Cochin and Malabar and the division of the state into nine districts, Malabar got dispersed roughly in the northern districts of Cannanore, Calicut and Palghat.[86] As per the 1961 census Cannanore district had 123,575 Christians in its opulation, while Calicut and Palghat had 110,874 and 33,811 respectively- altogether 268,260, with a spectacular growth of Christian population, particularly in the rural Malabar. Cannanore district had 113,638 Christians living in its rural areas, whereas it was 95417 and 29637 respectively for Calicut and Palghat.[87] Cannanore and Calicut districts of Malabar region recorded a higher population growth rate than the state average, mainly because

of large-scale inflow of settlers to the interiors of these districts.[88] Most of the taluks where the Syrian Christian migrants from the South preferred to settle down in Malabar, like Taliparamba, Tellicherry, North Wynad, Ernad and South Wynad were categorised as taluks with high increase and low density of population.[89] The lowest density of population in Malabar were particularly visible in the taluks of South Wynad and North Wynad, 347 and 313 respectively, followed by Perinthalmanna (546) Ernad (600), Taliparamba (604), Hosdurg (631), Chittur (610) and Kasaragod (720) as of 1961.[90]

The taluk-wise demographic figures give a clearer picture on a convincing presence of migrants in the rural population of those taluks, which were highly preferred by the Syrian Christian migrants. Among the taluks of Malabar, Tellicherry, Taliparamba, North Wynad and South Wynad that received enormous inflow of migrants, had the highest percentage of immigrants in its rural population. South Wynad had as much as 51 per cent immigrants in its rural population by 1961, North Wynad 43 per cent, Taliparamba 36 per cent and Tellicherry 32 per cent.[91] The percentage increase of Christian share in the population of the two Malabar districts over a period of sixty years was nothing less than emphatic in relative terms. The number of Christians per 10,000 in Cannanore district was just 119 in 1901, which increased over five fold to reach 694 by 1961, registering a growth of 483 per cent. Similarly Calicut district, which had merely 71 Christians in every 10,000 in 1901, got amplified to 424 by the year 1961, a growth of 497 per cent.[92] It can also be seen that Christianity that had no significant following in the rural Malabar, whatever adherents it had centring mostly on urban areas, was becoming an impressive presence in the interiors of the north. Cannanore had 871 Christians in every 10,000 of its urban population in 1901, which steadily declined to 331 by 1961. On the other hand, in rural Cannanore the share of the Christians was merely 62 in every 10,000 in the beginning of the twentieth century which increased to 768 after a period of six decades. Similarly urban Calicut had 505 Christians in 1911 which declined to 357 by 1961. In contrast rural Calicut, which had merely 37 Christians per 10,000 of its population in 1911, got an augmented share of 437 by 1961.[93] The increase of Christians, accordingly, in the rural Cannanore and Calicut district is 1139 and 1050 percents respectively. It is also important to note that Cannanore and Calicut together holding below 2 per cent of the total Christian population in the state in 1901 enlarged its share to almost 7 per cent by 1961.[94] The ruralisation of the community is thus largely a result of migrations aided by a new developmental imagery.

Articulacy of the Self

Making of any new self inescapably relies on what Charles Taylor describes its articulacy, and articulation, according to him, ‘is a necessary condition for adhesion’ of the self.[95] The unpacking of self is materialised through its self-interpretative exercises, which would make sense in a concomitant material and discursive context and constitute it. These self-articulations were embedded in the migrant fiction generated by the migrant imagination and the advocates of the same development model.[96] The forms like biographies, autobiographies, journal articles, contemporary media reports, migrant memories during and after the migration, etc. constitute migrant fiction and the fiction writes the history of migration with its central Syrian Christian agency. The knowledge thus generated seeks to facilitate and legitimise the development enterprise and becomes raw-material for subsequent historical representations. The making of a new Syrian Christian identity, as represented in the fiction and as a result of the community’s enterprises to reclaim ‘vacant’ landscapes to agriculture and prosperity, was inseparable from the vitality the discourse in general and the agents of change in particular attributed to land. The landscape of Malabar was one of the terrains on which the Syrian Christian transformative labour got applied to provide those vast lands caught in wilderness “its life.” The migrant fiction represents the pre-migration geography of Malabar as horrifying with awful forests, wild animals and life-taking diseases. The areas where the migrants were said to have engaged in a battle for making their living were portrayed as most insalubrious, inhabitable and unassailable within an extremely backward region.[97] The locality as a whole is rendered as disease-ridden and malaria had been given the status of the “biggest enemy of the migrants.” Pazheparambil, provides poignant pictures of the ravages of malaria on the Syrian Christian migrants.[98] The deaths were rampant, much higher than standard national rate, resulting more orphan children on the rolls of orphanages run by the Latin Catholic church in various locations of Malabar.[99] The portrayal of the ferocity of the landscape was coupled with an admission of its potentialities. It was construed as a potential paradise waiting a redeeming touch of human agency. The diversity and richness of Malabar soil kindled the migrant imagination as one see in its representation in a *thullal poem* written by understandably a migrant.[100] The thick descriptions of the untapped riches of the Malabar soil lost to the dark wilderness was circulated as a challenge to the Syrian Christians who began to view themselves as an assiduous agrarian community by then. The simultaneous evocation

of the discourses of potentiality and ferocity facilitated and normalised the application of labour that followed. The invention of potentialities became the precondition of the subsequent redemptive mission and the production and circulation of the idea of wilderness legitimised the modern mission.

The transformation of the wilderness into a land of plenty with all assets of prosperity and civilization has been described as something accomplished at the expense of impregnable will, determination and indefatigable labour of the 'forward looking' migrant peasants from the South. The Syrian Christian migrants are articulated as altering the life-contours of Malabar with their inherent transformative agency. Those who don't have a strong bend of mind for hard work and face adversities were warned not to migrate at all.[101] The migrants are depicted as those who "came down not with guns and swords, but with spades and axes, making the awful forests of Malabar their battlefield."[102] Nothing seems detracted them from their essential focus of hard work to convert the wilderness into opulent and civilized locations. The migrant cognitive world internalised hard work as something with an impeccable and all-justifying value with a conferred signature of the blessing of God. The hard work was seen as a comprehensive answer and 'do hard work and live with dignity' appeared to be their motto.[103] The sense of self and a sense of good, otherwise selfhood and a sense of morality are inextricably intertwined. The configuration of a new Syrian Christian identity in the context of migrations for land, relies much on hard work as a moralising logic and it defines the goodness of the new self. There is an affirmation of the ordinary life in this discourse, but an ordinary life of higher form defined by hard work. The self also seeks its legitimacy by falling back on a discourse of adventure, which is considered as essential in combating the awesome wilderness. The decision to live and the resilience to continue in the landscape of Malabar make a migrant's days occupied full with activity and adventure. The predicament that awaited the migrants at Malabar was narrated much fiercer than what had been anticipated: it was a space where the tiger can just barge into your house and snatch children; wild elephants can trample upon human beings at any time; wild animals, especially wild boars and elephants, can just jeopardise one's entire backbreaking exertions over a single night; tigers and leopards can catch one's cattle; one can get venom from poisonous snakes anytime; one can be attacked by a rogue boar while working at the field or protecting the crops during the

night; forest fire at times can cleanse one's cultivations, house and the person himself; the cattle and domesticated elephant of native *janmies* can enter into one's agricultural land at any time.[104] The narratives are often filled with absorbing instances of heroism and exciting encounters.[105] The very act of being in the wilderness for re-forming it was thus seen impossible with such a spirit of meticulous hard work, resilience and courage.

It is also true that a self exists only among other selves and it cannot be described without a reference to those who surround it or those who runs in disparate with it. Self-definition is possible only in relation to certain interlocutors and a self exists only within what Taylor call 'webs of interlocution'.[106] The self-definition is mostly achieved through a repudiation of the other against a valorisation of itself. The valorisation of hard work, resilience and adventure of the migrant was coincided by a repugnancy of its other, the natives. The natives were in general subsumed into a discourse of idleness, torpidity and lack of foresight. While the elite natives were seen living in feudal pride without a necessary accumulative value, the Adivasis of the land were looked down as objects untouched by the virtues of civilisation and labour. The backwardness of Malabar in the social development before the arrival of the migrants is attributed to the indolent life of both landlords and tenants of Malabar.[107] They were portrayed as leading a challenge-free life unaware of the untapped resources around. The abundance innate in their own landscape was seen as unapparent to them as they seems live out of 'the time'. There is also an assumed lack of knowledge, the knowledge of agriculture and civilization. This presumed impossibility of the natives gives an authority to the migrant self over the landscape and modernity of Malabar.

The affirmation of difference from the natives through a discourse of labour metaphorically accentuates the progressive proclivities of the migrant subject. The construal of hard work as the route to prosperity and civilization, while engaging with a 'backward' region, has multiple moral overtones in itself. It was the moral authority of hard work for augmenting agricultural production, preventing food shortage, creating employment, disseminating the ethic of labour and reclaiming the land left for woods and animals, that naturalised the taming of wilderness and its making as an ordered productive region. The mission of augmenting food production, at a time when the country was going through a famine kind of situation, the moral authority involved in the same was underscored time and again to adulate the migrants as "our national asset."[108] It was seen as a self-assumed

national and patriotic obligation undertaken by the migrant community to embark on a noble mission when the government failed in its primary responsibility of "providing to eat, dress and live" to its citizens.[109] Along with its contribution to resolve the food shortage, the role of migrations in integrating the region into global economy and bringing foreign money was also acknowledged.[110] The migrant enterprise had been viewed as a major force in dismantling the feudal production relations and an allied culture in Malabar. The migrants with their native affinity in the Thiru-Kochi region and building a new affinity in Malabar said to have contributed their share in imagining the three regions together into a culturally bound sub-nation.[111] The migrants with their self-wrapped superior cultural credentials, work ethic, industriousness and technologies of agriculture were said to be in a mission of resolving the 'cultural gap' between the two regions, Travancore and Malabar. There was a portrayal of Malabar as a dark, irrational and mysterious space making the application of the superior civilisation a natural solution to overawe it. It was portrayed as redemption from irrationality to 'good intelligence' and sobriety- "from darkness to light, from wickedness to morality and from fear to valour."[112] The migrants are also rendered as somebody who is in possession of a superior knowledge of agriculture and capable of converting any fallow into a site of opulence.[113] The accomplishment by the migrants is what is rendered as a prettification of the 'backward' region by a process of "transplanting Travancore onto Malabar," with all its "splendour and grace."[114] The progress of Malabar is described as so compelling that Pamba and Periyar, the legendary rivers of Travancore, now wanting to flow through the Malabar migrant localities.[115] All this provided the migrant subject convincing moral technologies to legitimise the historical mission they embarked on.

The reconstitution of Syrian Christians primarily as an agrarian community as a result of their engagement with the native landscape through agriculture, as explicated in the preceding discussion, had been necessitated by the forces of economic modernity beckoned by colonialism. The forces of religious colonialism destabilised their position in the native moral order and the collapse of the native state followed by a restructuring of the native economy not only dislocated them from their conventional economic activities but also offered them leeways of reinvention in the new economic setting. The majority of the community was swift in shifting to agriculture, in both commercial and non-commercial crops, by taming the undomesticated terrains and thereby redefining themselves as a modern agrarian community with a new ethic of labour and an altogether new attitude towards land. The

new discourse of development structured accordingly has a powerful sway over the Malayalee imaginations of economic mobility for quite sometime, offering enticements to other communities to emulate the same trajectory to catch up. The novel authority acquired by the Syrian Christian community in consequence of this reinvention inspired even the Nairs, who initially looked down upon the daring of the Syrian Christians with lordly disdain, to copy the model by 1920s itself.[116] Mannathu Padmanabhan finds the conservativeness of the Nairs in their economic enterprises as the main reason for the deterioration of the community, which is contrasted with the experience of the Christians who were fast in shifting to the commercial agronomy and ensuring their progress.[117] He was firm in his conviction that land, agriculture and hard work can only reinvent the royalty of the Nairs in the changed context. He felt that the Nair who crave after unprofitable government jobs is a subject of ridicule when the Christians were making heaven out of agriculture.[118] And it is not surprising that when the new economic problematic set communities in contention and tensions of competition, the new Syrian Christian subject accentuated itself as the "principal agriculturists of this country."[119] There was a powerful invocation of the history wherein the Christian missionaries were sometimes given the agency of change who has offered new meaning to landscape and new definition to labour which were readily imbibed by the Christians and making agriculture dignified. The Syrian Christian subject armoured itself with self-adulations- discourse of enterprising spirit, hard work and resilience- and thereby differentiating itself from its others in a mission of modernity.[120]

It was the ascendancy that the Syrian Christian subject achieved through such a developmentalist identity that allowed *Malayala Manorama* and *Deepika* dailies to shield the underlying development discourse and its agents by soliciting primacy to humanitarian over conservative compulsions even as late as 1960s. The context in which a consequential environmental crisis was seen impending and powerfully articulated upon, was coupled with a parallel campaign for providing the colonies reclaimed from wilderness with all the objects of modern development.[121] It was but normal that the special correspondent of *Mathrubhumi*, with a supposed predilection for the ideologies of conservation and environment, who was on a visit to various migrant colonies in Malabar, could see the absolute conversion of wilderness into sumptuous productive locations, with streams running merrily by singing the alluring music of labour.[122] The fashioning of the new Syrian Christian subject was taking place at a time when political citizenship and modern social subjects were also in the making

in India. But this by-lane locates itself outside the meta-narratives of nation and renaissance. However, taking a different route, the migrant narratives strives to project themselves as true 'citizens' of the new India- the enterprising and hard working Indian citizen within a pluralistic socio-political framework. This is certainly yet another powerful discourse of claiming 'nationhood', arguably without casting a shadow on the overarching 'meta' process. The two discourses meet and merge in the post-1947 phase where the nation and Syrian Christian migrants share the common destinies of development and wellbeing.

Notes:

1 Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol.I, p. 114; Koodapuzha, *Bharatasabhacharithram*, pp. 57-116.

2 They call themselves, St. Thomas Christians' and the community as a whole was bound by the 'law of Thomas' (*Thommayude Margam*). The appellation 'Syrian Christians' was given by the Dutch to distinguish them from the newly found Christian community, the Latin Christians, after the arrival of the Portuguese.

3 Dempsey, *Kerala Christian Sainthood*, p. 5.

4 If the story of Thomas of Cana is indicative, the Persian Christians came to Kerala also due to persecution at home, to get settled down and alloyed with the native Christian community.

5 According to N.K. Jose, Syriac became the language of worship of the Kerala Christians between 410 and 650 A.D. See, Jose, "Kerala Chraisthavar Ennanu Suriyanikkarayathu?", pp. 17-29.

6 The origin and evolution of Palliyogam is sometimes connected to the traditional village assembly known as 'manram', which held autonomy in the village in everything. Pulikkunnel, *Identity of Nazrani Church of Kerala,* pp. 16-19; Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 174-92; Zacharia, 'Charchayum Pooranavum" to P.J. Thomas, *Malayalam Sahityavum Christhianikalum*, pp. 316-17.

7 Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, 176-177.

8 Pepper growing is said to be their sole monopoly, but at the same time they were also masters of pepper-trade, occupying the missing space of a trading caste, the *vaisyas*, in the native society. Kollaparambil, *The St. Thomas Christians' Revolution in 1653*, p. 4; Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, pp. 155-56.

9 Bayly, *Saints Goddesses and Kings*, pp. 247-52.

10 Mundadan, *Indian Christians*, p. 17.

11 Bayly, *Saints Goddesses and Kings*, p. 252.

12 Cited from, Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India* Vol I, 156-57. Scaria Zacharia, see their conflict with the Muslim traders for mercantile supremacy in the region as the primary reason for the Christian retreat to inner areas for agriculture and turn to military training. Zacharia, Critical Introduction to *Udaymperor Sunhadosinte Kanonakal,* p. 30. Self-defence and the protection of the country were reasons for the 'militarisation' of the community. Kollaparambil, *The St. Thomas Christians' Revolution*, p.4.

13 Bayly, *Saints Goddesses and Kings*, p.257.

14 It is pointed out that like caste Hindus they too observed the practices of untouchability and pollution. They defined themselves as a 'jati' and many 'noble customs' were observed to legitimise their high social status. See for a detailed discussion, Mundadan, *Indian Christians*, pp. 17-21; Visvanathan, *The Christians of Kerala,* p. 2.

15 Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India* Vol I, p. 158.

16 Bayly, *Saints Goddesses and Kings*, pp. 252-53.

17 The privileges were day-lamp, spreading cloth, palanquin, umbrella, locked gate, arch, arch-decoration, earth and water on elephant back at the time of marriage, etc. See, Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, pp. 31-37 and Mundadan, *Indian Christians*, pp. 19-20.

18 For a detailed discussion on the events leading to the Synod of Diamper, held in 1599 and presided over by Archbishop Alexis de Menezes, see, Zacharia, critical introduction to *Udaymperor Sunhadosinte Kanonakal*, pp. 34-51

19 The Church of the Malabar Coast was decided to be divided into parishes under the 'salaried officials' of the *Padroado*, the vicars, appointed by the foreign bishops. This extirpated the democratic disposition of the native church with the local church communities and *yogams*, losing their long held autonomy. The liturgy was latinised but circulated in Syrian language. Celibacy became obligatory for the priests.

20 See for more details about the changes promulgated by the Synod, Zacharia, critical introduction to *Udaymperor Sunhadosinte Kanonakal*, pp. 58-66; Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabhacharithram*, pp.282-329; Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol.II, pp. 64-75. See for a different view, by way of celebrating Synod of Diamper and its resolutions as something that paved the way for renaissance of Kerala, Ochanthuruth, *Adiverukal*, pp. 67-102.

21 It is estimated that 82 congregations stood as the former group and 32 remained faithful to Archdeacon. Juhanon Mar Thoma, *Christianity in India and a Brief History of the Mar Thoma Church*, p.15.

[22] It was especially the *Puthankoottu* community who came under the undue benevolence of the colonial government, particularly during the Residentship of Col. Munro (1810-19). It is said that measures were taken to protect the Syrian Christians against oppressive 'Hindu' officers; 'forced' participation of Syrian Christians in Hindu temple ceremonies were banned and huge sums of money was donated to the churches. See, Bayly, *Saints Goddesses and Kings*, pp. 288-90.

[23] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, pp. 281-320.

[24] See for details of the struggle' for Syro-Malabar hierarchy, Mundadan, *Indian Christians*, pp. 67-89.

[25] The protestant groups are apart from the three major groups: Roman Catholics- Syrian (Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara) Catholics and Latin Catholics-, Orthodox Syrian who declare their complete independent and native status and Jacobite ('Yakoba') who still maintain their Antiochan connection. And C.S.I and Mar Thoma groups are generally recognised as protestant in their inspiration as they drew their reason for dissection from the teachings of Anglican Protestant missionaries. Most of the other protestant groups are denominations emerged from the Pentecostal movement.

[26] This contradicts the arguments of Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* and Washbrook, "Progress and Problems".

[27] It is transformation from *Jati* to *Samudayam* for some, whereas some others consider it as ethnogenesis under colonialism. Kurien, "Colonialism and Ethnogenesis."

[28] The political authority of the princely state was taken off without dismantling it formally. Colonialism was successful in manufacturing the native state's consent to the extent in which the Raja became a standby for the colonial government and the Dewan became a glorified clerk to the Resident. See for details: Jeffrey, *Decline of Nair Dominance*; Baak, *Plantation, Production and Political Power*; Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State*, pp. 25-55; and Varghese, "Memory as History," pp. 17-34.

[29] As Kawashima pointed out, though the British abandoned their policy of annexing native states with the Queen's Proclamation of 1858, the interference did not completely cease. But of course it decreased drastically in the latter half of the 19th century with a temporary aberration during the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon (1899-1905) during whose period at least fifteen native rulers were 'either forced to abdicate or temporarily deprived of their power'. Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State,* p. 44.

[30] The intervening time between the two representations (1815-1867) was a time when the native re-formed itself intensely in tune with the 'compulsions of modernity'.

[31] Ward and Conner, *Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States* (1863), Vol. I.

[32] The British dominated the plantation scene of Travancore during the entire second half of the nineteenth century with very little native participation. Baak, *Plantation, Production and Political Power,* pp. 61-137.

[33] See Baak *Plantation, Production and Political Power,* for a detailed discussion of this.

[34] Baak, *Plantation, Production and Political Power*, pp. 80-81; Raman, "Global Capital and Peripheral Labour," p.36.

[35] It also allowed unrestricted transfer of their properties. As the ownership right was conferred on the tenants with the power of alienation, the tenant farmers became peasant farmers. Joseph, *Migration and Economic Development of Kerala*, pp. 65-67.

[36] Quoted in *Travancore Land Revenue Manuel*, Vol. IV, p. 35.

[37] Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences*, p. 65.

[38] In the case of tea plantation, though impressive, the indigenous segment never exceeded their European counterparts till independence.

[39] For a detailed discussion see, Bayly, *Saints*, *Goddesses and Kings*, pp. 282-90.

[40] Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences*, p. 119.

[41] Baak, *Plantation Production and Political Power*, 80-100.

[42] Editorial in *Malayala Manorama*, quoted in Haridasan, *Management of Plantations*, p. 34.

[43] Baak, *Plantation, Production and Political Power*, pp. 167-172.

[44] Editorial in *Malayala Manorama*, 2 December, 1905.

[45] *UPASI Planting Directory*, respective issues. Baak, *Plantation, Production and Political Power*, pp. 163-64.

[46] The total area under rubber in India by 1938 was 99951 acres, out of which 64146 acres of estates and 35805 acres of holdings. It increased to 171191 acres with 103117 acres of estates and 54561 acres of holdings by 1951. The acreage of holdings of rubber outstripped that of rubber estates by the end of 1957, as the acreage under holdings increased to 140432 acres as against 121566 acres of estates. The share of the estates fell far behind that of holdings which increased to 202755.77 acres (84887 hectares) as against the 138358.70 acres (55993 hectares) of the former in 1961-62 with a total of 348114.47 acres (140880 hectares). The acreage under holdings outperformed that of estates at an accelerated pace in the next decades. The part of holdings were 251708.41 acres, 337106.17 acres and 392350.32 acres for the years 1965-66, 1970-71 and 1975-76 respectively while it was 155297.40 acres, 164748.98 acres and 162211.26 acres respectively for estates. See *Indian Rubber Statistics*, for the years 1958, 1967, 1971 and 1976.

[47] Unny and George Jacob, *Rubber Small Holdings in India*, p. 1-2. *Indian Rubber Statistics*, Vol XV, 1976, pp. 5-7.

[48] It was 6.86 acres in the case of Malabar during early 1960s and declined to 5.61 acres by mid 1970s. 'District wise trend in the planted area under Rubber' in *Indian Rubber Statistics*, Vol XV, 1976, pp.5-7.

[49] Calculated from *Statistics of Travancore*, Respective Issues; Also see Table II.9 in Devi, *Plantation Economics of the Third World*, pp. 103-05.

[50] It is pointed out that plantation agriculture was in fact subsidized at the cost of paddy cultivation. Rice figure an important item of export from the princely state when Ward and Conner done the survey of Travancore in the early quarter of 19th century. But from 1880s onwards, paddy and rice began to be figured as a main item in the list of imports to the state. Both together constituted 19 per cent of the total value of imports in 1880-81, which shot up to 41 per cent of the total import by 1910-11. *Travancore Administration Report* and *Travancore Trade Statistics*, Issues of 1880-81 and 1910-11. S. Uma Devi, *Plantation Economics of the Third World,* p. 66.

[51] The population, which was merely 13 lakhs in 1830s, rose to 29 lakhs in 1901 and to 72 lakhs in 1951. The growth of Christian population was especially spectacular during the period. The Christians who constituted merely 4.6 per cent of the total population in 1820 shot up to 31.5 per cent in 1931. T.K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol I. pp. 388-89.

[52] Devi, *Plantation Economics of the Third World*, pp. 85-100.

[53] *Report of the Agricultural Debt Redemption Committee*, p. 9.

[54] *Travancore Banking Enquiry Committee Report*, para. 63.

[55] The total deficit for the year 1943 is said to be 3,60,00 tonnes of rice and that of 1944 and 1945 more than that. Sivaswamy, "Food Shortage and State Controls" in *Food famine and Nutritional Diseases*, Surveys by Sivaswamy et.al. p.125.

[56] Dewan's statement in the Assembly, January, 1944, Referred in Sivaswamy, "Food Shortage and State Controls", p. 132.

[57] Sivaswamy, "Vital Statistics and Public Health" in *Food famine and Nutritional Diseases,* pp. 81-82.

[58] See the table in Sivaswamy, "Vital Statistics and Public Health", p. 83.

[59] Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences*, p. 124.

[60] It declined further to 15 percent in 1945-46, but mainly due to cessation of rice from Burma. *Travancore Trade Statistics*, 1927-28, 1940-41 and 1945-46.

[61] Bourdillon, *Report on the Forests of Travancore*, pp.13-16.

[62] Devi, *Plantation Economies of the Third World*, p.59.

[63] Rammohan, "Material Processes and Developmentalism," pp. 68-69.

[64] Minute by Mr. Thariathu Kunjithomman, in *Travancore Economic Depression Enquiry Committee Report*, p. 168.

[65] *Report of the Travancore Christian Committee*, pp. 1-78; Kodoth, "Gender, community and identity in Christian property law reform,"

[66] Editorial, "Sadhukkalkku Poduve Colony Erppeduthanam," 28 January, 1939, *Nazrani Deepika* daily. Forest was represented as 'abandoned', 'forsaken', 'put down' or 'empty' space. See for instance, 'Ozhichidappetta Vanangal', 9 April 1929, *Nazrani Deepika* daily.

