NOSTALGIAS OF THE NORTH:
MALABAR AND THE POPULAR IN MALAYALAM CINEMA

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CERTIFICATE

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Nostalgias of the North: Malabar and the Popular in Malayalam Cinema" submitted by Shyma P. bearing Reg. No. 08HCPH01 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

The thesis has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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DECLARATION

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I, Shyma P., hereby declare that this thesis entitled "Nostalgias of the North: Malabar and the Popular in Malayalam Cinema" submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof. M.T. Ansari is a bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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C O N T E N T S

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INTRODUCTION

Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting. (W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt 836)

Under patriarchy, men are the arbiters of identity for both males and females, because the cultural norm of human identity is, by definition, male identity—*masculinity*. And, under patriarchy, the cultural norm of male identity consists in power, prestige, privilege, and prerogative *as over and against* the gender class women. That's what masculinity is. It isn't something else. (John Stoltenberg 41)

Being one among the first generation of postgraduates in a family where even men have not had higher secondary education, let alone entered the service sector, my insecurities have had to do with negotiating not only with alienated women but also with alienated men. Even as I read/watch in abundance about the financial instabilities that could cripple housewives of a hierarchical middle-class household in Kerala (or Keralam, in Malayalam), leaving them creatively bereft, I have rarely come across the emotional insecurities of men, especially those employed in the primary and secondary sectors. Our literary/visual texts are inundated with fathers/husbands/brothers who return home in the evening, tired after work, expecting a refreshing cup of tea from their intimate female counterparts. However, these narratives remain blind and mute to those men outside such service clocks and schedules as well as monthly salaries and other fiscal benefits, but nonetheless are to perform the role of the male, responsible for his family.

Discourses which produce men as masters of the public space often sidestep the issues of men who are without any position there. For such men, marriage and family become the only way towards mobility, otherwise denied to them. The unavailable status in the public space is expected to be regained through a prosperous, private

realm of the family, the rights of which have already been conferred on him, through the sexual contract,[1] authorizing him to control and command. For a man who has to prove his place, the pressures of distinguishing himself as modern, which is indispensable for a contract with the modern state, become important. This he does by producing and reproducing the family unit as sanctioned by the state, which eventually determines his manliness. A family also symbolizes that inevitable break with a tradition of matriliny and the sexual excesses that it had infamously come to suggest under colonial evaluation in Kerala. The Marumakkathayam Act of 1933[2] was to legally put an end to a normative matrilineal kinship pattern followed in Kerala, which had symbolized a freedom to have more than one partner as well as to break away from them. While the picture was definitely not as perfect as it sometimes is made out to be, one could still say that the post-1933 generation, stepping onto the threshold of a modern, monogamous society, had to make sense of the polygamous desires of males and females who were made to feel primordially promiscuous, if not primitive and barbaric.

The emergent male had to re-fashion himself in order to lay a legitimate claim to the modern and proudly bear the insignia of the protector of the newly formed patriarchal state. Such refashioning often went hand-in-glove with a repudiation of a generation of polygamous fathers. The modern son, deceived by none other than his "adulterous" father, was to find new ways of being, difficult as it may be, unmotivated by anything in the "primitive" paternal past. The family provides a realm for this new male, who

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[1] The term used by Carole Pateman, a feminist critic, to emphasise how the liberal concept of the social contract, the agreement between the society and the state, has been based on a glossing over of the issues of unequal distribution of power as far as women are concerned; see Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988).
[2] The Act was to put an end to the matrilineal kinship pattern prevalent in Kerala by prohibiting polygamy, legalizing marriage, and giving rise to modern feminine and masculine identities.

had, albeit in the minimal ways of asserting himself in the new political order, a claim to that rebellious break with the past and the narrative of sacrifice that discourses of self-made manhood are inevitably imbued with. As far as the males of the region of Malabar, the northern-most region of Kerala,[3] were concerned, their need for rupture with the past and the rebellious state of being, which have been significant to the defining of hegemonic masculinity, was immensely helped by the cause of a militant, class-ist communism that was finding its way through the region since the 1930s. It began as part of the nationalist movement (specifically the Civil Disobedience movement of the 1930s) and charted out new terrains of "masculine" activities and spaces to the incipient modern male, limping his way from matriliny to patriarchy.

The patriarchal structures in Kerala, as may be seen, owe a lot to this history of militancy and assertion of a revolutionary male. However, this rupture, which authorizes the male to be a rigid, emotionless patriarch so as to ferry his family into the modern time and space, has not been without its banal consequences, especially for women, who have been at the receiving end of such alienated men. My concerns as a woman about "engendering," thereby, have more to do with the "political"[4] in Kerala, especially North Malabar, which legitimizes such hegemonic masculinities, prefiguring the narratives about women's oppression in the process.

North Malabar has had a distinctive culture, and later political atmosphere, as

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[3] North Malabar was an administrative unit of British India under Madras Presidency till 1947 and later a part of Madras State till 1956. On 1st November 1956, following the States Re-organization Act, the region, along with the Kasargode taluk of South Kanara district was merged with the erstwhile princely states of Cochin and Travancore to form the modern state of Kerala. Today, the region refers to the area covering the present districts of Kasargode and Kannur, the Mananthavady taluk of Wayanad district, Koyilandy and Vatakara taluks of Kozhikode district as well as Mahe, the sub-division of the Union territory of Pondicherry; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Malabar; accessed on 02/04/2012.

[4] I use the term"political" here to imply a field of struggle where contesting groups vie for hegemony. It is "the antagonistic dimension that can be given a form of expression, that will not destroy the political association;" Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005) 52.

different from South Malabar, the two regions being also demarcated geographically by the river Korapuzha in the erstwhile Malabar district. Marital alliances, for instance, from South Malabar were not really encouraged by several communities such as the Nairs, Thiyyas and Namboothiris of the North.[5] Such disdain persists into the present and the political scenario of North Malabar, of class-based communism, further cemented its claim to a "superior" culture, what with the people of North Malabar, especially Kannur and Kasargode, supposed to be politically conscious as well as rooted in tradition. North Malabar, seen as the centre of class-ist communist assertions in Kerala, is often imagined as the abode of tradition, above and over the regions of South Kerala and Central Kerala, and to a certain extent, South Malabar as well. South Malabar, which became infamous for its Malabar Rebellion in the 1920s, and South and Central Kerala, where a certain kind of trade unionism was taking shape as early as the 1920s as part of the assertions of the Ezhava backward community, have been undermined by the official histories of communism in Kerala.[6] On the other hand, North Malabar emerges in these histories as the realm of traditions and customs, the real embodiment of a modern, secular and casteless culture.[7] But such a conceptualization also underscores various socio-cultural movements that had taken place in these regions, and which were communitarian rather than class-ist in nature.

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[5] Writers like William Logan, Raghava Warriar, etc, have talked about how geographically North Malabar was less suited to wet land paddy cultivation, leading to the significance given to *punam krishi* or shift cultivation, the issues of which had spurred most of the peasant movements in the region during the 1940s. See chapter 2 for more details.

[6] See Chapter 2 and 3 for further discussion on the topic.

[7] North Malabar is often known for its ritualistic performance of Theyyam, where the lower castes are worshipped by the upper castes, and which is highlighted as part of the secular culture of the region (which once again is not so prevalent in South Malabar). However, the performance has been largely patronized by the CPI (M) who uses them for propagating their own secular credentials. The living cult of Theyyam has added to the region's claims of being rooted in tradition while at the same time being politically conscious by being part of the secular class communist past and present.

The North Malabar region, unlike the development statistics associated with the North globally and in comparison with the southern and central parts of Kerala, is yet grossly underdeveloped. However, issues of underdevelopment are often played down by the rhetoric of a politically conscious society, which is often attributed to the heritage of largely militant and popular communist movement. Mainstream histories project North Malabar as the founding ground of Kerala's communist legacy, wherein Kerala's first regional unit, CSP (Communist Socialist Party) was founded in Kannur, North Malabar, in 1937. Such a construction of the past has been central to the writings of many historians (A. Sreedhara Menon, K.K.N. Kurup, etc.), cultural critics (Dilip Menon, Robin Jeffrey, etc.) and Marxists (E.M.S. Namboothiripad, A.K. Gopalan, etc.), most of whom are upper castes.[8] Such elitist perceptions completely disregard what one could call a populist basis of communism significantly present since the 1920s, especially in the various factories and industries in South Kerala, and which significantly had a prominent backward caste agency. By positing the peasant revolts, especially since the late 1930s, as the foundation of communism, what such a historicization also does is to produce the upper caste reformers, the leaders of these peasant protests, as the agents of change and modernity.

The narrative of sacrifice of these upper-caste reformers who led "ignorant" villagers and peasants towards modernity is central to these historicizations. The rhetoric of class, on the other hand, legitimized their claims of being casteless leaders striving

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[8] See, for example, Robin Jeffrey, "Matriliny, Marxism and the birth of the Communist Party in Kerala, 1930-1940, *The Journal of Asian Studies* (Nov., 1978): 77-98; *JSTOR* 17 Jan 2005 http://www.jstor.org/search; Dilip M. Menon, "Conjunctural Community: Communism in Malabar, 1934-1948," *EPW* 27.51-52 (Dec. 1992): 2705-2715; *JSTOR* 29 Sept. 2008 http://www.jstor.org/search; E.M.S., 1990, *Kerala Charithram Marxist Veekshanathil* [*Kerala History in Marxian Perspective*] (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2008); E.M.S., 1948, *Kerala: Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*, [*Kerala, the Motherland of Malayalees*] Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publications, 2009; A.K.G., 2002, *Kerala: Innale Innu* [*Kerala: Today, Tomorrow*] (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2010); Chanthavila Murali, *Sakhavu P. Krishnapillai: A Concise Biographical Study* (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2008).

towards a classless community. Apart from enabling them to draw on a non-sectarian and nationalist cover, the valorization of individual reform initiatives directed against prevalent caste and community affiliations and interests may have helped freeze communities in a non-modern frame. Caste and community, read in essentialist terms, were seen as components that could be disconnected and discarded or, if required, redesigned and refashioned. These categories thereby also became available for exploitation in the larger interests of ever larger modules of an emerging class-based modern political modular[9] structure, which sat well with the dominant holistic liberal ideology. Modern developmentalist and inter-nationalist imagination of the "political" seems to be predicated on modularity—one which is based on independent community modules, whose predictable past-ness propels the developmental desires of the nation.

The "political" composed of modules apparently enhances its productivity while satisfying the governmental imperatives of control and surveillance. But the relationships between various modules are seemingly charted out, leaving little scope for "trespassing." Each community was thus understood as a module in such a way that each could be monitored and adjusted differently without altering the whole of which it is a part. In case of malfunction, the specific community module could then be supposedly replaced without disturbing the "political" in any way. In a nutshell, the newly imagined regional and nationalist communities, aspiring towards a classless

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[9] A term used in designing electronic machinery, buildings, etc., "modular" aims at using customized products, the "functional, spatial, and other relationships between components within a product design" being such that, once specified, they are not permitted to change (Huang 155). *Modularity* depends on two characteristics of design: (1) similarity between the physical and functional architecture of the design, and (2) minimization of incidental interactions between physical components. It resists obsolescence, shortens redesign, enables new designs to be realized using existing modules, reduces costs and eases maintenance (Huang 157). See, also, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modular_design; accessed on 16/12/12.

society, seem to have put paid to actually existing and contingent community formations. Hence, it was assumed that the caste-community modules could be used in various ways to facilitate different combinations with the borders of each module remaining intact. Such an imagining of a "political" becomes indispensable as far as the desire for a modern, secular and developmental nation is concerned. But it also arguably shows a disconnect between aspirations and actualities; for example, it was generally assumed that there should not be any contamination of the secular modern by the categories of the sacred, which ought to be religious and restricted to the private realm.[10] As far as Kerala was concerned, the class-ist communist past based in Malabar, particularly North Malabar, has been integral to such an imagining of a modular political. However, the articulations of various caste-communities have always staged resistances against the homogenous build of the modular political.[11]

Hence, my attempt is to engage with the ways in which the Thiyya/Ezhava[12] backward caste in North Malabar mobilized itself as a community[13] to wrest a place with the modular political in Kerala, since the experience of the Ezhava/Thiyya backward community has been different in the ways it was implicated in the

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[10] See, M.S.S. Pandian, "Dilemmas of Public Reason: Secularism and Religious Violence in Contemporary India," *EPW* 30.30 (2005): 2313-2320.

[11] Put in another way, the "fuzziness" was manifest even in the tables of progressive enumeration; see, Sudipta Kaviraj, "The Imaginary Institution of India," 16-17.

[12] Thiyyas are one of the major backward caste communities in North Malabar. They are also known as Ezhavar, Billavar/Villavan, Chekavan, Channan, Chovvan, Thandan, etc., by which they are referred to in various parts of the State with all these communities having similarities, a racial bond uniting them although there exists differences in terms of geography, history and social science, culture and ways of living, according to Thurston. See, Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari, "Tiyan," *Castes and Tribes of South India, Vol. VII* (New Delhi: Cosmo Books, 1975) 36-116. However, many have described them as being culturally and politically well-off than their Southern and Central counterparts. See chapter 4 for further discussion. I have used the spelling "Thiyya" except in cases where individual authors use a different spelling for the same.

[13] Jean Luc-Nancy has theorized community as a site of "encounters, interruption, fragmentation, and suspension" (32). Community is "neither a work to be produced, nor a lost communion, but rather as space itself, and the spacing of the experience of the outside, of the outside-of-self. It is an experience which never aims at regaining immanence or intimacy" (19); Jean Luc-Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, Peter Connor, ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

cinematic popular in Keralam, even as the latter reformed itself in the face of caste articulations in the early 1990s and post-2009. For this purpose, apart from select fictional as well as autobiographical texts, I mainly examine popular films, primarily of M.T. Vasudevan Nair[14] (M.T. from now on) and Ranjith,[15] two of the most popular Malayalam film-makers.

Moving along the Gramscian terrain of an influential, proactive superstructure, my claim is not that the popular faithfully represents the modular political, but rather that it emerges as a site of ideological reform. Cinema does not reproduce the "reality" of the developmentalist[16] rhetoric of a middle-class nation state. Rather, it allegorises reality while also re-forming itself. Hence, there is a need to understand the ideology of the form—whose elements combine and recombine—to produce nuanced understandings of cultural processes. While the elements of a genre, the genre as well as the cultural form itself are always open to change, being constantly evolving through historical processes, Malayalam cinema is still, by and large, acknowledged to follow a realist aesthetic. Though very much in keeping with a developmental project, a realistic aesthetic also required the foregoing of heterogeneous identities in terms of gender, caste and religion. The demands of a popular medium which had to "entertain" a variegated mass of Malayalees while retaining the ethics and aesthetics of realism seems to have pushed Malayalam cinema towards certain ideological

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[14] Madathil Thekkepattu Vasudevan Nair (1933-) was born in Kudallur, Palakkad district, which is now part of Central Kerala (also called Cochin or Kochi), but which was under Malabar District in the Madras Presidency of British India. He has been a popular writer as well as director and scriptwriter of many films.
[15] Ranjith Balakrishnan (1964-) was born in Balusseri, Kozhikode, southern part of Malabar and has scripted, directed, produced and acted in films.
[16] See chapter one, for further discussion on the concept of developmentalism and how it fosters and caters to a middle-class political.

reforms. Malayalam *madhyavarthy*[17] cinema, middle-class and middle-brow in orientation, seems to have evolved as a means of mediating, if not accommodating, the peculiar socio-political and cultural tensions of a post-Nehruvian context as it was played out in Kerala. The best of *madhyavarthy* cinema, especially in the wake of re-articulations of caste, seems to be geared to generate nostalgia for a populist past which, according to me, interpolated and implicated the backward Thiyya caste community in North Malabar in significant ways.

My thesis focuses on how two hugely popular film-makers, M.T. and Ranjith, lay claim to the class-ist history of the region, simultaneously drawing on categories of language and culture that are overtly casteist. I postulate that their films exude nostalgia for North Malabar, which I suggest is nostalgia for a modular reality, especially in the context of articulations of caste in the socio-political realm. Both these film-makers negotiate with the issues of caste by imagining a larger Hindu unity, based on an alliance of the Nairs and the Thiyya community, one of the major backward caste communities in Kerala and one which was more or less at par with the Nair community, especially in North Malabar. Moreover, the Valluvanandan language, belonging to the region Valluvanad, Central Kerala, and the Nair community acquired the status of standard literary Malayalam and of a normative modern Malayalee, respectively, through the films of M.T.[18] and Ranjith. Hence,

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[17] The term proclaimed its arrival largely by the early 1980s, and came to be realized in the films of K.G. George, P. Padmarajan, Bharathan, etc., as a genre of movies that was ubiquitously staged as "a genre of quality, in-between films which defied some of the cinematic conventions of both Malayalam *Kachavada* (commercial) and *Kala* (art) cinemas and self-consciously indulged in new film practices, carefully developed through principles of adaptation and refusal," Bindu Menon, "Malayalam Middle Cinema and the Category of Woman," *Women in Malayalam Cinema: Naturalising Gender Hieararchies*, Meena T. Pillai, ed. (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2010) 105-121.

[18] M.T.'s love and respect for Vaikkom Muhammad Basheer (1908-1994) is well known. Basheer had shifted from Thiruvananthapuram to Kozhikode, Malabar and was also inspired by the various freedom movements that were happening in Malabar during the 1930s. M.T., whose relationship with his father had remained ambiguous and uncertain, (see Chapter 3 for further discussion) nevertheless, looked

central to my argument are analyses of two films: *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* (*An Epic of the North*, Dir. Hariharan, 1989) and *Paleri Manikyam: Oru Paathira Kolapathakathinte Katha* (*Paleri Manikyam: The Story of a Midnight Murder*, Dir. Ranjith, 2009). While the former was scripted by M.T., the latter was scripted and directed by Ranjith. The years of release are also significant: though caste was being re-articulated as a political category following the Mandal implementations in the 1990s, it was in 2009 that it created a crisis of sorts within the CPI (M) in Kerala. Both M.T. and Ranjith, in my reading, endeavor to "contain" the caste-menace by orchestrating an ideological reform in cinema, the subject of which was the Thiyya backward caste, while the space of action was invariably located in (North) Malabar. Their "reform" initiatives, I argue, attempt to interpellate the Thiyya community as an ally in the inter-nationalist project of the secular-modern. Such a cooption, in my view, was dependent on an evocation of a shared past, on inducement of nostalgia for a class-ist communist past, the re-assertion of which was crucial for recuperating a threatened modular political.