[67] Editorial, "Wayanad Colonisation," 9 January, 1952, *Mathrubhumi* daily.

[68] Namboodiripad, "Onnekal Kodi Malayalikal" (1946), in *E. M. S Sampoorna Krithikal*, Vol. 6, pp. 294, 345.

[69] Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries,* pp. 23- 30.

[70] Citations are from the Editorial, *Malayala Manorama*, 2 December 1905, quoted in Haridasan, *Management of Plantations,* p. 34. Articles in both *Malayala Manorama* and (*Nazrani*) *Deepika*, two leading Syrian Christian dailies of the time, often wondered 'why the people of our country are not entering the field' when the profit is more than that of 'selling gold cut out from gold mines'.

[71] Sivaswamy et al, *The Exodus from Travancore to Malabar Jungles*, p. 3.

[72] "Madhya Pradeshathu Laksham Thiru-Kochi Kudumbangal Kutiyerunna Karyam Planning Commission Aalochikkunnu," 10 January 1956, *Deepika* daily. Dr. L.J. Chittoor, "Kutiyettam" 27 November 1960, *Deepika* daily; Dr. P.J. Thomas, "Kutiyettam: Keralathinte Adiyanthira Aavashyam" 15 August 1958, *Deepika* daily; "Brazil Kutiyettam: Prayogiga Vasangal" , 25 September 1958, *Deepika* daily; "Kutiyettam Sanghatithamayi Venam" 11 November 1958, *Deepika* daily.

[73] The proportion of Christians in urban areas was 1,780 per 10,000 in 1901, which reached to 2,320 in 1931, but declined to 1,970 in 1961. On the other hand, the proportion of Christians in rural areas was 1,352 in 1901 and steadily increased to reach 2,149 in 1961. *Census of India 1961, Volume VII, Kerala, Part I A, General Report*, table 9.3, pp. 400-01.

[74] All information is drawn from the same table.

[75] The proportion in the urban areas increased further to 1,670 when that of the rural areas declined to 1,809 by 1961, but still the latter retaining its edge over the former.

[76] In Trichur, Christian proportion in urban areas per 10,000 was 3,531 whereas in rural areas it was 2,383. In the case of Quilon the urban group had a slight edge over the rural as the former was 2,442 per 10,000 against the latter who were 2,431. *Ibid*, pp. 400-01.

[77] The seven original churches are considered to be Niranam, Chayal, Kollam, Palayur, Kodungallur, Kokkamangalam and Kottakayal.

[78] Innes, *Malabar Gazetteer*, p. 194-95, 201.

[79] Out of the 53,017 Christians in British Malabar, the southern taluks had the bulk share with Ponnani having 21,815 Christians, Cochin with 11,825 and Palghat with 3,808. The Christian population in other taluks were as following: Chirakkal-4,307, Kottayam-2,243, Kurumbranad-677, Ernad-589, Walavanad- 507, Wynad-1,790, Calicut-5,451 and Lacadive islands-3. See, *Madras District Gazetteers, Statistical Appendix for Malabar District* Table V, 'Religions in 191' p. 18.

[80] The southernmost portions of Malabar, as reported by Logan, were already under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Carmelite/Syrian diocese of Verapoly and the rest of Malabar under the Latin/Jesuit diocese of Mangalore. See, Logan, *Malabar Manual* Vol. I, p. 210.

[81] Censuses up to 1931 give figures of Syrian Christians separately. It increased marginally from 21,000 (out of a total of 53,017) in 1911 to 23,700 (out of a total of 65,894) in 1931, but its percentage share in the total Christian population declined from 39.62 (1911) and 39.85 (1921) to 35.96 (1931). Cited from Tharakan, "Migration of Farmers from Travancore to Malabar," pp. 10-11.

[82] Out of the 54,650 Christians, the southern taluks of Cochin and Ponnani together had 35,147. Palghat taluk had 3, 605 Christians making the Christian population north of it paltry. The Christian populations in the other taluks were as follows: Calicut- 5763, Chirakkal- 4,056, Ernad-371, Kottayam-2088, Kurumbranad- 641, Laccadive islands-0, Walluvanad-619 and Wynad-2358. See, *Village Statistics: Malabar District, Madras Presidency* [Census of 1921], (Madras: Government Press, 1921), pp. 1-75.

[83] *Census Handbook 1951, Malabar District*, p. 242.

[84] Since migration from the areas of Cochin was negligible, the figure given as born in Travancore-Cochin are understandably migrants from Travancore. There were just 2,611 Travancore born people in Malabar in 1911 and 3,328 in 1931. Tharakan, "Migration of Farmers from Travancore to Malabar", p. 20

[85] The figures of Travancore-Cochin people enumerated in the rural areas of other taluks of Malabar in 1951 are as follows with the number of Christian population two decades ago in the same taluks in brackets: Kottayam-12,655 (2531), Kurumbranad- 10,612 (618), Calicut- 13,636 (7361), Chirakkal- 5,509 (4593), Ernad- 802 (754), Walluvanad- 2,022 (892), Ponnani & Cochin- 6,429 (41,184). See, *Census Handbook 1951, Malabar District*, pp. 246-49.

[86] These three districts together occupied 6737 square miles as against the Malabar district which in 1951 had 5802 square miles of extent. Kasaragod taluk of South Kanara district was ceded to Kerala, the in Cannanore district as Kasaragod and Hosdurg taluks. It had 766 square miles of extent. The Christian population reached those two taluks also as part of migration. *Census of India 1961, Volume VII, Kerala, Part I A, General*, pp. 32-37.

[87] The number of Christian people living in the urban areas of the three districts were: Cannanore- 9,937, Calicut- 15,457 and Palghat- 4174. *Census of India 1961, Volume VII, Cultural and Migration Tables*, pp. 152-53.

[88] Cannanore had 29.47 per cent of increase with an increase of rural population by 41.11 per cent in Taliparamba taluk, 30.74 in Tellicherry and 51.39 in North Wynad. The growth rate of Calicut was 26.72 per cent with an increase of rural population by 32.75 per cent in Quilandy taluk, 28.20 in Ernad and 68.69 in South Wyand. Another district that has registered a growth rate higher than the state average due to an escalation of population particularly in the rural areas was Kottayam. The district recorded 30.52 per cent of growth rate mainly due to the influx of mainly Syrian Christian settlers in the highlands of the district as shown by the percentage increase of rural population in the taluks of Devicolam (48.38), Peermade (54.61) and Udumbanchola (675.75). *Census of India 1961, Volume VII, Kerala, Part I A, General Report*, tables, 2.38 and 2.39, pp.106-08.

[89] The state average was 1125 in 1961 whereas the average density of population in Cannanore, Calicut and Palghat were 812, 1019 and 897 (provisional) respectively. *Census of India, 1961, Supplement to the Handbook, The Provisional Population Totals of Kerala,* pp. 1-2.

[90] It is despite the fact that the average density of both the taluks increased at least by three fold, in four decades of time from 1921 to 1961, closely followed by the other northern taluks mentioned here. *Census of India, 1961, Supplement to the Handbook, The Provisional Population Totals of Kerala*, pp. 3-4.

[91] The only taluks that had higher percentage of immigrants in its rural population were Devicolam (53 per cent), Peermade (57 per cent) and Udumbanchola (84 per cent). These taluks were sites of massive migration of peasants, mainly Syrian Christians, in the Travancore region, for land and agriculture. The other taluks of former Travancore where Syrian Christian migrants settled down massively like Pathanapuram (31 per cent), Pathanamthitta (32 per cent) Thodupuzha (35 per cent) and Kanjirapally (41.02 per cent) also had a higher percentage of immigrants in its rural population. See, *Census of India 1961, Volume VII, Kerala, Part I A, General Report*, table 5.13, 'Percentage of Immigrants to the Rural Population in Taluks', pp. 287-88.

[92] The percentage increase for the whole state was 54 per cent during the period. The Christian heartlands Ernakulam, Kottayam, Trichur, Alleppy and Quilon districts registered 14, 28, 18, 14 and 90 percents respectively. *Ibid*, table 9.3, 'Distribution of the Strength of Each Major Religious

Community per 10,000 of Rural and Urban population respectively, 1901-1961', pp. 400-01.

93 *Ibid*, pp. 400-01.

94 *Ibid*, table 9.4, 'Distribution of Each Major Religious Community among the Districts of the State', 1901-1961, pp. 404-05.

95 Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity,* pp. 91-107.

96 My notion of 'migrant fiction' is informed by the concept of 'colonial fiction' as propounded by Nicholas B. Dirks. Dirks, *Castes of Mind*.

97 Editorial, "Malabarinodu Neethi Pularthuka," Girideepam, 7(12), 1968, pp. 3-5; Fr. George Kazkikkachalil, "Manoharamaya Wayanad", N.J. John et.al, "Manathavady" and Jose Thomas and Thekkanatt, "Pulpally," in *Souvenir of the Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee of Rt. Rev. Dr. Sebastian Vallopilly*.

98 He provides a number of instances where the migrants were cleansed by the dreadful fever. For instance, out of the 72 members of the Pallikkathazhathu family from Anikkad, who settled in Kuttiadi in 1932, all but two died of malaria in four or five years of their settlement. See for more instances: Pazheparambil, *Swapnabhumiyil*, pp. 98-107.

99 Sivaswamy et.al, *The Exodus from Travancore to Malabar*, pp. 3-10, 36-38.

100 John Thengumpally, "Malabarilekkulla Yathra Bahalam," (1944), reproduced *in Kutiyettathinte Ithihasam*, pp. 31-34.

101 Mathew C. Kattakkayam, "Malabarile Anubhava Bhodhyamaya Chila Vivarangal," September 24, 1949; K.C. Joseph, "Malabar Rangam: Nattukar Ariyendathu," November 26, 1949; Sebastian C. Vadakkayil, "Malabar Kutiyettam: Athengane Vijayaprdadhamakkam," January 1, 1954; *Deepika* daily.

102 K.C. Ninan, "Manninodu Mallidan Vannu," *Deepika* daily, 23 March 1954.

103 Nechikkad, "Mysore" Kuthichuyarunna Shimoga Colonikal," *Girideepam*, Vol. 5, Issue. 10, April 1966, pp. 7-9, 27; Fr. Joseph Kachiramattom, "Adhvanathilude Abhivridhiyilekku," *St. Joseph's Church Vayattuparambu, Smaranika* (Vayattuparambu: Smaranika Committee, 1986), pp. 148-50.

104 See for specific instances Pazheparambil, *Swapnabhumilyi,* pp. 108-24.

105 See, Vallopilly, *Daivam Nammodukude*, p. 221; Joseph, *Konippadikal,* p. 444.

106 Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* pp. 91-110.

107 Kuravilangad Joseph, "Malabar Kutiyettam: Poruthappedalum Poruthakkedum," in *Kutiyettathinte Ithihasam*, pp. 64-68.

108 See, Fr. Vadakkan, "Mattam Vithacha Van Kutiyettam,"in *St. Joseph's Church Vayattuparambu, Smaranika*, pp. 54-55; P.C. Balakrishnan Nambiar, "Wayanad Kutiyettathinu Sesham"; Fr. Kunnel, "Anthar Samsthana Kutiyettam Oru Adiyanthira Avasyam," *Girideepam*, Vol. 5, Issue. 6, December 1965, pp. 21-23; Jose Kadukayil, "Valarunna Colonikal—Nadavayal," Girideepam, Vol. 9, Issue. 10, April 1970, pp. 13-15; O.V. Lukose, "Keralathinte Nandanodhyanamayi Highrangine Roopappeduthanam," *Deepika* daily, 13 December 1956; Dr. P.J. Thomas, Kutiyettam Keralathinte Adiyandira Avasyam," *Deepika* daily, 15 August 1958; "Vanam Krishikkar," "Vanam Kaiyettathinidayakkiya Sahacharyangal," and "Vanam Kaiyettakkarude Prasnangal," *Deepika* daily, 10, 11 and 14 June respectively 1960 and Sivaswamy et.al, *The Exodus from Travancore to Malabar*, p. 3.

109 Editorial, "Vana Samrakshanavum Kutiyirakkum," *Sathyadeepam*, Vol. 37, No.30, 11 March 1964, p. 6.

110 N. E. Balaram, "Kottiyoor Kutiyanmare N.S.Sinu Vendi Kuruthi Kodukkaruthu," (Leaflet by Kannur District Karshaka Sangham, published in 1961), p. 1; P.C. Balakrishnan Nambiar, "Wayanad Kutiyettathinu Sesham."

111 Pottekkatt, "Statement to the First Edition," in *Vishakanyaka*, p. 5; M.N. Karasserry, "Malabar Kutiyettavum Aikya Keralavum," in *Kulathuvayal St. George Forane Church Suvarna Jubilee Smaranika* and Mar Sebastian Vallopilly, *Daivam Nammotukoode*, pp. 91-94.

112 Jose Kadukayil, "Valarunna Colonikal—Nadavayal," p. 13; Mon. Mathew Vellankal, "Thalasserry Roopathayum Malabarinte Samskarika Valarchayum," in *Souvenir of the Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee of Rt. Rev. Dr. Sebastian Vallopilly,* pp. 56-57.

113 C.T. Joseph, "Kutiyettam – Athinte Samoohika Samskarika Prerana," p. 14.; C.J. George, "Kutiyetta Pradeshangalile Jeevitham," *Kulathuvayal St. George Forane Church Suvarna Jubilee Smaranika*.

114 Valavoor, *Malabrinoru Moses*, p. 207.

115 Fr. Vadakkan, "Mattam Vithacha Van Kutiyettam," p. 55.

116 Mannathu Padmanabhan call the Nair youth to get at least five acres of land somewhere to toil and convert it into heaven like as the Christians do in the eastern hills of Travancore, Padmanabhan, "Athmavisvasavum Swasraya Sakthiyum Valarthuka" Speech delivered at the Kothamangalam Karayogam meeting in 1928, in *Mannathu Padmanabhante Prasangangal (MPP),* pp. 5-7.

117 He criticizes the Nairs for not taking up rubber cultivation and describes them as "more conservative than the conservative and more immobile than the immobile." Padmanabhan, "Asamkatitharkku Sthanamenthu?" Speech delivered at the Nair conference at Meenachil in 1945, in *MPP,* pp. 79-82.

[118] Padmanabhan, "Nayanmar Adhvana Sheelarayi Valarnu Varanam" Speech delivered at the N.S.S taluk Seminar at Changanacherry in 1963, in *MPP*, pp. 197-98.

[119] Editorial, "Krishi Parivarthanavum Christian Missionarimarum I," *Malayala Manorama*, Aug. 1, 1950.

[120] Editorial, "Krishi Parivarthanavum Christian Missionarimarum II," *Malayala Manorama*, Aug. 2, 1950

[121] "Vanam Kaiyettakkar," 8 April 1960; "Highragu Vanangalile Pravesam-I," 9 April 1961; Highrangile Pavapetta Kutiyettakkarude Prasnam," 10 April 1961; "Highrangu Pradeshathe Kutiyirakku Prasnam," 13 April 1961; "Pradishedarhamaya Vanam Kutiyirakku Natapadikal," 9 may, 1961; "kottiyoorum Bandhapetta Prasnangalum," 1 September, 1961; "Keerithottile Kutiyirakku," 29 February, 1964— all articles and editorials from *Malayala Manaorama*; Editorial, "Vana Samrakshanavum Kutiyirakkum," *Sathyadeepam*, Vol. 37, No. 30, 11 March 1964 and Editorial, "Keralathile Karshaka Kutiyetta Prasnam," reproduced from *Deepika* daily of 19th August, in *Sathyadeepam*, 29, August 1962.

[122] "Malabarile Malayorangalil-I: Thiruvitamkur Kutiyettakkar, Oru Mukhavara," 17 March, 1961, *Mathrubhumi* (Series of articles from March to July 1961).

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Making Space: An Administrator's Memoirs of War

Satish Poduval

V. P. Menon's *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States* (1951)[1] is widely acknowledged as the most comprehensive historical narrative documenting the procedures and stratagems through which, on the eve of Independence, the discrete "national territories" (or states) were fused together on behalf of the new nation. It recounts, on the one hand, the story of an administrative merger—of the Princely States with the territories under direct British rule—that was not just awesome in magnitude but perhaps without parallel in terms of ethico-legal challenges to constitutional jurisprudence. Alongside that, and more significant for my inquiry, this remarkable book represents the issue of region as a complex narrative interpellation of the Indian citizen-reader during the first decade after independence.

The former aspect is in many ways self-evident, and what Menon's book is most known for. On 15 August 1947, one of the many irksome problems confronting the new Indian nation-state was the existence of about 550 "sovereign" princely states within what it sought to secure as its territorial boundaries. These princely states together comprised 48 per cent of the total "Indian" territory, and their subjects (numbering about 89 million) made up more than one-quarter of the population of the new dominion. The new Indian government quickly set about "integrating" the princely states into the Indian union through a three-pronged strategy: one, inciting huge numbers of Congress volunteers to enter the princely states and to build/lead "popular" pressure for democracy; two, initiating vigorous diplomatic parleys with the princes—requesting, cajoling, threatening, and offering handsome monetary rewards—to get them to accede to India; and three, re-mobilizing the hegemonic "foundational fiction" that India had from time immemorial been *one* geographical and cultural entity.

My attempt here is to analyse how Menon narratively constructs the various "regions" in the image of the new nation—that is, how the narrative of nationalism seeks to deploy/impose a singular History to orchestrate cultural-geographical differences into a Statist anthem of unity. Equally significant is a related aspect of Menon's book: the textual labour of configuring an Indian reader-citizen: this figure is not so much an individualized—or even an ideal—reader but functions as a site of active narrative address that produces a "fitting" interpreter-collaborator. The working of Statist narratives (such as Menon's) is contingent upon the voice of the citizen-narrator exacting an "echo" in the response of the reader-as-citizen.[2] Susie Tharu (1998), in a revealing analysis of the politics of narrative address, points out that in realist writing (fiction as well as history) the

> effect is achieved through a dominant or controlling narrative perspective that presents everything else "in citation." In order to make sense of the [realist] account the reader must align with this narrative authority and with the frame of representation it sets up (p. 221).

She observes that such an act of "alignment" is paralleled in political theory when the new (transcendental, agentive, modern) sovereign subject is brought into conjuncture with the (law-abiding, law-governed) citizen. Thus she suggests,

> It could be argued that in the laws of attention firmed up by realist narrative, it is actually this figure, not just the reader, but the reader-citizen, that performs the function of mediating between the epistemological, juridical, economic, ethical and aesthetic subjects; between the state, the nation, the eco-nomy and the individual (ibid.)

Integration, I suggest, stages the intricate transactions that seemed necessary—and possible—during the heraldic 1950s in invoking and addressing the new Indian reader-citizen.

Interpellating the Reader-Citizen

Following the work of Balibar and Macheray (1978), Marxist literary theorists have sought to shift the terms of reference from a humanist framework of literary *creativity* to a materialist conception of literary *production*: the producer was not a subject (or a "genius") centred in his creation, but an element in a complex historical system.[3] Tony Bennett (1987) has proposed that the proper object for Marxist literary theory was not the study of texts but of "reading formations." He describes a reading formation as

> a set of discursive and inter-textual determinations which organize and animate the practice of reading, connecting texts and readers in specific relation to one another, in *constituting readers as reading subjects of particular types and texts as objects-to-be-read in particular ways* (pp. 70; emphasis added).

Readers (and, for that matter, writers) are not blessed with an autonomous consciousness that allows them to have an unmediated access to a *reality* which they then successfully "reflect" or "interpret." This insight has been crucial for contemporary Marxist cultural studies in its political-materialist investigation of culture as the site of production and reproduction of subjectivities. As Madhav Prasad (1994) points out, cultural studies rejects the claim of a text's inherent and autonomous meaningfulness, and calls attention to

> the signifying practices and codes which are mobilized in the process of production of texts, as well as the determining role of the reigning power relations (caste, race, gender) and relations of production (classes) in constituting the frames of intelligibility which mediate the reader's access to textual meaning (p. 6).[4]

Prasad's writings have been a notable contribution to a constellation of theoretical works that attempt to explore the narrative (and political) *address* embodied in the textual forms of post-colonial societies. He has argued that the pivotal role of Statist cultural policy in India after independence has been to recognize and reward works that manifest the true/appropriate aspects of Indian culture. As such works and their creators are unfurled through "the State's *nazar*, or Gaze of Recognition," the reader is installed in a subsidiary position from where "he/she can only hope to be linked to the world of the *nazar* by absorbing the wisdom and beauty of the Recognized." The gaze of the reader must thus be re-aligned with (relayed through) the gaze that confers—and confirms the integrity of—the work. It is in this sense that nationalist narratives conjure up (institute, address, authorize) not merely the reader, but the reader-citizen.[5]

Prasad specifies two predominant modes through which, he writes, the interactive relay between narrative address and the reader-citizen are set up in post-colonial realism:

> At one extreme, [the reader's] gaze coincides with the frame itself and operates a vertical control over the space of the

> narrative, and in the process *approximates the relation of state to nation*. At the other extreme, the random configurations of the narrative are focused by anchoring [the reader's] gaze in *a relation of identification with a central character*, and thus the citizen as individual embodiment of the legal order is called into being.[6]

Although Prasad's comments chiefly pertain to texts that belong to the genre of melodramatic realism, I find his analysis pertinent for my reading of Menon's *Integration.* As we shall later see, Menon's installation of the axiom of national-security-above-all-else provides the interpellative ground for recruiting and "securing" citizens. The setting up of this axiom required the projection of exemplary individuals manifesting this credo, individuals authorized by the State—precisely on the strength of this credo—to proceed on the pedagogic/modernizing mission of interpellating more "citizens."

The narrator-figure in *Integration* is staged as such an individual, a "central character" with whom the reader (in a specular relationship) identifies in order to become a (reader-)citizen. Two points need to be noted here. First, we must guard against an unreflective reading that confuses between the author and the narrator-figure: it is necessary to repudiate the straightforward expressive/causative link between the author's subjectivity and the narrative revelation of that subjectivity.[7] Second, the figure of the reader—also to be understood as an *inscribed*, structural rather than empirical entity—is at least as crucial to the operation of the narrative as the narrator-figure: although cursorily there seem to be clearer and more numerous traces of the narrator (crudely, the narrative often says *I* but not *you*), we must note that the reader is invoked obliquely or conatively in first-person realist narratives.

The narrator-figure in *Integration* is cast in the role of a devoted and selfless patriot, who values his nation's newly won independence from foreign rule. There is little sentimentality in his affection for the nation—he is aware of the dangers that beset the new-born state and of the need to devise means adequate to the task of protecting it. And he would not overly demur from means that might be criticized by soft liberals and the riff-raff, so long as the "larger-interests" of state-security are fulfilled. Indeed it is for these larger interests that he eschews what he considers a well-earned rest after his retirement from the colonial bureaucracy. His description of his interview with Patel—and his conscription for the task of national integration—is a careful staging of his credentials for the job. When Patel offers to make him the Secretary of the States Department, Menon expresses reluctance at first:

> I told Sardar that it was my intention to take all the leave I had earned and to retire from Government service after 15 August… I had never expected that I would see freedom for India in my lifetime. Since that had materialized, my life's ambition was achieved. Further, I had been overworked and was feeling the strain. I had not taken a rest for many years (p. 92).

Patel, with whom Menon had worked even before independence, would have none of it. Patel knew that the Secretary of his States' Ministry had a crucial role to play in the seemingly impossible assignment of quickly coalescing the different regions of the sub-continent—and Menon, with his vast experience and craftiness, was the right man for the post. Therefore

> Sardar told me that because of the abnormal situation in the country, people like myself should not think in terms of retirement. He added that I had taken a prominent part in the transfer of power and that I should consider it my bounden duty to work for the consolidation of freedom (pp. 92-3).

Put in these terms, Menon "naturally agreed" with Patel that national interest, rather than anyone's "personal predilections," should be the guiding factor. The narrator also demonstrates that he had the right qualifications for this complex task. He had been intimately aware of (and involved in) the foregoing British-led moves for constitutional change. He also had the trust of (and personal access to) the British viceroy, whose arbitration would be crucial in the emerging political contours of the Indian dominion. It was Menon, for instance, who proposed to Patel that

> the active co-operation of Lord Mountbatten should be secured. Apart from his position, his grace and his gifts, his relationship to the Royal Family was bound to influence the rulers. Sardar whole-heartedly agreed and asked me to approach him without delay (p. 97).

Perhaps more significant than the narrator's contact with the British Viceroy was the fact that his endeavours had—or at least he seeks to convey that they had—the moral and political backing of all the national leaders who mattered. Nehru and especially Gandhi, who might be expected to differ from his/Patel's vision of India and the modus operandi adopted for integration, surface at critical points in the narrative to "bless" some controversial action of his, thereby precluding the need for further debate or comment. For instance, Gandhi was initially against the interference of the Congress in the States, and critical of the All-

India Congress Committee's efforts to support and encourage the people in the States to demand "self-determination" within them, but Menon points out that "it was not easy even for Gandhiji to draw a *khadi* curtain screening the States from the general mass awakening" (p. 43). So Gandhi finally came round to the view that "the simultaneous awakening in the States [was] due to the 'time spirit'" (ibid.). When there was widespread criticism of Menon's threat on behalf of the Government of India to take over some of the Orissa States, and caustic letters were sent to Gandhi and Nehru, Patel instructed Menon to meet Gandhi and Nehru personally and to "explain matters." Although Gandhi and his opinions do not figure prominently in Menon's planning and negotiations for integration, Gandhi's backing for any of his actions functions as a strong validating measure in Menon's narrative.[8] It equips him to discount and set aside any criticisms or grievances that might have been voiced by any of the parties he was engaging with.

After describing how he accomplished his task of merging the princely states with British India, in the closing chapters of the book the narrator presents a balance sheet about the gains and losses that have accrued from the deal.

> By the partition India had lost an area of 364,737 square miles and a population of 81½ millions. By the integration of the States, we brought in an area of nearly 500,000 square miles with a population of 86½ millions (not including Jammu and Kashmir) (p. 490).

Menon also quotes Patel's statement that the real achievement lay in the fact that the "great ideal" of India's geographical, political and economic unification—which "for centuries remained a distant dream and which appeared as remote and as difficult of attainment as ever even after the advent of Indian independence"—was consummated by the policy of integration (p. ibid.). The narrative concludes with a note of hope and optimism that what had been achieved so far would indeed provide the platform for further development and consolidation:

> …the real integration had to take place in the minds of the people. This could not be accomplished overnight. It would take some time for the people of the erstwhile States to outgrow their regional loyalties and to develop a wider outlook and a broader vision (ibid.).

It is difficult not to read the preceding "balance sheet" as an *account rendered* to the citizens of the new nation after the take-over of additional territory/property (together with appropriate directions for

use). The narrator-figure who renders account here has the twin functions of articulating the State's point-of-view *and* of acting as the textual relay for the constitution of the reader-citizen. In other words, the narrator-figure doubles as the voice of governmental rationality *and* as an ideal citizen representing (i.e. exemplifying, but also displacing, defining, delimiting, sanctioning) other citizens. This narrator-citizen tells the story of how the Indian states were merged, describes the obstacles surmounted, justifies the questionable strategies adopted, emphasizes the need to continue alertly yet confidently down the same road; and, in articulating all these, this figure also prepares an inter-subjective ground and a mode of address that seeks to construct the reader-citizen.

The narrator-figure in *Integration* does not merely report a set of events, but also devises a "perspective," or a conjunct position, from which inhabitants of the national space might perceive and participate in the logic/activities of the nation-state.

Spatial Strategies of Nationalism

A nation comes into being when an imaginary geography is cross-mapped onto a tangible territory. The processes through which physical space appropriated, controlled, or deployed by the State might be described as the *spatial strategies* of nationalism. As Satish Deshpande (1995) puts it:

> Considered as ideologies, spatial strategies can be seen as articulating the physical-material and mental-imaginative aspects of social space. In short, successful spatial strategies are able to link, in a durable and ideologically credible way, abstract (imagined) spaces to concrete (physical) places (p. 3220).

V. P. Menon's *Integration* presents important insights into a range of complex spatial strategies that were deployed by the Indian State to fabricate a territorial/cultural nation. The Indian nation, a yet-to-be-achieved community, is decreed to be *fait accompli* right from an immemorial past. In this continuist narrative, in which the aspiration of the elite becomes a mandate to the people-nation, a cultural-political cartography is sought to be consolidated through arguments premised on "natural" grounds as well as on the elaboration of Hindu (brahminical) ideas of spatiality. Both these modes draw extensively on colonialist writings but recast them for the purposes of hegemonic nationalism. A new idea of national history is inaugurated: the "past" is

constructed in such a manner that it is available for interpretation, deployment, selective rejection—in short, for conquest—by the nation-state that governs in the present. This new history simultaneous produces the nation on the one hand, and *its* "regions" on the other.

For the hegemonic nationalist imagination, the regions appear as a necessary evil, a productive provocation: they now constitute the *parts* ("subordinate sovereignties") as well as the *pasts* (to-be-modernized) that are to be overcome for the making of the nation. This gives rise to spatial strategies in which while the nation's "outsiders" are kept beyond the pale, and the diverse internal "subordinate sovereignties" are subjugated or re-located in the new terrain of the nation. In Menon's narrative, the chief antagonists to such subjugation are Muslims, regional satraps, tribal communities, and the insurgent peasantry.

Menon begins his book by outlining a pen-portrait of (Mother) India as a damsel in historical distress. Although he asserts that India has always been "one geographical entity," he laments the fact that "throughout her long and chequered history, she never achieved political homogeneity." Various kings in north India had, from the earliest times, made intermittent attempts to "bring about her consolidation," yet they had all failed because even when there had been a powerful emperor,

> a diversity of autonomous States constituted the mosaic of an empire. The emperor claimed suzerainty over these rulers, who offered allegiance to him; subordinated their foreign policy to his diplomatic moves; usually served him in war, and offered him tribute; but who, in other respects, retained their sovereignty. Whenever the authority of the Emperor weakened, the subordinate rulers asserted their independence (p. 1).

The chief—and deplorable—fall-out of such a situation, writes Menon (echoing well-worn colonialist historiographic axioms), was that Muslims were able, through an "organised invasion," to vanquish the Hindu kingdoms in north India. Menon repeatedly characterises the coming and settling of the "Moghuls" in terms of a breach and a despotism, while associating the activities of the northern Hindu kings with incipient "Indian" nation-building. For instance, he extols the Rajputs for contributing "a glorious and memorable chapter to the early history of India" by putting up a "heroic resistance" against "the Muslim invaders"—so much so that they have "become synonymous in the Indian mind with chivalry" (p. 250). He goes on to cite approvingly the case of the contemporary ruling family of Udaipur, describing it as being

> first in rank and dignity among the Rajput princes of India. According to tradition, the line was founded by Kanaka Sen, one of the descendants of Sri Rama, the hero of the *Ramayana*. No state in India put up a more heroic or prolonged resistance against the Muslims than Udaipur and it is the boast of the family that it never gave a daughter in marriage to any of the Muslim emperors (p. 258)

While he persistently categorises (etymologically: "to accuse publicly") Muslims as rapacious invaders who refuse to be assimilated into India, Menon is quite well disposed towards the British. It is evident that he draws substantially upon the British self-representations of their "civilising mission" in order to anticipate—and normalise—the statist version of history which he was involved in fortifying. In the opening chapter of the book, Menon credits the British with having effected "India's enduring political consolidation," without which "the Government of Free India could hardly have taken the final step of bringing about the peaceful integration of the Princely States" (p. 3). He can recognise no greater British achievement than the fact that

> [t]oday, for the first time in the country's history, the writ of a single central government runs from Kailas to Kanyakumari, from Kathiawar to Kamrupa (the old name of Assam) (ibid.).

The first aspect of the spatial strategies of nationalism, then, was the coding of Muslims as invaders, India as a Hindu territory, and the anthropomorphising/naturalising of the "immemorial" national space. Embedded here are a range of unwarranted assumptions and assertions that need to be unpacked.

It is remarkable that a writer as enamoured of British administrators and historians as Menon appears ignorant of—or chooses to ignore—the fairly widespread British conviction that prior to the arrival of the East India company there existed no nation called India, only a diverse melange of regional kingdoms. In their well-known compendium of Anglo-Indian vocabulary *Hobson-Jobson* (1886), Yule and Burnell state that "no modern Englishman, who has had to do with India ever speaks of a man of that country as 'an Indian.'" Their contemporary John Strachey is even more emphatic in his book *India* (1888): "there is not, and never was an India, or even a country of India, possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious." Strachey believed that without the British, the sub-continent would return to what it always had been—the regional empires of the Sikhs, the Mughals, the Marathas and the Cholas. None

of these would think of themselves as being parts of one nation, or answer to the name "Indian." Although there followed a century-long evolution of nationalist sentiment in large areas of British India, even at the time Menon published this account of integration, a meaningful historical unification of all the regions into a territorial nation remained more of an aspiration and a mandate than achieved reality. One reason for this, as Selig Harrison (1960) pointed out in 1960, was that there had always been different regions in India—each with its own "golden age," and "one region's golden age was often another's dark age" (p. 13).

Perhaps more importantly, the problem lay in the terms with which the improbable unity was sought to be imposed. During the late nineteenth century, a few representatives of the Indian elite classes (especially those who grouped together as the Indian National Congress) disputed the colonialist characterisation of India as an assorted mix of regions. They asserted that such an idea was being propagated by the British to subvert the emerging nationalist consciousness across the subcontinent. The nationalist rejection of the idea of "separate regions" was premised on a strategic counter-history against colonialist power/hegemony. D.R. Bhandarkar, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh, among others in the late nineteenth century, insisted that India's living spiritual traditions—which could be traced back to the periods preceding the arrival of the Muslims—meant, and proved, that India was a single nation. It was in this early phase of "Indian nationalism" that the names *India* and *Hindu* began to overlap, explicitly in some circles, implicitly in others. Vincent Smith's *Oxford History of India* (1919) was among the early colonial accounts that concurred with and legitimised this overlap. Smith, and several other historians of his time, recognized that with British paramountcy the disparate regions of India had been successfully brought under a single administration for the first time, and that as an administrative strategy it would help to cement the major fault-lines in the social field to be governed. Thus, Smith proposed the famous axiom that "India offers unity in diversity." Wherein lay this unity? In the civilizational heritage that had recently been excavated by Orientalist scholarship (especially from the missionary college of Fort William, Calcutta), which emboldened Smith to declare: "India is primarily a Hindu country."

V. P. Menon's thinking about India is located in the same constellation of ideas. The dimensions of the cultural geography that Menon mobilizes might be mapped through the spatial strategies Menon and Patel evolved during their efforts to "integrate" the various parts of India. These spatial strategies could be described under the following heads:

Terrain of Government

One of the most important of these strategies was to try and ensure that, even as the transfer of power took place, the *structures of governance* were not quickly or overly reorganized. This meant that the princes not only had to be brought round to acceding to the Indian union, but they also had to be persuaded to continue ruling (on behalf of the Indian government) until the much-vaunted "people's choice" (electoral democracy) could safely be notified by the Congress government. During the negotiations with the princes, Menon reports, Patel proffered "friendly advice to the rulers, not as a representative of the old paramountcy or of any foreign power, but as a member of the family trying to solve a family problem" (p. 165). If the princes persisted in their attempts to retain their sovereignty, they would be looked upon as "ulcers on the body" that had to be either cured or eliminated: "if they listened to his [Patel's] advice they could be cured; otherwise they might find themselves uprooted by the people" (ibid.). Patel was thus like a middleman between the princely order and the people who could choose to finally support those from whom he gained most. The chief motif of the advice given by Patel, and often on his behalf by Menon, was that the princes ought to accede to, and strengthen, the Congress government at the centre so that "instead of dividing a narrow well, they would be able to swim in an ocean" (ibid.). The anti-democratic thrust of the deal that was being brokered is revealed in another passage:

> [Sardar Patel] told me that integration was really to the advantage of the rulers themselves. In that event, the Government of India would look after the privy purse and private properties of the rulers. If the viable States were allowed to exist as separate units, the rights and privileges of the rulers would be at the mercy of the local legislatures; and *he was not altogether confident that the local leaders would give the rulers a square dea.* (p. 231; emphasis added).

With the aim of quick and smooth integration, Patel and Menon offered the princes a square deal in the form of hefty privy purses. In addition, "we permitted them to retain certain private properties and guaranteed them the personal rights, privileges and dignities which they had hitherto been enjoying" (p. 477). Menon explains why, in his view, this was necessary:

> The grant of privy purses to the rulers was a sort of *quid pro quo*… We believed that these concessions would, in due course, enable the rulers and their successors to…fit themselves into the modern social and economic pattern. A discontented group of rulers with their numerous dependents would have been a serious problem for us (ibid.).

There was, of course, widespread criticism from several quarters of the move by the new democratic Republic to grant such an enormous financial package to the antiquated nobility. About this recent "tendency" to regard the price paid for integration in the shape of the privy purses as "too high," Menon responds with statistical disdain:

> We cannot strike a balance-sheet without juxtaposing the assets against the liabilities (p. 483)

Thus, even if critics were to ignore great but abstract assets like "the consummation of the great ideal of a united and integrated India, which has affected the destinies of millions of people," or the Centre's new "federal sources of income," or the "abolition of internal customs, which has greatly benefited trade and commerce in the country," Menon reasons that we must at least take into account

> the assets we have received from the States in the shape of immense cash balances and investments amounting to Rs. 77 crores, as well as buildings and palaces. If these are weighed against the total amount of the privy purse, the latter would seem insignificant (ibid.).

Patel was also determined to implement this "fair deal" between the Government and the princes.

> *He regarded them as 'co-architects' and was anxious to retain their goodwill*, *to utilize them as partners* in the work of national consolidation and reconstruction (p. 489; emphasis added).

The princes were not the only beneficiaries/partners Patel had in mind. The community-class he came from, and staunchly represented, too was equally close to his heart:

> Another section towards whom Sardar wanted a considerate policy to be adopted was the *jagirdars*… [He] was against any sort of violent appropriation, which he always described as '*choree*' (theft), or '*daka*' (dacoity). The criterion he had in mind was, if we robbed Peter to pay Paul, what was Peter to do?… There was certainly no sadistic socialism in his make-up (ibid.)

Of course not![9] And the policy adopted by Patel and Menon towards the princes has been highly praised by several right-wing Statist patriots. According to Ishwari Prasad (in Nardurkar (ed.), 1974), such was the "magic effect of his healing touch that the leading princes came forward on their own free-will to renounce their time-honoured privileges" (pp. 108-9). Rajendra Prasad (ibid.), the first President of the Indian Republic, echoed these sentiments:

> That this consolidation was achieved so speedily and as it were almost unnoticed and without the use of force speaks highly not only of the high spirit of patriotism of the rulers and princes who voluntarily gave up powers and privileges long enjoyed, but also of the great powers of organization and persuasion of the Sardar who was able not only to gain their confidence but also retain it (p. 118-9).

The achievement of Patel has also been compared with that of other statesmen. Most frequently, the comparison has been with Bismarck, the Iron Man and creator of German unity.[10] K.M. Munshi (ibid.) invokes another comparison in order to highlight the nature of Patel's achievement:

> Samudragupta, the great Gupta Emperor was styled…'the uprooter of kings'… But in the case of this 'uprooter of kings' [Patel], every ruler so uprooted prayed for the destroyer's long life! (p. 123).

The successful pact with the princely order embodied one of the most important spatial strategies of 1950s nationalism, or more specifically of India's passive revolution monitored by the Congress party.

Engaging Subaltern Resistance

A second aspect of the spatial strategies of nationalism during the years immediately after independence was the set of initiatives to *de-mobilize the various subaltern forces* that had been galvanized in the combative context of anti-imperial nationalism. Since the council of princes had been potentially the greatest organized threat to the dominance of the Congress, they were brought over through the policy of privy purses and the decision not to abolish zamindari. A diametrically opposed strategy was deployed to subdue the "localized" subaltern formations. Menon touches upon the magnitude of this problem—as well as the strategy evolved to deal with it—when he discusses the violent insurgency of the tribals in Orissa towards the end of October

1947. The tribals had begun to occupy the cultivated fields belonging to the landlords and to harvest the grain, affixing blue fags to the property they seized and killing those who opposed them. Menon, with lofty unconcern for whatever "might be the truth as to the origin of the disturbances," states that:

> what caused the greatest concern to the Government of India was the possibility that outbreaks among the aborigines might be spread to those neighbouring areas in which they formed a considerable proportion of the population (p. 154).

Swiftly aligning his mindset with the counter-insurgency reflexes of colonial administrators, Menon declares:

> Trouble with the aborigines had often broken out in the past and had cost considerable effort and expense to put down. *From all points of view*, it appeared that the time had come *to take firm and immediate action if chaos was to be prevented* (ibid.; emphasis added).

What about the point of view of the restive tribals? Clearly, Menon perceives the tribals not as rational and rights-bearing citizens of the new Republic but merely as an untamed threat to the national interest that he (and others in the Congress and the Government of India) are committed to upholding. The idea of nationalism is now being conflated with that of Statism—the State functionaries take all the decisions, and act on those decisions, keeping the National Interest in mind; and conformity is expected from all subjects. The rationale of the speaking (Statist) subject is presumed to be impeccable and self-evident. Subaltern disregard for the elite project of nationalism is characterized as an anti-national impertinence, resulting from ignorance and from being misguided by the local (vested) interests. Take, for instance, Menon's narrativization of a tribal uprising in response to the administrative relocation of Mayurbhanj.

> *We decided* that Mayurbhanj should go to Orissa, as it was logically and culturally linked with that province. [However, when] this decision became known, there was an *intense agitation by the Adibasis who wanted the State to be merged with Bihar* (p. 174; emphases added).

Menon does not consider it relevant that the Adivasis might have wanted to be part of Bihar because the vast majority of their community lived in (what was to become) Bihar, and they did not want their community to be disrupted by—at least in their perception—a *sarkar* representing the exploitative non-adivasis. His attitude towards them, as well as his concern for the State, are evident in his response to their demand:

> It seemed to me that the agitation was *not spontaneous*, but it looked as though the Adibasis would *get out of control* (ibid.; emphases added.).

And so, in order to deal with the crisis,

> I went again to Baripada the capital of Mayurbhanj. On the day of my arrival I saw streams of Adibasis pouring on to the *maidan* facing the bungalow where I was staying and, by the evening, some thousands of them had collected (ibid.).

One would have expected that the motives and concerns of this huge gathering would weigh on the mind of the bureaucrat from Delhi. Instead, one finds him smirk with bemused irritation at the "rather peculiar" tribal manner of conducting public meetings:

> they kept up a continuous session of eating, dancing and speech-making, with occasional intervals for sleep. Sometimes these meetings would last for two or three days at a stretch (ibid.).

Again, what was said and discussed at these marathon meetings is of no concern to Menon. The bottom-line for him is that this mob without a sense of discipline could hardly be expected to act in a mature and responsible manner, in the National Interest. Therefore, his intervention was necessary.

> I felt that *it was imperative* that I should point out to the Adibasi leaders the error of their ways. Accordingly, *I sent for their leader*, one Sonarram, who brought along a few of his colleagues. (ibid.; emphases added).

Sonarram and his colleagues are then served with a quick explanation about the Centre's decision and instructed to fall in line. Menon's arbitrary nationalism and insensitivity towards regional identification are quite breath-taking:

> I explained to them that *there was not a single valid reason* why Mayurbhanj should merge with Bihar. If contiguity were the only criterion [as the tribals seemed to assert], the State could *as well be merged with West Bengal.* Culturally and economically, *its affinity was with Orissa…* (ibid.; emphases added.).

The State's man is in Mayurbhanj not to discuss but to declareand decree. Menon does not report a single word uttered by

Sonarram and his friends. Nor does he pause to wonder why they "did not appear to be convinced by my arguments." Instead, seeing that his "pleas" did not have the desired result, he decides to by-pass these upstart and petty representatives of the tribals: "I then decided to address the Adibasis direct." Menon's "direct address" (from the State to its potential subjects) is not without an element of dark irony:

> I spoke to them that afternoon and *my speech was translated into their dialect by the Superintendent of Police* (ibid., emphasis added.).

Unfortunately for Menon and the Superintendent of Police (that old friend and well-wisher of the tribals from the colonial times!), the tribals are as recalcitrant as their leaders. Menon spares us no details of his "direct" interaction with the tribals, but asks the reader to acquiesce with his assessment of the agitation and its unruly participants:

> I could see that *they had no interest whatever* in this agitation, that the whole demonstration was *artificial* and that *these simple and unsophisticated people were being incited by interested agitators* (ibid., emphases added).

Patel and Menon go ahead with their plan for the merger of Mayurbhanj with Orissa. Although the agitation continued even after the merger, Menon notes with satisfaction that "eventually it fizzled out." This spatial strategy of fragmenting and localizing subaltern resistance movements into governable units, on which the Centre would keep a disciplining eye, was thence generalized:

> In some of the States there were areas where the population was predominantly Bhil. The Bhils are an aboriginal race and extremely backward. They are *very excitable* and it would be *risky to entrust them to the care of an inexperienced democratic government* (p. 234; emphases added).

In other words, to permit the Bhils to exercise democratic sovereignty in their localities would automatically endanger the larger (?) democratic project which the Centre had in mind. The subaltern potential for disrupting that elite-scripted project of democracy had to be policed, "regionalized," and re-deployed in the National Interest:

> It was therefore decided to treat the regions where more than fifty per cent of the population were Bhils as scheduled areas, and *to confer the authority to make laws for the peace and good government* of these areas on the Rajpramukh, *subject to the control of the Government of India* (pp. 234-5; emphases added).

The other—and perhaps—much larger—challenge to the elite project of "democracy" and "nation-building" came from the peasantry, whom Menon characterizes as ignorant villagers vulnerable to communist guile and propaganda. While he acknowledges that the condition of the peasantry in many parts of the country was "extremely backward and neglected" and that they were subjected to harrowing exploitation by the "feudal system," he denies them even a semblance of capacity for autonomous deliberation or resistance. The peasants, according to him, are by nature the selfless, trusting and patriotic servants of the National community—but who, unfortunately, are victimized on the one hand by the landholders who exact labour and tribute from them, and on the other by the fearsome communists. Not for a moment can Menon countenance the thought that there might be any kind of positive understanding or alliance between the landlord-exploited peasants and the anti-landlord communists! At times, this leads to passages of bizzare benightedness:

> The villagers were terrified of [the Communists] and were afraid to give information about their movements and hide-outs… [To] recount only one instance of how the villagers were terrorized by the Communists: in a village consisting of several huts the Patwari's house had been burnt down and looted and his wife been murdered. This happened twenty yards away from the villagers' huts, but when I asked their owners whether they had seen the burning of the Patwari's house they feigned complete ignorance. I was told that for fear of the Communists the villagers invariably behaved like this (p. 384).

We might note that Menon's anti-Communist animus represents one pole of opinion within the Congress—that voiced most notably by Patel, Prasad, Rajagopalachari, etc. It was not shared by those (like Nehru, for instance) for whom the Communists were to some extent a well-grounded social force, as opposed to the divisive and backward mindset of the communalists.

However, even for this other pole of opinion within the Congress, nationalism meant the deployment of a spatial strategy that opposed Communism (as foreign and anti-national in inspiration) to subvert subaltern political activity. B.N. Mullik, a bureaucrat from the Nehru camp who was the Director of Intelligence, articulates this viewpoint fairly clearly. His version (1972) of the events in Nalgonda and Warangal are not very different from Menon's in terms of denying substantive autonomy and agency to the peasants. He does grant that the

Communists held a paternalist (rather than terrorizing) hold over the peasantry, but he vigorously reinforces the distinction between the "Communists"/"Communist mobs"—who act on the basis of an ideology—and the "villagers"/"masses"—who at best just support the former passively, for fear or favour.

> [The Communists] carried on their depredations over a large area seizing land, driving away the landlords and brutally exterminating all those who dared to stand against them. Side by side with this armed action, the work of distribution of land amongst the peasants continued and this gave the party a standing among the masses in spite of the violence which the masses did not approve of (p. 246-7).

The Communist depredators targeted precisely those institutions and symbols of elite authority which Ranajit Guha (1983) catalogues as persistent targets of peasant insurgency against the nexus of zamindar-sahukar-sarkar much before the influx of Communism into India:

> Even *police stations* were attacked and arms looted. Communist mobs also looted *liquor and excise shops*, *customs offices and shops of the villagers who did not subscribe to their policy*. They damaged *bridges and culverts* to disrupt communications, gradually extended their control…and established their own form of village Panchayat with the result that there was no semblance of any *governmental authority* left in these areas (ibid., emphases added).

The Communists, with their "foreign ideology" based on "hatred and violence," appeared more successful than the "benevolent" nationalists in winning over even the "ignorant" tribals.

> The Communists also extended their activities into the hilly and forest areas to win over such tribal populations as the Koyas, the Chenchus and the Lambadas. The tribals came very handy in showing them secret paths through the forests and hills and also in working as scouts against advancing troops and police. Ultimately these areas became the shelters for the Communist *Dalams* when the pressure of the Indian army increased (p. 252).

Mullick also admits to another significant difference between the "communist mobs" and the "nationalist troops"—despite being inspired and guided by a foreign ideology, the Communists seemed to have much stronger local ties than the nationalist forces.

> …the troops were *strangers to the area and did not know the language*. They had to depend on *guides and interpreters who often betrayed them*. The civil police, the Patels, etc., who could have been of use, had been thoroughly demoralised. The communists were *local people, with deep roots in the villages in which they were born and in which they had worked for nearly a decade* and, therefore, it was easy for them to disappear *amongst the village people even under the nose of the security forces*. The only way to detect them was through informants… (p. 253; emphases added).

Thus the Congress government evolved and deployed a spatial strategy to subvert/de-mobilize the peasant and tribal uprisings during the 1950s: an abstract and overarching National Interest was set up, on behalf—and in defence—of which the "local" subaltern insurgencies were to be quashed. Despite their differences, both Nehru and Patel agreed on one point: subaltern movements could be given the name "Communist" and hanged. Nehru's initial pious stand (that the "social force" represented by the Communists could be fought back by the "social force" represented by his Government's Five Year Plans) soon gave way to a policy of violent suppression. When Rajagopalachari took over as Home Minister after Patel's death, Mullick was given an "open charter" to exterminate the guerrillas who had "committed so many atrocities on the people," had killed "many innocent people," and caused so much "wanton destruction." And Menon describes the methods through which, in the name of protecting the helpless rural subjects, the combined might of the national armies were deployed to deal with what was basically a local rebellion:

> The banning of the Communist party, together with the disposition of the army and the special police, gradually renewed the confidence of the rural population… All available resources were thrown into this all-out drive. Armed police were borrowed from Madras, the Central Provinces and Bombay (p. 385).