The first chapter, "Class-ism and Populism: The Marxist Popular," differentiates between the class-ist and the populist trajectories in the Marxist discourse of power. The concept of populism is analyzed as an always-already present category in Marxism, even as economic reductionism had limited it to a vulgar Marxism at a point of time. Despite the fact that populism is seen as a necessary result of the conditions of late capitalism, the tenets of populism may be seen to be always-already present in Marxist discourse. However, the late capitalist economic structure—the understanding that capitalism has moved from within the walls of an early industrial

upon Basheer (who came to be known as the Sulthan of Bepur (in Kozhikode, Malabar) as his literary guru or rather father.

phase to a much larger post-industrial scenario, expanding the category of a working class and labor, blurring the boundaries of proletarian becoming—was to augment its inevitability. Nonetheless, the concept of an economically determined class community has been contested time and again by many within Marxism. The deleterious effect of capital, which is as much cultural and social as it is economical, has been discussed by the likes of Mikhail Bakhtin and Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci realised the necessity of recognizing the heterogeneous realm of culture rather than limit one's understanding to a restrictive economic realm. Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau's notion of populism conceptualizes the political in an Empire[19] as an always present condition of society. In a post-industrial and post-national scenario, the "political" propels the disintegration of a class-based community a step forward by further dividing the identity of a communitarian being in terms of articulated demands and extra-party formations. Contingent demands form the basis of populism. Such demands—isolated and differential—acquire corporeality as they find themselves within an escalating chain of demands.

Since the 1920s, communism in Kerala has had a history of encountering such corporeality of differential demands based on questions of caste. The consecration of an Ezhava Shiva in Aruvippuram in 1889 by an Ezhava, Narayana Guru[20] was to construct a new corporeality by setting in motion isolated demands in the backward/lower caste communities. The caste reform movements that had begun in Kerala as early as the middle of the 19th century obtained a much required

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[19]Empire is referred to as "a new global form of sovereignity composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule;" Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard: Harvard UP, 2000) XII.

[20] An Ezhava social reformer, Narayana Guru (1865 – 1928) is said to have initiated a transition to modernity of the Ezhava community by a symbolic act of consecrating an Ezhava Shiva in 1888 in Aruvippuram, South Kerala.

leadership[21] in Narayana Guru in so far as it sought to bring together a community of untouchables belonging to the backward and the lower castes. The communist movement in Kerala was to thrive in such an ambience. However, what ensued was an appropriation of a specific caste formation by the class idiom of communism, which in its turn was to follow the Brahminical nationalist movement in North Malabar in the 1930s. The indigenous promptings to the movement that were inspired by the Ezhava caste-community movements in the 1920s remain absent and unacknowledged, a history of which is traced in the second chapter.

The second chapter, "Kerala's Modular Political: Making of a Class-ist Past," analyses the modular political of Kerala as one that was formed by a usurpation of the Ezhava-initiated populist past of communism, by an upper caste led class-ist communism. The centrality given to North Malabar and the peasant movements in the narratives of communism in Kerala has been part of this usurpation which traces the origins of communism as a tributary of the casteist, nationalist movement. The modern political and its legitimization of insulated modular communities have not been as helpful in advancing the idea of democracy as is posited. This accounts for the need to acknowledge the indigenous caste history of the movement in Kerala and, particularly, of the mobilization of backward and other lower castes under the leadership of Narayana Guru as early as the 1920s. Such a class history was to serve

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[21] Preceded by movements like the Channar revolt in south Travancore, the earliest of them in 1822 by lower-caste Channar women for the right to cover their breasts, the consecration of the Ezhava Shiva was followed by various assertions of caste, like Ayyankali's assertion of the right of lower-castes to travel on public roads in decorated bullock carts in 1899 in Aralamoodu Bazar near Balaramapuram. Alongside political assertions, like the Ezhava Memmorial of 1895, all these were attempts to question the supremacy given to the Aiyyer's and Rao's in various administrative positions. Such initiatives were also instrumental in the making of various caste communities, like the SNDP in 1903 by Palpu, NSS in 1914 by Mannathu Padmanabhan, Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham in 1905 by Ayyankali, Yogakshema Sabha in 1908 and Sahodaran Ayyappan's Sahodara Prastanam in 1917. The Vaikkam Sathyagraha in 1924 to allow untouchables to walk on the road leading to Vaikkam temple, the Guruvayoor Sathyagraha in 1931 for all Hindus to gain access to all temples were some of the other significant movements.

two purposes. On the one hand, it accorded an opportunity for the upper-caste Nairs to come to terms with the backward Thiyya caste, a predominant presence in North Malabar, even as the backward Ezhava community in the South was posing a threat in its *avatar* of an emerging modern community. On the other hand, their class rhetoric sought to legitimize the authority of the upper-caste Nairs by providing a platform of coexistence with the lower castes, without having to compromise their elite caste formation. These two factors enabled a smooth trajectory for its modernizing desires, promoting Nair masculinity as a hegemonic masculinity of modern Kerala's patriarchal political. The idiom of a class communist past was hence essential as far as the modernizing desires of the Nair community were concerned, especially to break away from the historical alliance with the Namboothiri community. This break proved consequential in imparting a sense of past-ness to a feudal order, which is essential for an emerging modern individuality. However, "to admit the contemporaneity of feudalism would be to place the citizen subject addressee of realism at the hypothetical end-point of a still going revolution" (Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film*, 17). The construction of North Malabar as a bedrock of communism in Kerala that can be seen in the histories of communism—like those of Robin Jeffrey and Dilip Menon as well as in the autobiographical and biographical writings of communist leaders like E.M.S. Namboothiripad, A.K. Gopalan, P. Krishna Pillai, etc.—are a part of such a nostalgia for a class communist past, where the movement as well as the leaders, become a part of the Brahminical nationalist movement[22] of the 1930s. The various backward and lower caste motivations of the communist movement in the 1920s in south Kerala remain absent and unacknowledged. Moreover, caste-based

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[22] G. Aloysius looks at how the upper castes reincarnate the Brahminical social order as "a nationalist ideology through liberal Western categories," the term Brahminical used to suggest a way of life rather than a community; see G. Aloysius, "Nationalism and Nation: The Gandhian Synthesis," *Nationalism Without a Nation in India* (New Delhi: OUP, 1997) 170-213.

reform movements initiated by Narayana Guru were appropriated by the class discourse of communism, leading to its secularization. While this secularized religio-reform movement of Narayana Guru was used to suit the interests of communism, its later modernist stream that found momentum in *Sahodaranism*,[23] led by Sahodaran Ayyappan towards the end of the 1920s, and which upheld the coming together of the backward and lower castes, was quietly and strategically forgotten and forsaken. Instead, the populist trajectory spearheaded by the Ezhava backward caste community was seized by the class-ist discourse.

The peasant movements of the late 1930s and early 1940s become the basis for communism in Kerala as per this dominant historiography. Unsurprisingly, these peasant movements and the land reform act following them were never really to benefit the landless lower-castes and were tenant-based rather than tiller-oriented. Tenant-based agricultural people largely belonged to the upper-caste Nair community—from whom the communist leaders were to come, thereby writing them into history as the heirs of modern Kerala. Other religious and caste communities, such as Muslims, Christians and Thiyyas were also mostly tenant-based. The tenant-based communities by and large were also to make it to the service sector. As various Dalit critics, such as K.K. Kochu, Sanal Mohan, K.M. Salim Kumar, Sunny M. Kapikkad, etc., and the ex-Naxalite K. Venu,[24] formulate it, the Dalits and Adivasis were never part of this middle-class modern because the caste structure in Kerala was

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[23] The term was used by Ajay Sekher and quoted in J. Reghu, "Sahodaran Ayyappan: Overcoming Narayana Guru," http://utharakalam.com/english/?p=303, accessed on 15/04/2012.

[24] See, K.K. Kochu, "Writing the History of Kerala: Seeking a Dalit Space" and Sunny M. Kappikad, "Beyond Just a Home and Name," in K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu, eds., *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India, Dossier- 1: Tamil and Malayalam* (Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011) 494-495 and 464-474; K.M. Salimkumar, 2006, "The Caste of Communist," *Dalitapaadakal: Dalitavaadathe Pati Oru Samvadam*, [*Dalit Paths: A Debate on the Dalit Discourse*], Bobby Thomas, ed. (Thiruvananthapuram: Sign Books, 2010) 166-182; K. Venu, *Indian Janadipathyam: Prashnanghalum Sadyathakalum,* [*Indian Democracy: Problems and Possibilities*] (Kozhikode: Navakerala Cooperative Publishing House, 2010).

such that the service sector was to remain inaccessible to these communities.

The second chapter also looks at how the cinematic popular in Kerala is characterized by a feudal nativism, one that sought to allegorize the class political by subsequent reforms,[25] the basis for which remains a nostalgia towards a class-ist communist past centered in North Malabar. The translation and augmentation of how this modular political has inspired the making of the sacrificial male as the hegemonic Malayalee male, and the sacred[26] villain as his "other," respectively, with reference to the selected films of M.T. and Ranjith, are examined in the third and fourth chapters.

The third chapter, "Secular Martyrs: North Malabar in M.T.'s Films," traces the nostalgia for North Malabar in the films of M.T., as being formative in imagining the normative, sacrificial, male hero of his Vallavanadan-scape. M.T., apart from being one of the most celebrated, and avidly read by Malayalam literati as well, has also been part of popular cinema for almost four decades with seven films as director, around 45 scripts, many of them based on his own stories, a documentary on renowned Malayalam author Thakazhi, and a tele-serial *Nalukettu* based on his novel. M.T. has also been an undeniable presence on the national and state film award scene: *Iruttinte Athmavu* (*Soul of the Dark*); Dir. P. Bhaskaran, 1967 and *Pazhassi Raja*, Dir. Hariharan, 2009. Incomparable on the Malayalam literary scene as well, he was awarded the Jnanapith award in 1996 for *Randamoozham* (*Second Coming*) as well as the Kendra Sahitya Akademy award for *Kaalam* (*Time*) in 1970 and Kerala Sahitya

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[25] See "ideological reform" as used by Madhava Prasad in his *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: OUP, 1998).
[26] The term "sacred" is used here as opposite to the "secular," suggestive of a domain of cultural heterogeneity as against a monadic concept of a nation. Indian secularism, following Western secularism, was to facilitate, to borrow from Mahmood, a homogenous political "by defining a political ethic altogether independent of religious doctrines;" see, Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Media, Culture and Society* 29.3 (May 2007): 324.

Akademy awards for *Swargam Thurakkunna Samayam* (*When the Heavens Open*) in 1986 and *Nalukettu* in 1970.

I argue that the hegemonic masculinity in Malayalam cinema relives (in) the narrative of reform of the upper caste Nair community. The secular male heroes in Malayalam cinema—embodying a drive constituted by a desire of sacrifice—reproduce a history of the upper caste instigated class struggle based in North Malabar, supposedly instrumental in the creation of a modern Kerala. As such, cinema tends to represent the modular political of Kerala. The class-ist past associated with the Kannur Central jail makes it a modern substitute for the traditional *tharavadu* and the prisoners, the representative of the martyrs. The metaphor of martyrdom is used to suggest the renunciation of the (traditional) self which is made a pre-requisite for the assertion of the modern self. The martyr and the jail is brought into a jingoistic narrative that underscores their parts in ruing and ruining the traditional/past as well as affords opportunities for acts of sacrifice for the building up of a modern/present. The heroes—fatherless as well as protectors of chastity—re-enact the historical drama of class-ist communism, modelled on how Nairs qualified as agents of class modernity, moving up as it were from a "barbaric" alliance with the Namboothiris who supposedly had reduced their women to nothing less than concubines. While a narrative of protectors of chastity enabled the modern Nair male's passage towards modernity, the "quality" of fatherless-ness allowed him the privilege of feigning a rebellious persona who wages quixotic wars against a traditional past.

Films such as *Olavum Theeravum* (*Waves and Shores*, Dir. P.N. Menon; 1970), *Adiyozhukku* (*Undercurrents*, Dir. I.V. Sasi; 1984), *Panchagni* (*Sacrifice by Fire*, Dir.

T. Hariharan; 1986), *Sadayam* (*Clemency*, Dir. Sibi Malayil; 1992) and *Parinayam* (*Marriage*, Dir. T. Hariharan; 1994) feature Kannur central jail as a metonym for the history of peasant movements in the 1930s and 1940s led by upper caste reformers that formed the basis of communist movement in Kerala. M.T.'s masculinities hark back to these peasant pasts, giving these masculinities as well as the histories of peasant revolts inscribed through them legitimacy as well as the authority of class and communist bases. This Nair historiography of communism underpins the presence of a sacrificial masculine or male-as-martyr and/or the absence of fathers in the films of M.T. The central jail functions as a trope to recreate this casteist communist history, while manufacturing the Nair community as agents of modernity in Kerala. However, this history of modernization was based on relegating women to the realm of the sacred on the one hand while entrusting the paternal with an autocratic power over a secular realm. Both involved a violence that however remains un(re)marked from the time and space of the modern.

As critiques of modernity were to focus on the woman who was restricted to the private domains of the family following the Marumakkathayam Act of 1933, what was often neglected was the man, the figure on whom the burden of colonial/nationalist modernity was to fall upon. Such critiques often focus on issues involving women, as in the studies of J. Devika, G. Arunima, Praveena Kodoth, etc., while studies on masculinities, as that of Ratheesh Radhakrishnan,[27] draw on a

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[27] G. Arunima, *There Comes Papa: Colonialism and the Transformation of Matriliny in Kerala, Malabar c. 1850-1940* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2003); J. Devika, *Engendering Individuals: The Language of Reforming in 20th Century Kerala* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007); Praveena Kodoth, "Courting Legitimacy or Delegitimizing Custom? Sexuality, Sambandham, and Marriage Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Malabar," *Modern Asian Studies*, 35.2 (May, 2001): 349-384 *JSTOR* 29 Sept 2008 http://www.jstor.org; Ratheesh Radhakrishnan, "Masculinity and the Structuring of the Public Domain in Kerala: A History of the Contemporary," Diss. Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE – Deemed University) 2006.

tradition of the revolutionary father of the secular domain. The hero of Malayalam cinema was imagined thus as a "bastard" sans a paternal presence. The "profanities" of this sacred[28] realm that nonetheless represented itself through the villains onscreen were constantly trimmed and constricted—the focus of my next chapter.

The fourth chapter, "Sacred Villains: Subaltern Male in Malayalam Cinema," engages with the sacred other of the secular male, the hero of the modular political as well as Malayalam cinema. It discusses how the realm of the secular male since the early 1990s suggested a framework that reinstated a secular class patriarch at its center, especially within the context of threats from a caste "uprising." However, such a reductive rendering also involved an imagining of the Ezhava/Thiyya backward caste as the sacred other, the villain, of the secular in various ways and which required a reconstruction through the cinematic popular. The modern identity that the debates around the Mandal implementation of caste reservations sought to reinvent was to lead to a re-emergence of the question of caste as well as to expose the governmental rationality behind the "secular," as one that went against the grain of lived realities. The constriction was imperative, especially in a framework where caste was about to begin registering as a political reality rather than merely as a protective entity. The chapter focuses on two things—it maps a tradition of the sacred as one belonging to the paternal realm which the popular had to do away with to augment the secular tradition of the modular political. Secondly, it looks at how the redefined secular was made sense of by positioning the category within the Thiyya backward community in

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[28] The realm of the sacred, according to Agamben, is one which cannot be understood apart from the realm of the profane, one that is older than Christianity and which is not opposed to the religious domain, as the realm of the secular would want to be part of the modern order of things. It was a realm that was thereby isolated from the continuum of social activity and communal legislation; see, Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998).

North Malabar.

The constriction of masculinity on screen was to be symptomatic of a new Brahminism brought about by the imagining of a new holistic, Hindu module of Nairs and Thiyyas, isolated nonetheless from the lower caste communities. In order to understand this, I focus on Ranjith's films, especially *Paleri Manikyam: Oru Paathira Kolapathakathinte Katha* (*PaleriManikyam: The Story of a Midnight Murder*, Dir. Ranjith, 2009) and M.T.'s *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* (*An Epic of the North*, Dir. Hariharan, 1989), the criterion of selection being the specific periods in which these films came out, both periods being "ridden" by the consciousness deliberated by extra class rhetoric. While the former was invoked by the Mandal recommendations, the latter was inspired by debates within the CPI (M) on class/caste-communitarian identities in Kerala. While the former redefined the category of the villain, by "heroizing" the villain of the folk narrative of the Thiyya community, probably for the first time, the latter was to reinstate the class-ist Thiyya as the legitimate successor of a class-ist communism in North Malabar. The representations of the Thiyya and North Malabar facilitated a reassurance regarding the legitimacy of a hegemonic modular political.

Ranjith, credited as the new face of *madhyavarthy* cinema in Malayalam, is of interest in the similarity of feudal narratives that he shares with M.T., making him a successor to the latter, if not the heir apparent. Although he made his film debut like M.T. as a script writer as early as 1987 with the film *Oru Maymaasa Pulariyil* (*On a Dawn in May*, Dir. V.R. Gopinath), he gained fame during the early 1990s with a series of films known for their feudal innuendoes beginning with *Devasuram* (*The God-*

Demon; Dir. I.V. Sasi, 1993). However, the later years were to see him experimenting with the off-beat, like *Kaiyoppu* (*Signature*; Dir. Ranjith, 2007) as well as comedy like *Pranchiyettan and the Saint* (Dir. Ranjith, 2011). He is acclaimed for taking Malayalam cinema back to its good old days of realistic narratives. However, this, I argue, was to suggest only a return to the class-ist past and a re-affirming of a modular present.

Malabar, particularly North Malabar, has been evocative of a present-ness of the past, which predominantly was prefigured as nostalgic longing for a class-ist communist legacy in Kerala. But the past-ness of the present, I contend, is even more important. From such a perception, it is possible to argue that class-ism was not all that different from casteism. While there is a good deal of work being done in this area now, it is crucial that we distinguish between the communist and communitarian aspects of various socio-political movements of North Malabar. Nostalgia for the north in the context of Kerala is also nostalgia of the north, and various communities of the North Malabar, instead of re-living a past fostered on them by proponents of progressive and secular-modern, if not statist, developmentalism, have to re-trace and critically engage with their own historical trajectories. In order to understand the Ezhava/Thiyya dynamics within the caste-community and class-ist discourses in Kerala, I focus on popular Malayalam cinema and its co-opting of the Thiyya community. While nostalgias of the north are also nostalgias generated for and around the Thiyya community, caste-community formations in Malabar are still searching for a language outside of approved teleology. My thesis is a humble contribution towards understanding the intricacies of a past that seems to be more memorable in its restaging of what is perceived as the "political."