India as Hindu-stan

A related aspect—of the National countermanding the local—constituted a third "regionalizing" spatial strategy of the central government during the 1950s: *the erasure or re-writing of prevailing expressions of local sovereignty by projecting an imperious National space*. What were more or less "autonomous" political entities now became "parts" of the vast nation. In Menon's book, this spatial-temporal take-over is narrativized overtly as well as covertly.

Menon begins by dismissing the idea (upheld by the rulers, the British, the Muslim League, among others) that the princely States were—or had ever been—sovereign.

> It was not historically correct to assume that when the States came into contact with the British power they were independent, each possessed of full sovereignty and of a status which a modern constitutional lawyer could hold to be governed by the rules in international law. In fact none of the States had ever had international status (p. 23).

It matters little to Menon that the historically specific idea of a *nation* (let alone "international law") which would be recognized by a "modern constitutional lawyer" is of recent origin. He also chooses to ignore the fact that the debate was for the recognition of the States, along with British India—with which they had always been comparable and contemporary—as sovereign nations. While Nehru declared that all the treaties between the British and the Princely States must be scrapped, that all those who harked back to these treaties were "lunatics, knaves or fools" (p. 52), and that any State that decided to stay away from the Constituent Assembly "would be treated as a hostile state," the Muslim League asserted that the treaties had legal validity and advised the States to "disregard [Nehru's] idle threat" (p. 78). Nehru believed that two criteria had to be fulfilled by a State before sovereignty could be established: the capacity for international relations and the capacity for declaring war; and he contended that in these terms hardly any State could claim even semi-sovereignty during British rule. When some of the prominent States announced that after the lapse of British paramountcy on 15 August 1947 they would become/remain independent and sovereign (with the right to diplomatic and military activity), in a strongly-worded resolution the All-India Congress Committee opposed any scheme leading to the "Balkanization" of the country and rejected the theory of paramountcy as enunciated and interpreted by the British Government. Menon approvingly reports how the theory was enunciated and interpreted by the Congress:

> The Committee *refused to admit the right of any State to declare its independence and to live in isolation from the rest of India.* That would amount to *a denial of the course of Indian history and the objectives of the Indian people* (p. 91).

Menon deplores the contemporary expressions of local sovereignty, or the refusal to get "regionalized," as a grave threat to the newly delineated national boundaries. He characterizes the fractious princes as cynical and selfish power-brokers, who could undo the nation that the Congress was selflessly and benevolently putting together:

> The general tendency among the rulers was to make the best of the bargaining position in which the lapse of paramountcy placed them. The fact that during the second World war many of the major States had strengthened their armed forces could not be ignored. The decision therefore that, with the withdrawal of the British, the Indian states comprising two-fifths of the land must *return to a state of complete political isolation* was fraught with the *gravest danger to the integrity of the country* (ibid.).

For many of the States that were thus sought to be "regionalized" the ideal of the Nation might well have appeared to be a neo-Aryan, or North Indian, fabrication. Most kingdoms that, from colonial times, came to be described as the "North-East" had little historical/cultural links with the rest of India. Similarly, most of "South India" had across the centuries been more closely connected—economically but also culturally—with the Arabian peninsula, the Mediterranean, and Oceania, than with the northern parts of the sub-continent. In fact, several maps produced until the mid-nineteenth century point to more than a physical divide in naming the territory covering the Gangetic plains till the Vindhyas as "Hindustan" and the territory south of the Vindhyas as the "Deccan." It is possible to argue that the idea of a united India was more an aim and aspiration of the mighty empires of Hindustan (or "Aryavarta") than a reality on the ground, even administratively, until the British period. Most kingdoms of contemporary Kerala and Tamil Nadu were *never* quite under these Hindustani empires. In a sense, therefore, they were neither politically part of Hindustan/India nor culturally part of Hinduism. E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker emphasized this point when he said in 1927:

> Those who have done research in languages tell us that the word 'Hindu' is derived from "Sind" and it *denotes a Region in our country and not any religion based on any principles…*(p. 35; emphasis added).

On another occasion, he elaborated:

> There is no religion called Hindu religion. There is no word known as "Hindu" in any of our languages or even in Sanskrit… just as the word 'Bengali' means one who lives in Bengal, 'Gujarati' means one who lives in Gujarat… likewise, the word 'Hindu' means 'one who lives in India.'… Even the language

"Hindi" is an Aryan language and the word "Hindu" which is close to the word "Hindi" should also be an Aryan word; *it is in no way connected with our people* (p. 91; emphasis added).

Naicker's was, of course, only one among several incisive analyses of the interface between history and cultural geography that released sedimented facts for fresh investigation.[11] Similar demands for the retention/restoration of political and cultural autonomy were forcefully articulated by the Sikhs, the Nagas, the Kashmiris, and several others.

Nationalism, Territory and Security

During the 1950s, the terrain of Indian polity appeared to be weathering the tremors and rumblings originating from diverse civil societal epicentres with reasonable success. But there was no telling at what point, and from which direction, major fault-lines would cleave the bedrock apart. For the new State, the "unity" of the nation was an overriding concern. True, there was euphoria at the overthrow of colonial rule and the people seemed to be full of patriotic longing to build a strong India. The State, however, could only view the energetic aspirations and expectations buzzing across the huge subcontinent as a mixed blessing. It was quite clear that these widespread aspirations could not be fulfilled in the near future, and the disillusionment and unrest which might follow would have to be dealt with. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment—these were huge and vicious circles which the country did not have the resources to square in decades. Perhaps more problematic was the incipient divisions based on language, caste, community, and regional identity. The only all-inclusive sphere which could possibly subsume these divisive identities was that of regional identity. How could this all-inclusive sphere be materialized? First, by establishing the concepts of nationhood, the State, and national territory as inextricably interlinked; and second, by generating public consent for the idea that the security of the democratic nation-state and its territory was greater than, and a pre-condition for, the well-being of its constituent regions and subjects.

We have already discussed how Menon casts the question of the State's *security*—and, by logical extension as it were, of its citizens—as the hinge-argument for his narrative of the nation's integration. For Menon, the nationalist State is essentially an administrative apparatus set up for, and committed to, the welfare of its citizens. It should be noted that not for a moment does he conceive of the State as an appendage of the ruling class or as an arena of economic (let alone

cultural-political) jostling. For him the State is all-important because it guarantees, at least in principle, the "security" of its citizens against alien invaders, enemies within, pestilence and natural disasters, unjust/unmodern social practices, etc., through the policies and activities of its authorized agents and institutions.

Security, in other words, is the predicate upon which the modern subjects of government[12]—its agents as well as its objects—are harnessed. The issue is not really whether one accepts or rejects modern regimes based on security, but the discursive configuration and dissemination of specific ideas about (in-)security. One might pursue this investigation along at least two lines. One could, archaeologically, document how security is described; who or what does the describing; the presuppositions that enable and validate such descriptions; the institutions and discursive practices that produce, foster and circulate these descriptions; etc. Alternatively, in a genealogical mode that I propose to adopt in the discussion that follows, one could ask what sort of projects are elaborated by the pursuit of security. To the genealogist, security is not a noun that names something but a principle of formation that does things. S/he would replace a question like "What do people mean/understand by security?" with one like "How does a perception of (in-)security forge a people?"

In my reading of Menon's narrative, I am less interested in the (obvious and no doubt important) question of how effective the Indian State has been in fulfilling its foundational claim to legitimacy by providing security for the majority of its citizens; my interest is more in asking how Menon construes the national political space—and what he deems must be policed or excluded from it—in order to ensure security? An allied set of questions would be: what does Menon's representation of insecurity make of "us" (and of those who are not "us")? what is forfeited/obliterated because of the manner in which "we" feel threatened and need security?

In Menon's narrative, the security of the new Indian nation-State is threatened chiefly by two elements: first, the not-yet-fully-attained administrative and psychological integration of the various regions that make up the nation; and second, the perceived irrationality/unreliability of the Muslim citizens of India. Both these threats to the nation's security have to be dealt with through evolving strategies of government[13], that is by acting on the given population of the territory through tactics that will induce it to act in a manner conducive to the needs of government.

Notwithstanding Menon's projection in his narrative as fait accompli, during the early 1950s confused and divided loyalties prevailed in the realm of realpolitik. Thus, more significant are the glimpses offered of the "governmental" strategies that were being evolved during that period. One of these was embedded in the Instrument of Accession itself. According to this Act, the union government would be sovereign (only) in three matters: defence, communication, and foreign relations. In all other matters, the different units of the federation would retain autonomy. However, as Menon pointed out to Patel, Nehru and Mountbatten,

> If the rulers acceded on 'defence', the Government of India *obtained the right of entry into any State where internal stability was threatened.* 'defence' covered not only external aggression but internal security as well (p. 97; emphasis added).

As it turned out, the "Government of India" was not averse to activating or encouraging Congress volunteers to create instability within the recalcitrant states. When, for instance, the dewan of Travancore, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar declared that his state would assert its independence with the transfer of power, the Travancore State Congress threatened to launch a campaign of direct action. Aiyar's announcement, writes Menon, was worrisome because of his influential position in the public life of the country—it "had deleterious repercussions and encouraged those rulers who were not favourably disposed towards the Indian Dominion" (p. 114). So the Congress press in India was "extremely caustic" in its response to Aiyar. Menon and Mountbatten met Aiyar to persuade him to change the decision, at first by appealing to his "vanity" and "patriotism." When these failed, Mountbatten informed Aiyar that a millionaire Marwari supporter of the Congress, Sir Seth Dalmia, had paid rupees five lakhs (then worth Ł 37, 500) into the Travancore Congress Party funds "in anticipation of starting internal trouble after 15th August"(Cited in Hodson, p. 378). Shortly after Aiyar returned to Travancore, he was violently attacked with a billhook and was nearly killed. The Maharajah of Travancore immediately telegraphed his "acceptance" of the Instrument of Accession," and Patel "appealed to the Travancore State Congress to suspend their campaign of direct action" (p. 116).

Menon and Patel have often enough been characterized as upholding a Hindu nationalist vision of Indian culture and politics. Their attempts to Hinduize the emergent nation-space bears the discernible imprint of a splay of (primarily) anti-Muslim sentiments. Menon's narrative is structured around a logic that, on the one hand, occults/ disavows the active role and contributions of the Muslims in forging what Nehru influentially described as India's composite culture, and on the other, protracts the figure of the Muslim as aggressor, invader, vivisector: in short, as individuating a community of proven—and potential traitors. But there is another aspect to the narrative stereotyping of the Muslim(s) that compels attention. Designating the Muslim as a threat to national *security* makes possible "secular," governmental initiatives to combat the threats of fragmentation posed by the various regional movements. Menon is often quite explicit about the merits of putting the animosity generated against the Muslims to profitable governmental use. He notes, for instance, that the communal flare-up in north India had made many non-Muslim rulers turn away from Pakistan and so he had advised Patel that "we should use this development to our advantage" (p. 97).

Thus, one important aspect of mobilizing anti-Muslim sentiments for "governmental" purposes was to designate Pakistan/ Muslims as an interchangeable threat to national security.[14] Of the chapter-length discussions on the efforts to integrate the various states, over one-fourths are devoted to "Muslim" states (Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Jammu and Kashmir), for these states had posed the greatest resistance to Menon's patriotic endeavours. In the mirror of the secular-Hindu nation, the question of regionality articulated by these Muslim states was communalized and this set the stage for the secular State to exorcise the ghost of "yet another Pakistan" through its ideological and repressive apparatuses.

Menon tries very hard to project Muslim rulers and their political representatives—with whom Menon had to negotiate—as exorbitantly communal-minded and impossible to do rational business with. Most of his reports about his (often ignominious) dealings with his Muslim interlocutors are preceded by spiteful descriptions, connotative in function. He picks on the intractable Nawab of Junagadh, describing him as "an eccentric of rare vintage [whose] chief preoccupation in life was dogs" (p. 125). Kasim Razvi, the imposing leader of the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, a leading political organization in Hyderabad, is described as combining "fanaticism with charlatanry" (p. 321). With Razvi, it was hate-at-first-sight for Menon:

> I cannot say I was impressed by his appearance, despite his gleaming eyes and the beard which he sported beneath a fez worn at a rakish angle. The moment he started talking I could see that his was a fanaticism bordering on frenzy. He declared

> that Hyderabad would never surrender its independence and that the Hindus were happy under the Nizam (p. 334)

Menon is no better disposed towards the members of the Nizam's delegation that met him: Abdur Rahim is characterized as "a communalist fanatic of little or no ability"; as for Nawaz Jung—the leader of the delegation—there was "an identity of interests between him and Kasim Razvi" and "it was he, more than anyone else, who made an amicable settlement between India and Hyderabad practically impossible" (p. 330).

Menon maintains a studied silence on the activities of Hindu communalist organizations, notably the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha, which according to several historians were primarily responsible for the outbreak of communal conflict in many parts of India. In Hyderabad, for example, there had been very few cases of communal disturbances till the mid-1930s. Ian Copland's research (1988) unearths evidence to indicate that Hindu communalism was brought into Hyderabad by the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha. Just before the outbreak of the series of riots that rocked the state between 1937 and 1940, "the Hindu Mahasabha spent over Rs. 70, 000 financing the civil disobedience campaign and most of this apparently went on providing rail fares," while "the Arya Samaj's outlay was even higher—over three lakhs, according to one British estimate—and most of this seems likewise to have been expended on fares" (p. 797). Copland also points out that the All-India Congress Working Committee gave "advice, encouragement and possibly financial help" to the Hyderabad State Congress until the Congress emissary Padmaja Naidu described it as unrepresentative, timid, and communal (p. 802). But the primary impetus for the communalization of Hyderabad politics was provided by the Arya Samaj. Although the Hyderabad branch of the Arya Samaj was initially a small unit and geographically isolated from its power centres in Punjab and northern India, during the 1930s it was able to embark on

> [A] vigorous expansion and recruiting programme which resulted in the opening of over 100 additional branches and the acquisition of a number of schools, orphanages and newspapers. With these considerable new resources behind it, the Samaj stepped up the tempo of its proselytising, concentrating especially on untouchables who had been recently converted to Islam (pp. 805-6).

Without sketching this background, in response to which organizations like the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen were started, Menon's descriptions of the Muslims' fanaticism and fears of Hindu dominance and violence appear winkingly addressed to Hindu readers alone, and has the function of demonizing the Muslim. What is also missing from the picture Menon sketches is how the Indian National Congress was orchestrating its own version of "secular" pressure from within and outside Hyderabad to subject the sovereignty of the Nizam. Vallabhbhai Patel's correspondence during this period reveals that he was in touch with various ministers and leaders of the states neighbouring Hyderabad, directing and abetting their moves to topple the government of Hyderabad. D.P. Mishra, a Congress minister in the Central Provinces and Berar, reported proudly to Patel on 29 June 1947:

> We in the Central Provinces have posted on our border trusted Hindu DCs and DSPs with instructions to help those who are working in Hyderabad. Such workers can agitate in Hyderabad and when pursued can cross back into CP and Berar districts (Das, 1973, p. 34).

Mishra also declares that he has requested the Ministers of Bombay and Mysore to make similar arrangements in their border districts.

> If a similar situation could be created by Dr. Subbarayan in the Andhra border, I think we would have succeeded in throwing a ring round this treacherous State. Of course all this is subject to your approval… (ibid.).

The prime minister of the Central Provinces, R. S. Shukla, reported another step taken within his state with Patel's approval—the disarmament of Muslims. In his letter of 21 July 1947 he wrote to Patel that he was certain that if the Nizam or "the goondas of Hyderabad" created trouble, the Muslims in the Central Provinces would also join them. To circumvent this possibility, Shukla first ordered all the citizens of his province to surrender their arms and ammunition to their nearest police station; then, since this was only a "temporary measure," he soon ordered the district magistrate to return to the Hindus their arms. However,

> I do not propose to return the arms and ammunitions of the Muslim licence-holders till it is clear what their attitude is. Perhaps they will never promise or declare that they will not help the Nizam. I, therefore, consider it is not safe to return the arms to them immediately. Though it looks discriminatory, it is

> justified under the present extraordinary circumstances…and I am glad I have your approval of it (ibid., p. 37).

Patel's prompt validation of Shukla's action makes it clear that this move was not an isolated instance of Statist communalism but a deliberate *governmental* initiative. Patel wrote:

> We have separately sent a detailed circular to provincial governments making some suggestions as to the policy they should pursue in regard to arms, ammunition and explosives. The procedure you have suggested is in accordance with the suggestions I have made and I have no objection to your proceeding accordingly (ibid., p.37).

We must not lose sight of the several other facets of the situation in Hyderabad. Much has been made of the fact that the state was a Hindu-majority state ruled over by a Muslim minority, and the low representation of Hindus in the administration has often been assumed to be the major cause of the disturbances against the Nizam's rule. But it is difficult to accept that Hyderabad was characterized by systematic "Islamic" oppression. Since the nineteenth-century, Hyderabad was, in the words of Carolyn Elliot (1974), a "weak patrimonial regime" without much control over its territory or finances: a large part of its land was under the command of powerful feudatory lords, while at the capital nobles with hereditary liens on government offices divested the Nizam of effective sway over administration. The earlier prime minister, Sir Salar Jung, had attempted to break their power by appointing north Indian recruits (*ghair-mulkis*, or non-locals) in the court, and the schism between the *mulkis* and non-*mulkis* continued to be a pivotal issue in Hyderabad politics down to the 1930s (in fact even into the 1970s). Many of the non-*mulkis* had been educated at the Aligarh Muslim University, and they brought with them a militant Islamic consciousness from north India. The *Mulkis* sought to recapture their ascendancy by projecting the Nizam as a local cultural hero and they called upon him to preserve Hyderabad's blend of Hindu and Muslim cultures against the intrusion of religious divisiveness from north India. This schism has often been described as primarily a court battle for administrative jobs, but it is an important pointer to the fact that there was no unified Islamic oppression from above in the state. In fact, as Copland notes, despite their relatively slight presence in the bureaucracy the Hindus dominated in almost all other sectors of the state, like agriculture, banking, trade, law, medicine, accountancy, etc. Indeed, he observes, the commercial hegemony of the Hindus was so complete that the Darbar's Director of Public Information was even able to justify the introduction of a policy of positive discrimination towards Muslims in government jobs as a sort of welfare measure![15] However, the impact of the communal Hindu organizations in the capital, and of the powerful communist movement which united the rural peasantry against the feudal chiefs (mostly Hindu), turned the Nizam increasingly towards the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen for support.

During the parleys between the Indian State and the Nizam's representatives, Nehru put forward two arguments to contend why it would be inconceivable for Hyderabad to remain an independent state. One argument related to the strategic security concerns of India: the Indian State could not permit any foreign power (especially an assertive Muslim power) to remain inside the territorial boundaries of the nation. The other argument related to the internal situation in Hyderabad: the people of Hyderabad aspired to replace the authoritarian regime of the Nizam with democratic governance. Menon of course consistently upholds this official position throughout his book, but there are some points in his narrative that are worth noting. The argument concerning India's security has a double-edged function and dovetails into the argument about the aspirations of the people. During the late 1940s, the "people" of Hyderabad were no homogeneous mass of Hindu patriots yearning to become citizens of India. In fact, records (including Statist records) would indicate that some of the most massive and organized "people's movements" in Hyderabad during this tumultuous phase were mobilized by the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen/Razakars and the Communists.[16] The Indian State's security interests demanded that the potential dangers of Islamic communitarianism (or what today might be described as identity-politics), and communist-led demands for equitable social redistribution of wealth and power, be curbed. What made the "Hyderabad situation" especially dangerous was the fact that Hyderabad was looked upon by large numbers of Muslims all over India as a symbol of Islamic pride, that many of the princes reluctant to accede to India looked up to Hyderabad as leading their struggle for justice, and that the remarkable achievements of the communists in the Telengana region were fanning inspiration and unrest to several parts of the country. It is not surprising, therefore, that the chapters on Hyderabad provide Menon the ground for pathologizing Muslims (through the Razakars) and the peasant/tribal movements (through the communists).

Dealing aggressively and effectively with Hyderabad would not only rid the Indian State of the lingering shreds of Muslim pride and unruly demands of the peasantry. It would also result in two other

advantages. The Indian State would be able to re-deploy its armed forces in curbing insurgency in the north-east, and especially to capture the bigger "prize" of Kashmir, as Nehru 's letter to Patel on 27 May 1948 makes clear:

> I had a long military conference about Kashmir. The situation is not so good as we had hoped… Undoubtedly with more troops we could clear up this place this summer. But we just can[not?] spare them so long as there is danger or warlike developments in Hyderabad with other consequences in other parts of the country. *It is in this context that we have to see the Hyderabad picture*. I feel that it would be of *tremendous advantage to us if we could satisfactorily settle with Hyderabad and make it innocuous by bringing it effectively under our control. The rest will follow* (Das, 1974), p. 210; emphases added).

Taking possession of Hyderabad in as less visibly violent a manner as possible would have the further advantage of enabling the Indian State to proclaim its secular credentials to the world. This was an important consideration because, as Menon notes, the Nizam "had a position not only in the State and among his co-religionists in the rest of the country, but also a certain prestige abroad" (p. 378). Projecting the Indian State as secular would thus help in reducing the threat of internal rioting as well as strengthen the India's efforts to sell its Kashmir policy to the world at large. Thus Menon cheerfully writes that contrary to widespread fears, there was "not a single communal incident in the whole length and breadth of India throughout the time of the operation" (ibid.). What precisely many Muslims in the country felt during the period is difficult to guess, but there is a little vignette in Menon's narrative that might give an oblique indication. After Hyderabad had been defeated and captured, Menon goes—brimming with secular Hindu benevolence—to see the Ittehad leader Kasim Razvi, who was under military custody.

> Surprise was writ large on Razvi's face when he saw me. When I greeted him he told me that he never expected that I would shake hands with him. I said to him: 'Did I not tell you when you met me in Delhi that you would land yourself in this predicament?' (p. 381).

Menon further observes that

> Shorn of his bombast, Kasim Razvi looked woebegone. He told me that he had great plans for communal peace in south India, but I replied that I had seen enough of the results of those plans, though I had been in Hyderabad State for only a short time (ibid.).

The interview ends with Menon's patronising offer (no doubt also pitched at the reader, as proof of a fair-minded liberalism) to provide succour, and a silent refusal from the captive Muslim villain:

> I asked him whether he was well looked after and whether he wanted any particular facilities which could be given to him. He assured me that he was being well looked after and that he did not want anything (ibid.).

Notes:

1. Hereafter cited in the text as *Integration*, with page numbers in brackets.
2. It is fairly well-established today that the realist genre operates principally on two representational axes: a vertical *hierarchy* of worlds, characters, discourses, etc., of which the narrative normalizes and privileges one set (through narratorial tone, use of quotation marks, choice of settings/"villains," processes of closure, etc.); and a horizontal *alignment* or contract—as crucial as it is implicit—between the author and the reader regarding the "laws of attention" that would render the textual world self-evidently real. See MacCabe (1986), Ermarth (1983), Tharu (1998).
3. Balibar and Macherey (1978) argue that it is important to *locate* the "production of literary effects historically as part of the ensemble of social practices…. Literature and history are not each set up externally to each other (not even as the history *of* literature, social and political history), but are in an intricate and connected relationship…. Very generally, this internal relationship is what constitutes the definition of literature as an ideological form" (p. 6).
4. See Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) conception of the *literary field* which "requires and enables us to make a radical break with the substantialist mode of thought…which tends to foreground the individual, or the visible interactions between individuals, at the expense of structural relations—invisible, or visible only through their effects—between social positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be isolated individuals, groups or institutions" (p. 29).
5. As Prasad (1998) points out, the concept of the "citizen" in India cannot be thought of as an attribute that automatically belongs to all those who inhabit the nation-state; rather, it is an ideal that is characteristic of a unique (modern, urban, upper-caste, frequently male) individual (p. 55).
6. Prasad (1998) builds on Neil Larsen's argument that in post-colonial realist narratives the "direct authorial word" is erased from the horizontal axis of the narrative and transferred or displaced onto "a paradigmatic or vertical

position from which it is able govern the flow of the narrative as if through filtration" (Cited p. 60). According to Prasad, the dominant mode of realism in post-colonial India is distinguished by the involvement of the reader with a central character's excursus through a sequence of events "whose meaning is constructed through the diegesis, under the aegis of legality" (p. 63).

7. Following Lacan's well-known query "Is the subject I speak of when I speak the same as the subject who speaks?" Roland Barthes (1977) pointed out that *who speaks* in the narrative is not *who writes* (in real life)—also, *who writes* is not *who is*. (See pp. 111-2.) (Subsequently, of course, a question mark has also been put around confident assumptions about *who is*).

8. Partha Chatterjee (1986) points to a similar "use" of Gandhi by Nehru—and other bourgeois leaders who anticipated an effective "transfer of power" to their hands—during the final phase of the nationalist struggle: "[W]hereas our very knowledge of society tells us that 'we' are powerless, Gandhi's unique and incomprehensible knack of reaching the people makes him powerful; however, for that very reason, our knowledge of the consequences of Gandhi's power enables us to let him act on our behalf for the time being but to resume our control afterwards" (p. 152).