Chapter One

Class-ism and Populism: The Marxist Popular

> The theory of the State (and in particular of the state of exception, which, is to say, of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the transitional phase leading to the stateless society) is the reef on which the revolutions of our century have been shipwrecked. (Agamben 12)

In August 2007, around 300 landless families entered the Chengara estate, held by Harrisons Malayalam Plantations and began to live there. Gradually, the strength was to increase to around 7000 as the landless—belonging to Nair, Christian and Muslim communities, members of the Scheduled castes, Dalit Christians, and Adivasis, from around Kerala including Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kollam, Kottayam, Idukki, Thiruvananthapuram and Kasargode—headed in solidarity to the site of protest (Kapikkad 474-475). This protest draws on a history of lower caste initiated land struggles in Kerala, especially since the 1980s.[29] Such Dalit/Adivasi assertions in a state that claimed to have solved the question of landlessness through its land reform Act of 1969 raises significant questions. However, the questions have remained unanswered, even as the then ruling party CPI (M)[30] consistently refrained from acknowledging the legitimacy of the Chengara protest and dubbed it a spurious endeavor. A predominant perception that produces the protestors as mere, welfare requiring and receiving categories, without having to necessarily show a sense of

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[29] The Adivasi struggles that took place under C.K. Janu, the Kundara struggle, and the one in 2002, in front of the secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram, followed by the Muthanga protest in 2003, which was part of the land reclamation project in the wake of it being converted into a wild life sanctuary and denial of the promised reallocation of land respectively, individual protests as that of Pokkudan against the destruction of mangrove forests, etc were part of these political mobilizations.

[30] "The chief minister V.S. Achuthanandan accused the protestors at Chengara of leading a life of gluttony and pleasure, stealing rubber worth 1 lakh rupees, belonging to the owner of the plantation. The leader of the protestors, Laha Gopalan, has opened up the possibility of such living there. And then they have a gala time, feasting with the [money from] stolen rubber," as quoted and translated by J. Devika from *Mathrubhumi* Daily in "Welcome to Kerala's Haven of Ease and Vice-Chengara," http://kafila.org/2008/10/29/welcome-to-keralas-haven-of-ease-and-vice-chengara/; accessed on 24 Jan 2011.

political existence underpins the CPI (M) discourse. As C.K. Janu says,[31] the CPI (M) has remained skeptic of recognizing any protest other than that which hoists its red flag. In would therefore appear that such a delegitimization speaks of a class based ideology that attempts to subsume and explicate all struggles within the narrow framework of class, forbidding any agency to forms of resistance that threaten to rupture the precincts of this structure. Considering the fact that the inception of the communist movement in Kerala had taken place on grounds ploughed by caste reform movements, this apathy suggests of something more than a mere anomaly or aberration.

The consecration of an Ezhava Shiva in Aruvippuram in 1889 by an Ezhava, Narayana Guru, was to have a tremendous effect as far as the mobilization of backward/lower caste communities was concerned. The caste reform movements that had begun in Kerala as early as the middle of the 19th century obtained a much required leadership in Guru in so far as it sought to bring together a community of untouchables belonging to the backward and the lower castes. Although the latter project suffered a setback,[32] the philosophy of Narayana Guru continued to be pursued with increased vigor by Ayyappan, validating its politics of dissent. This socio cultural awakening was to lead to a stirring in the realm of the work place, resulting in the emergence of the first labor association for the benefit of the workers, Travancore Labor Association (TLA). It was a significant moment in the history of caste struggles in Kerala in that it was spearheaded by its backward/lower caste members/leaders. The demands of caste communities that were emerging at various points of South Kerala were to acquire a corporeality through Narayana's Guru's act

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[31] C.K. Janu in an interview with Joseph K. Job, "Marichittilla Njhan," ["I Haven't Died"], *Pachakuthira* Monthly, August 2011. 4-11.
[32] See chapter 2 for further discussion on the topic.

of symbolic consecration of an Ezhava Shiva. It imagined an alliance that was based on a community of equals belonging to lower and backward caste communities as opposed to the hegemony of dominant upper caste communities. However, this alliance was seized by a class-ist trajectory that tended to identify with history as a class struggle of the working class and the ruling class, the triumph of the former over the latter being indispensable for a class less society or rather an egalitarian society. The next section would thus attempt to study the two paradigms that predominate in the Marxist discourse of thought—the class-ist paradigm that looked at changes in the economic base as crucial for transformations in the political, and the populist paradigm that interprets the political as a realm of transformations, mandatory for any recombinations to happen in the base.

The concept of populism in this thesis would be understood as a category always already present in Marxism, even as economic reductionism had abridged it to a vulgar Marxism at a point of time. Despite the fact that populism is seen as a necessary result of the conditions induced by late capitalism, the tenets of populism may be seen to be always already present in the Marxist discourse. The late capitalist economic structure was to only augment its inevitability. It is in such a context that I would attempt to understand the two trajectories of thought in Marxist discourse.

Economic Centrism

Marxism may be seen to have emerged as a materialist philosophy following the revolutionary, post-Newtonic rethinking of matter. In this transitional phase, the space of labor was to determine the material existence of "men." The sphere of production was reconfigured in terms of rationalist qualities such as order and reason rather than

with chagrin or indifference as was the general attitude of the period. The focus on labor provided the material world a shift in priority—a shift which marked an important aspect of Enlightenment thinking—that the mind was furnished with ideas by sense impressions taken directly from the material world (Sewell 179).[33] This was to form the basis of an early imagining of a class community, resulting in an economically deterministic Marxism. Marxism, with its insistence on labor as the site of relations of production—the political, was largely based on such a project.

Humanity relates to the physical world through labor; through labor, humanity itself develops and labor is the source of human beings' relationships with each other. What happens to the process of work, therefore, has a decisive influence on the whole of society. Our ability to work, to improve how we work and build on our successes, has tended to result in the cumulative development of the productive forces. In other words it is labor that determines the consciousness of humans. One such development gave rise to class society.[34]

The realm of labor hence, according to Marxist thought, constitutes the relations of production, which men enter into, in the material production of their existence, as bourgeoisie and proletariats, the totality of which constitutes an economic structure of the society. It defined the material reality of humans. As such, the proletariat or the working class, being the exploited section of a labor-oriented political life, was to

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[33] "It is significant that the first coherent school of economic thinkers actually dubbed themselves the Physiocrats"—which means, "the rule of the physical makes clear the overall thrust of the economist's project: to find the essential ordering principles of human life in the material sphere of production and exchange, the very sphere that had for so long been disdained by philosophers, theologians, and rulers as vile and lowly" (180), William H. Sewell. Jun., "A Post-Materialist Rhetoric for Labour History," *Class*, Patrick Joyce, ed. (New York: OUP, 1995) 174-180.

[34] http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj79/cox.htm; accessed on 12/08/201: for more information on labour and alienation.

become the representative agents of change. Marx and Engels talk about Marxism in their "German Ideology"[35] thus,

> This method of approach is not devoid of premises. It starts out from the real premises and doesn't abandon them for a moment. Its premises are men not in any fantastic isolation and rigidity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. (165)

Thus it was, being, "in its actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions" (168) that precedes consciousness and not the other way round. The consciousness was based on the real premises which labor accorded to the individual and produced "him" as belonging to a certain class community. The totality of these relations of production, which men enter into, independent of their will, constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.

The conceptualization of labor, and the division of labor following it, help understand the individual's transition from a "sheep like or tribal consciousness" to one, provided by the multiplicity of productive forces accessible through men "who are productively active in a definite way (by entering) into definite social and political relations (Marx and Engels 164). The space of labor enables such a language of real life, where the material intercourse of men leads to "the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness" (165). The increase in productivity, needs and population would inevitably lead to a "division of labor" (from the sexual one to a material and mental

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[35] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology" (1845) *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, Imre Szeman and Timothy Kaposy, ed. (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell Publications) 161-171.

one) which while carrying existence to the realm of the social also leads to a fixation of social identity on the other hand.

> The fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our calculations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now. (168)

Such a development of the productive forces is inherent to a capitalist mode of production where one group (the bourgeoisie) comes to acquire the ownership of production while another (the proletariat) gets alienated from the processes of production. The alienation from the productive realms also leads to an alienation from the domain of intellectual production,[36] leading to a threat to one's own consciousness. It is deemed necessary to be conscious of the way in which one could be enslaved by the ideological superstructure as one waged a war at the level of the economic base. Labor that forms the basis of being, becomes coerced and a space of exploitation and thereby leads to the inevitable—the class struggle.

> At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production….Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure." (Marx, German Ideology 107)

The social structure is a predetermined one, with the economic base determining the legal super structure, making one a reflection of the other. On the one hand, such a

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[36] "The class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think;" Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology (1845)," *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, Imre Szeman and Timothy Kaposy, ed. (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell Publications, 2010) 169.

structuring constructs the bourgeoisie as the subject of history. On the other hand, it produces the proletariat as social and cultural dunces, with no socio-cultural basis other than what is sanctioned by bourgeoisie culture. It, being a part of the cultural industry, it was to the proletariats that they develop an attitude of skepticism towards cultural productions as it would detract them away from the materiality of their life. A change in such a structure ought to imply a social revolution, as well as a total break with the "existing relations of production." This change is one that can only be imagined on a radical negation of the prior conditions of society and all previous classes which sought to rule.

However, such a conception of class seems to be quite reductionist due to in terms of its dichotomous and rigid structuring of society into the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and so as to disallow the imagination of any kind of transaction between the two. According to Laclau, the discourse of emancipation that ideological Marxism espouses is based on two incompatible lines of thought—the rationality of a new (proletarian) order cannot be understood without extending that rationality to the act which founded it. This would involve such elements of the social order (bourgeoisie) which are to be overthrown as well. But then, the bourgeoisie would also cease to be the irreducible other of the oppressive system, which is essential for imagining a notion of radical emancipation (Laclau 4). The whole discourse of radicalism becomes unfeasible as the possibility of each exists only in the presence of the other's impossibility. It is not the rise of something new that leaves both logics behind, but an orderly drifting away from what would otherwise have been their full operation.

This incompatibility articulates the irrelevance of binary structures in the understanding power and ensues from a notion that perceives power as emanating from a single source i.e. the bourgeoisie. According to Foucault, a binary construction of power is quite rudimentary as power is non-subjective, everywhere and self-producing. He in fact identifies that attempts to locate power would only end up in an idealization of one power structure over the other. There cannot be a discourse sub-divided into domains of the acceptable and the excluded. Power ought to be seen as "a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies" (Foucault, Method 136).

> We must make allowance for the complete and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an affect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (138)

The manifold manifestations of power take place constantly, leading to cleavages that run through the social body and which requires resistance at various levels. The binary structure-based class struggle of Marxism, thus, undermines the various manifestations of capital by constructing it in terms of just the economic base. This constitutes the cultural realm as a reflection of the same, and merely as a mode of imparting false consciousness. Civil society then becomes the realm of ideology which ought to be reformed and not engaged with. Political emancipation is, therefore, limited as long as the civil sphere of egoistic life remains unreformed and the state is freed from a limitation, without man actually being liberated from it.

Man's "authentic life" continues to belong to the realm of the civil sphere (Marx, Jewish Question 7).

> It follows that man frees himself from a limitation politically, through the state, by overcoming the limitation in an abstract, limited, and partial manner, in contradiction with himself. The state is only a mediator to which man transfers all his unholiness and all his human freedom. (8)

Civil society is thus removed of all its carnivalesque phases which it possibly holds, and becomes a realm of false consciousness. Its natural, self-producing existence is undermined. It is this notion of the economic deterministic class based Marxism that produces a specific idea of the culture industry.

Culture and Marxism

Bakhtins's notion of the carnivalesque seems to be suggesting such breaks within the civil sphere, which need not necessarily be interpreted as mere "safety valves" as Terry Eagleton would put it. The society exists within the state's unifying framework of legal regulation. Yet, at the same time it is a natural reality which is in essential respects, inaccessible to centralized political power. Bakhtin's laughter is the popular voice of the people, not only alleviating the tensions of official ideology, but cutting right through them and denying their influence. It is part of a tradition which goes back to the middle ages, wherein festivals like the annual Dionysia become the site of defamation and derogation of "identifiable Athenian public figures and their politics" (Bakhtin 107).

Fantasy becomes a legitimate medium of representation in the carnivalesque tradition, making possible a revisiting of issues that have been obscured by "rhetoric, personal

interests, or real politics" (Bakhtin 109). These may be seen as theatrical performances, which forbid the subjectivization of a social being as a "perceived being," leading to a critique of seeing the social world as "the sum of the (mental) representations," which occurs when class identities along with their historical roles are narrativized and symbolically realized through repetition. The relative autonomy of "the logic of symbolic representations with respect to the material determinants of socio-economic condition, are henceforth contested" (Bourdieu, Reality of Representation 106).

> We have to move beyond the opposition between objectivist theories which identify the social classes (but also the sex or age classes) with discrete groups, simple countable populations separated by boundaries objectively drawn in reality, and subjectivist (or marginalist) theories which reduce the social order to a sort of collective classification obtained by aggregating the individual classifications or, more precisely, the individual strategies, classified and classifying, through which agents class themselves and others. (100)

Carnivalization offers a means of politicization within the realm of the civil society, as an always present realm which is out of the reach of statism while existing within it. It opens up the former as a space of possible points of rupture and contamination, rather than as a morbid reflection of a stagnant economic base, waiting to be roused by a proletarian upheaval.

The Gramscian Turn

The possibilities of dissent and resistance within the civil society were dealt with extensively by Gramsci, who was one of the earliest to have theorized the importance

of culture as a probable site of reality in length. His skepticisms regarding the passive super structure and the hyper active economic base led him to rethink the rigidity of the binary structuration. This was to lead him to consider the need for a class that was neither the working nor the ruling class—the subaltern class. This class community was imagined as an incomplete entity in so far as it constantly intervenes with the pre-existing classes and power structures in its attempt to form a national popular. The presence of the former and its dialogues were integral to the forming of the latter.

His view was that the Bolshevik Revolution was not caused as much by an advanced stage of economic contradictions, but out of the elements that Marx included in the superstructure—the ideological forms. It necessitated a review of the superstructure as an ideological form, which led not to consciousness, but false consciousness. As the latter would not have resulted in a revolution, it was imperative that the notion of power as ideological—as hindering the forming of consciousness—was clearly restrictive in understanding political reality. A one to one correspondence between the base and the super structure, with the former determining the latter was inadequate.

> Where Gramsci departed from the earliest Marxist tradition was in arguing that the cultural and ideological relations between ruling and subordinate classes in capitalist societies consist less in the domination of the latter by the former than in the struggle for hegemony—that is, for moral, cultural, intellectual and, thereby, political leadership over the whole of society— between the ruling class and, as the principal subordinate class, the working class. (Bennett 225)

It is in such a context that Gramsci conceptualizes the integral state and passive revolution, which are significant in understanding the transitions from an economic

deterministic model. The integral state, which unlike Marx, considered the civil society a part of the state, is a conceptualization which was based on a philosophy of praxis, wherein it was impossible to grasp any new form of dialectic, without a transcending of an older dialectic, and a philosophy on which it was based. This required a constant interaction with the former dialectic before it could be superseded. Any revolution thus ought to consider, and base itself on the former dialectic of which it was a part, making any and every revolution "passive" or rather incompatible. The concept of passive revolution is derived from the two fundamental principles of political science:

- That no social formation disappears as long as the productive forces which had developed within it still find room for further forward movement.

- That a society does not set itself tasks for whose solution the necessary conditions have not already been incubated. (Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* 106)

This conceptualization of the integral state makes the civil society a definitive part of the political order of things. Gramscian notion of power is thus based on a war of position[37] rather than one of maneuver, which results from a constant contestation with the structures of power, that are indefinitely limitless, and not always reduced to the realms of labor and economy. An individual is subordinated to capital, but also through his/her incorporation in a multitude of social relations which is crucial in determining his/her consciousness. An ideological power structure is maimed by an inability to understand the relations of power—based on a war of position—involved in an integral state. The concept of hegemony becomes significant in such a context. This is understood by a hegemonic power relation rather than an ideological one.

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[37] It refers to the "long ideological and political preparation, organically devised in advance to reawaken popular passions and enable them to be concentrated and brought simultaneously to detonation point;" Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, ed. and trans. (Chennai: Orient Longman, 1971) 110.

Unlike ideology, the notion of hegemony bases itself on the interdependency of classes on each other, suggesting a failure of the bourgeoisie in their historical function, which would require the other groups as active subjects in making the society. Whereas, according to the dominant ideology thesis, bourgeois culture and ideology seek to displace working-class culture and ideology and become directly operative in delegitimizing working-class experience. Gramsci argues that the bourgeoisie can become a hegemonic class only to the degree that bourgeoisie ideology is able to accommodate, to find some space for, opposing class cultures and values. A bourgeois hegemony is secured not via the obliteration of working-class culture, but via its articulations with it, and through which its own political affiliations get altered. Gramsci's "hegemony" refers to a process of moral and intellectual leadership through which the dominated or subordinate classes consent to their own domination by ruling classes, as opposed to being simply forced or coerced into accepting inferior positions. Hegemony is produced, reproduced and transformed in civil societies by means of making concessions to the dominated groups and incorporating their expressions to a level at which the subordinate groups do not pose a threat to the overall framework of domination.

The state, with the help of its civil society, tries to produce the consent. The legitimacy of the ruling class lies in the manufacturing of this consent. The success of this hegemonic project is measured by the extent to which other subordinate or "subaltern" social groups accept this new "settlement," more or less voluntarily, and are drawn into a "historic bloc" around the dominant elite. The existence of the integral state is based on the manufacture of this consent, which in its turn implies a

constant contestation between the dominating and the dominated. The subaltern class and the making of the national popular are based on the concept of the integral state—through which it is bought into existence.

There can be no linearity to the history of subaltern group as it gets continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling group, a pre-requisite of the latter's own being. An integral historian ought to look for interruptions, as "independent initiatives … of incalculable value," rather than revolutions (Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* 55). A study of the subaltern requires the study of their origins in pre-existing social groups, whose mentality, ideology and aims they conserve for a time, their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations, the birth of new parties of the dominant groups, intended to conserve the assent of the subaltern groups and to maintain control over them, the formations which the subaltern groups themselves produce, newer formations which assert the autonomy of the subaltern groups, but within the old framework and formations which assert the integral autonomy, etc.