9. Patel's "understanding" of socialism is evident from the following anecdote related by an admiring biographer: "Once an ardent socialist approached him with a personal appeal to abolish inequality of wealth and cited as an instance that X was master of several millions. Sardar let him wax eloquent on the distribution of surplus wealth. When he had finished, he coolly looked at him and said: 'I know the extent of X's wealth. If all of it were distributed equally among the people of India, your share would be about four annas and three pies. I am willing to give it to you from my own pocket if you undertake to talk no more about this.' The man had no answer" (Panjabi, p. 230).

10. Ishwari Prasad (in Nandurkar (ed.) (1974)) rejects this comparison with Bismarck as "inapt and inaccurate." He explains why: "Bismarck had to fight three wars to accomplish [German] unity; India escaped such catastrophe owing to the skill of her statesmen and the patriotism of her princes. India's problem was of a vast magnitude; the German problem pales into insignificance before it" (pp. 108-9).

11. Others include Iothee Dass (in Madras), Potuluri Veerabrahmam (in Andhra), Jotiba Phule (in Maharashtra), Mangoo Ram (in Punjab), Swami Achchutanand (in Uttar Pradesh), etc.

12. Susie Tharu (1992) suggests that these "subjects of government" are not just those directly employed by the State but also the executiv—and pedagogic—avant-garde consisting of "experts, artists, modernizers, secular individuals [who are invested with] a centrality around which a land and a to-be-governed subject-population is deployed in what emerges as their objective thereness." She adds that this avant-garde is "endowed with auratic, utopic, subjectivities and entrusted with governmental responsibilities of administration, reform and development," even as its individual members "hover in a difficult yoking between their authority and their civic-human equality" (p. 224-5).

13. Although the terms "government(-ality)" and "security" are borrowed from Foucault (1994), it will be clear from my discussion that I use them in a rather restricted sense to indicate the Statist strategies deployed to enforce territorial integrity.

14. Vallabhbhai Patel, in a speech at Calcutta on 3 January 1948, stressed upon one "indisputable" fact: "There are 4 ½ crores of Muslims in India many of whom helped the creation of Pakistan. How can anyone believe that they have changed overnight? The Muslims say that they are loyal citizens and therefore why should anybody doubt their *bonafides*? To them I would say: 'Why do you ask us? Search your own conscience'" (Cited in Panjabi (1962), pp. 134-5). In another well-known speech a few days later, this time at Lucknow on 6 January 1948, Patel stated: "I want to tell [Muslims] that mere declarations of loyalty to the Indian Union will not help them at this critical juncture. They must give practical proof of their declarations… Those who are disloyal will have to go to Pakistan. Those who are still riding two horses [India and Islam?] will have to quit Hindustan" (ibid., p. 135).

15. "The Hindu have the greater part of the trade and industry and consequently most of the private wealth of the State; most of the men of influence in the districts—village patels etc.—are Hindus; therefore there are few ways of livelihood left open to the Muslims except Government service…. Yet even in Government service there are over 300 Hindu gazetted officers" (Cited in Copland, pp. 789-90).

16. Menon, for instance, reports how at "about 3 o'clock in the morning of 27 October, a crowd estimated at about twenty-five to thirty thousand" mobilized by the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen prevented the Nizam's delegation from going to New Delhi for talks with the Indian government (p. 328). Menon dismisses the Hyderabad prime minister Laik Ali's "amazing plea" that the Razakars had come into existence because of "the apprehensions of the Muslims in Hyderabad that their lives were in danger" (p. 344). However, he emphasizes the fact that the Razakars had "for a time, become the virtual masters of Hyderabad" (p. 383-4). The communists had the support of even greater numbers. Even after the Indian State threw all available resources into an "all-out drive" against the communists, Menon reports that: "We were able to bring the menace under control only after three years of ceaseless effort. One might well imagine what would have happened had the Communists been allowed an undisturbed lease of life" (p. 385). At another point Menon declares that "I was by this time more worried about the activities of the Communists and the Razakars than about accession or responsible government for Hyderabad" (p. 350).

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We are reprinting the text of a speech delivered (28th April 1875) by Dr. Robert Caldwell on the languages of India. The occasion was the Annual meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. The text exhibits the synergy of missionary labours and linguistics labours of Caldwell the Zealous religious intellectual. This text provides many clues for understanding the paradigms of Caldwell's cultural, historical and lingusitic theories. We present this text for the cirtical reading of linguists, historians, religious scholars and cultural critics.

The original text was printed by R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR, BREAD STREET HILL, LONDON in 1875. We acknowledge our gratitude to the Tuebingen University Library, Germany, where the editor of TAPASAM came across this booklet in 1990 during his tenure as an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow.

Scaria Zacharia

THE LANGUAGES OF INDIA IN Their Relation to Missionary Work

REV. R. CALDWELL, D.D., LL.D.,

I HAVE been asked to make some remarks on the present occasion on a special subject— the languages of India in their relation to Missionary work. This subject will necessarily be regarded as an interesting one by all persons who take any interest in the study of languages, and I trust it will not be found uninteresting by any. It will not, I believe, be useless labour to attempt to supply the friends of Missions with some information on this subject. It will help them, I trust, to form some idea as to how much has already been done in each language district, and how much remains to be

done. A knowledge of facts will generally be found, sooner or later, to bear fruit.

It may be well to explain at the outset, that my estimate of the population of the different language districts, and of the number of the native converts in those districts, is founded on the results of the census of 1871-72. I do not include Burma or Ceylon. I should also explain that I refer only to the Missions and native converts connected with the various Protestant Missionary Societies—following herein the line adopted by the Indian government in its "Survey of Moral and Material Progress," and for the same reasons.

India is not a homogeneous country, as it is commonly supposed to be, but is as wonderfully varied as it is wonderfully extensive and populous. The population consists of a mixture of several different races, and the differences in language we meet with are still more numerous. Where people of different races have come to make use of one and the same language— as in the British Isles and the United States of America— differences of race offer no hindrance either to mutual intercourse or to Christian work. But where you find a different language in use— whether the people be of the same race as their neighbours, or of a different race—there you find a different nation ; and where the object you have in view is that of preaching the Gospel to every creature, and gaining every nation for Christ, the difficulties in the way are greatly increased by the increased expenditure, not only of money, time, and labour, but even of human life, which the existence of so many different languages involves. When people speak a language of their own, not understood by their neighbours, whether their number be great or small, they require a separate system of means for their Christianisation. They require a Bible of their own, school-books of their own, the elements at least of a literature of their own; and all this requires that they should have Missionaries of their own.

It would be a great relief to the minds of the friends of Missions, and a great lightening of the load borne by the various Missionary Societies, if there were only one language spoken in

India—say Hindûstânî. Hindûstânî, however, is only one language out of many, and, indeed, may be regarded rather as a dialect than as a separate language. The number of the languages, properly so called, spoken in India, is very much greater than is generally supposed. Not including English, the language of government and of the higher education—not including Sanskrit, the literary language of the Brâhmans and other Indo-Aryans—not including Persian, the literary language of the Muhammedans—not including any of the languages spoken on the further side of the Indian frontier, such as Belûchi, on the north-west, or the Burmese dialects spoken on the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal—reckoning only the languages spoken within the boundary line, but including native states as well as British provinces, and the aboriginal tribes of the hills and forests, as well as the more cultivated races—the number of languages spoken in India cannot fall short of a hundred. Twenty of these languages may be regarded as cultivated, the rest as uncultivated ; and it is a remarkable fact, that of the uncultivated languages more than sixty are spoken in one region alone—in the hill ranges of Nepâl, Bhûtân and Asam. As in the Pacific Ocean every group of islands has a language of its own, and every islet a dialect of its own ; so in the region referred to, every range of hills has a language of its own, and every valley a dialect of its own. It may be well to commence our survey of the various languages of India, in their relation to Missionary work, by seeing what is being done along the northern frontier.

Beginning at the extreme limit of British India to the North-West, we find ourselves in the district of country of which Peshâwar is the capital—a district which might be supposed to belong rather to Central Asia than to India, seeing that it was originally a portion of Afghânistân, and that it lies to the west of the Indus, the ancient boundary of India, the river from which India took the name by which it became known to the western nations. The population amounts to about two millions, and the prevailing language is the Afghân, or as it is called the Pashtu, a language which occupies a middle position between Persian and the Indo-Aryan vernaculars.

In this district, through which one race of conquerors after another entered India, the Church Missionary Society has the honour of holding the passes for Christ.

Further east, following the line of the Himâlayas, the great snowy range of mountains which forms nature's barrier between India and High Asia, the first Indian vernacular, properly so called, we meet with, is the language of Cashmere, a native state, with a population of about a million and a half. Cashmere is celebrated for its beauty, and it abounds in objects of interest, but I am sorry to say, that through the jealousy of the native government, it is up to the present time almost impervious to Christian influences. A good beginning has been made by a private Mission in Chamba, a small hill state bordering on Cashmere.

Further along the range, in the neighbourhood of Simla, a Mission has been established by the Church Missionary Society amongst the Hindû inhabitants of the Himâlayas; and higher up the range, in the line of the passes into Tibet, where the Tibetan language begins to be spoken and Hindûism begins to be superseded by Buddhism, a Mission has been commenced by the Moravians. This is all, I fear, that is being done for the Christianisation of Tibet from the Indian side; but missionaries of the Russian Church are operating on Tibet, it is said successfully, from the north.

Still further along the range, nestled in the shade of the loftiest peaks of the Himilayas, is the secluded but interesting State of Nepâl, with a population estimated at about two millions—a State which is geographically a portion of India, though almost quite independent of the British government. Missionaries have not yet succeeded in effecting even an entrance into Nepal, through the jealousy of the native government, which is still more intense than that of Cashmere. This State is the only portion of India in which Buddhism still survives, though it was in India that Buddhism originated, and though at one time Buddhism overspread the greater part of India; and even in Nepal the present rulers are not Buddhists, but Hindûs, and speak a dialect of Hindi. When Christianity

enters Nepâl—as enter it must and will in time—we may be sure that it will not neglect the aboriginal tribes of the Sub-Himilâyan hills and valleys, as both Buddhism and Hindûism have hitherto done.

A mission has been established at the British Sanatarium of Darjiling in Sikhim, a portion of Bhûtan immediately adjoining Nepâl, where the Lepcha, a Tibetan language, is spoken ; and missionaries from Cocch Behâr and Asam have occasionally penetrated into Bhûtan.

Following the line of the Himalayas to their furthest extremity, we arrive at the extreme limit of British India to the North-East, and find ourselves no longer in the region watered by the Indus, the Ganges and their tributaries, but in the valley through which the Brahmaputra flows—the great valley of Asam, celebrated for its tea plantations, which was formerly a portion of the Burman empire. Asamese, the language spoken by the Hindûs in Asam, and the Hinduised portion of the inhabitants, numbering about a million and a half, is considered a dialect of Bengâli. In the hills and forests bordering upon Asam to the Fast and South, there is an extraordinary number of rude tribes, such as the Nâgas, Kâsias, Gâros and many others. The Nâgas number 80,000 ; the Kâsias 142,000 ; the Gâros 69,000. These numbers include only the tribes inhabiting the districts that have been surveyed; and we have lately seen how difficult and dangerous it is to carry out a survey of those hills. It is an interesting circumstance that some of the languages spoken by the rude tribes of the North-Eastern frontier, and the usages prevailing amongst some of those tribes have been found to be allied to those of some of the Kolarian tribes in Chota Nagpore, from which it may be concluded that whilst the Aryans entered India from the North-West—and probably also the Dravidians—the Kolarians must have entered from the North-East.

Several missions have been established by various missionary societies in Asam, both among the Hinduised Asamese, and amongst the hill tribes,—and an encouraging commencement at

least has been made. Kâsia Christians now appear for the second time in the census returns, Gâro Christians for the first time; and the rude Kâsia language has been enriched by the publication in it of several Christian books.

The number of native Christians connected with the various Mission stations established along the northern frontier, to which I have now referred in succession, from Peshâwar in the North-West to Asam in the North-East, is about 1,200. This number does not include several hundred native Christians from Chota Nagpore who are employed as labourers in the tea-plantations in Asam.

We have now taken a survey of the entire frontier from the Indus to the Brahmaputra, and India proper with all its "nations and, kindreds, and peoples and tongues" now stretches before us. The languages spoken in India proper may be divided into three great families or groups—the Indo-Aryan. the Dravidian, and the Kolarian.

I shall begin with the Kolarian family, the family which stands lowest in the scale of cultivation. The Kôls or Kolarians may possibly at some early period have overspread the greater part of the plains of Bengal; but at present they are found only in the hilly and jungly tracts between upper and lower Bengal, and on the plateau of Chota Nagpore, to which they appear to have fled for refuge. The juângs, the most primitive tribe in all India, are Kolarians. Seven languages, at least, are comprised in the Kolarian family, of which the best known are the Santâl, the Munda, and the Ho. The Santâl is spoken on the Râjmahâl hills; the other languages in Chota Nagpore ; and the tribes who speak these languages number more than three millions.

Missions have recently been established amongst the Santâls, and already in 1871 Santâl Christians to the number of nearly 1,000 took their place for the first time in the census returns. Amongst the related Kolarian tribes in Chota Nagpore still more considerable progress has been made. Including the Orâons, who are Dravidians, the native converts on that plateau reached in 1871

the large number of 21,000. The Kolarians, though totally uncultured, are a peculiarly simple-minded, inoffensive race, peculiarly accessible to missionary influences.

The condition of the Indo-Aryans, in point of intellect and culture, differs widely from that of the Kolarians and the other aboriginal tribes. It differs indeed in general so widely that it is difficult to realise the fact that both races have lived together for ages, side by side, in the same country, and even in the same districts. The Indo-Aryan vernaculars are spoken over a far wider area, and by a far larger number of people than any other languages in India; and it may be interesting to us to know that they belong to the same great variety of human speech to which our own language and most of the languages of Europe belong. They have been formed-like the Prâkrits, the more ancient Indo-Aryan vernaculars—from the decomposition of Sanskrit, and consequently the relation in which they stand to Sanskrit is somewhat similar to that of Italian and Spanish to Latin. I have mentioned three of those Indo-Aryan languages already, as spoken amongst the roots of the Himâlayas—the Cashmirian, the court language of Nepâl, and the Asamese ; but there are seven more—not mere dialects, but distinct languages—which are spoken in the plains of India proper. Benglâi is spoken in Lower Bengal by about 36,000,000; the Oriya, or language of Orissa, is spoken by about 5,000,000 ; Hindî, perhaps the most direct representative of Sanskrit, is spoken over a wider area, and by a larger number of people than any other Indian language whatever. It abounds in dialects. Urdû or Hindûstânî, though generally reckoned as a separate language, may rather perhaps be described as a Muhammedan dialect of Hindî, containing a large ad-mixture of Persian. Another dialect of Hindî which may perhaps have a just claim to be separately mentioned, is Mâiwâri, the language of the most extensive of the Râjput States. Including these and other dialects, Hindî is spoken in Upper Bengal, in the North-Western Provinces, and throughout Rajputâna, by more than 100,000,000 ; Punjâbî is spoken by about 12,000,000. These languages belong to the Presidency of Bengal. Then follow the Indo-

Aryan languages spoken in the Bombay Presidency. Sindhî is spoken by about 2,000,000 ; Guiarâtî by about 7,000,000; Marâthî, including Konkanî—the chief rival of Hindî amongst the languages of this class—by about 15,000,000. These numbers may seem large; but however large they may seem, they do not exceed the truth ; on the contrary, they fall considerably short of it, the census of the native states being generally very imperfect.

In consequence of the wide extent of country over which these languages are spoken, and the difficulties in the way of social intercourse which were formerly experienced, most of them have given birth to a large number of dialects. More than twelve dialects are, said to be included in Hindî alone. It is a comfort, however, to know that through the spread of education, local dialects seem to be shrinking into smaller dimensions, or passing away.

A considerable proportion of the people by whom these Indo-Aryan vernaculars are spoken were not, I conceive, originally Aryans by descent, but were Dravidian or Kolarian aborigines, conquered by the Aryans, and then gradually amalgamated with them and Aryanised. Hence we find amongst them many differences in complexion and type of feature, and also many differences in culture and mental and moral characteristics. But notwithstanding these differences—what-ever their culture or want of culture—whether they are of high caste or of low caste—the ideas and feelings of the entire mass have in the course of ages become so completely interpenetrated by the religion they all profess in common, and all classes, down even to the lowest, are so fast tied and bound by the iron fetters of caste, and so proud of those fetters, that the difficulties in the way of their conversion to Christianity are very much greater—I had almost said immeasurably greater—than those that stand in the way of the conversion of the ruder, but freer, aboriginal tribes. Notwithstanding this, throughout the immense extent of Aryan India, and amongst the immense population speaking Indo-Aryan vernaculars, Christianity is slowly winning its way, by dint of earnest, unflagging effort, towards the position it is destined, we believe, to occupy. In so far as mere numbers are concerned, the result is, that it was found in 1871, when the last census was made, that the number of converts belonging to this portion of the population, in connection with the various missionary societies, amounted to 40,000. If this number should seem small—as doubtless it will, when it is compared with the vastness of the population out of which it was gathered—it is but fair and right that we should encourage ourselves by remembering the remarkable fact that this number was exactly double what it was only ten years before. The increase in the number of converts, throughout India, taken as a whole, was found to be 61 per cent. in the ten years preceding 1871 ; but amongst the Indo-Aryans, the most difficult portion of the whole people to deal with, it was found to be 100 per cent. It is also to be remembered that results are not to be estimated by the number of present, immediate conversions alone. The influence for good produced in the public mind, as testified by the Indian Government itself, must also be taken into account.

The third great family into which the vernacular languages of India are divided, is the Dravidian. The cultured portions of the Dravidian race appear to have received their culture, together with their religion and their civil polity, from the Indo-Aryans, in consequence of which they are almost as completely Aryanised or Brahmanised as the Indo-Aryans themselves. But the languages of this family stand in no such relation to the Aryan. The Dravidian languages have borrowed, it is true, from Sanskrit — as English has borrowed from Latin—most of the words required to express the higher class of ideas; but notwithstanding this, those languages are wholly independent of Sanskrit in origin, and claim, indeed, to represent a stage in the history of human speech older than the Sanskritic, older than the oldest Aryan, older even than the separation between Aryan and Turanian. I may be pardoned if I seem to regard this family of languages with partiality, or at least with peculiar interest, seeing that it is now more than thirty-seven years since I commenced the study of Tamil—one of the Dravidian languages—and that ever since it is in Tamil alone that I have carried on my labours as a missionary.

The Dravidian languages are spoken not only in every part of the Presidency of Madras, but in the southern portion of the Bombay Presidency, in the Central Provinces, and even in some isolated portions of the Presidency of Bengal. This family comprises twelve languages not reckoning local dialects, six of which may be classed as cultivated, and six as uncultivated.

To begin with the uncultivated languages,—I have already mentioned one, the Orâon, as spoken by a portion of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Chota Nagpore plateau. The Orâons number 263,000. Another of the uncultivated languages of this family is the Râjmahâl, spoken by a tribe which inhabits the Râjmahâl hills, to the north of Chota Nagpore and between Upper and Lower Bengal, and, which appears to have inhabited those hills before the arrival in them of the Santâls. The people who belong to this tribe, called Mâlers, number 41,000. Christianity has begun to spread amongst the Santâls, but I am not aware whether any of the Mâlers have accepted it as yet.

Another uncultivated language of this family is spoken by the Khonds or Kandhs, a rude tribe inhabiting the hilly region behind Orissa and Ganjam, and numbering 269,000. The members of this tribe used to have a bad notoriety on account of their practice of kidnapping the children of their neighbours and offering them up in sacrifice to the earth-goddess, in the hope of fertilising their fields thereby. That horrid practice has now been entirely suppressed, and the Khonds are said to be advancing in civilisation, but I have not heard that Christianity has as yet been introduced amongst them. I fear not.

This tribe is not to be confounded with the Gônds of the Central Provinces, the most numerous of the aboriginal tribes inhabiting this part of India. The Gônds number 1,634,000, and are divided into a variety of clans, some extremely barbarous and others comparatively civilised, but all speaking substantially the same language. In old maps you will see the name Gôndwana, the forest of the Gônds, printed right across the greater part of Central India. Gônd Christians appeared for the first time in the census returns

of. 1871, some in connection with the Scottish Presbyterian Missions established in the northern portion of the Gônd country, in the valley of the Nerbudda, and some in connection with a mission established by the Church Missionary Society at the southern extremity of the Gônd country, on the banks of the Godavary. The Gônds of the latter place are called Kôîs, properly Kôîtôrs; but this does not mean that they are a different people. Kôî is only one of the many names by which the Gônds call themselves. I have been much interested lately by reading some portions of two of the Gospels recently printed in Gônd, in the Deva-Nâgarî character; and if the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, it must be satisfactory to know that the literary history of this rude language has begun at the right end by the publication in it of portions of the divine word.

The remaining two uncultivated languages of the Dravidian family— the Tuda and Kôta—are spoken on the Neilgherry Hills, in the Presidency of Madras. More has been written about the Tudas than about any other tribe in India, yet they number only 752 souls, and the Kôtas number only 1,112. Christian work has been carried on for some time amongst these peculiarly rude, stiff- necked tribes, but hitherto I fear without much effect.

I now come to the cultivated languages of the Dravidian family. Tamil, the language of the Carnatic, or southern portion of the Coromandel coast of South Travancore, and of the northern portion of Ceylon, may fairly claim, I think, to rank first in the list, in virtue of its being the most highly cultivated and possessing the most extensive literature. Next comes Telugu, Italian of the East, the language of the Northern Circars, or northern portion of the Coromandel coast, and of a portion of the Nizam's territory. Next comes Canarese, the language of Mysore, of the southern districts of the Bombay Presidency, and of Canara, a portion of the Malabar coast. Then comes Malayalam, the language of the southern portion of the Malabar coast, a language which perhaps may be described as a very ancient dialect of Tamil. I have some hesitation in classing amongst the cultivated tongues Tulu, the language of a small portion of the district of Canara, on the Malabar coast ; and

it is with still greater hesitation that I place in this class the Kodagu, or Coorg, the language of a small hill state to the west of Mysore. Tamil is spoken by about 14,500,000; Telugu, by about 15,500,000 ; Canarese, by about 9,250,000 ; Malayâlam, by about 3,750,000; Tulu, by about 300,000; Kodagu, by about 150,000.

In these numbers I include, as far as their numbers can be ascertained, settlers and emigrants who retain the use of their origin language. For instance, in the number of people who speak Tamil, include the Tamil-speaking settlers in Ceylon, whether Hindus or Muhammedans, and the labourers in the Ceylon coffee plantation who number in all 702,000. I include also the Tamil people who are to be found in Burma, in the Eastern Archipelago, in Mauritius, in Southern Africa, in the West Indies—in short, wherever labour required or money is to be made.

Altogether the people who speak the Dravidian languages, whether cultivated or uncultivated, may be reckoned as numbering about 45,660,000.

Christianity has made greater progress on the whole, both as regards the number of converts and the influence it has acquired in the community, amongst the peoples and tribes speaking the Dravidian languages, than amongst the Indo-Aryans. Gônd Christians amount as yet only to 278 ; Kodagu Christians to only about 200 ; The Orâon Christians number 5,600. I am unable to distinguish Tulu-speaking Christians from the rest of the Christians in Canara, but the entire number of Canarese Christians, including those who speak Tulu, is above 4,400. Telugu Christians number above 19,000; Malayâlam Christians also number above 19,000. The number of native Christians who speak Tamil stands considerably the highest in the Indian returns. It amounts to no fewer than 118,000 ; but this includes the native Christians connected with several important Missions which have long occupied a prominent position in India and the names of which are well known in this country—such as the Missions in Tanjore, in Tinnevelly, and in South Travancore.

The number of natives, especially in the great centres of population, who can be reached and influenced through the English language is now very great, and is rapidly increasing; and in consequence, a considerable amount of Christian work is now being carried on in India, especially in schools, through the medium of English. I have restricted myself, however, to the Indian vernaculars, properly so called. I have restricted myself to a rapid survey—I might almost call it merely an enumeration—of those vernaculars, in their relation to missionary work; and it appears to me that the conclusion we are warranted in forming, from the various particulars I have mentioned, is, that whilst the difficulties in the way of the Christianisation of India arising out of the existence of a multiplicity of languages are greater than perhaps had been supposed, those difficulties have not been found to be insurmountable. They have yielded already, as we have seen, in a considerable degree, to the patient, loving efforts of the various missionary societies. Those societies, as they have increased in number and strength, have spread their efforts over a wider and wider area, and devoted themselves to the cultivation of one portion after another of the great Indian field. We have seen that Christianity is now being taught in about seven-and-twenty Indian languages, or including the literary languages—Sanskrit and Persian—in nine-and-twenty, and that amongst twenty-three of the peoples by whom those languages are spoken Christian truth has assumed a visible shape, through the formation amongst them of congregations of Christians. I trust therefore the time is coming—it will soon come—it will come perhaps almost before we are aware—when every language and dialect in India will be consecrated to Christ.

The people by whom these languages are spoken, however cultured or however rude, belong to the same great family to which we ourselves belong. They have the same nature and needs, and are capable of the same salvation. And it is not too much, I think, to assert respecting the various languages they speak, that they are as suitable as our own for being used as vehicles of Christian teaching. They are either suitable in themselves, in virtue of being rich and expressive in themselves; or, if otherwise—if they are

uncultivated as yet— they are able to enrich themselves at will out of the wealth of words providentially laid up in store in Sanskrit for the benefit of all India. And consequently they are all capable of being employed for the noblest purposes for which a language is required. They are capable of conveying God's message of mercy to the soul, and of conveying to God in return the soul's answer of grateful love. There is every reason, therefore, why we should readily and gladly respond to the cry, "Come over and help us," with which India, with her hundred languages and her thousand necessities, invokes our aid.

I cannot sit down without adding a word respecting my own hopes and wishes. I hope in August or September to return to India—to return to Tinnevelly—my own special sphere of labour; and it is my earnest desire that I may be accompanied by a band of young Missionaries. Two young Missionaries have already gone out to Tanjore, a neighbouring province, and the Bishop of Madras writes that "the news of their arrival was like rain after an Indian drought." But I am sorry to say it is uncertain as yet whether any new Missionaries will accompany me to Tinnevelly. We urgently require the help of four new men, three for Tinnevelly itself, and one for Ramnad. May I not hope that some earnest, devoted young men, whether in orders as yet or not, will this day make up their minds to accompany me on this good errand? God is saying to us—in the voice of events— "Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" May I not hope that more than one person here present to-day will answer, "Here am I, send me" ?

ഗവേഷണരംഗം

കേരളപഠനസംബന്ധമായ വിഷയങ്ങളിൽ വിവിധ സർവകലാശാലകളിൽനിന്നു ഡോക്ടർ ബിരുദം ലഭിക്കുന്നവരുടെ പ്രബന്ധങ്ങൾ പരിചയപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന പംക്തിയാണിത്. വിവിധ പഠന വകുപ്പുകളിൽനിന്നു കേരളപഠനവിഷയങ്ങളിൽ ബിരുദം ലഭിക്കുന്നവരുടെ പ്രബന്ധങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള കുറിപ്പുകൾ ക്ഷണിക്കുന്നു.

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ഡോ. ഷംഷാദ് ഹുസൈൻ

മാർഗ്ഗദർശി : ഡോ. സ്കറിയാ സക്കറിയ

ഗവേഷണകേന്ദ്രം: മലയാളവിഭാഗം, ശ്രീശങ്കരാചാര്യ സംസ്കൃത സർവകലാശാല

എ. കെ. നമ്പ്യാർ ■

'കൊളോണിയൽ വിരുദ്ധസമരം' എന്നു വിലയിരുത്തപ്പെട്ട 'മലബാർ കലാപ'ത്തെ അതിന്റെ ഇരകളായ സാമാന്യജനത എങ്ങനെ വിലയിരുത്തുന്നു എന്ന അന്വേഷണമാണ് ഗവേഷക നടത്തുന്നത്. കലാപത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള അക്കാദമിക് ചരിത്രവീക്ഷണങ്ങളെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ നിർത്തി, നാട്ടുവഴക്കത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായ 'വാമൊഴിപ്പാരമ്പര്യ'ത്തെ ഉപാദാനസാമഗ്രിയായി സ്വീകരിച്ചുകൊണ്ടുള്ള ഒരന്വേഷണമാണിത്. ചരിത്രരേഖകളിൽ ഇടം ലഭിക്കാതെപോയ, പ്രാന്തവൽക്കരിക്കപ്പെട്ട സാമാന്യജനതയുടെ ശബ്ദവും അനുഭവങ്ങളും വീണ്ടെടുക്കുന്ന തരത്തിലുള്ള അന്വേഷണമാണ് പ്രബന്ധകർത്ത്രിയുടേത്. മലബാർകലാപത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് നിലവിലുള്ള ധാരണകളെ വിപുലീകരിക്കുകയോ പരിഷ്കരിക്കുകയോ ചെയ്യാൻ പാകത്തിലുള്ള ഒട്ടേറെ സൂചനകൾ വാമൊഴിവഴക്കത്തിന്റെ വിശകലനത്തിലൂടെ വെളിവാക്കുവാൻ പ്രബന്ധത്തിൽ ശ്രമിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ചരിത്രത്തിൽ നിശ്ചയമായും സ്ഥാനം ലഭിക്കേണ്ടുന്ന അത്തരം അറിവുകൾ ചരിത്രത്തിന്റെ രീതിശാസ്ത്രത്തിലൂടെ പഠിക്കുകയെന്നത് തന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യമല്ലെന്നും ഗവേഷക വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. "ചരിത്രം ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളിലൂടെ എങ്ങനെ കഥാത്വം നേടി സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ വിവിധ അടരുകളിൽ വ്യാപിച്ചുനില്ക്കുന്നു" എന്നതാണ്

ഗവേഷണത്തിന്റെ കേന്ദ്രം എന്നും പ്രബന്ധകർത്രി സൂചിപ്പിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. അധിനിവേശഭരണകൂടത്തിന്റെയോ ദേശീയപ്രസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെയോ ജന്മിത്ത വിരുദ്ധതയുടെയോ ബൃഹദാഖ്യാനങ്ങൾക്കടിയിൽപ്പെട്ട് അമർന്നുപോയ ചെറുസ്വരങ്ങളാണ് വാമൊഴികളിലൂടെ കേൾക്കാൻ കഴിയുന്നത് എന്ന ആശയം സ്ഥാപിക്കാൻ ഗവേഷണത്തിലൂടെ ശ്രമിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ഈ ആഖ്യാന ങ്ങൾ പ്രാദേശികതകൾ, ഗാർഹികതകൾ, വൈയക്തികാനുഭവങ്ങൾ എന്നീ വ്യത്യസ്തതലങ്ങളിലേയ്ക്ക് കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുമ്പോൾ കാഴ്ചകളും വ്യത്യസ്ത മായിത്തീരുന്നു. അമ്പത്തൊന്ന് ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളിലൂടെ കലാപകാലത്തെ ദൈനംദിനജീവിതത്തിന്റെ ഉത്ക്കണ്ഠകളും ഭീതികളും സന്തോഷങ്ങളും വർത്തമാനകാലത്തിന്റെ അറിവടയാളങ്ങളുമായി കലർന്ന് നമ്മുടെ മുമ്പിൽ തെളിഞ്ഞുവരുന്നു.

എട്ടധ്യായങ്ങളുള്ള ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിന്റെ ഒന്നാമധ്യായത്തിൽ കലാ പത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള പൂർവപഠനങ്ങൾ സംക്ഷേപിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. തുടർന്നുള്ള മൂന്നധ്യായങ്ങളിൽ വാമൊഴിയുടെ പകർപ്പുകൾ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തിയിരിക്കുന്നു. അഞ്ചാമധ്യായം കലാപത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വാമൊഴിപ്പാരമ്പര്യത്തിന്റെ വിശ കലനമാണ് ഈ അധ്യായത്തിൽ. സ്ത്രീകളുടെ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങളുടെ സവി ശേഷതകളും ഏഴാമധ്യായത്തിൽ സ്ത്രീകളും ജ്ഞാനവ്യവസ്ഥയും തമ്മി ലുള്ള ബന്ധവും ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുന്നു. വാമൊഴിവഴക്കത്തിലെ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങ ളുടെ ഭാഷാപരമായ സവിശേഷതകളാണ് എട്ടാമധ്യായത്തിന്റെ ഉള്ളടക്കം. പ്രബന്ധത്തിലെ ചർച്ചകൾ 'ഉപസംഹാര'ത്തിൽ ഏകോപിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു.

മണ്ഡലവൃത്തിയുടെ ഭാഗമായി ആവേദകരിലൂടെ വസ്തുതാസ മാഹരണം നടത്തി, വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്ന ഫോക്‌ലോർഗവേഷണത്തിന്റെ രീതിശാസ്ത്രമാണ് പ്രബന്ധകർത്രി പൊതുവെ സ്വീകരിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത്. പഠ നത്തിലും വസ്തുതകളുടെ അപഗ്രഥനത്തിലും ആവേദകരുടെ വ്യാഖ്യാ നത്തിന് മുൻതൂക്കം നല്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. ആവേദകർ പ്രതിനിധാനം ചെയ്യുന്ന കൂട്ടായ്മകളുടെ സ്വത്വം വെളിപ്പെടുത്താനുള്ള ശ്രമവും പഠനത്തിൽ കാണാ നുണ്ട്. സമൂഹത്തിന്റെ സ്വത്വബോധം അതിന്റെ വാമൊഴിവഴക്കങ്ങളിൽ പ്രതിഫലിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടാകും. വൈയക്തികവും സാമൂഹികവുമായ സ്വത്വപ്രകാ ശനവും അവയിൽ കണ്ടെത്താൻ കഴിയും. പ്രബന്ധത്തിൽ അത് കാണാ നുണ്ട്. 'കലാപത്തിന്റെ സ്ത്രീഭാഷ്യ'ത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള അന്വേഷണവും ഗവേ ഷണത്തിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യമാകയാൽ സ്ത്രീവാദപരമായ ഒരു സമീപനവും ഗവേ ഷക സ്വീകരിച്ചുകാണുന്നുണ്ട്.

വാമൊഴിയെ ദത്തമായി സ്വീകരിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് ചരിത്രത്തെ വിശക ലനം ചെയ്യുന്ന ഒരു രീതി മലയാളത്തിൽ വേരൂന്നിക്കഴിഞ്ഞിട്ടില്ല. വാമൊഴി പാരമ്പര്യത്തിലെ സ്ത്രീസാന്നിദ്ധ്യം ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുത്തിക്കൊണ്ട് മലബാർ കലാപം വായിച്ചെടുക്കുകയെന്ന, അത്ര എളുപ്പമല്ലാത്ത ഒരു കാര്യമാണ് ഗവേഷക ഏറ്റെടുത്തിരിക്കുന്നത്. ഇങ്ങനെയൊരന്വേഷണം ഇതിനു മുമ്പ് മലയാളത്തിൽ ആരെങ്കിലും നടത്തിയതായി അറിവില്ല. മറ്റാരും കൈവച്ചി ട്ടില്ലാത്ത ഒരു മേഖലയാണ് ഇതെന്ന വസ്തുത ഈ ഗവേഷണപ്രബന്ധ ത്തിന്റെ പ്രസക്തി വർദ്ധിപ്പിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്.

ഗവേഷണത്തിന് ഉചിതമായിട്ടുള്ള രീതിശാസ്ത്രവും അതിനു ചേർന്ന ഭാഷയുമാണ് പ്രബന്ധത്തിന്റേത്. മണ്ഡലവൃത്തിയിലൂടെ ലഭിച്ച ദത്തസാമഗ്രികളെ അനുബന്ധമായി ചേർക്കുന്ന പതിവുരീതിയിൽനിന്ന് വ്യത്യസ്തമായി അവയെ പ്രബന്ധശരീരത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമായാണ് കൊടുത്തി രിക്കുന്നത്. അവ ഈ പഠനത്തിന് അനുപേക്ഷണീയമായ വസ്തുതകളാ കയാലും, അവയെ കേന്ദ്രസ്ഥാനത്തുനിർത്തിയുള്ള പഠനമാണെന്നതി നാലും അത് തികച്ചും ഉചിതംതന്നെ. മലയാളത്തിലെ ഗവേഷണപ്രബന്ധ ങ്ങളിൽനിന്ന് തികച്ചും വ്യത്യസ്തത പുലർത്തുന്ന ഒരു ഗവേഷണ പ്രബന്ധമാണ് ഇതെന്ന് പ്രസ്താവിക്കാൻ സന്തോഷമുണ്ട്. പ്രബന്ധത്തിന്റെ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരണം മലയാളത്തിലെ ഗവേഷണമേഖലയ്ക്ക് ഒരു മുതൽക്കൂ ട്ടായിരിക്കും.

Dilip M. Menon ■

The region of Malabar has generally been studied within the parameters of the three M's — Mappilas, Matriliny and Marxism. Of the three, it is the first that is the least studied for a paradoxical reason. It is the shadow of 1921 —the Malabar Rebelluion— which interrupted the Gandhian politics of Non Co-operation and Khilafat that has come to loom over any writing of the social history of the Mappilas. The profusion of colonial and nationalist documentation on the challenge to their respective authorities has meant that there has been almost no effort to study the Mappila community outside of this ephocal phenomenon. Attempts to explain the rebellion have either concentrated on the religious aspects (Mappila rebellion) or the agrarian aspects (Malabar rebellion). So we have two versions at variance with each other and drawing upon different narratives and sources. Stephen Dale's *Islamic society on the south west frontier*, is the *locus classicus* for the view that the Mappilas rebelled as Muslims against Hindu oppression and that a tradition of outbreaks can be traced back to the incursion of the Portuguese in the 15th century that precipitated a Christian-Muslim conflict on the Arabian Sea. As against this *longue duree* perspective, we have K N Panikkar's *Against Lord and State* that argues that the rebellion was the product of colonial land revenue policies that disturbed the equilibrium of the agrarian structure creating a Muslim underclass that rebelled for a more equitable dispensation. So we have two discursive formation, the

religious and the economic, that do not allow for any differentiation in Mappila aspirations or understandings.

Shamshad Husain's work is pioneereing in that it addresses the question of individual experience for the very first time breaking the mould of existing historiography. Shamshad is extremely aware of the frameworks of power that structure historical narratives, and she is properly sceptical of both colonial and nationalist accounts. Here she follows from Shahid Amin's classic reinterpretation of Chauri Chaura through the words of the participants and constructs a counter narrative of experience. What distinguishes Shamshad's work again is her engagement with feminist theory that allows her to critically engage with the marginalization of women and the female voice in standard works on the events of 1921. There are three significant breakthroughs in this disseration. First it moves away from the standard colonial and nationalist narrtives that privilege structural factors like the economy, political authority and religion and emphasizes instead the agency of the Mappilas of the southern Malabar region. Second, there is a nuanced and critical use of oral traditions and interviews to construct an experiential account that militates against the unlinear narratives generted by power. This allows her in particular to contest the existing paradigm that *de facto* regards the events of 1921 as an assertion by male peasants and actors alone, with women as passive victims. Third, and most important she retains the original flavour of the dialects of the region and in this her work transcends the hiostorical domain to be of future use to linguistics and Malayalam scholars.

My only cavil with this original, sophisticated and sensitive work is that it does not engage with the question of memory and experience as much as it could have. Studies of the Holocaust have allowed us to be more clear eyed about the nature of testimony after the event and raised issues of trauma, repression, "invention" as also ethical questions of what may be asked and narrated. How reliable are present renditions of past traumatic events? What are the mediations: to what extent has memory come to be structured by "history" and a constructed "political tradition"? These are questions that could have been explored with profit.

അധഃകൃതരുടെ സാമൂഹികജീവിതചിത്രീകരണം മലയാളനോവലിൽ (2007)

ജി. കെ. സാവിത്രി/
മാർഗ്ഗദർശി : ഡോ. വത്സലാ ബേബി
ഗവേഷണകേന്ദ്രം: മലയാളവിഭാഗം, കേരള സർവകലാശാല

ഡോ.എൻ. അജയകുമാർ ■

ആമുഖവും ഉപസംഹാരവും കൂടാതെ നാല് അധ്യായങ്ങളുണ്ട് ഈ പ്രബന്ധത്തിന്. 'അധഃകൃതരുടെ സാമൂഹികാവസ്ഥ ഒരു വിശകലനം', 'അധഃകൃത ജീവിതചിത്രീകരണം മലയാളനോവലിൽ', 'അധഃകൃതരുടെ സാമൂഹികജീവിതചിത്രീകരണം മാവേലിമൻറം, നെല്ല്, കൊച്ചരേത്തി എന്നീ നോവലുകളിൽ', 'അധഃകൃതരുടെ ജീവിതചിത്രീകരണം രണ്ടിടങ്ങഴി, ദൈവമക്കൾ, കറ്റയും കൊയ്ത്തും എന്നീ നോവലുകളിൽ' എന്നിവയാണ് അധ്യായങ്ങൾ.

പട്ടികവർഗക്കാരെയും പട്ടികജാതിക്കാരെയുമാണ് 'അധഃകൃതർ' എന്ന പദംകൊണ്ട് ഈ പ്രബന്ധം അർഥമാക്കുന്നത്. ചരിത്രത്തിന്റെയും സാമൂഹികശാസ്ത്രത്തിന്റെയും അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ കേരളത്തിലെ പട്ടികജാതി, പട്ടികവർഗ വിഭാഗക്കാരുടെ സാമൂഹികാവസ്ഥ സാമാന്യമായി അവലോകനം ചെയ്യുകയാണ് ഒന്നാം അധ്യായത്തിൽ. സെൻസസ് റിപ്പോർട്ടുകളും മറ്റു രേഖകളും ഉപയോഗിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടെന്നത് അഭിനന്ദനാർഹമാണ്. പണ്ട് സമൂഹത്തിൽ മേൽക്കോയ്മ വഹിച്ചിരുന്നവരോ നാടുവാഴികളോ ഭരണകർത്താക്കളോ ആയിരുന്നു പുലയർ, പറയർ, കുറവർ, മലയർ മുതലായവരെന്ന് പഠനങ്ങളും രേഖകളും ഉദ്ധരിച്ച് പ്രബന്ധകർത്രി വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നു (പുറം. 9). ആര്യന്മാരുടെ കുടിയേറ്റത്തോടെയാണ് ഈ അവസ്ഥ കീഴ്മേൽ മറിഞ്ഞതെന്നും വ്യക്തമാക്കുന്നു. അധഃകൃതർ, അസ്പൃശ്യർ, ഹരിജനങ്ങൾ എന്നീ വിശേഷണങ്ങൾ മറികടന്ന് ദലിതരായി സ്വത്വബോധമാർജിച്ച സമീപകാലചരിത്രംവരെ സാമാന്യമായി പറഞ്ഞുവയ്ക്കുന്നു. പട്ടികവർഗക്കാരും പട്ടികജാതിക്കാരും ആരാണെന്നും കേരളത്തിലെ പ്രധാന പട്ടികവർഗ, പട്ടികജാതികൾ ഏതൊക്കെയാണെന്നും അവരുടെ ജീവിതരീതി എങ്ങനെയെന്നും തുടർന്ന് അവലോകനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. "...മനുഷ്യരുടെ ബോധത്തിലും ജിവിതത്തിലും വികാരവിചാരങ്ങളിലും സമാന്തരമായി സംഭവിക്കുന്ന പരിണാമത്തെ സൂക്ഷ്മമായി വിവരിക്കാൻ സാമൂഹ്യശാസ്ത്രകാരനെയോ ചരിത്രകാരനെയോ അപേക്ഷിച്ചു ശക്തി കൂടുതൽ സാഹിത്യകാരനാണ്" എന്ന കാഴ്ചപ്പാടോടെ (അതെല്ലാവരും അംഗീകരിക്കണമെന്നില്ലെങ്കിലും) തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത നോവലുകളെ ആസ്പദമാക്കി അധഃകൃതരുടെ ജീവിതാവസ്ഥ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നതിനുള്ള ഉചിതമായ പശ്ചാത്തലമാണ് ഈ അധ്യായം.

അധഃകൃതജീവിതം ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്ന ഏതാനും മലയാളനോവലുകൾ ഹ്രസ്വമായി പരിചയപ്പെടുത്തുകയാണ് രണ്ടാമത്തെ അധ്യായ ത്തിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യം. പട്ടികജാതിക്കാരുടെ ജീവിതം പ്രമേയമാകുന്ന സരസ്വതീവിജയം (പോത്തേരി കുഞ്ഞമ്പു), ഓടയിൽ നിന്ന് (കേശവദേവ്), രണ്ടിടങ്ങഴി (തകഴി), തോട്ടിയുടെ മകൻ (തകഴി), തോട്ടി (നാഗവള്ളി), മണ്ണിന്റെ മാറിൽ (ചെറുകാട്), നനവുള്ള മണ്ണ് (ടി. കെ. സി. വടുതല), കറ്റയും കൊയ്ത്തും (ടി. കെ. സി. വടുതല), പുലയത്തറ (പോൾ ചിറക്കരോട്), ന്യായാസനം (പോൾ ചിറക്കരോട്), മുക്കണി (ഡി. രാജൻ), കല്ലേലിദേശം (കരിക്കം രാജൻ), പുതിയ കോവിൽ (മുട്ടത്തുവർക്കി), ദൈവമക്കൾ (സാറാ തോമസ്), അയ്യങ്കാളിപ്പട (കവിയൂർ മുരളി) എന്നീ നോവലുകളും പട്ടികവർഗ ജീവിതം ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്ന വള്ളൂരമ്മ (യു.എ. ഖാദർ), പൊന്നി (മലയാറ്റൂർ), നെല്ല് (പി. വത്സല), കൂമൻകൊല്ലി (പി. വത്സല), നെല്ല് (ടി. സി. ജോൺ) തേക്ക് (ടി. സി. ജോൺ), ഈ കാട്ടിൽ മൃഗങ്ങളല്ല (കാനം ഇ. ജെ.) കാക്കപ്പുല (നാരായണൻ മാവൂർ), മാവേലി മൻറം (കെ. ജെ. ബേബി) കൊച്ചരേത്തി, ഊരാളിക്കുടി, ചെങ്ങാറും കൂട്ടാളും (മൂന്നും നാരായൻ), കാണി (ശ്രീകണ്ഠൻനായർ) എന്നീ നോവലുകളും വിശകലവിധേയമാക്കുന്നു. "സാഹിത്യം രണ്ടുവിധത്തിലുണ്ട്. ഒന്നാമത്തേത് അറിവിന്റെ സാഹിത്യം, രണ്ടാമത്തേത് ശക്തിയുടെ സാഹിത്യം. അറിവിന്റെ സാഹിത്യം പഠിപ്പിക്കുക എന്ന കൃത്യം നിർവഹിക്കുന്നു. ശക്തിയുടെ സാഹിത്യം ചലിപ്പിക്കുന്നു." എന്ന കവിയൂർ മുരളിയുടെ അഭിപ്രായം ഉദ്ധരിച്ച്, ഈ രണ്ടു ധർമങ്ങളും നിർവഹിക്കുന്നതാകണം അധഃകൃതജീവിതം ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്ന സാഹിത്യം എന്ന് പ്രബന്ധകർത്ത്രി അഭിപ്രായപ്പെടുന്നു. തുടർന്നുള്ള വിശകലനങ്ങളുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാട് നിർണയിക്കുന്നത് ഈ ആശയമാണ്.

മൂന്നും നാലും അധ്യായങ്ങളിലാണ് പ്രബന്ധത്തിന്റെ പ്രധാന വാദഗതികളും വിശകലനങ്ങളും അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. പട്ടികവർഗവിഭാഗക്കാരുടെ സാമൂഹിക ജീവിതം ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്ന മാവേലി മൻറം, നെല്ല്, കൊച്ചരേത്തി എന്നീ നോവലുകളുടെ വിശദപഠനമാണ് മൂന്നാം അധ്യായം. ഈ മൂന്നു നോവലുകളുടെയും ഇതിവൃത്തം ചുരുക്കത്തിൽ അവതരിപ്പിച്ചതിനുശേഷം സാമൂഹികഘടന, അടിസ്ഥാനാവശ്യങ്ങൾ, സാമൂഹികസ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ എന്നിങ്ങനെ മൂന്നു വിപുലവിഭാഗങ്ങളിലായി ഈ നോവലുകളിലെ സാമൂഹികജീവിതചിത്രീകരണം വർഗീകരിച്ചു വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഗോത്രഘടന, ഭരണക്രമം, സമുദായത്തലവന്മാരുടെ അധികാരം, സാമൂഹികസ്ഥിതി, ജീവനോപാധികൾ, ചൂഷണം, സ്ത്രീകളുടെ അവസ്ഥ, അയിത്തം എന്നീ ഉപശീർഷകങ്ങളിൽ സാമൂഹികഘടനയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള വിശകലനം നിർവഹിക്കുന്നു. ഈ വിഷയങ്ങൾ ഓരോ നോവലിലും എങ്ങനെ ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്നുവെന്ന് ഉദാഹരണസഹിതം വ്യക്തമാക്കുകയാണു ചെയ്യുന്നത്. അടിസ്ഥാനാവശ്യങ്ങൾ എന്ന വിഭാഗത്തിൽ ആഹാരം, വേഷഭൂഷാദികൾ, പാർപ്പിടം എന്നിവയെ സംബന്ധിച്ച വിവരണങ്ങളാണുള്ളത്. വിവാഹം, ആരാധന, ആചാരങ്ങൾ, പേടിതല്ലൽ, തിരണ്ടുകുളി, പ്രസവാചാരങ്ങൾ, ഹദ്രിക, മുറം കിലുക്കിപ്പാട്ട്, കുരുതി, കാക്കപ്പുല, പുര നിറയക്കൽ, മരണാന്തരച്ചടങ്ങുകൾ, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം എന്നീ ഉപശീർഷകങ്ങളിലാണ് സാമൂഹികസ്ഥാപനങ്ങളെ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നത്. അധഃകൃതരുടെ ജീവിതം ചിത്രീകരിക്കുക മാത്രമല്ല, അവരുടെ സാമൂഹിക സമുദ്ധാരണം ലക്ഷ്യമാക്കുകയും ഇത്തരം നോവലുകളുടെ ധർമമാണെന്നും അതിൽ ഈ മൂന്നു നോവലുകളും വിജയിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടെന്നും പ്രബന്ധകർത്ത്രി നിരീക്ഷിക്കുന്നു.