The concept stands out in its incompleteness. While the notion of the working class marks a closed entity, the subaltern is defined by its yet-to-be-ness. The subaltern has her origin in pre-existing groups, whose mentality, ideology and aims she conserves for a time, and has an active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations. It attempts to influence the programmes of these formations in order to press claims of their own, the consequences determining its processes of decomposition, renovation or neo-formation. Gramsci further adds that the study of the subaltern should also involve a study of the birth of new parties of the dominant groups, intended to conserve the assent of the subaltern groups as well as the formations which the

subaltern groups themselves produce, in order to press claims of a limited and partial character.

The subaltern group owes its origins to pre-existing groups, while the formations within it are to press claims of a partial character, rather than to form a full class structure. A class is always formed by its present and its past. While the past gives it uniqueness, its present enables it to become a hegemonic force and, thereby, create a national popular. The national popular is a historic bloc created by hegemonic means enabling the subaltern class to build alliances beyond itself and win consent for its institutions and ideas. It is a hegemonic formation whereby a particular community represents its own interests in relation to the nation and thereby constitutes a new commonsense, at the same time forging an alliance, a national popular identity around or within the dominant structures, which then defines the re-formed common sense.

The new points of rupture and antagonism are now located not solely in the relations of production, but in forms of consumption within the social structure. The discourse of historical necessity, suggested by an economic reductionist Marxism, loses its relevance and withdraws to the horizon of the social, which requires a proliferation of new discursive forms. Hegemony is a relation of power which addresses and identifies this realm of the capital, but not solely in terms the economic, the prime concern of ideology. The national popular extends the political to the realm of the social. The social begins to reinvent itself as the site of a "surplus" vis-a-vis the social order and rupture all that the discourse of "historical necessity" facilitated. By accommodating elements of opposing class cultures, "bourgeois culture" ceases to be purely or entirely bourgeois. Moreover it becomes impossible for the members of

subordinate classes to be oppressed by a dominant ideology in some pure or class essentialist form (Mouffe and Laclau 225-226). It is a history that is intertwined with that of the civil society and the state, as the fundamental historical unity of the ruling class results from the organic relations between the State or civil society and the political society.

Thus, hegemony explains the importance that culture has in invoking revolution. Culture becomes political by becoming a site of a war of position. It is in such a context that the role of the organic intellectual ought to be seen. The intellectuals play an essential mediating role in building the historic bloc between national and popular aspirations. It relates to the position of the masses within the culture of the nation (Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* 421). An important characteristic of any group developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and "ideologically" conquer the traditional intellectuals, made quicker and more efficacious when the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own clique of organic intellectuals. The hegemony of the national-popular historic bloc requires a constant refreshing of new personnel, energies and insights, especially from subaltern groups' own elites and intellectuals.

The civil society becomes important for Gramsci because of the ways which this realm creates the possibilities for a new common sense through education and the work of organic intellectuals. Intellectuals work in the domain of the civil society, where a collective pressure without "sanctions" or "compulsory obligations" obtains "objective results in the form of an evolution of customs, ways of thinking and acting, morality, etc." and thereby leads to the creation of a commonsense. The state is one

which also "educates this consent, by means of the political and syndical associations" (Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* 8).

Gramsci's intellectuals are part of his philosophy of praxis, where the intellectual is one who forms himself and the society through constant interaction, while seeking to change it. An intellectual is never a man of letters—the philosopher, the artist—but technically bound by technical education and industrial labour.

> Each man, finally, outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is he is a "philosopher," an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring new modes of thought. (9)

Education is another realm which helps engineer the civil society in terms of a historical bloc. The more extensive the "area" covered by education and the more numerous the "vertical" "levels" of schooling, the more complex is the cultural world, the civilization of a particular state (10-11). Education is considered to be essential in bringing about intellectuals from the working class. "A common basic education, imparting a general, humanistic, formative culture; this would strike the right balance between development of the capacities required for intellectual work" (27).

Gramsci, thus gives importance to the organic relationships between the state and civil society in building a new commonsense, required for a historical bloc in the process of augmenting a war of position. The importance given to the civil society, thus, determines a hegemonic power structure rather than an ideological one, which in turn gives rise to the national popular. The site of labor and waged laborers there are

no longer the only agencies of change. There is no need to search for an authentic voice of the working class, as if this could exist in some pure form, preserved and immune to forms of cultural production in a capitalist society. Moreover, revolution is more passive and gradual, than spontaneous as is suggested in a war of maneuver.

Gramsci's conceptualization of the national popular is important not only for its emphasis on subaltern culture as a paradigm against the ruling class, but also for positing it against a party leadership composed largely of middle-class intellectuals who were monopolizing theory. It contests the notion of a class as a purely economic entity and necessitates its reconfiguration in terms of culture, thereby expanding the realm of the political, by its inclusion of the latter. The notion of class finds critique in theorists like Bourdieu who consider it important to understand structures of consumption that are different from structures of production to be able to go beyond "the logic of symbolic representations," a system of durable transposable dispositions which mediates between structures and practices—defining a certain style of life (Thompson 101-2),[38] given by a discourse. A class is defined as much by perception as by its being, its consumption—which need not be conspicuous in order to be symbolic—as much as by its position in the relations of production (even if it is true that the latter governs the former).

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment produce the habitus, systems of durable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as the principle of generation and structuration of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular"

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[38] As quoted in John B. Thompson, "Bourdieu on Habitus," *Class*, Patrick Joyce, ed. (New York: OUP, 1995) 101-103.

without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goal without presupposing the conscious orientation towards ends and the express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all that, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor. (101)

Capital is as cultural and social as it is economic. Gramsci's theory of hegemony opens up the field of popular culture as one of enormous political possibilities, in suggesting that the political and ideological articulations of cultural practices are movable—that a practice which articulates bourgeois values today may be disconnected from those values and connected to socialist ones tomorrow. The transition from national popular to Mouffe's populism becomes significant in terms of such an understanding of culture, where styles of consumption determine and redefine means of production.

Demands and Populism

> Sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule. This new global form of sovereignty is what we call Empire. It is decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. (Hardt and Negri xii)

The *Empire* marks the decline of the nation state. It is a deterritorializing force that sustains itself while calling for and necessitating its destruction. Rethinking of the class on the lines of a "demand" provides a modified notion of a community, in a post-national scenario of the *Empire*. This decentering of power has transformed notions of labor and working class. Both are reconstituted in such a way that one cannot conceptualize labor within the frameworks of specific places and times. Power directly implicates life from within, thereby producing and reproducing it.

> Power is now exercised through machines that directly organize the brains (in communication systems, information networks, etc.) and bodies (in welfare systems, monitored activities, etc.) towards a state of autonomous alienation from the sense of life and the desire for creativity … and these extend well outside the structured sites of social institutions through flexible and fluctuating networks. (Hardt and Negri 144)

The category of the proletariat (male factory worker) subsumed under the industrial working class has been displaced to an undifferentiated identity of a worker, irrespective of whether s/he participates in labor that is waged and occasionally not. Some labor is restricted within the factory walls, while some are dispersed without, some labor, which is limited to 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week, but some which expands to fill the entire time of life; some labor is accorded a minimal value, while others are escalated to the pinnacle of the capitalist economy (66). It is impossible to maintain the fiction of any measure of the working day and, thus, separate the time of production from that of reproduction, or work time from leisure time. From being passive objects, the workers are expected to become "active" subjects in the coordination of the various functions of production, instead of being subjected to it under the compulsions of a simple command. It is in the coordination of the "author-worker-audience"[39] that labor power is produced, according to Maurizio Lazzarato, constituting each as a worker and a subject at the same time.

> Participative management, which makes subjects (or makes lives), is a technology of power of manipulating the "subjective powers" precisely. It means that subjectivity is longer confined to tasks of execution, but also, in the areas of "management, communication, and creativity, which are to be made

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[39] www.generation-online.org/c/feimmaterial labour 3.htm; accessed on 23/07/2011: for information on immaterial labour.

> compatible with the conditions of production for production's sake. It succeeds in concealing the fact that the individual and collective interests of workers and those of the company are not identical. (ibid)

The consumption-production relations are transformed to an extent that the consumer is inscribed in the manufacturing of the product right from its conception. Consumption is then a utilization of information rather than the "realization" of a product. Labour—material or immaterial—[40] intellectual or corporeal, produces and reproduces social life, and in the process is exploited by capital. It is as much part of a cultural life as it is of economic life.

Mouffe and Laclau's populism is a multi-class movement, and more importantly is an always present possibility of structuration of political life. It is attributed to the post-industrial, post-national reality of the *Empire*. It is in such a dimension that it moves ahead from Gramscian hegemony. Here, classes are divided into smaller unities of "demands" which are suggestive of diverse multitudes rather than a nationalist reality. Such extra nationalist demands could be the driving force that started off various struggles like the Egyptian revolution or the Telangana protest. The Egyptian revolution of 2010 was quite significant for the way in which it took off, when in 2008 a Facebook network, Youth Movement came in support of a worker's strike for higher wages in the industrial town of El-Mahalla El-Kubra. The network was to constitute different communities, involving students, workers etc. According to a report in *The Guardian*, the movement in Egypt that overthrew the regime of Hosni Mubarak was "a movement led by tech-savvy students and twenty somethings—labour activists, intellectuals, lawyers, accountants, engineers—*that had*

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[40] Immaterial labour, is a term used to refer to labour that produces an immaterial good as service, a cultural product, knowledge or communication.

its origins in a three-year-old textile strike in the Nile Delta and the killing of a 28-year-old university graduate, Khaled Said." [41] T*he pan-Arab nature* of the new movement following Iran's "green movement" and the Tunisian Jasmine revolution, and inspired by the Palestinian Intifida, is decidedly novel in terms of its anti-US sentiments. These movements stand out by their "post-nationalist, post-ideological, civil and democratic character" questioning forms of mobilization and initiating new political practices and new subjectivities—in a word, the nature of the political itself. The protest for a separate state in Andhra Pradesh ought to be seen in such a context, especially in the face of the movement being dismissed as belonging to the realm of *bhavodvegaalu* (emotions and sentiments) rather than to the realm of the political. This movement, which began as a demand for a different statehood, has sucked into its wake grass root struggles for drinking water, share in irrigated water, distress migration and mining projects that lay waste the land,[42] involving people from various sections of the society, students being a major part of it all.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Egyptian revolution has been its broad class and multi-denominational composition. Talking about the rebellion, Gautam Bhan says that it possibly signals an end of that particular form—the party form—that structured all of modern politics in the last two centuries. These struggles are post-national not only in that they establish connections beyond their borders; they are also post-national because they are not averse to using the support of external powers to aid their internal struggles. The uprisings offer us a renewed hope and also indicated a new mode of political mobilization that we must take seriously – uprisings that are not

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[41] Aditya Nigam, "The 'Viral' Revolutions of Our Times–Postnational Reflections," *Kafia* 17 February 2011. http://kafila.org/2011/02/17/the-viral-revolutions-of-our-times-postnational-reflections/.

[42] "An Extraordinary General Strike for Telangana: A Suneetha, Vasudha Nagaraj and Others," *Kafila* 28 September 2011. http://kafila.org/2011/09/28/an-extraordinary-general-strike-for-telangana-a-suneetha-vasudha-nagaraj-and-others/.

just based on the structured spaces and familiar institutions of revolution but create a new space where the unions, the Muslim Brotherhood, the elite, the young and the Army found a common language. [43]

It is a similar conception of the political that the notion of populism puts forward, in terms of a demand-based community rather than a class-based one. The demands, isolated at the beginning and emerging at different points of the social fabric acquire corporeality only when they get invested within an equivalential chain. Its inscription prevents it from making it a fleeting occurrence, whereby it becomes a discursive/institutional ensemble which ensures its long-term survival (Laclau 2004: 88).

> Demands cannot "rely on a purely differential logic; its success depends on the inscription of those differences within an equivalential chain. (121)

A particular demand or "partiality" within the equivalential ensemble assumes the role of "an impossible universality" (115). Its body is split between the particularity which it still is and the more universal signification of which it is the bearer. Hegemony lies in the "investment in a partial object—of a fullness which will always evade us because it is purely mythical"—the only means of making sense of equality. The only possible totalizing horizon is given by a partiality (the hegemonic force) which assumes the representation of a mythical totality (116).

A populist hegemony consists in the articulation of all such equivalential ensembles of demands. All such articulations, irrespective of their ideological affiliations thus become hegemonic, provided that the demands acquire their over-determined and

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[43] Gautam Bhan, "What can Egypt and Tunisia teach us?" *Kafila.* 15 February 2011. http://kafila.org/2011/02/15/what-can-egypt-and-tunisia-teach-us/.

(impossible) fullness in an equivalential logic of partialities. The political thereby becomes a space that is constituted by such articulations. "It need not be a transitional moment derived from the immaturity of social action, but rather a constant dimension of political action which necessarily arises in all political discourses, subverting and complicating the operations of the so called "more mature" ideologies (Mouffe and Laclau 18). The oppositions to such articulations may be seen as antagonisms that disable the fullness of an ensemble, thereby increasing its validity as a hegemonic formation. Antagonisms are the limits of the social, which "disables" it to fully constitute itself (125). Populism imagines the political as a realm of possible dissent and dialogues rather than a fully formed entity. It is always in the process of making. One of its major constituents that forbid it from becoming totalitarian is the demands, which, as an always already present aspect of the political, opens it for dialogues and contestations. The popular hence is enabling in as much as it imagines a political into being. Talking about why popular culture is significant for the constitution of socialism, Stuart Hall focuses on the importance of a space of becoming or potent spill-overs. According to Hall,

> Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured. It is not a sphere where socialism, a socialist culture-already fully formed-might be simply "expressed." But it is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why "popular culture" matters. (71)

Caste and the Political in Kerala

> The base is not the building. On the basis of the economic relations, a building is erected of religious, social and political institutions. This building has just as much reality as the base. If we want to change the base, then first the building that has been constructed on it has to be knocked down…if we want to change the economic relations of society, then first the existing social, political and other institutions will have to be destroyed. (Ambedkar 256-257)[44]

Caste as a partial hegemony as well as its significance in creating an alternative to modernity has been indispensable to the philosophy of Ambedkar. In reference to Dalit resurgence, Wakankar says that their resurgence has to be understood "not just as a major South Asian phenomenon, but as an event which bears great affinity with political movements among migrants and indigenes all over the world." Being social groups whose specific sense of being rests on a notion of divinity that is "immediately" prior to their historical experience (3), their demand which is a retrieval of pre-history is based on a project of modernity from below. Since this pre-history entails an attempt to turn to a norm of historical experience that involves a conception of the infinite—i.e. one that exists prior to the historical experience— necessarily resists historiographical recovery (4). As such their demands also involve an inversion of the modern presuppositions of an Indian. It in fact tries to retrieve the religious from the history of the modern, understood from the perspective of Europe or of countries formerly colonized by Europe, and in which it is enmeshed. It tends to retract a history that relies on an idea of religion, inextricably intertwined with the deeply invidious legacy of nation, state, and civilization, through "looking back" not as nostalgia, but as a part of *finding* (of God), located prior to the historical experience (ix).

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[44] Ambedkar, quoted in Gail Omvedt, *Buddhism in India: Challenging Brahmanism and Caste* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003).

This was something that Ambedkar had asserted in his philosophy of Navayana Buddhism. According to him, a socio economic development that renders religious and caste identities superfluous could never be egalitarian. His Navayana Buddhism was based on the fact that the assertion of communitarian identities was indispensible for the progress of modernity.

> Society has to choose one of three alternatives. Society may choose not to have any Dhamma as an instrument of government…. This means Society chooses the road to anarchy. Secondly, Society may choose the police, i.e. dictatorship, as an instrument of Government. Third, Society may choose Dhamma plus the Magistrate whenever people fail to observe the Dhamma. In anarchy and dictatorship liberty is lost, only in the third liberty survives. Those who want liberty must therefore have Dhamma. (Ambedkar 317)

This perception views a modern, consisting of partial hegemonies, that is located prior to the historical experience of a national time and space. As far as Kerala was concerned, partial hegemonies suggested by caste communities had had a presence since the late 19th century as mentioned before. However, the class community of communism that was to gain momentum since the early 1940s, as part of the aggressive peasant movements, was to topple these partialities and give way to a superior class political in Kerala. This class political has been continuing its hold on the political of Kerala—as may be seen in the recent debates on identity/class politics that was to come up within the CPI (M)—especially in Kerala. This significance accorded to class over other communities has been a defining aspect of communism in Kerala and which has been articulated in the recent debates that happened around the conflicts between class and identity politics within the CPI (M).

In the early half of 2010, a critique of class politics was taken up by a section of the CPI (M),[45] who argued that a community-based identity (gender, caste, environment etc), was essential in understanding subjectivities, rather than considering the class base alone. Amidst a flurry of diatribes against the proponents of identity politics (which ultimately was to end up reinforcing the pro-class-ists),[46] what is of interest is the way in which the discussants against identity politics were to draw upon the issue of the threatened nation state.[47] The unity of the nation state would be at stake, according to pro-class-ists, if such extra class articulations were to be taken in to consideration. The anxieties of the crusaders of class politics regarding communitarian identities seem strikingly similar to the category of corruption that was conveniently appropriated by the post 2000's campaigners of the *Lok Pal* so as to save the nation state from its imminent dissolution.

This may be seen as a progeny of the anti-reservation campaigns of (from) the 1990s which had suffered similar denials. The debates on caste as a contemporary category, was to result in, a political realm, as against a secular public that was based on a west-

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[45] This issue was in circulation among a narrow section of Left ideologues especially after the publication of the book *Manifesto of the Victims* in Malayalam, written a few years ago by K.E.N. Kunjahammad, a staunch supporter of the CPI (M). The book, it would appear, didn't raise any eyebrows at the time of its publication, leading to a second edition of the book by a CPI (M) managed outfit, *Chinta*. However, a reassertion of the issue by P.K. Pokker, another Marxist intellectual, in 2010, on identity politics brought the issue to the forefront of theoretical discourse, sparking off debates within various left intellectuals.

[46] It is said that the entire controversy surrounding the debate aided communism, which was facing criticisms due to alleged alliances with the PDP, to reaffirm its class-ist approach. Bhoopesh says that the very controversy was part of the left's stand to garner the Hindu votes, fearing a loss of votes due to their alliance with the PDP, "Anti-identity politics in CPI-M is only a part of its electoral agenda, wherein, it attempts to distance away from minority alliances. This could be seen in the way in which its critics dealt with the issue, connecting identity with religion, which subsequently gets translated to Muslim identity, in the present Kerala context" (35), See N.K. Bhoopesh, "Prashnam Svathvathintethu Mathramalla Sakhave," ["The Problem is Not Just About Identity Comrade"], *Madhyamam* Weekly 21 June 2010, 32-36.