രണ്ടിടങ്ങഴി, ദൈവമക്കൾ, കറ്റയും കൊയ്ത്തും എന്നീ നോവലുകളുടെ വിശകലനത്തിലൂടെ പട്ടികജാതിവിഭാഗക്കാരുടെ ജീവിതചിത്രീകരണം പഠിക്കുകയാണ് നാലം അധ്യായത്തിന്റെ ലക്ഷ്യം. മുൻ അധ്യായത്തിലെപ്പോലെ ഈ നോവലുകളുടെ ഇതിവൃത്തം സംഗ്രഹിച്ചശേഷം സാമൂഹികഘടന, അടിസ്ഥാനാവശ്യങ്ങൾ, സാമൂഹികസ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ എന്നിങ്ങനെതന്നെ നോവലുകളിലെ ചിത്രീകരണങ്ങളെ വർഗീകരിക്കുന്നു. ആദ്യത്തെ വിഭാഗത്തിൽ സാമൂഹികസ്ഥിതി, ജീവനോപാധികൾ, അയിത്തം, മതപരിവർത്തനം, ചൂഷണം, സ്ത്രീകളുടെ അവസ്ഥ, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം എന്നീ ഉപശീർഷകങ്ങളുണ്ട്. ഭക്ഷണം പാർപ്പിടം എന്നിവയാണ് അടിസ്ഥാനാവശ്യങ്ങളിൽ വിശകലനവിധേയമാക്കുന്നത്. വിവാഹം, ആരാധന, മരണാനന്തരച്ചടങ്ങുകൾ എന്നിവയാണ് സാമൂഹികസ്ഥാപനങ്ങളായി പരിഗണിക്കുന്നത്. ഈ വർഗീകരണം തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത നോവലുകളുടെ പഠനത്തിന് പര്യാപ്തമാണ്. പഠനത്തിൽനിന്ന് എത്തിച്ചേർന്ന നിഗമനങ്ങൾ ഉപസംഹാരത്തിൽ ക്രോഡീകരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു. അധഃകൃതരുടെ സാമൂഹിക ജീവിതം ചിത്രീകരിക്കുന്നതിലും അവരുടെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങൾ പൊതുജനശ്രദ്ധയിൽ കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നതിനും തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ആറു നോവലുകളും വിജയിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടെന്നാണ് പ്രബന്ധകർത്ത്രിയുടെ നിഗമനം.

COMPLEMENTING THE BOOKS

പുസ്തകപൂരണം

കേരളപഠനസംബന്ധമായ പുതിയ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരണങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചു വായനക്കാരോ ഗ്രന്ഥകർത്താക്കളോ എഴുതുന്ന പൂരണക്കുറിപ്പുകൾ ഈ പംക്തിയിലേക്കു ക്ഷണിക്കുന്നു.

- പത്രാധിപർ

The Blindness of Insight,
Essays on Caste in Modern India
Dilip M. Menon
Chennai: Navayana, 2006
Price: Rs.200

Partial Provocations

DileepRaj

Book reviews demand a prototypical plotline consisting 'balanced' placement of applause and criticisms. I would rather forgo the 'story' and enter right away into a critical engagement with the provocations raised by the book. The very fact that a work triggers metadiscussions is, perhaps, the highest recommendation one could confer on it.

'Antagonistic Indebtedness'[1]: Lower Castes' Engagements with Modernity

I am taking the new corpus of research on Kerala as the baseline of this review for two reasons. First, Dilip. M. Menon's works are of central importance in a recent paradigm shift in Kerala studies, in which, methodological prominence is given to the concept of 'modernity'. This ofcourse is a welcome shift away from the continuous histories written by both liberal and Marxist historians. Second, it is essential that internal debates should occur between the works within this new paradigm. Such critical engagements alone will ensure the development of that terrain.

Last two essays are readings of three Malayalam novels dealing with the experience of slave castes in nineteenth – century Kerala viz: *Saraswathivijayam* [Potheri Kunhambu, 1893], *Sukumari* [Joseph Muliyil,1897] and *Ghatakavadham* [Mrs.Collins,1865]. Dilip's analysis shows many possibilities as well as limitations involved in pursuing questions on history through the interpretations of literature.

Dilip argues that the frame of interpretation put forward by Benedict Anderson and Frederic Jameson, conflating the imagination of the novel with that of nation, is severely limiting and wrongheaded. He considers early Indian novel as concerned with the question of the fashioning of the modern self and argues that this was thought through within the idiom of religion. In the third chapter, " A Place Elsewhere", it is argued that the Malayalam novel written by subordinated caste groups in nineteenth century Kerala project the imagination of a place elsewhere where the old caste self dies. The new unmarked modern self is then located within the tropes of clean homes and secure families bound by love. The crucial difference Dilip is foregrounding in distinction with Anderson's approach is that this place elsewhere spoken about in the subaltern novel, instead of being a narration of here and now, revealed through the imagination of the nation, is beyond the geographical map that subordinated collectivities were forced to inhabit.

Then he proceeds to one of the most beautiful instances of nuanced textual interpretations in the book, of the tropes of travel and migration marking those novels. Equally imaginative is the analyses of different levels of meanings of 'death', the central trope in them.

What strikes me is the uncritical celebration of these texts as instances of lower caste intellectual interventions. [Strategically it has proved to be very effective, as at least *Saraswathivijayam* has succeeded in finding its way into a new canon constructed through the process of selection/ translation.] Setting Potheri, or anyone else, as a subaltern intellectual hero beyond criticisms won't help. We are badly in need of a self-reflexive intellectual practice. For instance, look at the recent debates on '*dalitavadam*' in mainstream Malayalam literary journals , which extracted violent responses of secular critics. It was a resistence to certain textual analyses attempted by dalit critcs. Anand, eminent literary figure in Malayalam, was eloquent in expressing his displeasure on witnessing the return of caste in public debates:

> "…. the practice of individuals being identified in terms of caste, and the practice of asking caste … had become obsolete even in my childhood. It is as if the revolutions through which we passed were futile."[2]

He is absolutely convinced that caste markers do not belong to him while talking about 'my' childhood and the revolutions 'we' came through. V.C Sreejan ,a radical critic was more fierce and explicit in his response:

> "….if a dalit can proclaim loudly that 'I am a dalit', a nair too should have the freedom and right to say 'I am a nair'"[3] Both of them rejects discourses speaking caste as caste and denies them recognition as 'literature', 'criticism' etc. Yet they qualifies their opponents as 'dalit critics':
>
> "Though dalit critics are writing profusely, no body 'minds' it."[4]

Through such attacks and disavowals, these so-called secular writers are, *de facto*, compelled to acknowledge the entry of dalit intellectuals into the sacrosanct Malayalam literary field, albeit as opponents. It has been an exclusive field denying access to those who do not rightfully belong to Kerala's homogeneous culture. For us, rather than the choice of the text , what matters is what the author do with it by way of handling one's present political concerns[5]. I would raise the following issues in this regard out of my own political dilemmas.

1. In *Saraswathivijayam* converts are depicted as the ground rather than agents on which the whole question of civil rights is enacted. It deals with untouchability as only a theme. Does this point to the veracity of D.R. Nagaraj's emphatic statement, 'lower caste cosmologies do not make a modern novel possible'?[6]

2. We could find at least one counter example in Travancore that evidences that dalit negotiation with modernity was in no way unilinear. As Sanalmohan's studies shows, those who were initiated to Christian religion started interpreting the scriptures on their own terms and created results defying the expectations of missionaries. Poykayil Yohannan made the bold anti –realist move of transforming fiction into history to great effect through various discursive practices. How can we recuperate the agency of dalits? Is it possible to accommodate the experiences of slaves without problematising the discourses on progress?

3. Dilip's interpretation of *Saraswathivijayam* at several points sounds like a naïve endorsement of modernity . Though he mentions about the gap between colonial rhetoric and practice that is reflected in the novels , the thought frame he develops is not sufficiently capable of thinking modernity in its complexity and interarticulations[7].

4. It is stated that missionary rhetoric gave a radical spin to the idea of individuals [p.85].In *Saraswathivijayam* both Marathan [dalit protagonist] and Subhadra[daughter of the landlord] find redemption within the space of Christianity. "The colonial presence allows them entry as individuals into the public sphere unmarked by their gender or caste" [pp140-41]. Recent research on Kerala's modernity proves the exact opposite as the case. J. Devika observes that the displacements in this novel – from high to low, low to high – are fuelled by the internalities of the characters. Privileging of such internality is presented as liberation. A new form of regulation- self regulation – is inevitable for such liberation. Though the ability for self-regulation is necessary for both the ideal Man and Woman, they are found to occupy different domains; the public and the domestic. This assigns different kinds of authority, not equal opportunity for entry to them[8].

5. "… It was a peculiar mix of the language of police state along with the language of the politics of the street. So that you picked up a text and you 'interrogated' it and you beat it black and blue until it gave up its evasions and silences and yielded the truth for you"[9]I too share this aversion to a particular brand of textual analysis, but can't still ignore the following marginal references in *Saraswathivijayam.*

   (a) "The Nambudiri had heard of the mappilas of Kondotti and their cruelty and he was worried about being set upon by them"[10]

   (b) "Kuberan and Kuppan sat down and planned their course of action after they had eaten: 'If we stay in one place then people will get to know, and if we go to the forest it is inhabited by cruel tribes like kurichiyas."[11]

Here, mappilas and kurichiyas are other figures within the enclosure of modernity. If read in conjunction with the statement in the introduction that "the brahmin and the untouchables are part of a dyad, with a fraught yet shared destiny" [p. xv] and the actual historical trajectory of hindu identity formation in north malabar , the chances for it being the case that mappilas were constitutive others in structuring the self could not be rejected.

Problematising Historiography

Historiography is one terrain, which allows upper caste elites to speak caste through other means in Kerala. It always projected their role in struggles against colonialism and erased internal social contradictions .Marxist discourses in particular tried to convert dalits to visions of equality and liberation and internalized developmentalism uncritically. Thus , in present day Kerala, history of slavery is not taken as the common heritage but specifically assigned to dalits.

" Being a Brahmin the Marxist Way : E.M.S Namboodiripad and The Pasts of Kerala" , the second essay in the book, exposes the logic behind the normalizing process through which what the upper cast imagines as Kerala's history gets encoded as exactly that. Unlike Potheri Kunhambu, E . M. S is a powerful cultural token and the critical response evoked by this particular reading within and outside the academics give ample proof to it. This is one reason why we couldn't still risk eschewing the business of problematising canonical texts altogether.

E.M.S inaugurated the deployment of two competing sets of languages dealing with the issue of caste in Malayali public sphere, which is hinted at in the beginning of this article. One talks of caste by other terms and the other talks of caste in its 'own terms'[12]. Dilip critically analyses the evolutionary paradigm followed by malayali Marxists and the way in which it enabled them in consigning caste to the distant past and in creating a new usable past through such transcending. It is also a reminder of the fact that what looks like unmarked modern/ public sphere here is deeply inscribed with upper caste cultural values.

In Search of an Adequate Vocabulary

I too am fascinated by the works of many of the authors like Gauri Viswanathan, Talal Asad, Paul Gilory featured as guiding thinkers in this book. I wish to see two other names to get included among them :D.R.Nagaraj and Rustom Bharucha.[13] They succeeded in studying belief systems as an essential component of subaltern consciousness.

Again, at some junctures I wished that some of the insights given by the authors mentioned above were pursued to the maximum. In particular, Talal Asad's criticism that religion in contemporary parlance has become modernity's alienated self; also, how " the content of minority religion is placed outside the space of national culture" [14] . The reason why dissent is most often articulated by adopting minority religions, according to Gauri Viswanathan, is that it unsettles the fixed concept of identities and problematises the boundaries by which selfhood, citizenship, nationhood and community are defined, exposing these as permeable borders.[15] I am emphasizing this, because I am afraid that at a certain level the essays in this book repeats the 'routine theoretical moves' about assumed categories. Susan Harding writes: " It seems that antiorientalising tools of cultural criticism are better suited for some 'others' and not other 'others'-specifically, for cultural 'others' constituted by discourses of race/sex/class/ethnicity/colonialism but not religion."[16]

Main arguments in the first essay "the Blindness of insight: Why communalism in India is about caste" could be summarized as follows:

a) Communalism is a deflection of the central issue of violence and inegalitarianism within the Hindu religion.

b) The quotidian violence against dalits gets insufficient theoretical attention. It becomes the object of *reportage* whereas communal violence the object of *theorizing.*

c) The trajectory of politics in north and south India has diverged on the issue of the resolution of caste.

Though the author is careful in not presenting caste as 'an unchanging essence of Indian society' (p x), similar care is not found in analyzing communalism. Most of the time it is taken to be a unilinear current. How can Dilip abstract such a stable position with such confidence out of the heterogeneity of the complex context?

I am deeply troubled by the chronological hierarchy hinted at in this essay: "What we need to explore is the inner violence within Hinduism as much as the violence directed outwards against Muslims, and acknowledge that the former is historically prior."[p.2] Equally disturbing is the juxtaposition repeated in one of the footnotes: "It is not that there is no quotidian violence against Muslims but that there is more extensive coverage of 'Hindu-Muslim riots' in the media." [p.25]. Is it possible to confer such priority without being blind to the processes through which identities are constructed, fixed and mobilized in different periods? Isn't it inevitable that we must freeze at least one of the categories to proceed with such an assumption?

The subtitle "Essays on caste in modern India" is misleading for this book. Expectations aroused by such overarching terms are not what we find in the book. Radicals in academia are subject to identity conflicts while they 'try simultaneously to wear different hats'.[17] As an outcome of this simultaneous response to activist and academic

situations, at some critical moments, the theoretical seems to get reduced to political. Thus the activist voice, which is in the forefront in first essay, stands conspicuously at odds with the expert voice taking lead in the remaining essays.

Consider this confession in the introduction: "I joined the Nehru Museum as Fellow in 1994 intending to work on state formation in the eighteenth century South India. In the political contexts of the 1990s and the emergence of a strident Hindu nationalism, this project increasingly appeared to me to be too remote and academic." (pp xvi – xvii). One implication of such an anxiety is that we can draw political conclusions directly from historical enquiries. Ironically, it was in1990s itself that communal forces made people commit so many atrocities for the distant past. The claim over distant past added to the seductive attraction of Hindutva fascism. In fact, the politics of history writing could not be determined in any simplistic manner and I must admit that there are no easy answers to such questions regarding the value of historiography.

Let me be more concrete here. I am not arguing that attempts at bridging these disparate discourses should be abandoned. But rather, the bridge discourse built by Dilip is leaning too much towards one side. The macro framework put forth in the introduction as well as the lead essay on caste and communalism seems to be a bit forced and unconvincing, incapable of integrating the remaining essays.

There is no denying the fact that no author could explain all the complexities of contemporary power. Also, no book could represent the entirety of author's world. As Judith Butler puts it, it evokes partial provocations. As these essays come from a politically critical academic and addresses a hybrid public[18] presumed to include both experts and activists, the demand made in this review to think contemporary power along all the vectors simultaneously is 'incontrovertibly important even in its impossibility' [19] .

Notes & References:

1 . I am borrowing a term used by Paul Gilory in the context of Black politics from M.S.S. Pandian's monograph *One Step Outside Modernity: Caste, Identity, Politics and Public Sphere*, Sephis-Codesria lecture No.4, 2002. Pandian describes the lower castes' relation to modernity as 'antagonistic indebtedness', implying the need to reject the civilizational claims of modernity and to reclaim what has been stigmatized. That alone would end the self-hate of lower castes and would allow them to claim a space for their politics, he argues.

2. Boby Thomas (ed), *Dalithapathakal*, Sign Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006, p.51

3. *Dalithapathakal*, p 62

4. *Dalithapathakal*, p 65

5 May be, the choice of the text does matter. Dilip himself reveals the backstage secrets of venturing out on a study of *Saraswathivijayam* thus: " I began working on this novel, *Saraswathivijayam* , while completing my PhD. At that point, I was reading widely in the hope of finding a more specific topic and I chanced upon this novel…In engaging with the academic genre of cultural studies, what struck me was that very often there was an inquisition of canonical texts alone that was taking place. Very often, as Stephen Greenblatt put it, the usual suspects were rounded up"["Looking Back in Anger: Authenticity and Radical Identity"in *Re-figuring Culture:History,Theory and the Aesthetic in Contemporary India*, (ed.) Satish Poduval, Sahitya Akademi, NewDelhi,2005,pp100-108. Further, he makes it clear that the choice in no way is fortuitous. " Instead of seeking evasions and contradictions within canonical texts why not study the texts produced by the subordinates?"(p.101). Fine, for giving a kick start to one's arguments but weak if proposed as an excuse for the blindness about textual aporias.

6. Nagaraj doubts that there is an implicit world-view behind the stylistic devise of realism which is essentially a monolithic one and it does not accept the legitimacy of other modes of being. It can at best accommodate the rationalist worldview of the modern middleclass, he fears.[D.R.Nagaraj, *The Flaming Feet:A Study of the Dalit Movement in India*, South Forum Press, Bangalore,1993]

   Dilip describes how the second edition of *Saraswathivijayam* in 1937 found lot more admirers against the backdrop of *jivalsahityam* [Progressive Literary Movement] . Realism made them natural allies. To quote Nagaraj again, " .. For them, mimetic contract and empirical verifiability , the cornerstones of realism, offer perfect ways of presenting and evaluating their experiences. No wonder realism is the most important and authentic mode of writing for the writers of radical literary movements, Dalit and Bandaya" (p.75)

7. Nizar Ahmad proposes such an interrelated frame of reference in his article "Keralathile Aadhunikatha: Chila Saidhanthika Pariganankal" [*Pacha-kkuthira*, July 2005].To him, the impulse to re-form arises from the very modern desire to represent tradition.Subsequently,the modern representation of the caste modifies the self representation of the tradition.

8. J. Devika, *En-gendering Individuals:The Language of Re-forming in Early Twentieth Century Keralam*, Orient Longman, Delhi, 2007. pp.39-40. She

emphasizes the role of gender in individualization : "The individual is thus envisaged to be both 'free' and simultaneously implicated in new institutions. To be thus implicated was also a way towards commanding authority. Gender strongly mediates this implication determining whether the individual is to be implicated in the public or the domestic domain" (p.54). Actually in the third chapter (written two years after the essay on *Saraswativijayam*) Dilip provides a much nuanced conception of self-fashioning. But the tensions between the essays remain unresolved.

9. "Looking Back in Anger: Authenticity and Radical Identity", p.101
10. Potheri Kunhambu, *Saraswathivijayam*, (tr.) Dilip Menon, The Book Review Trust, New Delhi, 2002, p.61
11. *Saraswathivijayam*, p.66
12. *One Step Outside Modernity: Caste, Identity, Politics and Public Sphere* , pp. 6-7
13. My fascination came from reading two 'minor' works by them. The work of 79 pages by Nagaraj [see footnote no.7] and of 94 pages by Rustom Bharucha, *The Question of Faith*, Orient Longman, NewDelhi, 1993
14. 13. Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief*, NewDelhi, Oxford University Press, 1998,p.xvi
15. *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief*, p.16
16. Cited in *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief*, p.xiv
17. Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Powr,Discourse and Gender in Contemporary social Theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989, p1.
18. A usage taken from *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*,
19. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex".* New York, Routledge, 1993. p.17

The Enigma of the Kerala Woman : A Failed Promise of Literacy, Edited by Swapna Mukhopadhyay, Social Science Press, New Delhi, 2007, Price, Rs. 550.

Gender Paradox in Kerala: A Q2 Response

Bindhulakshmi Pattadath

Academic discussion on the celebrated model of Kerala and its subsequent critiques are not unfamiliar in social science research. *The Enigma of the Kerala Woman: A Failed Promise of Literacy*, edited by Swapna Mukhopadhyay is one among those genres. This volume is an outcome of the gender network project, a multi-disciplinary thematic enterprise, carried out by regional network of researchers belonging to different disciplinary frameworks. The book consists of a collection of essays that try to unwrap the paradoxical gender relations in Kerala society.

This book has been divided into three sections. The first section consists of four research papers that have come out as a result of gender network project. A few case studies have been included in the second section and are presented in a narrative style. The intention to include the case studies was to substantiate the data presented in the first section. The last section consists of a few photographs taken at various life- contexts in Kerala. These three sections make an interesting collage on the 'enigma' of Kerala woman though they do not seem to complement to each other really well as it claims.

What makes this book important is its attempt to understand the limitations of conventional social indicators that have been emulated as indicators of higher status of Kerala women. It definitely helps the readers to pull down the myths on Kerala and its glorified model of development. Through this book the authors argue that the conventional social indicators are not sufficient to understand the 'real' issue of Kerala women.

The first three chapters provide an enormous amount of statistical data on the wide spectrum of development indicators. For someone who is a novice in quantitative research, the book will be a mammoth task to read. The paper by Devika and Avanti Mukherjee and the case studies that follows provide some relief to the jarring statistical data.

The book claims to be a critical study of the already laden assumption about the higher status of Kerala women. As the editor argues in the introductory chapter, the book uses diverse methods to find answers and to understand the enigma of the Kerala woman. Such a statement unsettles the readers with various questions. Who is this Kerala woman the author is talking about? Phrase such as 'the enigma of the Kerala woman' seems to be too deterministic to understand the unequal gender relations in a society. Is it the case that 'the Kerala woman' inclusive of 'all Kerala women'? How does one understand the multiplicities in which Kerala women live when one becomes over-inclusive in the selection of subjects? Is the 'enigma' same for all those Kerala women? Making a binary of man- woman to understand gender relations in a society is an outdated methodology. But the book seems to be using this quite often. Especially in the section dealing with 'violence as an indicator of powerlessness' it goes with the gendered binary of the victim and perpetuator. This is a crucial weakness of the study. In this chapter the author explains that the first step to address the 'enigma' of Kerala woman is through recognizing the systematic violence against women in Kerala society. While talking about violence as an indicator to understand powerlessness it is completely muted on the strong agency women have on various occasions. In order to understand powerlessness one must look beyond the stereotypical image of victim and the perpetuator putting women always at the receiving end without any agency. In order to understand the gendered inequality one should get out of the binaries and would rather look at the complex ways in which gendered relations are played out in Kerala society. The dynamics of caste, class, religious identities, sexualities etc. play a crucial role in defining gender relations in a society. The construction of subversive

and dominant women though the patriarchal ideologies need to be analysed further to understand the gender relations in Kerala society. The chapter by J. Devika and Avanti Mukherjee look at this aspects to an extent where they try to understand the reproduction of patriarchal ideologies through social reforms and community movements. As a response to the conventional social indicator, three indicators were used in this research to understand the 'enigma' of Kerala woman such as violence against women, mental health and gender ideology.

Second chapter paper by S. Irudaya Rajan and Sreerupa presents a statistical overview of women in Kerala but goes beyond the standard aggregative data. The attempt here is to emphasize area that needs immediate attention in the context of contemporary Kerala. In this chapter they meticulously chart out the limitations of the conventional social indicators for gender development. But one seems to be losing track of the argument while browsing through the thick statistical data provided by the authors. With the support of statistical data, they attempt to address the issue of gender disparity in Kerala. The issues touched upon by the authors are sex ratio, age at marriage, fertility and contraception, education, work participation and unemployment etc. Here they prove that gender disparity is indeed on a higher side in Kerala and show the inability of conventional indicators to understand the actual process of development in Kerala society. For example they demolish the myth of favourable sex ratio which has been considered as one crucial indicator of high status and development in Kerala society. With the support of statistical data collected the authors argue that this favourable sex ratio is due to the large number of out-migration of males from Kerala. If there had there been no migration from Kerala the number of males per females would have been greater. They question the wide acceptance of favourable sex ratio as a crucial indicator of gender equality in Kerala. The emerging crisis in gender disparity in Kerala society, according to the authors, are aging, migration, juvenile sex ratio and rising crime against women. Even though they provide a detailed statistical data to prove the point, it becomes mostly descriptive. Instead of taking the statistical data as it is, a more detailed empirical study is needed based on this available quantitative data. There are indeed interesting findings in their statistics but that alone cannot be sufficient to explain the social phenomena. More detailed case studies are needed to support the information collected in this chapter.

Third chapter 'Mental Health, Gender ideology and Women's status' in Kerala by Swapna Mukhopadhyay, Jayanti Basu and S Irudaya Rajan is the result of an investigation into the status of mental health of

men and women in Kerala. It uses statistical indicators like Subjective Well Being Inventory (SUBI) and general health questionnaire (GHQ) widely used in applied psychological research. Based on data generated by the Kerala mental Health Survey (KMHS) conducted during the Gender Network project it shows the existence of strongly negative associations of orthodox patriarchal gender ideology with the status of Mental Health of the population in Kerala.

Methodological drawbacks are clearly visible in this chapter. The chapter is based on an extensive mental health survey carried out in 2002 (KMHS). This chapter uses the standard and fixed mental health indicators to analyze the well-being of an individual. The chapter also confuses mental distress with the lower mental health of the individual. The indicator used in this paper cannot be the indicator for mental distress always. The chapter also invokes problematic findings such as the relationship between poverty, illiteracy to a high level of mental distress. The authors come out with some correlations between alcoholism, violence and mental ill health of women. Such a correlation seems to be too easy a conclusion without understanding the issue of mental ill health in its nuance ways. Such findings are the outcome of the use of standard fixed indicators to understand the well-being of a society. Even though the volume claims it is a critic of conventional social indicators, in this chapter one can see the high dependency of standard indicators. Some of the methodological hitches can be further explained in this chapter. For example the questions such as 'Do you believe that women should not opt for outside employment as far as possible?' used for the construction of gender ideology scale are flawed (pp.90).