[47] Sunil P. Ilayidam, "Utharaadunikathayum Svathvarashtreeyavum," ["Post Modernism and Identity Politics"], *Svathvarashtreeyathe Pati*, [*About Identity Politics*], M.V. Govindan, ed. (TVM: Chintha Publishers, 2010) 70-78; V.P. Vasudevan, "Elamkulathuninnu Veendum," ["Again from Elamkulathu"], *Madhyamam* Weekly 28 June 2010, 33-37; K.T. Kunjhikannan, "Svathvarashtreeyam," ["Identity Politics"], *Ethirdisa Monthly* March 2010, 5-7.

propelled modernity. The debates on caste in the 1990s, which suggested its contemporaenity, rather than as a pre-modern articulation were to "contaminate" the political space of the nation. Dalits and OBCs were the agents of this transformation (Satyanarayana and Tharu 5).

> Caste recognition as a community was a critique of it as a remnant of a pre-modern, hierarchical, purity-pollution formation specific to Hindu religion. This thesis, transforms what is actually a contemporary form of power into an outmoded religious practice that disadvantages those subjected to social stigma and geographical or social segregation. (9-10)

These debates, in proposing an alternative rationality, based on a notion of a pre-history which partakes of both miracle and violence by "endorsing the idea of an incessant modernization," and thereby "remaining committed to the emancipator goals of the European enlightenment, while also attempting to reclaim the past, so as to reinvent history (Wakankar 6) seem to be suggestive of an antagonistic "partial" hegemony. Such partialities that emerge at different points of the social fabric, when invested within an equivalential chain of demands, according to Laclau, would lead to a populist corporeality. One might see that the issue at stake is one of reclaiming a unified imaginary of a nation state that is threatened by the "fragmenting" dissent of caste, religious and regional identities. Communitarian identities have been at the centre of discussions in the debates on the nation and its problematic since the 1990s, with a consensus having reached that proposals to rethink post-national institutions or solidarities do not necessarily need a ruling out, but rather a re-looking at the regional pluralisms that make up a nation state. Arjun Appadurai's project of "thinking ourselves beyond the nation,"[48] Partha Chatterjee's logic of looking within national

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[48] See Arjun Appadurai, "Patriotism and its Futures," *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of*

traditions for narratives of inferiorization as well as retribution, and Pandian's assertion that being one step outside modernity is important to be one step ahead of modernity etc., allude to the ways in which the concept of a unified nation state has always been a contested one. A call for a unity of the nation, where caste, gender and religious differences are flattened within a discourse of class, would thus be nothing but the building up of an internal form of colonization.

According to J. Reghu, it is the Hindu value system that preserves the nation as a unified and irrefutable essence, and not the liberal political theories (Hindu Colonialism 75). The Indian nation is a liberalized political form of nationalized Hinduism. Thus, it becomes necessary for this "nationalist-secular" discourse to deny political acceptability to caste presences or even discussions on caste and change them into something that one ought to feel ashamed and guilty about. This anti-caste rhetoric speaks volumes about the kind of middle-class popular that could be found and which seems to be the major concern for hard core nationalists and communists alike.

Regarding the hegemony of the middle class, Deshpande says that the middle class articulates the hegemony of the ruling bloc—it both expresses this hegemony by translating the relations of domination into the language of legitimization and mediates the relationship between classes within the ruling bloc, as well as between this bloc and other classes (139). A history of the middle class in India would reveal that it formed the core of Indian politics, and was a significant political presence

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Globalization (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 158-177; Chatterjee, Partha, "Beyond the Nation? Or Within?" *Social Text* 56 (1998): 57-69; *JSTOR* 12 August 2007 http://www.jstor.org/search; Pandian, M.S.S., "One Step Outside Modernity: Caste, Identity Politics and Public Sphere," *EPW* 37.18 (4 May 2002): 1735-1741.

beginning with the anti-colonial protests. The formation of the Indian National Congress (INC henceforth) in 1885, was only a follow up of a politics of those belonging to the upper caste, middle class sections of the society as one could see in the Hindu revivalist movements of the early nineteenth century. Such revivalist movements like the Arya Samaj and Brahma Samaj were attempts at "imitating and surpassing" at once the British colonizer—the imitation being as important as the rejection—as part of defining the new modern identity. The INC was essentially an upper- and middle-class affair that did not seek to challenge British rule, but to create a forum which could facilitate a dialogue with the British on such matters as the increasing participation by members of the said class in the legislative councils set up by the British government and the progressive Indianization of the civil service and the army (Aloysius 7). It was peopled by those who believed that their position as fighters for independence was a predestined one, them being the legitimate heirs of India (19). As a result, government services were to be usurped by this class.

It is only understandable why the fear of the nation state getting dismantled had to precipitate constantly in the discussions of the leftists who were against identity politics. The Kerala model of development has been understood as a way of attaining high levels of human development even as economic development remains low. One of the key stones of such a model is supposed to be the resolution of the question of land through the much acclaimed Land Reform Act brought about by the communist government in 1969. However, the ongoing struggles for land by the Dalits and Adivasis prove it otherwise. Dalit critics have argued the lopsidedness of the Kerala model as a developmental model that depended largely on the pacification of the middle class community in Kerala, even as Dalits and Adivasis continued to remain

outside the said model. The political in Kerala, in other words, has been a modular one consistently catering to the development of a casteist, middle-class political that, in turn, has been abstaining from any kind of dialogue with the modules of caste. The "retrieval" of the nation state in class politics as opposed to identity politics debates that was to happen in Kerala alludes to a similar hegemonic, class-ist modular political. The middle class no longer claims merely to represent the people (who alone were thought to constitute the nation in the era of development), but rather that it itself is the nation (Deshpande 150). Both suggest an attempt to reinstate the lost moral order of the modern political space, a realm structured as one of national democracy.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the left-dominated political of Kerala that expressed its allegiance to the nation—the dismantling of which was proposed to be the main threat of identity-based politics—seems to be part of a similar casteist middle-class hegemony. This conflation of communist and nationalist spirit is a quintessential one in understanding the ideological bearings of communism in Kerala, as well as the making of its modular political. Recent debates within the CPI (M) emphasize the importance of class over caste and religious identities. The ongoing struggles for land have been suggestive of this trend. The history of its modular political has been one of a hijacking of the populist trajectory by the class trajectory, which would be elaborated in the second chapter. The third and fourth chapter would look at how this modular political has inspired the making of the sacrificial male as the hegemonic Malayali male, and the sacred villain as his "other," respectively.

The third chapter would examine the manner in which this modular political served as the backdrop for the cinematic renderings of M.T., especially in the making of his

male heroes. It discusses the way in which M.T. s narratives that are based on the Valluvanandan culture of South Kerala however, returns to North Malabar for its validation and augmentation. A class-ist past is inbuilt into the narratives of M.T., which will be examined through some of his films that are based on the Kannur Central jail, was integral in imagining his secular, sacrificial male. The fourth chapter would concentrate on how the realm of masculinity went through a homogenization following the caste articulations in the political. Such articulations quite often followed a redefining of the Brahminical male. However, such redefinitions also pointed out to the way in which the new hegemonic masculinity was associated with the Thiyyas, which also required that the community get "real- ized" by recreating them as cinematic or modular.

Chapter Two

Kerala's Modular Political: Making of a Class-ist Past

In the preface to *Kannur District Communist Party History*, published by the *Patyam Gopalan Smaaraka Study Research Center* in Kannur, Pinarayi Vijayan[49] summarizes the history of communism in Kerala:

> While in South Kerala the communist movement was to sow its seeds in a soil already ploughed by the renaissance thoughts of social reformation movements, as far as North Malabar was concerned, it was the peasant movements that were to take up the responsibilities of the renaissance movement…. The social hurdles that the renaissance movement was to encounter were also to be taken up in North Malabar, more or less by the peasant movement and the communist movement here. That is why caste-religious organizations couldn't trespass into the social life here. (14)

Vijayan continues, "Since peasant-worker's movements had been an active influence in Kannur district early on itself, it led to the rise of struggles concerning the demands raised by such groups" (14). Quickly enough he adds, "following this, Kannur district was to become the centre of peasant movements. It is these struggles in the agricultural realm that developed deep roots of communist politics in the district. All those were fights that involved the shedding of blood by several sacrificial, selfless lovers of humanity, unknown to history" (16).

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[49] Pinarayi Vijayan is a former minister of Kerala and is currently a politburo member and the state secretary of Kerala State Committee of Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)). All translations, unless otherwise mentioned, are mine.

This binary drawn between the caste basis of communism in South Kerala and the class-based communism in North Malabar and the construction of the latter as legitimate—the reason offered, "caste-religious organizations couldn't trespass into the social life here,"—has been integral to the understanding of communism in Kerala. As such, this chapter would look at how the history of communism in Kerala has been one of usurpation by a class history of what could be called a populist one with a basis in the various caste community movements. The centrality given to North Malabar and the peasant movements in the narratives of communism in Kerala have been part of this usurpation, which traces the foundations of communism in the trajectory set up by the casteist, nationalist movement in Malabar. Nevertheless there has been an indigenous, caste history to the movement in Kerala, related to the mobilization of the backward and other lower castes under the leadership of an Ezhava Narayana Guru, as early as the 1920s. In this chapter, I would attempt to trace the ways in which this stream of communist historiography was taken over by a class-based discourse, and was to gain legitimacy in its passage to modernity. A modern political with its modular structuring was to facilitate isolated blocs of power, and a secular, class based community was best suited for such a model in as much as it dissociated with any need to talk the language of caste, that was already judged as belonging to a realm of the pre modern. The high-jacking of the caste past by a class past was thus integral to the making of a modern, modular political in Kerala. The first section would look at how the class history of communism was more of a community affair that resulted from the desire of the upper castes, especially the Nairs, for mobility towards a so-called modern order of things. The second section would look at the populist trajectory spearheaded by the Ezhava backward caste community, which, however was hijacked by the class-ist discourse. The third section

would look at how the cinematic popular in Kerala is characterized by a feudal nativism—one that sought to allegorize the modular political by subsequent reforms,[50] at the realm of the masculine, the grounds of which remained a nostalgia towards the class-ist communist past attributed to North Malabar.

Nair Reformism and Communism

In his article, "Matriliny, Marxism, and the Birth of the Communist Party in Kerala 1930-1940," Robin Jeffrey argues as to how communism in Kerala had emerged out of a drive to fulfill "an ideological void keenly felt by thousands of literate, alienated people" (78). According to this history, the Marumakkathayam Act of 1930 produced jolts as strong as those that followed "the periods of civil war in China and of the destruction of the Confucian bureaucracy in Vietnam" (79) were to create thousands of literate, but alienated Nair youths who were to be drawn into the nationalist movement. Eventually dissatisfied with it, they would form the communist party. It was these leaders, who were suddenly thrown into an ideological void, who were to lead the masses, and who were to initiate the enlightenment of the ignorant. It conceives of communism as a direct consequence of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement that swept Malabar in the 1930s. The Nair male is represented here as the agent of change and the bearer of modernity in Kerala. This history tends to trace a direct relation between the nationalists and the communists, quite often at the cost of side stepping the indigenous core and promptings of the movement with a prominent backward caste representation.

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[50] See "ideological reform" as used by Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: OUP, 1998).

A common past is necessary for the narrativization of the nation and its national subjects, in so far as the sameness that arises from such a shared history enables a homogenous public, while also writing away its "ambivalent margins" (Pandian, Nation from its Margins 287). The construction of a common past that attributes a Nair agency to communism may be seen in the majority of communist historiography, both Oriental and native. While for Jeffrey communism emerged as part of an ideological void, for Dilip Menon it was a definitive but "conjunctural community."[51] But "the aims of the communist political activity" and "the aspirations for land and equality among low caste agricultural laborers"—two integral aspects in the forming of the conjunctural community—were to be established on the respect that the younger members of dominant tharavadus commanded as members of the ruling elite, the dominant identity that enabled them to work amongst, and organize cultivators and laborers, says Menon (Conjunctural Community 2706). For the elite as well as the working class, the agent of change is the Nair youth. This North Malabar-ian narrative of communism seems to be a recurring one across the writings of many of the foremost leaders such as E.M.S. Namboothiripad, A.K. Gopalan, P. Krishnapillai, etc.; all of them allude to the Kannur central jail as the site of the emergence of communist ideals.[52]

The historiography that perceived Nairs as the agents of modernity in Kerala may be traced back to a period as early as the 8th century BC. Kambil Anandan, while talking about the beginnings of the Thiyya[53] community in Kerala, and pointing to a common Dravidian ancestry of Keralites, suggests that the Shudras (Nairs) were the group who

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[51] See Dilip M. Menon, "Conjunctural Community: Communism in Malabar, 1934-1948," *EPW* (December 1992): 2705-2715.
[52] See Chapter 3 for elaborate discussions on the topic.
[53] See Chapter 4 for a discussion about the Thiyya's, a backward caste community in North Malabar, who are also known as Ezhavas in South Kerala.

allied with the Vaishnavite Aryans as they gained supremacy over the reigning Buddhists. Although it was impossible to state their place of origin, these Nairs were undoubtedly Shaivites. The arrival of the Vaishnavites prompted changes, wherein their intermixing with Malayali women led to the emergence of the Namboothiris. The Vaishnava scholars defeated the Buddhists in debate and proclaimed supremacy. While the Sudras accepted the new religion, the Thiyyas and other castes kept away from it" (Anandan 21-23).[54] The end of Buddhism in Kerala is supposed to have happened in the 8th/9th century when the advent of Shankara's *Advaita* and Aryanisation was to bring a paradigm shift, leading to the absolute persecution of Buddhism. According to Ajay Shekhar,

> The Nayar dominance in Kerala history began in the middle ages with large scale Brahman settlements and militarisation. The brutal persecution of Buddhist monks/nuns and conversion of temples happened in eighth and ninth centuries under the leadership of Sankara the furious advocate of Brahmanical propaganda and violence. His Advaita "theory" reiterated and enforced caste division and hierarchy with a peripheral and cunning shroud of unity that cheated the masses.[55]

It is not a mere coincidence that "the consolidation of the temple-centred rural Brahmin settlement as relatively autonomous agrarian units of contemporary society and polity" was to happen at this point of time, i.e., during the rule of the Makotai kings from 8th

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[54] This notion of Kerala is similar to the one imagined by Dalit writers like K.K. Kochu who view that Dalit history has been taken over by the the myth of a golden past on the one hand and the notion of Dalits-as-slaves from time immemorial on the other. Both are *savarna* interpretations in the sense that it never addresses the contemporaneity of the caste issue. According to Kochu, all social structures were tribal in nature and the advent of caste is one of the various changes through which the history of clans and communities had transformed through the centuries, K.K. Kochu, "Writing the History of Kerala: Seeking a Dalit Space," *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India, Dossier-1: Tamil and Malayalam*, K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu, eds. (Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011) 491-505.
[55] http://ajaysekher.net/2010/01/03/buddhism-kerala/; accessed on 05/03/2012: for details on Buddhism in Kerala .

century to the 12th century AD, as pointed out by Rajan Gurukkal (290). The land tenure system in Kerala was largely Brahmanical, enabling the owning of land by temples (*Devasvam vaka*), apart from the government (*Pandaram vaka*) and individual landlords (*Jenmi vaka*). Gurukkal observes that agricultural produce was the chief resource base of ancient and medieval Kerala society. The temple was a major shareholder in the agrarian order of things. As a result the temple acquired a central place in the agrarian economy and large agrarian tracts were acquired by the Namboothiris in the form of royal endowment. Land was largely restricted in the hands of the upper castes, while the various land taxes were a prerogative of the lower castes, who were living off these lands as cultivators and tenants. Suresh Kumar talks about systems like *aalotti olakkaranam* and *aalvila olakkaranam* prevalent in Travancore which reveal that in the nineteenth century Travancore, there was a feudal government which directly used and exploited slaves and lower-caste agricultural laborers and the custom of *oozhiya vela* corresponding to the *vishti* system in Malabar forced agricultural laborers—including Izhavas[56]—to work without wages when there were any festivals or other auspicious ceremonies (69). Nair dominance in Kerala ought to be seen in such a context of a Brahminical efflorescence, where alliance with them served the acquiring of a cultural capital as far as the Nairs were concerned.

It can be safely assumed that, apart from the interlude from 1766-1790, the period of Mysorean rule in Malabar, the hegemony of this alliance remained unquestioned. The Mysorean regime, while introducing a revenue system which was to directly benefit the cultivators, became an instant threat to the ruling hegemony. The modernizing attempts, introduced by Hyder were continued by Tipu Sultan after his death in 1782

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[56] The spelling as used by the author Suresh Kumar.

(128).[57] It was in Hyder's time that a land survey was taken up for the first time. The concept of the *janmam* was removed and land was reassessed in such a way that the exchanges with the cultivators were given more importance. The Mysorean rulers started a revenue system for the first time in Malabar, aiming at direct participation of the peasants. What ensued was the retreat of many of the Nair landlords who had lost their titles over land. Tipu Sultan followed his father in the reformations based on direct relations with cultivators. This was the only period in the history of Malabar when the ruling class had to face a threat from an outside force and explains why the Mysorean rule was interpreted a barbaric one.