The chapter by J. Devika and Avanti Mukherji looked at the early social reform movements and its systematic marginalization of women in various ways to produce gendered stereotypes. This is one of the enriching chapters in this volume and it stands differently in terms of content and methodology. Through a historical analysis they try to understand the context of social reform and political interventions which fostered patriarchal modernity in Kerala society. Historically placing the issues such as education, employment, development and politics in the context of social reform and community movements, they shows how these modern institutions fostered new forms of patriarchy. Through this chapter they argue that ''gender paradox' hardly appears paradoxical if one is prepared to shed the assumption that better social development indicators will lead to women's emancipation' (pp 122). I think this should be the crux of the argument in this volume.

The case studies included in this volume present rich unfinished ethnographic texts. A detailed analysis is missing in this section that makes it incomplete to substantiate the data provided in the first section of this book. The visual images towards the end is self explanatory but often goes out of context without giving any clue to the reader to connect to the main theme of this book.

In terms of methodology the book is innovative with an interesting combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (Q2 methodology). Even though there are many hitches the book makes an interesting contribution to the study of gender relations in Kerala society.

മണലെഴുത്ത്
സുഗതകുമാരി
ഡി. സി. ബുക്സ് പ്രസിദ്ധീകരണം, 2006

മണലെഴുത്ത്

സ്കറിയാ സക്കറിയ

മലയാളഭാഷയിൽ 'ഒരു പൂമരംപോലെ', 'തണൽമരംപോലെ', വളർന്നു നിൽക്കുന്ന സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയുടെ ഏറ്റവും പുതിയ സമാഹാരമാണ് എന്റെ കൈയിലിരിക്കുന്നത് - മണലെഴുത്ത്. 2006 ജൂണിൽ ഡി.സി. ബുക്സ് പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ച ഈ സമാഹാരത്തിലെ 27 കവിതകളും 2006 ആഗസ്റ്റിൽ പ്രസിദ്ധീകരിച്ച 'സുഗതകുമാരിയുടെ കവിതകൾ സമ്പൂർണ്ണം' എന്ന സമാഹാരത്തിൽ ചേർത്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. പേരിൽനിന്നുതന്നെ ഊഹിക്കാവുന്നതുപോലെ, അമ്പതുകളിലെ മുത്തുച്ചിപ്പിയുടെ വൈകാരികഘടന പുത്തൻപുതുമയോടെ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതാണ് പുതിയ കവിതകൾ. 'ഏറെനേരത്തോളം തങ്ങിനിൽക്കുന്ന പൂവിൻചിരിയും നിലാവിൻ സുഗന്ധവും ജീവിതത്തിന്റെയഗാധമാം ദുഃഖവു'മാണ് സുഗതകുമാരിയുടെ കവിതയിലുള്ളതെന്ന് മുത്തുച്ചിപ്പിയുടെ അവതാരി

കയിൽ 50 വർഷംമുമ്പ് ബാലാമണിയമ്മ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തി. ഇതു മണലെഴുത്തിലെ കവിതകൾക്കും ഇണങ്ങും. മണലെഴുത്തിന്റെ അവതാരികയിൽ ആത്മാരാമൻ, മറ്റു പല കാവ്യാസ്വാദകരെയുംപോലെ, 'ഈ കവിതയുടെ ചേലത്തുമ്പ് വിടാതെ പിടിച്ചു നടന്നു' എന്ന സാക്ഷ്യത്തോടെ എടുത്തുപറയുന്ന മൂന്നു സവിശേഷതകൾ ശ്രദ്ധിക്കുക — പ്രണയതാരള്യം, ഭക്തിവൈവശ്യം, ധർമ്മരോഷം. 'ഈ മൂന്നിഴകൾ ചേർത്തു പിരിച്ച ഞാണിന്മേൽ ഏറിയാണ് ഈ തെരുക്കൂത്തുകാരി കഴലിടറുമ്പോഴും കൈവിട്ട് അതിസാഹസങ്ങൾ കാട്ടുന്നത്' എന്നുകൂടി അവതാരികയിൽ ആത്മാരാമൻ നിരീക്ഷിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. 'താരള്യം', 'വൈവശ്യം' 'രോഷം', 'അതിസാഹസം' എന്നെല്ലാം സ്നേഹാദരപൂർവം ആത്മാരാമൻ പരാമർശിക്കുന്നിടത്തു സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയുടെ ചേരുവ തെളിഞ്ഞുകിട്ടുന്നു. അവയെല്ലാം കവിതയുടെ വൈകാരികഘടനയിലാണ് ഊന്നുന്നത്. കാല്പനികതയുടെയും ലിറിസിസത്തിന്റെയും മികച്ച മലയാളമാതൃകകളായി സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതകളെ വേർതിരിക്കാൻ ഇത്തരം നിരീക്ഷണങ്ങൾ മതിയാകും. ചങ്ങമ്പുഴ, ഇടപ്പള്ളി, വയലാർ തുടങ്ങിയവരിൽ മലയാളി അനുഭവിച്ചറിഞ്ഞ കാവ്യതരംഗങ്ങളാണിവ. സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയുടെ പാരമ്പര്യവഴികൾ മലയാളകവിതയിൽ തേടുന്നവർക്ക് ഈ വഴിക്ക് അന്വേഷണം വിപുലീകരിക്കാം. സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയുടെ ജനപ്രിയത വിശദീകരിക്കാനും ഇത്തരം അന്വേഷണം ഉപകരിക്കും.

എങ്കിലും ഇതിനുമപ്പുറം സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയെ ജനകീയമാക്കുന്ന ചില സവിശേഷതകളുണ്ട്. മണലെഴുത്ത് എന്ന കവിത തന്നെ നോക്കുക. മണലെഴുത്തിന്റെ പ്രത്യേകത തൂത്തെഴുതാനുള്ള സൗകര്യമാണ്. ഇന്നത്തെ നിലയിൽ മണലെഴുത്ത് അസുഖകരമായ അസൗകര്യമായിരിക്കാം. കവിയുടെ ഭാവനാഭൂപടത്തിൽ മണലെഴുത്ത് മണ്ണിൽ എഴുതി ഉറപ്പിക്കാനുള്ള പാവം മാനവഹൃദയത്തിന്റെ ശ്രമമാണ്.

'ഒരുകോടി വിരലുകൾ
കൊതിയോടെ വിറയോടെ
വിരിമണലിലെഴുതുന്നു -
'പ്രേമം'.

ഇവിടെ വിശേഷണങ്ങൾകൊണ്ടുള്ള വിസ്തരിക്കൽ, അറിവിനെ കാഴ്ചയാക്കുന്ന വിവർത്തനം ശ്രദ്ധേയമാണ്.

....

'മതി'യെന്നു കടലിരമ്പുന്നു
'മനസ്സിലിതു
ബസവാഗ്നിയായിക്കഴിഞ്ഞു'

ഒരു കോടിയുപ്പു തിരക-
ളാഞ്ഞെത്തിയാ-
ച്ചെറുലിപികൾ മായ്ച്ചുകളയുന്നു.

ഒരുകോടി വിരലുകൾ
കൊതിയോടെ പിന്നെയും
ചൊരിമണലിലെഴുതുന്നു -
'പ്രേമം'...

ഇവിടെ ചിരപരിചതമായ ഒരു ആശയം ഭംഗിതരംഗിതമായ കാഴ്ച ഉത്സവമാക്കി മാറ്റിയിരിക്കുന്നു. ആശയത്തിൽനിന്നു 'കാഴ്ച'യിലേക്കുള്ള ഈ തർജമയിൽ — ചിഹ്നപരിവർത്തനത്തിലാണ് സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയിലെ പ്രതിഭാവിലാസം. സുപരിചിതമായ ആശയത്തെ ഇവിടെ കാഴ്ചയുടെ പൂരോത്സവമാക്കി മാറ്റുന്നതു സർഗ്ഗപ്രതിഭയുടെ ഭാഷാകൗശലമാണ്. ഈ പ്രതിഭയാകട്ടെ കേവലം വ്യക്തിഗതമോ ആകസ്മികമോ അല്ല, ചരിത്രപരമാണ്. അനുദിനജീവിതത്തിന്റെ നാനാമുഖങ്ങളിൽനിന്ന് കൊണ്ടും കൊടുത്തുമുണ്ടായ അനുഭവക്കടലിൽ വിളഞ്ഞവയാണ് ഇത്തരം വാങ്മയമുത്തുകൾ. ഇവിടെ പ്രേമത്തെ എഴുതുന്നതും മറയ്ക്കുന്നതും ശക്തിയാണ്, അധികാരത്തിന്റെ പിൻബലമുള്ള ശക്തി. അധികാരം സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയുടെ ചിത്രപടത്തിൽ 'ഒരുകോടി വിരലുകളാ'യിട്ടാണ് പ്രത്യക്ഷപ്പെടുന്നത്. അധികാരവും ശക്തിയും എണ്ണബലമായി അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതു ജനാധിപത്യയുഗത്തിന്റെ ബലതന്ത്രത്തിലാണ്. അതേ അധികാരസംവിധാനത്തിൽ മായ്ക്കാനായ് എത്തുന്നതും ഒരുകോടിയുപ്പുതിരകളാണെന്ന് ഓർമ്മിക്കുക. ജനാധിപത്യയുഗത്തിലെ തൂത്തെഴുത്തിനെ കാഴ്ചയാക്കി അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന കവിസങ്കേതത്തിലെ ചേരുവകൾ കവിതയിലെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാട്/ നിലപാട്, മുന്നറിവുകൾ/പ്രത്യയശാസ്ത്രം എന്നിവ വെളിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നുണ്ട്. ജനാധിപത്യത്തിലെയും ദേശീയതയിലെയും രാഷ്ട്രീയത്തിലെയും സർഗ്ഗാത്മകത മാത്രമല്ല, ഹിംസാത്മകതയും തിരിച്ചറിയുന്നു. ഇതു കവിതയ്ക്കു ഗഹനത നൽകുന്നു. മുദ്രാവാക്യങ്ങളിൽനിന്നും പടപ്പാട്ടിൽനിന്നും സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിത രാഷ്ട്രീയകാര്യത്തിൽ വ്യത്യസ്തമാകുന്നത് ഇങ്ങനെയാണ്. ഇതു നിശ്ചയമില്ലായ്മ, സന്ദേഹം, ambivalence കവിതയിലേക്കു സംക്രമിപ്പിക്കുന്നു.

സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയിലെ പൂരക്കാഴ്ചകളിലൂടെ കടന്നുപോകുമ്പോൾ അതിന്റെ പുരാണപ്രതിപത്തിയെക്കുറിച്ചാണ് പലരും പറയാറുള്ളത്. ഭാരതീയ പുരാണങ്ങളിൽ സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിത അഭിരമിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്. വർത്തമാനകാല വ്യസനങ്ങൾ വിശദീകരിക്കാനും വ്യാഖ്യാനിക്കാനുമുള്ള അമിതവ്യഗ്രതകൊണ്ടാവണം അത്രയ്ക്കു പുരാണോന്മുഖത എന്നു വേണമെങ്കിൽ വിമർശിക്കാം. എങ്കിലും ഒരുകാര്യം മറക്കരുത്. വർത്തമാനകാല അനുദിനജീവിതത്തിന്റെ നൊമ്പരങ്ങൾ കണ്ടറിയാൻ ഉപകരിക്കുന്ന മലയാളി ഇടമാണ് സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിത. അതിൽ പുരാതനലോകം മാത്രമല്ല, അനുദിനജീവിതവുമുണ്ട്. ജനാധിപത്യസമൂഹത്തിന്റെ വേവലാതികളുണ്ട്. കേരളത്തിലെ സ്ത്രീകളുടെ ദൈന്യം

നിറക്കൂട്ടുകൾകൊണ്ട് ആൾരൂപങ്ങളായി ആലേഖനം ചെയ്തിരിക്കുന്നു. ഇതു സ്ത്രീപക്ഷരചനയായില്ലെങ്കിലും ഒന്നാംതരം സ്ത്രീരചനയാണ്. സൈലന്റ് വാലിയിൽ വീണ്ടും എന്ന കവിതയിൽ മലനാടിന്റെ മനസ്സാക്ഷിയെ അവതരിപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നതു ശ്രദ്ധിക്കൂ:

'ആടിക്കറുപ്പാർന്ന കന്യ,യിക്കാടിനെ
ആരും തൊടില്ലെന്നു കാക്കാൻ
"അരുതു പേടിക്കേണ്ട, ഞാനിവിടെയുണ്ടെ"ന്നു
ചുഴലവും കൺകൾ പായിച്ചും
കവരങ്ങൾ പിരിയുന്ന കൊമ്പുകളുയർത്തിയും
തലപൊക്കി ഗന്ധം പിടിച്ചും
കലമാനിനെപ്പോലെ കാവൽ നിൽക്കുന്നിതാ
മലനാടിതിൻ മനസ്സാക്ഷി...'

മലയാളിയുടെ മനസ്സാക്ഷി കവിതയിലെ കലമാനിനെപ്പോലെ ജാഗ്രത പാലിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ എന്ന് എനിക്കു തീർച്ചയില്ല. പക്ഷേ, കേരളീയജീവിതത്തിന്റെ താളം തെറ്റിക്കുന്ന ഭീകരതകളെക്കുറിച്ചു സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിത ഈ കലമാനിനെപ്പോലെ, (അതോ പേടമാനിനെപ്പോലെ എന്നു പരിഷ്കരിച്ചു പറയണോ?) നിതാന്തജാഗ്രത പുലർത്തുന്നു. ഇക്കാരണത്താൽ ഏറ്റവും സമകാലികവും ജനകീയവുമായിത്തീരുന്നു സുഗതകുമാരിയുടെ പല കവിതകളും. കവിതയുടെ ഭാഷ, ഇവിടെയാണ് വിമർശന പഠനവിഷയമാകേണ്ടത്. പദം, വ്യാകരണം, അർത്ഥം എന്നിങ്ങനെ ഇഴ പിരിച്ചു പഠിക്കുന്നതിനു പകരം സവേദനപ്രക്രിയയുടെ തുടർബന്ധങ്ങളിൽ കവിതയുടെ വിനിമയരീതിയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള പഠനമാകണം കാവ്യവിമർശനം. നമ്മുടെ കാവ്യപഠനത്തിൽ വരേണ്ട മാറ്റമാണിത്. അർത്ഥകേന്ദ്രിതമായ വിനമിയരീതി വിട്ട് കവിത ഭാഷയുടെ ബഹുമുഖത്വം പരമാവധി പ്രയോജനപ്പെടുത്തുന്നത് എങ്ങനെ എന്നു വിശദീകരിക്കാൻ കാവ്യനിരൂപണത്തിനു കഴിയണം.

മണൽക്കാടുകൾ എന്ന കവിതാസമാഹാരത്തിൽ എന്നെ ഏറ്റവും ആകർഷിച്ച രണ്ടു കവിതകളെക്കുറിച്ചു സൂചിപ്പിക്കാം. വാർധക്യം എന്ന കവിത:

ഇതോ വാർധക്യം? ഞാൻ മറന്നു പൂക്കളെ,
കിളികളെ, മണിച്ചിരികളെ, മദി–
ച്ചിളകും പാടത്തെയിളം നിലാവിനെ,
നിലാവിനെ കോരിക്കുടിച്ച പൊയ്കയെ

ഇതോ വാർധക്യം? ഞാൻ മറന്നു ചന്ദന
സുഗന്ധത്തെ, ച്ചോന്ന തിലകത്തെ, മഷി
ത്തിളക്കത്തെ, വളക്കിലുക്കത്തെ, ച്ചേല
മിനുക്കത്തെ,യെന്റെ നിലക്കണ്ണാടിയെ...........

ഇതോ വാർധക്യം? ഞാൻ മറക്കുന്നു പ്രിയ
മുഖങ്ങൾ നാമങ്ങൾ പഥങ്ങൾ ബന്ധങ്ങൾ
നിഴലുപോലെയെല്ലാം പതുക്കെ മങ്ങുന്നു.

ഇനിയുള്ള ഭാഗം, അതു കൂടുതൽ ശ്രദ്ധിക്കണം:

കവിതയെന്നുള്ളിലിതൾ കൊഴിക്കുന്നു
(മുറുകെയെൻ കയ്യിൽ പിടിച്ചുവയ്ക്കിലും
ഒരിറ്റു പൂമണം കനിഞ്ഞു വയ്ക്കാതെ
ഇതളിതളായി, ഇതളിതളായി...)

കവിതയുടെ ഇതൾപൊഴിക്കലിനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള കവിയുടെ പ്രസ്താവത്തെ കവിത അനുപദം തുത്തെഴുതുന്ന അനുഭവം ഞാൻ എന്തിനു സഹൃദയരെ വിസ്തരിച്ചു ബോധ്യപ്പെടുത്തണം. അസാധാരണമായ വിനിമയകൗശലമാണ് സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിത ഇവിടെ പ്രകടിപ്പിക്കുന്നത്. സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയിൽ ഇന്നും തുടരുന്ന വർണ്ണപ്പൊലിമയാർന്ന പുഷ്പോത്സവത്തിന്റെ വിളംബരമാണ് ഇതൾ കൊഴിയലിനെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള ഈ പരാമർശം. അർത്ഥംകൊണ്ടു പറയുന്നതിനെ ഭാഷയുടെ പ്രവർത്തനംകൊണ്ടു തുത്തെഴുതുന്ന വിസ്മയവിദ്യയാണിത്. ഭാഷയുടെ അർത്ഥത്തെ ഭാഷയുടെ കർമ്മം തുത്തുകളയുന്നതിന്റെ ആഹ്ലാദം ഭാഷാകേളിയിൽ നിന്നുണ്ടാകുന്ന ഉദാത്താനുഭവമാണ്. അതു സാഹിത്യാനുഭവത്തിന്റെ നീരുറവയായി വേണം പരിഗണിക്കാൻ.

അടുത്ത ഖണ്ഡത്തിൽ കവിത പെട്ടെന്നു ഗതി മാറിയൊഴുകുന്നു:

'ഇതോ വാർധക്യം? ഞാൻ ചിരിച്ചുപോവുന്നു
എവിടെപ്പോയ് ഭ്രാന്തവിചിത്രാദർശങ്ങൾ
എവിടെപ്പോയ് സ്നേഹദൃഢവിശ്വാസങ്ങൾ
എവിടെ ഞാൻ നട്ട വയൽത്തഴപ്പുകൾ'

ഇവിടെ കവിത കണ്ണാടിയായി മാറുന്നു – ചുറ്റിത്തിരിയുന്ന കണ്ണാടി. അതു വൃദ്ധരിലേക്കും യുവാക്കളിലേക്കും കവിയിലേക്കും തിരിയുന്ന നിലക്കണ്ണാടിയായി മാറുന്നു. അതിൽ പ്രതിഫലിക്കുന്ന ചിത്രങ്ങളുടെ ഗതിപരിണാമങ്ങളിലൂടെ വായനക്കാരൻ ആദ്യം വിഭ്രാന്തിയിലേക്കും പിന്നെ വീണ്ടുവിചാരത്തിലേക്കും നീങ്ങുന്നു.

കവിത അവസാനിക്കുന്നത് ഇങ്ങനെയാണ്:

ഇതേ വാർധക്യം ഞാനറിയുന്നു, നെടും
വഴിയിലെൻ വഴി മറന്നൊരേ നില്ക്കൽ
കടലുപോലുള്ളിൽ കരുണതൻ നിറ
ഞ്ഞിരമ്പൽ, കൈകളാൽ ധരണിയെപ്പുൽകൽ
നിറമിഴികളാൽ തപനനെ നോക്കൽ

മതിയെന്നു കൂപ്പിത്തൊഴുതു പിൻവാങ്ങൽ...

അവാസനവരികൾ വായിച്ചു കഴിയുമ്പോൾ കവിതയുടെ പ്രമേയം എന്ത് എന്നു വല്ലാത്തൊരു അന്ധാളിപ്പ് വായനക്കാർക്കുണ്ടാകും. ഇതു വിരക്തിയോ, പരിഭവമോ? കവിത ക്ഷുദ്രമായ തീർപ്പുകളിലേക്കു നമ്മെ നയിക്കണമെന്നില്ല. ജീവിതത്തിന്റെ, വാർദ്ധക്യത്തിന്റെ അനുഭവങ്ങളെ അങ്ങനെ ഒറ്റയടിക്കു തീർപ്പാക്കാൻ നോക്കേണ്ട. അതിനെ സാന്ദ്രമായ അനുഭവമാക്കാൻ വാർധക്യം എന്ന കവിതയ്ക്കു കഴിയുന്നു.

സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിത എക്കാലത്തും പ്രേമവിയോഗങ്ങളെ കാവ്യോചിതമായി സംസ്കരിച്ചവതരിപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. കൃഷ്ണഭക്തിയുടെ വർണ്ണപ്പൊലിമയും സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയുടെ വിഷാദസ്ഥായിയും ഇടകലർന്ന എത്രയോ രചനകൾ വായനക്കാരുടെ ഓർമ്മയിലുണ്ടാകും. മണലെഴുത്തിലെ ചില കവിതകൾ കുറേക്കൂടി മൂർത്തമായ അനുഭവരേഖകളുടെ രൂപത്തിൽ മരണത്തിന്റെ ഇരുണ്ടപശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ രതിയെ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നു. സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയിലെ ആധ്യാത്മികതയ്ക്കും ശരീരപരതയ്ക്കും പുതിയ വൈകാരികത്തിളക്കം നൽകുന്നതാണ് പുതിയ കവിതകൾ.

തനിച്ചു തനിച്ചിനി എന്ന കവിതയുടെ അവാസനപാദങ്ങൾ കേൾക്കൂ:

...വേർപിരി
ഞ്ഞജ്ഞാതപഥങ്ങളിലൂടെ നീ
ഒറ്റയ്ക്കു പോകണം, ഞാനും മടങ്ങണ-
മൊറ്റയ്ക്കുതന്നെ നടന്നു തീർത്തിടണം
നമ്മളൊന്നിച്ചു നടന്ന വഴികളിൽ
എന്നേയ്ക്കുമായിത്തനിച്ചു തനിച്ചിനി.

പോയതിൻശേഷം എന്ന കവിതയിൽ

ഒക്കയും പതിവുപോൽ,
എങ്കിലുമോർമ്മിക്കുവാ-
നിത്രയും കുറിക്കുന്നെൻ
ഇളയ യാത്രക്കാരേ
ഇത്തിരിമാത്രം നേരം
കൈകോർത്തു നടക്കുവാൻ
ഇത്തിരിയല്ലോ നേരം
കൊതിക്കാൻ, സ്നേഹിക്കാനും....

പ്രേമിക്കുന്ന ഇളമുറക്കാരെ, ഇണക്കുത്തിൽ കുടുങ്ങുന്ന ഇളമുറക്കാരെ ഇങ്ങനെ ജാഗ്രതപ്പെടുത്താൻ നമുക്കൊരു കവിയുണ്ടെന്നതു അഭിമാനകരമാണ്.

ഇവിടെനിന്നു വായനക്കാർ എത്തുന്നതു *രാത്രിയിൽ, ഗംഗോത്രിയിൽ* എന്ന അതിമനോഹരമായ കവിതയിലാണ്. ഇടിയും മിന്നലും പെരുമഴയുമുള്ള രാത്രിയിൽ ഗംഗോത്രിയിലെ ഒരു മുറിയിൽ കഴിഞ്ഞുകൂടിയതിന്റെ ഓർമ്മയാണ് വിഷയം. സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയിലെ നിത്യസാന്നിധ്യമായ രാത്രിമഴ ഇവിടെ പൂർവാധികം ശക്തിയോടെ കടന്നുവരുന്നു.

എത്രനേരമോ നീണ്ടുനിന്നതാക്കൊടുംമിന്നൽ
വെട്ടവും ഇടിവെട്ടും മഴയുമിരമ്പലും
ഓരോരോ മിന്നൽക്കടുംപൊട്ടലിൽ
ഞെട്ടിക്കൊണ്ടും
ഓരോ ഞെട്ടലിൽ പൊട്ടിച്ചിരിച്ചും
കളിചൊന്നും
ചെറുപൈതങ്ങൾപോലെ മുറുകെ കെട്ടിപ്പിടി
ച്ചിരവങ്ങനെപോക്കി, വൈകി നാമുണർന്നപ്പോൾ
കുളിച്ചു പച്ചപ്പട്ടു ചാർത്തി നിൽക്കുന്നു ഭൂമി
ചിരിച്ചു നിറുകയിലുമ്മ വയ്ക്കുന്നു സൂര്യൻ!

കവിത ചിത്രപടമായി മാറുന്നതും ചിത്രത്തിനുള്ളിൽ ലോകം ഓളംവെട്ടുന്നതും കവിതയുടെ മാന്ത്രികാനുഭവമാക്കി അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ഭാവകാവ്യമാണിത്. വ്യക്തിപരമായ വിയോഗാനുഭവത്തെ കാവ്യഭാഷയുടെ സർഗ്ഗശക്തികൊണ്ട് വായനക്കാരന്റെ കാഴ്ചയനുഭവമാക്കുന്ന കാവ്യരചനാകൗശലം എന്നു ഇതിനെ വിശേഷിപ്പിക്കാം. ചുരുക്കത്തിൽ, സുഗതകുമാരിക്കവിതയുടെ കഴിഞ്ഞ അൻപതുവർഷത്തെ വീര്യവും തേജസ്സും നിലനിർത്തിക്കൊണ്ട് പുത്തൻ പുതുമകളിലേക്കു വായനക്കാരനെ നയിക്കുന്ന കവിതകളാണ് മണൽക്കാടുകൾ എന്ന സമാഹാരത്തിലുള്ളത്. ഇത് മലയാളത്തിന്റെ സൗഭാഗ്യം.

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