> Where the whole land was *janmam* property, where only Namboothiri's and Nairs were landlords, if a settlement was made by a land survey, without any kind of *jenmibogam* with the colonizing *kaanakar*, it is not impossible to see the enormous impact of that royal decree, or the social consequences that it had produced. (P.K. Balakrishnan, *Tipu Sulthan* 164)

Tipu's "*padayottam*" (onslaught/incursion) is part of a grandma's tale in Kerala. According to that "gruesome" memory, they burgled temples, butchered cows in Agraharams, executed *sunnath* to all Hindu's on whom they could their lay hands, and forced them to eat beef. No one has called it Tipu's rule, but it is *Padayottam*—a *padayottam* by a demon who came from Mysore, swirling the death sword of Islamic fanaticism. The term *pada* which is a curse word in many places in Kerala today seems to be a result of this Mysorean use *pada* (141). This story of violence became a horrifying chapter of Kerala history. The authors of *Thiruvithamcore State Manuals* and histories, the author of *Kochi State Manual* and the historians of the Kochi

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[57] Experiments involving pearl diving, mulberry cultivation etc for the manufacture of pearl and silk respectively, also taken up by Tipu, gives one an image of a modern ruler, contrary to historical representations of a barbaric ruler; P.K. Balakrishnan, *Tipu Sulthan* (Kottayam: DC Books, 2010) 173.

kingdom, the *Samoothiri vamsha* (Calicut Kingdom) and those of "modern" Kerala, have contributed to the legitimization of this myth with their contributions (141). [58]

With Malabar falling into the hands of the British, the supremacy of the erstwhile landowning communities of Namboothiris and the Sudras (the term Nair comes much later) were reinstated. The *janmam* title was returned to the *jenmi,* making him the sole owner of land. They returned the lands to their "rightful" owners and thus the caste system was reinstated through a new mode of land relation. The colonial government sought to reinstate the authority of the Namboothiri and Nair landlords.[59] In the process, they were to reinvigorate the tenancy system, making it more stringent by removing the customary rights that were part of the traditional system. This was to lead to a more rigid structuration of a hierarchical society. The changes brought about in the *kanam* tenure were to validate the *janmakkaran* as the rightful inheritor of the soil, whereas the burden of land revenue fell primarily on tenants and small landholders who cultivated on their own. Initially *kanam*[60] was a permanent tenure which could be renewed after a certain period. Moreover, it also gave certain customary rights to the tenants leading to a specific kind of relationship between the

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[58] P.K. Balakrishnan says that it could be safely assumed that the country was going through a prosperous time during the reign of Tipu, what with the elaborate road and transport facilities initiated by Tipu, proving wrong, the theory of people running away into forest fearing for life, as put forward by historians like Panikker. Tipu's decision to leave out the garden lands, which belonged to the upper caste landlords, from the ambit of his land settlement, was to help the ruling elites from penury, asserts P.K. Balakrishnan, as these were excluded from taxes. It was with the fall of the Mysorean empire that they came back to their former selves; P.K. Balakrishnan, *Tipu Sulthan* (Kottayam: DC Books, 2010) 171.

[59] Logan says, "If there would not have been a crucial intervention by a more stronger, foreign community (janavibagam), there is no doubt that the Nairs would also have ended up being a permanent forest dwelling community, like other such communities as the Kurumbas;" William Logan, 1985, *Malabar Manual: The History of Malabar*, T.V. Krishnan, trans. (Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi Books, 2010) 160.

[60] *Kanam* was the most common traditional tenure in which the tenant surrenders a fixed rent, often about a third of the crop, to the landlord, in addition to the cash renewal fee every 12 years. In pre-British times, this "superior" tenure was confined to Nayars and other high caste Hindus of similar rank and to relatively high ranking Muslims and Christians; Kathleen Gough, "Peasant Resistance and Revolt in South India, *Pacific Affairs* 41-4 (Winter 1968-69): 526. *JSTOR* 16 Aug 2011 http://www.jstor.org/.

landlord and his tenant, albeit within the ambit of the feudal structure. But the British intervention interpreted it as tenure terminable at the end of every 12 years, which permitted the *jenmi* the option either to renew the lease or give the land to another tenant who was prepared to pay a higher rent (Panikkar 21). Moreover, making the *jenmikkaran* the sole inheritor of land led to sub-infeudation, which in its turn made the *kanakkar* a cultural force to reckon with.

An important consequence of the non-cultivating *janmis* owning a lion's share of land was sub-infeudation and, as its sequel, the rise of the *kanakkar*, to social and economic prominence. A substantial section of the *kanakkar*, mostly upper-caste Nairs, did not undertake cultivation, but sub-leased the land on *verumpattam* or for crop sharing (Panikkar 28). Kerala, was thus divided into a large class of peasantry under the Namboothiri *jenmi* who orchestrated the social hierarchy with "Nayars as *kaanakar* at the top, Tiyyas and Mappilas as verumpattakar[61] in the middle, artisan and service castes as *cheru jenmekkar* below them, and the lower polluting castes as agricultural labourers at the bottom." (32)

However, by the end of the 19th century, the status of the Namboothiri overseer was to suffer serious setbacks, with questions of Western modernity already infiltrating through English education and the dominating influence of backward communities, especially the Ezhavas. Reform movements within the Namboothiri and the Nair communities questioned, above all others, the rationality of staying together as

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[61] "Verumpattakar formed the the most inferior tenure, in which the tenant pays a fixed rent, usually amounting to about 2/3rd, of the net produce, to the landlord or the kanam tenant … these tenures include those belonging to the relatively low ranking cultivating caste of Thiyyas and Izhavas; very seldom to the lowest "untouchable" castes such as Pulayas and Parayas, almost all of them whom are landless labourers;" Kathleen Gough, "Peasant Resistance and Revolt in South India," *Pacific Affairs* 41-44 (Winter 1968-1969): 527. *JSTOR* 16 Aug 2011 http://www.jstor.org/.

modern concepts of femininity gained ground. Exogamy, promoted by customs like *Sambandham* were condemned by the reformers of both the communities, raising concerns about the ways in which it would affect their women in different ways, the former by producing unmarried women and the latter by producing "free" women. The rise of the modern western was to eventually disrupt the Nair-Namboothiri alliance. The Namboothiri community, who were associated with temple rituals, came to be representative of all that was "pre-modern." Meanwhile the backward caste communities were initiated into a new sense of subjectivity inspired by the spiritual Guru, Sree Narayana. The Aruvippuram consecration of an Ezhava Shiva in 1888 was to have a lasting impact on the community, leading to prominent strides in the realm of education, industry, etc. The new awareness encouraged and initiated a new order of things that was distinct from the agrarian order and definitely more lucrative—even as colonial intervention increased markets for coir, tiles, cashew nuts etc.—than agricultural produce. This was to probably question the very feasibility of hierarchies which were supposed to be a birth right, and posed a portent threat to the ruling castes, necessitating apprehensions and impetuses to rethink the given-ness of one's own identity.

The passing of two acts in the 1930s, the Malabar Tenancy Act (1930) and the Madras Marumakkathayam Act (1933), in such a context were to have long standing consequences in Kerala as they sought to implement and legalize the desires of a confused Nair self. G. Arunima says,

> The first granted security of tenures to all *kanam* tenants and restricted arbitrary evictions and rack-renting. The latter sealed the demise of the households by legitimizing its partition into branches, by either a male or

female member, as well as ratifying the right of wives and children to inherit a

male's property and succeed to it. (Arunima 177)

This was to bring to an end a way of life as well as a mode of production centered on

matrilineal kinship patterns with the tharavadu at its center. It was to legally question

the custom of *Sambhandam*[62] between the Namboothiri men and Nair women,

condemning the latter to a delegitimized state of concubinage, and leading to the

construction of modern feminine and masculine subjectivities. However, these

transitions were to accentuate the crisis of identity in various other ways.

These men and women generally had neither property in their own right nor a

father or maternal uncle ready to take responsibility for them. There was no

place for them in the collapsing society of their forbears, yet new forms of

social organization had scarcely begun to evolve. (Jeffrey, Matriliny, Marxism

81)

At such a point of time, the communist movement was to provide the said men and

women a much required cultural and political impetus that was threatened by the

modern spaces initiated by colonial notions of morality and legitimacy as well as

backward caste mobilizations.[63] The movement upheld the upper caste Nairs as agents

of change who were to inseminate ideas of modernity and progress among the not-

yet-enlightened masses, especially the peasants. The words of K. Madhavan, a

Karshaka Sangham leader, in a *Kasargode Taluk Peasants' Association* in 1941,

would be enlightening in this context.

At this time, when many changes and reforms are taking place in this world

and in this 20th century when society is making progress both educationally

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[62] *Sambhandham* was a custom of non-contractual conjugality, in which the figure of the "providing father" or the "caring husband" was absent as the children were part of the woman's tharavadu headed by the Kaaranavan, rather than the "father/husband."

[63] See second section for a discussion on the topic.

and culturally, we the peasants who form a majority in the human society are living without any change or reform, laboring and starving like two-legged beasts…. But one thing that is consoling to us is that many persons who are well-educated and well-wishers of the peasants, aiming at the peasant's prosperity have been for some time past advising us to organize ourselves, exerting themselves to safeguard our interests by establishing an *All India Peasants Association*. (123)[64]

This narrative of progress was to comply well with the aspirations of a forlorn community set to build up its modern basis of (cultural) capital by conflating itself with the Hindu nationalist movement[65] on the one hand, and the negotiations that such a conflation made possible with the lower castes, especially the backward castes, from whom they had kept an untouchable distance, on the other.

The Civil Disobedience of the 1930s, gave an opportunity for the "deracine" Nair youths, imprisoned in the jails to establish contact with revolutionaries of the North like Tiwari and thereby draw the inspiration to form the oppositional faction of Communism within the Congress. In his book, *Kerala Charithram Marxist Veekshanathil*, E.M.S. states that communism was a movement, a resultant of dissatisfactions "with the ideals of Gandiji and Panditji" (*Kerala Charithram* 246), leaders of the nationalist movement,

> … socialism had come to Kerala as a movement within the Congress, as a party of socialists' working within the Congress. It was the very same people, who had earlier waved the flag of nationalism and democracy, who became the first generation of socialists in Kerala. (*Kerala Charithram* 284-285)

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[64] Quoted in Chanthavila Murali, *Sakhavu P. Krishnapillai: A Concise Biographical Study* (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2008).

[65] See 2nd half of the chapter for discussion on the dominant nationalist movement.

Compared to the princely states of Kochi and Travancore, Malabar had seen very little of caste based movements. However, nationalist movements were to have their greatest impact on Malabar, given the fact that protests were restricted in the princely states till the Haripura conference in 1938, the Civil Disobedience movement, initiated by Gandhi saw tremendous success in Malabar, following which protestors from Cochin and Travancore were to flock to the region to participate in the event and court arrest.[66]

Having little precedent of caste based movements in the region, the Civil Disobedience movement was to inspire the formation of a new community, which was to however "assume the contours of a class community, given the fact that the rural political activity that was largely initiated by a socialist leadership drawn from prominent "Nayar"[67] tharavadus in north Malabar had to build an alternative order which could re-emphasise a sense of community, but which should also have to be shorn of the accretion of emphases of traditional authority," as Dilip Menon suggests. A class community was the best bet in such a context. The CSP meeting on 29th December 1934, in which E.M.S. was the chair, demanded from its members, an oath of non-affiliation to any caste community,

> I am a member in Congress. I haven't joined as member in any other community institution or other political institution which is against the aims of the socialist party. (Qtd in Murali 133)

"The community … which would be shorn of the accretion of emphases of traditional authority would be one that was to be led by the ethos of nationalism. It nevertheless creates an internally homogenous experience of being 'colonised,' an 'equivalence' of

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[66] Memoirs of several writers like Basheer and politicians like P. Krishnapillai attest to the sense of national spirit that the event had inspired in them.
[67] The spelling as used by Dilip M. Menon.

interests and social positions among all those who inhabited the territory of the 'colonized'" (Dilip Menon, Conjunctural Community 2706). The legitimate subject of which however remained the Nair male and "his" rights over land and woman. The discourse of nationalism and its positing of "nation" vis-à-vis colonialism enabled those who spoke for and on behalf of the nation to re-present themselves as the agent of an entire society and also to de-present those whom they claimed to represent.

Talking about the contradictory nature of Indian nationalism, which makes it Brahminical rather than subaltern, G. Aloysius asserts that nationalism in India had more to do with reinstating the status quo of the pre-nation form of differential power structures than with the transfer of power to emergent communities. Nationalist consciousness and sentiments were to first emerge with the conjuncture of the transformation of social domination of the political buttresses of the Raj—both the paying (landlords) and the paid (service men and professionals)—into unified state power and under the aegis of colonialism (98). The entire phenomenon of accommodative or antagonistic response to the British rule's negative impact on the old order was limited to the handful of dominant communities scattered across the country with real or imagined stakes in the status quo. This is understandable, for it was their economic and ideological interest that was being threatened and in response they were trying out several ways of handling or neutralizing the negative impact till they finally succeeded in turning the whole process to their own advantage by developing a pan-Indian consciousness that was political and at the same time religious (101-102).

This was quite true of Kerala as the peasant movement that was to be inspired by this elite leadership was more about retaining the lost land and power rather than the relocation of land to the hitherto landless. The geographical situations in the region were such that it reduced the scope for wet land paddy cultivation, quite often encouraging *punam* (shift) farming and dry land farming, which explains the importance that waste lands had in the region.[68] Garden crops dominated in North Malabar, with *punam* farming being a predominant mode of farming in the region. These waste lands were more or less the property of the landlords. This may be understood by the fact that most of the struggles in Malabar (especially North) were directed against waste lands and not wetlands. The waste lands and garden lands, earlier under the control of the landlords continued to be theirs, which was part of the colonial government's drive to appease the landlord community while curtailing many of their other rights. The wet lands, based on which a structure of caste defined society already existed, remained outside the purview of these struggles. The struggle was led by people who were already landed.

The peasant movement in Kerala was largely for rights to *punam krishi* (shift cultivation) and not necessarily for land. By the 1940s, land available for wet cultivation as well as *punam* krishi was becoming scarce. Cultivators had begun insisting on this alternative between 1938-39 while less fertile areas had been brought under cultivation to grow subsistence crops like horsegram and *cumbum*. The Malabar

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[68] The comparatively less number of Namboothiri families in the region (in Payyanur and Taliparamba) has been noted by various scholars, which probably could be accounted by the comparative absence of land suitable for paddy cultivation, which forms part of their ritualistic life. This also explained their comparatively lesser hold on the population which also led to other forms of sustenance which took the form of maritime trade, through which Arakkal royal family, the only Muslim royal family, was to become a force by the middle of the 16th century; M.R. Raghavawarriar, *Vadakkan Pattukalude Paniyala*, [*The Workshop of the Ballads of North Malabar*], (Shukapuram: Vallathol Vidyapeedam, 1982) 72.

Tenancy Committee published its report in 1940, leaving landlords with absolute control over wastelands and forests. Moreover, no security of tenure was provided for the *punam* and pepper cultivators. This narrative constitutes the background of the peasant protests in the 1940s. These movements, led by middle peasants, for whom landlessness was never an issue, never addressed the landless, who had nevertheless participated en masse in the movements, and contributed several martyrs in the process. Kathleen Gough says that while poor peasants and also landless laborers were drawn into the struggle, there was still a tendency on the part of the communists to rely on the middle peasants for local leadership (529). Although the landless had played an important part in the struggles, they often had to face discrimination at the hands of the middle peasants who used them for their benefit.

> In the agitations of the 1930s … Kerala's middle peasants were able to organize large numbers of poor peasants to throw off some of the more traditional exactions of landlords. Difficulties exist because middle peasants themselves often exploit landless laborers (540).

It ought to be understood that the issue of caste mattered most for those who spearheaded the movement, only in so far as garnering support for an anti-feudal movement. The skepticism regarding the discrimination meted out to the tillers appears to be articulated by a few like A.K.G., who in a speech to the All India Left Communist Kisan Sabha in 1968, states that,

> We have to make them (the landless laborers) the hub of our activity. Reluctance to take up their specific demands, fearing that this will drive the rich and middle peasant away from us, will have to be given up. (Qtd in Gough 541)

Dalits were barred from becoming tenants since they were slaves (Yesudasan 615). The class perspective defined Dalits as agricultural workers who have only their labor to sell and, therefore have no claim to any kind of property. Workers are only workers and are not supposed to be proprietors (616). It was such a casteist order of things that was to lead to the Land Reform Act in 1969. Beginning from the Kayyur protest[69] in 1941, till 1949, when the communist party was banned, most revolts involved constant contestations between the police and the peasants. The peasant movements that acquired a militant phase following this were to be integral in providing a mass foundation to the party and in enabling its entrance in the parliament, as well as in forming the tenets of the Kerala development model that consistently sustained the need to provide land to the tenant, rather than land to the tiller. Kayyur becomes representative of this agro-based history. For K.K.N. Kurup, Kayyur is a "symbol of heroism and martyrdom for communists all over Kerala" (*Karshshaka Samaranghal* 119).

This indulgent class history, which attributes Communism to the upper caste agency, fails to acknowledge the fact that there were streams of native protests and indigenous movements. SNDP, and its leaders like C. Kesavan or even the JPC (Joint Political Congress),[70] recognized the Hindu predispositions of the nationalist movement and were quite resistant to the State Congress in Travancore. In the meantime, it creates a history of exploitation which was to begin with the British rule, the responsibility of

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[69] See Chapter 3 for discussions on the nature of the peasant movements.

[70] In protest against the inadequacy of the Constitutional reforms of 1932, the *Nivartana* (abstention) movement was started, as the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims who constituted 70 per cent of the population, apprehended that the new reforms, owing to the provisions for restricted franchise on the basis of the area of possession of property and other qualifications, would secure for them only a few number of seats in the enlarged legislature than the Nairs. They demanded apportioning of the seats on the basis of population. When the Government turned a deaf ear to the voice of protest, they organized a Joint Political Congress and exhorted the voters to abstain from voting. The Government at last conceded their demands to a certain extent by introducing communal reservation in appointments to the public service.

liberation from which was authorized on the upper castes, who were also the subjects of history. Within such a discursive realm, the British served as an incendiary, causing a cultural conflagration. E.M.S., for instance, blamed the British rule for having instigated a blockage to cultural efflorescence in Kerala. "It was the arrival of the British that drew our country to such a condition … a condition, where not even a single scholar could prove worthy of his well acclaimed ancestry that ancient Kerala lay claim to, by producing scholars who were well known for their scholasticism throughout India; where Kerala, the birthplace of Kathakali, was to end up becoming a haven for cheap dramas that imitated their Tamil counterparts and Hindi cinema; where good works were not coming out in the language of those like *Chambukaarans* and *Attakathakarans* (Namboothiripad, *Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi* 219).

Although. bequeaths the dismantling of the caste-landlord feudal structure to British colonization which had created new job opportunities to those who were considered "unfit" like the Christians and the Muslims, he is quick to controvert the benefits of such a situation by emphasizing how this was to lead to the emergence of capitalists like A.V. Thomas, A.V. George, Thanghal Kunjhu Musliar, Samuel Aron, Kunjhimayan Haji, as well as those from the Ezhava community such as K.C. Karunakaran, Naarakasseri Krishnan, Kaayathu Damodaran (Namboothiripad, *Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi* 200-203).

G. Alosyius states that advocacy of rights for the lower caste masses within society was resisted by the dominant and Brahminical communities in general. Such advocacy was considered outside the realms of custom and tradition and imitative of western culture, particularly by cultural nationalists (150-151). The "colonial"

interventions in the Kerala society actually resulted in a positive impact upon the lives of Ezhavas and other untouchable sections; not by "enslaving," but by "empowering" them in their relationship with the "dominant minority" of the "colonized." The colonial religion Christianity, for instance, offered itself up as a religion of mobilization. The threats of conversion to Christianity had finally prompted the Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936. Narayana Guru for instance talks about how it was the British who imparted *Sanyasam* to the lower castes. Vadapuram B.K. Bhava, the initiator of trade union movement in Kerala, was inspired by the message of Narayana Guru, which would subsequently reflect in his industrial endeavors. In fact, the work culture that was building itself around factories, since the 1920s in South and Central Kerala, in various industries based on coir, cashew nut, etc, and which employed men as well as women from the lower castes, fails to find adequate space in the mainstream discourse on communism, which more or less traces its origins to the peasant movements in North Malabar or the post *Punnapra Vayalar* workers movements.

Considering the fact that the former was more tenant based than tiller based, and that the latter marks a post-class community movement, it suggests the ideology that communism in Kerala was to adopt. Communism, by asserting itself as an ingredient of nationalism, was to overcome a situation of threat precipitated by the assertions of lower caste identities and modernities as it redefined the Nair as its agency. This was mediated through a hijacking of the community oriented modernity formation that was taking place in the princely states of Cochin and Travancore (the present central and southern parts of Kerala respectively). It is not mere coincidence that many of the early leaders of communism in Kerala who came from the Nair community were

associated with the peasant movements. It was part of a crisis that the community was going through, both from within—with the practice of *Sambhandam* delegitimizing the community as uncivilized—and from the outside—with the gradual prominence that backward castes like the Ezhavas in South Kerala and Thiyyas in North Malabar had. The symbolic upliftment of the Ezhava community in South Kerala was leading to increased demands for social representation as could be seen in the demand for government services. The Nair's transition to the modern necessitated a break with their historical alliance with the Namboothiris, while also sustaining a strategic alliance with the emerging backward communities, especially the Thiyyas in North Malabar, who was beginning to reinforce a defining position within the British colonial government.[71]

Ezhavas and the Populist Trajectory of Communism in Kerala

As an attempt to historicize the indigenous promptings of the communist movement in the region, this section would attempt to understand the said movement in terms of a caste community formation and how its class-isation was to happen by eschewing caste articulations and identities. Such a historicization would reveal the way in which the process of class-isation would enumerate the presences of subaltern communities and spaces in the making of an elitist agrarian movement. It would also look at how the former was to be appropriated by the latter through alliances between the upper and the backward castes. In other words, it would try to conceptualize the proclamation of the communist Party in Parappuram, North Malabar in 1939, as something that closely followed a particular event that was to occur in South Kerala—the general strike of the Alappuzha workers in 1938. Such a conceptualization would

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[71] See chapter 4 for further discussion.

be symptomatic of how the class community was to impress its ideological hold over the caste community of workers emerging in South and Central Kerala resulting in the ideological conflation of the Ezhavas and the Nairs. K.R. Gowri, or the more popularly called Gowriyamma's[72] autobiography describes how the awakening in the socio-cultural realm had fastened the process of claiming rights in the labour space.

> It was the socio-cultural revolution that took place under the leadership of Sri Narayana Guru, Kumaranasan, Dr. Palpu, Ayyankali etc, that led to the uprising of the tenants and agricultural laborers, who were transformed into factory workers following the discrepancies and undercurrents of the period, the brutal ways of the feudal setup, and their relations with the empire (Gowriyamma 307).

In South Kerala, caste communities were beginning to be mobilise as early as the 19th century. The Guru's consecration of Ezhava Shiva in Aruvippuram in 1989 was to provide the much needed impetus that the mobilization[73] of a caste community—suffering from untouchability—would have required. As more and more people from the community were activated through education and jobs opened up by the colonial markets, it implied a symbolic and substantive upliftment of a community, relegated

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[72] K.R. Gowri is a veteran Ezhava politician. She was a prominent figure in the Communist movement in Kerala and had served as minister in the various Communist-led governments, including as the revenue minister in the first E.M.S. Ministry in 1957. However, in 1994, K.R. Gowri was expelled from CPI (M) on charges of anti-party activities, following which, she established a new party named Janadipathya Samrakshana Samithi (JSS). She has been an active presence in the politics of Kerala ever since.

[73] Preceded by movements like the Channar revolt in south Travancore, the earliest of them, in 1822, for the right to cover the breasts by the lower caste Channar women, the consecration of the Ezhava Shiva in 1889 was to be followed by various assertions of caste communities like Ayyankali's assertion of the right of lower castes to travel on public roads, in decorated bullock carts in 1899 in Aralamoodu Bazar near Balaramapuram, political assertions like the Ezhava Memmorial of 1895, which attempts to question the supremacy given to the Aiyyers and Raos in various administrative positions. These served to be instrumental in the making of various caste communities like the SNDP in 1903 by Dr. Palpu, NSS in 1914 by Mannathu Padmanabhan, Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham in 1905 by Ayyankali, Yogakshema Sabha in 1908 and Sahodaran Ayyappan's Sahodara Prastanam in 1917, etc. The Vaikkam Sathyagraha in 1924, to gain access for the untouchables to walk road leading to Vaikkam temple, Guruvayoor Sathyagraha in 1931, for all Hindus to gain access to all temples were also significant movements.

to the margins by the rigid caste society. From the 1860s, the growing number of Ezhavas and ex-slave castes encountered the European missionaries, whose schools would provide the former basic education. From the 1870s, Ezhavas began to graduate from Thiruvananthapuram College. The 1875 census put male literacy among Ezhavas at 3.15%, by the 1891 census it had gone up to 12.10% (Sahadevan 8).

The principles of Narayana Guru was to galvanize mobilizations, especially within the community, leading to formations of various kinds—such as the *Ezhava Mahajana Sabha*[74] in 1896, the *Travancore Labour Association* in 1921, the JPC formed in 1933, of Christians, Ezhava and Muslim organizations—in order to boycott the elections to the new legislature and to demand representation proportionate to community numbers in the legislature and government service, the demand for Temple Entry in 1936, etc. The difficulties of entering government services had compelled many to shift to trade and commerce while forcing others like Dr. Palpu to migrate outside the state. This however prompted Dr. Palpu to fight for the Ezhava cause. He was a signatory to the *Malayali Memorial*, presented to the Government in 1891 demanding greater representation for "Malayalis" in Travancore government service. However, soon after this, Dr. Palpu was to initiate the *Ezhava Memorial*, demanding for more government jobs for Ezhavas, but which was rudely rejected.

There were two streams of mobilizations that were to follow the symbolic consecration of Ezhava Siva. The one was to understand the community as part of the *savarna* Hindu community like those by T.K. Madhavan, leading to the *Vaikkam*

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[74] Dr. Palpu was to organize a society called Ezhava Mahaiana Sabha in 1896 to inculcate among the Ezhavas a desire for modem educational qualifications, and to get admission in government schools.

satyagraha and the movements towards Temple Entry which was to lead to the Proclommation in 1936.[75] The other stream was the one adopted by those like C. Kesavan, K. Ayyapan and E. Madhavan, who found it necessary to distance themselves from the upper caste Nairs and wanted a distinctive identity for the community. Thus, C. Kesavan, the general secretary of SNDP in 1933, would accuse the Nairs of "making monkeys of the Ezhavas," and further demand that "we want adult suffrage … we are not Hindus … renounce this Hinduism" (20), while Madhavan asserted on the Buddhist ancestry of the community in his celebrated book *Swathantra Samudayam* (*Independent Community*). Nevertheless, it was the former stream that was to gain parlance as the community increasingly acquired a middle-class form, and this was to consolidate with the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1937. It seems to have marked an important phase in that it suggested a transition to a symbolic alliance with the Nairs and a going back on the alliance with the non-Hindu-Christian-Muslim combine of the JPC.

A parallel change—with the emergence of class consciousness among the workers of Alappuzha—seems to have happened in the realm of political assertion. It led to formation of the Travancore Labour Association (TLA) in 1921 in Alappuzha. The Travancore Labour Association, probably the first trade union in Kerala, was formed by V.B.K. Bhava, an Ezhava. The majority of its labourer-members also belonged to the same community. An estimate by a coir-factory proprietor in 1938 held that 80 per cent of the work force was Ezhava, eight per cent Christian, one per cent Muslim, one per cent Nayar, and the remaining 10 per cent lower caste Hindus (Jeffrey, Destroy Capitalism 1163). The labour association was not really committed to any

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[75] In 1936, with elections due in 1937, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy, issued the Proclamation, throwing open all the government temples to all Hindus.

revolutionary aspect of the working class ideology or any ideology for that matter. It was formed by the workers to resist the oppressions of the Moopans, who acted as middle men to provide the work force for various European companies such as the William Gudekkar, Bombay Company, Aspinval, Madhura Company, etc, as well as the colonial masters (Gowriyamma 220).

Considering the period in which it was formed, the very idea of a labour association was revolutionary in itself (Gowriyamma 219-20). According to Gowriyamma, the history of the TLA however marks a transition from caste consciousness to class consciousness, which by the General Strike of 1938, was to evolve into a class community. The Travancore Labour Association as to have a formative influence on communism in Kerala according to those like Gowriyamma, who also conceptualise communism in Kerala as the legacy of an indigenous tradition. Gowriyamma's observation regarding the growth of the communist party in Kerala is quite revealing in the context of a history that draws the trajectory of how the communist party was to grow into a position of leadership for the working class. Gowriyamma asserts that the specific social structure of Travancore formed the backdrop to the organization of the workers in Alapuzha, especially the coir workers. While discussing the change from caste community to class, Issac[76] suggests that although the TLA was dominated by the Ezhava caste, mobilizations by the CSP were to lead to their becoming class conscious rather than caste conscious. Although Jeffrey[77] claims that such a change was to happen in keeping with the transformations that were to happen within the community, followed by the community's success in acquiring electoral shares in the

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[76] See Thomas Issac, "From Caste Consciousness to Class Consciousness," *EPW* XX.4 (26 Jan 1985): PE-5-16.
[77] See Robin Jeffrey, "'Destroy Capitalism!' Growing Solidarity of Alleppey's Coir Workers," 1930-40 *EPW* 19.29 (21 July 1984): 1159-1165.

wake of the abstention movement as well as the Temple Entry Proclamation. What ensued eventually was a common ground for the Nairs and the Ezhavas to unite in a class community. One might say that it was the success (in terms of the mass mobilization and participation as labourers) of the general strike of 1938 that was to lead to the formation of the CPI in 1939. In a semi-legal conference of CSP activists at Pinarayi in Malabar the CSP in Kerala was transformed into the CPI.

The strike of January 1934 brought a range of slogans and songs to the lips of the Alappuzha workers: But the most significant was the cry that made the leap from a caste and communal outrage to one of class conflict: "Destroy the Nayars!" it began. "Destroy Nayar rule!" Then it shifted, and demonstrated how a Malayalam word would acquire a new connotation: "Destroy capitalism!" (Jeffrey, Destroy Capitalism 1162). In 1936, once again the workers were to strike against various atrocities, including the two month long strike against the increase in working hours, at the end of which the government was forced to concede to a raise in wages for the purpose of which a committee was formed with K. George as the chairman (Gowriyamma 221).[78] Gowriyamma describes this strike as the one that had eventually led the workers of Alappuzha to a larger political agitation. In Aroor, the coir factory workers and the peasant laborers entered the protest to demand a responsible government under comrade T.K. Raman. Gradually the activities of the communist party also spread to this realm (221-22). The caste community of workers, organized by leaders like K.C. Govindan were however to complete their transition into a class community of workers by the time the General strike of 1938 was to take place. It marked a phase where the class community that was formed in North Malabar was to gain legitimacy

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[78] K. George was to replace K.N. Govindan, who was removed from the committee due to allegations of siding with the capitalists, K.R. Gowriyamma, *Athmakatha*, [*Autobiography*], (Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi Books, 2011).

as an All Kerala formation. Interpreting the mass migration of the socialist cadres all over Kerala to Travancore to participate in the strike, E.M.S. says that "the unity at the level of activity, of the democratic movement in Kerala and that too under the leadership of the working class and the socialist movements, was formed thus. This was to later be the basis for the movement for a democratic *Aikya Kerala* (Namboothiripad, *Kerala Charithram* 282).

The event was to bring in clashes with the State Congress to the open, leading to a shift towards the left–similar to the one that had led to the formation of CSP in North Malabar in 1934. The workers felt abandoned by the State Congress at a critical juncture. However, this order of things was to benefit the Communist outfit since the class community that had been limited to North Malabar till then was to grow to a pan-Kerala organization. The workers of Alapuzha also began to associate themselves among a larger brotherhood provided by class affiliations, offered by the Malabar Socialists and the Youth League. E.M.S. talks of how the General Strike occasioned an all Kerala union of socialists.

> Till then, the socialist groups in Travancore were limited to certain towns alone. It was an important political force only in Alappuzha and the industrial belt surrounding it. But the protest of the Youth League in 1938 and the formation of the progressive group were to lead to the changing of the left socialist groups as a national political power. (Namboothiripad, *Kerala Charithram* 283)

It is not coincidental that the communist unit of Kerala was to be formed in 1939 in North Malabar soon after the huge success of the General Strike. It also occasioned the alliance of the Ezhavas and the Nairs. Jeffrey documents it thus, "the general

strike became a living feature of the mythology—the story-telling, the culture—not just of the Alleppey working class but of the Left in Kerala. It hardened the workers' consciousness of themselves, not as members of a caste or a religion, but as members of an exploited group—a class. Though the majority of workers were Iravas,[79] they acclaimed and followed the example of P. Krishnapillai, a Nayar" (Jeffrey, Destroy Capitalism 1163). The resonances of the conflation of caste-class identities in the TLA could be quite significant for a history of Communism in the region which insists on harking back to a narrative of modernization of the Nair community.

Ideologically this coming together marks the way in which the movement initiated by Narayana Guru was to be secularized and made to serve the mainstream discourse of a class community. Guru's importance, as J. Reghu emphasizes, was the way in which he led the Ezhavas from a caste identity to that of a communitarian one. The formation of community suggests a disruption from the position of a victim to that of a subject. It is only by re-presenting the universal ideals of equality and justice that a victim could be transformed into a subject. Reghu identifies the consecration of the Ezhava Shiva by Narayana Guru in Aruvippuram in 1888 as suggesting a similar transition to a community. He refers to it as a context-smashing event that would re-contextualize various formations enabling the organization of the Ezhava identity as a community (73). Guru's philosophy of *dharma*, based on a minoritized Advaita philosophy, worked as an abstract machine which strived towards a destratification of the social structure rather than its stratification (B. Rajeevan 250). It is in this minoritization of a majoritarian philosophy that Narayana Guru's importance lies. It makes the Advaita discourse of Narayana Guru part of a minoritarian discourse. In it,

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[79] The spelling as used by Robin Jeffrey.

there is a *novel imaginary* that doesn't rely on Western humanism and a developmental project that need not rely on Western modernity's conceptualization of the modern (252). It was a kind of political nationalism as opposed to a cultural nationalism (Aloysius 131), which dealt with the emerging structures of the polity rather than an already structured sanctified cultural framework. The ideology of political nationalism, of abolition of ascriptive privileges and democratization of society in the sub-continent, was translated, concretized and diversified into a series of rights for the lower caste masses at the primary level. It intended to facilitate their emergence into different spheres of the new power and opportunity realm—the civil society (150). But, this minority discourse was often usurped by the secularist nationalist ideology that was gaining ground.

The social reformist movement that Guru had suggested quite often related with the policies of the congress and its Gandhi inspired Civil Disobedience movements like picketing toddy shops, upliftment of lower castes, community feasting, etc. The absence of such community-based movements, while increasing the utility of communism[80] in the region, also helped create a halo of superiority around the communists who were to engage in caste atrocities as well. The Malabar branch of *Harijan Seva Sangham* came to being in April 1933 with K. Kelappan as the chairman. The CSP leaders worked actively in these movements as well. Chantavila Murali, in his biography of P. Krishnapillai talks about how the latter was brutally beaten up for his active involvement in the programmes for Harijan upliftment. He was engaged in the upliftment of the "Harijans" by participating in cleaning houses, distributing essential commodities, etc. for which he was brutally beaten by the

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[80] Till the Haripura conference in 1938, the Congress had limited its activities to the British ruled provinces staying away from the princely dominions.

conformists at Thuluchery, in Kannur.[81] Pillai's work was however based on a secular class ideology which was to quickly turn into a liberal discourse that enabled, not an empowering of caste communities, rather their leveling, especially those belonging to the upper and backward castes, thereby providing the former with the leverage that it was losing with the breakup of traditional structures. Nonetheless this communitarianism was to further distance the backward communities from the lower castes, as its anti-*savarna* atheistic assertions were to dove-tail into the secular mould that Communism suggested. The CSP and later the communist party were to bank on this class-ist formation, which would eventually dominate the various movements in North Kerala.

As Reghu says, the appropriations of communism were to manifest themselves in the way in which the religious reform movement of the first phase was appropriated by the class community, while the more revolutionary phase marked by Sahodaran Ayyappan was to be ignored. "Sahodaranism" reminds the low caste movement across India that any encounter with the "cultural empire of Hinduism" necessitates the critical appropriation of intellectual resources from outside the empire.[82] Ayyappan represented the subversive edge of this distancing and at no point of time in his life was he carried away by the deceptive image of the Indian nation. The real nationalist spirit, according to Ayyappan necessitated the recognition of communitarian identities.

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[81] Ananthatheerthan's Asramam *Sree Narayana Harijana Seva Sadanam*, was the centre of such activities, wherein Krishnapillai used to take study classes. K.P.R. Gopalan, V.R. Nair, etc., were frequent visitors at the Ashramam. On account of his active involvement, Krishnapillai was tied to a coconut tree and brutally beaten up, Chanthavila Murali, *Sakhavu P. Krishnapillai: A Concise Biographical Study* (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2008) 98-99.

[82] J. Reghu, "Sahodaran Ayyappan: Overcoming Narayana Guru," http://utharakalam.com/english/?p=303; accessed on 15/04/2012.

The opponents of communal representation were in actuality the exponents of communal privileges. In that sense they were the enemies of real nationalism. The exponents of communal representation demanded communal justice. That was the national interest. So they could not be called communalists. On the other hand those who wanted the society to remain divided into privileged and unprivileged without granting communal representation were the communalists. Communalism had to be done away with. But by preserving communal privileges it could not be done away with (Sahadevan 99).

For Ayyappan, like Narayana Guru, a disowning of caste involved owning it descriptively. His views on communitarian representation were well articulated in his opinions as a legislator when he demanded for education to be the criterion for universal franchise amidst clamors for a property oriented one. His communitarian views, often communicated through the editorial of his journal *Sahodaran*, seemed threateningly close to criticizing Gandhi while lauding the likes of Ambedkar and unsurprisingly earned him the title of an anti-nationalist. [83]

Class Communism and its Agro-based Pasts

It was on the denial of communitarian identities that nationalist communism would build its mass base. Caste was to be part of the superstructure, wherein it could be changed through changes in the economic base. It was to facilitate organized production through a systematic division of labor. However what they tended to overrule was the fact that caste was interwoven into the economic base, in such a way that it determined the laborer before determining the division of labor that formed the

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[83] See M. Sahadevan, *Towards Social Justice and Nation Making: A Study of Sahodaran Ayyappan* (Trichur: Lumiere Printing Works, 1993).

base. The system of land ownership was so inextricably melded together with caste that it was impossible for a Brahmin to be an agrestic serf or for a Dalit to be a landlord (Kapikkad 469). Analyzing the difference between Dalit literature and working class literature, Kaviyoor Murali, a Dalit writer says,

> Dalit population indeed belongs to the working class community. The general disabilities that the working class usually has, they too share. But, Dalit workers have certain other disabilities as distinctive from those that a Nair worker, or Christian worker or a Muslim worker has and that distinction comes from a discrimination based on his birth. In other words it is one that is based on his caste. In Chertala, the Ezhava and Pulaya who did the same agricultural labor weren't given the same wages. When the Ezhava would get four rupee as wages, the Pulayan would be given only three rupees. The basis of such discrimination was caste and not the worker-capitalist relation. (Kaviyoor Murali 70)

The perception of workers forming the subject of history has led to a failure in acknowledging of forms of struggles and protests by communitarian identities as apolitical. E.M.S. for instance says that the General Strike by the Alappuzha workers were the first organized political protest that Kerala had seen. This led to an over exuberance regarding the peasant discourse by the upper caste Communist history in Kerala. The workers' movements however were quite active in the 1930s itself, in the various coir, tile, weaving and cashew nut factories and which were not necessarily led by the upper castes.

Apart from the strikes of TLA that have already been mentioned, there have been internal protests by cashew workers during the same period (1930s) as Anna Lindberg

points out. The first known strike by cashew workers happened in the mid-1930s in the India Nut Company in Travancore. Lindberg says that the union activities of cashew workers, the earliest collective actions to be taken, were usually carried out jointly by men and women cashew workers of the lowest castes (105). The 1930s were a vibrant period, even for the workers in North Malabar. A parallel movement in the industrial sector was going on in the said period, led by an important figure, K.P. Gopalan, a Thiyya. He played a significant role in organising the Kannur Beedi Worker's Union, Churuttu Worker's Union, Chirakkal Taluk Weaver's Union, Municipal Workers Union, Commonwealth Union, etc., in the 1930s. The North Malabar Worker's Union, with Kannur as the center, was formed as early as September 1931 under the leadership of K.P. Gopalan (Jayarajan 297). Workers associations had begun to take form in the 1920s, when organisations like *Bharat Sevak Samaj*, under the leadership of V.R. Nayanar, Suryanarayana Rao, etc., were to involve in various workers' issues. Different movements with concerns—similar as well as varied—came out of factories associated with tiles, weaving, umbrella-making, brick-making, etc., apart from the political demands raised by the various Beedi workers' associations in Payyanur, Kannur and Thalassery. In Thalassery, the Beedi workers' association was formed as Sree Narayana Beedi Worker's Association, influenced by the ideas of Narayana Guru. Their first programme was to organise a procession to Thalassery Jagannatha temple, hailing the messages of Narayana Guru (Jayarajan 289).

The Beedi Workers' Union was quite an assertive force in North Malabar. One of the significant moments in the history of the workers' movement has been the agitation in 1939, organized by the Beedi workers, as the organization decided to picket the

military camp in Kannur—put up to recruit men for the Second World War—to show their anti-war sentiment. The protest against the camp was organised under the leadership of Vayalil Krishnan, Chenoli Koran, C.H. Appu, K.P. Govindan, K. Damodaran, Mundan Changhat Krishnan and Ottakan Kannan (292). Another significant phase in the history of the workers' movement was the organization of the Municipal workers, who were entrusted with the job of scavenging. The difficult task of organizing these socially and culturally backward communities was taken up in Kannur by K.P. Gopalan, C. Kannan and others (302-303).

Owing to their superior position in a caste-dominated society, such spaces were never the domains of the Nairs and other upper castes until they were legitimized by the language of class. Nevertheless, this history of the workers' movement is more or less shadowed by the peasant movements of the post-1940s, henceforth making the latter the immediate forbearers of the Communist Party in Kerala. The emphasis on peasant movements as the focus of activity in the 1940s after the formation of class Communism as an all Kerala organization in 1939 ought to be seen in such a context. Ideologically, and, as it was to prove later, politically, the peasant movement could only be tenant-based and never tiller- based.

This necessarily alludes to the pre-capitalist or feudal relations of power that the Kerala government had to reckon with, in its transition to a modern state, the fact being that it owed its foundation to the category of the middle peasants who were largely landed and never lower castes. As such the legislation at land reform benefited only the section that had some kind of control over land—Ezhavas, Muslims and Christians—to whom lands belonging to the Brahmin and Nair landlords were leased

out. Talking about the reasons behind the failure of the Nehruvian state as far as the subaltern communities were concerned, Deepa Srinivas asserts that the political power that came into power, post-independence was not based on any radical transformation of the social order:

> The new government remained dependent on existing pre-capitalist form of social power to mobilize electoral support for it through landed proprietorship or caste loyalty or religious authority. It simply sought to contain the powers of pre-capitalist dominant classes through contingent strategies of neutralization, concession or relative attack, all these being means to keep them in the position of subsidiary allies in the reformed state structure (9-10).

Kerala offered a similar situation. Land reforms merely manifested a new form of casteism, for instance, the phenomenon or tendency of denying or delaying justice to the traditionally oppressed social groups by adopting measures and positions which are supposedly radical and progressive, but which only helped in sustaining a casteist status quo. The act was to put into place this assemblage of pre-capitalist identitarian forces under the aegis of structured communities such as the NSS, SNDP and various Syrian Christian and Muslim organizations. The tertiary service sector, largely controlled by these communities thus came to serve as the middle-class subject of Kerala. The act proved indispensable to the construction a modern state, in terms of the cultural and political resources that the communities involved within the ambit of the act was to provide to the emerging state. The middle-class' rise into prominence was accompanied by the modernising desires of the newly formed state, because the kind of human resources that modernity demanded were only available to the middle class.

The need for state-led, industry-based investment programmes, made obligatory by the handicaps caused by colonial backwardness, legitimized the inclusion of the industrial bourgeoisie, the urban middle class intelligentsia and the rural propertied classes at the centre of state formation. The technicization of development and the enormous prestige of scientific technology … provide the middle class with a significant measure of legitimacy (Deshpande 140). It led to the "formation of a new ruling class coalition in which the industrial bourgeoisie and the urban middle-class intelligentsia would play the leading role but which would also include, for reasons of political expediency in an electoral democracy, the rural propertied classes with local influence in the districts and provinces (Chatterjee, Beyond the Nation 8). The nation state was based on a mixture of pre-capitalist political forms where power was shared by "a coalition of the bourgeoisie, the rural rich and the bureaucratic elite" (Kaviraj 51). Critics, like K. Venu, who are apprehensive of the "land-for-all" theory, point out the fallacy of setting aside land for these two unproductive sectors as envisaged by the Kerala model. He calls it flawed. This was to lead to a situation where there was no money to be spent for the productive realms. By the end of the 1980s the internal contradiction that this had created was to become explicit … the simple truth is that the service sectors cannot grow by sacrificing the productive realms (Venu 111). Due to the Communists' neglect of caste structures, Dalit peasants, who formed the majority of the labor force in the agricultural sector couldn't get agricultural land through the said reforms. They had to be satisfied with mere homestead rights. Conditions created by entrenched caste structures meant Dalits didn't get the permission even to claim rights on the leased out lands, although most of these lands were cultivated by them (109).

The Act was to transfer land to those who didn't depend on agriculture, whose investment in the land would be profit-based and not sustenance-based. Moreover the exemption of the plantation sector from the limits of the land reform legislation resulted in a massive increment in cash crop production, even as the food crop sector battled devastation (Kapikkad 470). The agrarian sector as a mode of survival continued to be neglected, as it increasingly began to be used to suit the profit-oriented demands of its middle-class owners. Both as an economic and a social engineering policy, the Kerala model was a failure as it failed to revive the agrarian sector and drove the economy into deep crisis. It led Kerala's indigenous population—the Dalits and Adivasis (472)—to legalized exclusion from land ownership.

The crisis that was to be brought about in the agrarian sector as it was usurped from its indigenous owners, for whom it had been a source of survival, was sought to be solved, not by returning lands to their rightful owners, but rather by innovations in the agrarian realm, such as the introduction of innovative agricultural methods and produce in the form of floriculture, with plans of catering to an international market. Additionally, backwaters where paddy was cultivated was converted for tourism. Sanal Mohan says that these endeavors, aimed at compensating for the losses, if embarked upon, would definitely change the agricultural profile, but would also lead to a postponement of the problems regarding ownership of land (273).

The lack of an initiative to recognize the lower-caste identity of the agricultural laborers in the agrarian sector arises from a class consciousness that forbids agency to caste expressions. It is no wonder that Dalits in India have not been able to become a

modern working class as Mohan rightly points out. They cannot become a working class; a fact attested by many Indian cities. Dalit and Adivasi communities are yet to reach a situation whereby they can acquire cultural capital to even become a working class. The acquiring of land thus becomes a matter of immediate importance for the lower castes as the construction of a present is necessary to create a past as well as the future. Wakankar talks about the notion of immediacy being crucial for a Dalit historiography, for which the idea of a past and the idea of the future turns around the problem of the present.

The "problem of the present"—accounting for the continuing land struggles in Kerala by Adivasis and Dalits as indigenous people[84]—were to be augmented[85] since the 1980s, even as the first ever agricultural strike in Kerala was to happen as early as 1913 under the leadership of Ayyankali. The first labor struggle was fought as part of "demanding admission in schools besides enhancement of wages and reduction of the duration of time of the work." "The strike began in June 1913 which affected the work in the paddy fields of Kandala, Pallichal, Mudavapara to Vizhinjam, Kaniapuram, etc. All the paddy fields and land were left untouched by untouchable laborers. The strike was called off only after a year after a year in May 1914, once their demands were agreed to (Chentharassery 29). C.K. Janu asserts that the reclamation of forest land was important for their traditional way of life and would consequently lead to a life with modern facilities. "If one starts living a modern life

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[84] The Adivasi upsurge was to raise many an eyebrow of who did not have faith of an Adivasi to turn violent, with an alleging of militant intervention of the Tamil Tigers or the People's War Group, in these struggles, *The Hindu*, 21 Feb 2003.

[85] In 1 Sep. 1989, *Manusmrithi* was burnt in Vaikkom, by the *Adasthitha Navothana Munnanni*. However, the left government, leaded by E.K. Nayanar was to leash police action against them: 60 of them were jailed and penalized for almost 10 years. It was a political as well as an ideological protest against the upper caste domination which had kept the downtrodden and women in a perpetual state of depression (177); K.M. Saleem Kumar, "Communistukarude Jaathi," ["The Caste of Communists"], *Dalitapaadakal: Dalitavaadathe Pati Oru Samvadam*, [*Dalit Paths: A Debate About Dalitism*], Bobby Thomas, ed. (Thiruvananthapuram: Sign Books, 2010) 167-182.

completely discarding one's tradition, such communities will soon face extinction (11).[86] Land was a basic and important requirement, significant for any mobilization towards communitarian modernity.

The Adivasi struggles that took place under the Adivasi Gothra Samithi in the 1990s, led by C.K. Janu, the Kundara struggle, and the one in 2002 in front of the secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram (441-442),[87] followed by the Muthanga protest in 2003—part of a land reclamation movement in the wake of it being converted into a wildlife sanctuary and the denial of the promised reallocation of land—were part of these political mobilizations. The reclaiming of land is symbolic of a present as well as a pre-history which gets written through its present, and thereby contests its upper caste historicizations. Pradeepan Pambirikunnu says that it was the "upper" caste market of Indian literature which determined the acceptability of a Dalit. The blueprint of "upper" caste markets are the literary histories. Kerala's literature and its history are also the constructs of the "upper" caste market, where the tragic beauty of social survival, in all its squalor and splendor is considered counterfeit (284).

Thus, a pre-history seems to be as important for the present as for an emancipatory political future. A Dalit prehistory, which partakes of both miracle and violence by "endorsing the idea of an incessant modernization," and thereby "remaining committed to the emancipator goals of the European enlightenment," while also, attempting to claim themselves by the past, so as to reinvent Indian history, (Wakankar 6) would be suggestive of an alternative political space of partial

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[86] C.K. Janu in an interview with Joseph K. Job, "Marichittilla Njhan" ["I Haven't Died"], *Pachakuthira* Monthly, August 2011, 4-11.
[87] Interview of C.K. Janu by Rekha Raj, "We Need to Build Huts all over Kerala, Again and Again, " trans. K.C. Bindu, *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India, Dossier-1: Tamil and Malayalam*, K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu, eds. (Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011) 431-451.

hegemonies. This, considering the facts, ought to happen in spite of, rather than because of the bourgeoisie, as Bagchi points out,

> In India, … if multicultural democracy, with equality of rights for everybody is to win through, it will be largely in spite of, rather than because of, the Indian bourgeoisie as they are culturally, socially and politically constituted today. (Bagchi 247)

The communist ancestry, which had helped the Malayalis to get away from the "darkness" of a caste past and made them modern citizens, forms part of the popular lore in Kerala. However, indices like high levels of literacy—adult literacy including female literacy—low infant mortality rates, declining birth rates, better health and education services even with a very low per capita income, which marked the Kerala model, was based on an unequal assessment of social relations that benefitted only a certain section of the society. This alludes to the elite hegemony that communism in Kerala partakes of:

> The middle class articulates the hegemony of the ruling-bloc. It both expresses this hegemony by translating the relations of domination into the language of legitimization and b) mediates the relationship between classes within the ruling bloc, as well as between this bloc and other classes. (Deshpande 139)

Thus, this upper/middle caste(s) middle class that had been in the making from the 1930s itself was to transform itself into the legitimate subjects of the "Kerala model of development." The political of Kerala was to manifest the hegemony of this reconstituted public. The Kerala model of development was to address this section of the society, which, because of its cultural capital acquired through the possession of land, emerged from the service sector in Kerala. The popular in Kerala may be understood to be one that addresses and caters to these model citizens, who occupy a

secular, casteless space which produces their progressiveness as one with a history of more than 50 years of communism. The narrative of class-ist communism helps cover the casteism involved in its very formation by constructing itself as a modular political of the secular middle class Malayali, who is free and do not have to interact with the "pre-modern" categories of caste, religion etc.

Digitalisation/Immortalisation of the Class-ist Past

In 2009, Thrissur witnessed the grand climax of a five year long programme called *Ente Malayalam* (*My Malayalam*),[88] launched by Malayala Manorama (in 2003) as part of celebrating the 50th anniversary of Kerala state formation. The program, intended to revive people's interest in Malayalam literature, had a definitive finale with the release of *M.T. yude Lokanghal*, a database of some 65000 digital pages of M.T. Vasudevan Nair's (from now on M.T.) works, including his literary and cinematic contributions. The first of its kind, on any writer or any other, *M.T. yude Lokanghal* (*M.T.'s Worlds*) entered the *Limca Books of Records* in the year 2010 for being the first and largest digital compilation about any writer's work. The promotional song of *Ente Malayalam* was made by AMMA, Association of Malayali Movie Artists. The Kerala that gets imagined in and through the database is reminiscent of the feudal ambience that M.T. targets through his narratives, with the image of the tharavadu looming in the background. This event may be viewed as a definitive one that cashes in on the nostalgias of a hegemonic middle-class popular in Kerala.

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[88] The Manorama group of publications had come up with a 10-point 'save the language' document, by a four-member panel which included S. Guptan Nair, Dr. Sukumar Azhikode, M.T. Vasudevan Nair and O.N.V. Kurup, marking the conclusion of a year-long Ente Malayalam campaign in 2003. The programme was launched as part of safeguarding the beauty, grace and vitality of Malayalam language. http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-10-27/thiruvananthapuram/27191801_1_malayala-manorama-s-guptan-nair-year-long-ente-malayalam-campaign; accessed on 16/10/201: for details on the digital compilation on M.T.

The cultural realm seems to have reproduced the alienation in the social realm in an unprecedented way, validating the hegemony of the middle class of the region. *M.T. yude Lokanghal* is seems to suggests an imagery of a Malayalam literary history that was based on an eulogizing "of Manipravala poetry, which basically extolled the mental decadence and historical discontents of the brahminical caste," a continuation of which could be found in the upper caste world that M.T. recreates in his works, and which gets celebrated as the Malayali world. *Ente Malayalam*, through immortalizing M.T., is suggestive of the processes of memory of a feudal past that is narrativized in and through the works of M.T. not only in the literary realm, but also in the visual media. His works are suggestive of a feudal nostalgia, narrativized in tharavadus, self-suffering males, selfless females and the "others"—Pulayars and Parayars— who quite often nameless, work away at the narrative fringes in kitchens, forests, etc. Darley, talking about the power structures involved in digitalized reality, emphasizes that the digital genres and expressions take place within, and draws upon an entertainment tradition that precedes it (Darley 58).

> There exists a strong pre-occupation with the production of representations of a second degree or second order, a pre-occupation … with the simulation of prior or already existing modes and forms of representations ... computer imaging looks not so much to the world itself, as to already existing techniques of mediation, together with their attendant forms and styles. Prior forms, genres and works constitute a referential basis or ground for copying, acts of manipulation and recombination, and efforts aimed at further "perfecting" and simulating the already mediated. (Darley 74-75)

C. Aiyyappan's response to the comparatively slender volume of work that he had produced talks volumes regarding the attitude of the public towards Dalit writings.

K.M. Sheriff says that at least two decades before the publication of "Vazhakula" (1936), by Changhampuzha, was hailed as the first poem to protest against Dalit oppression, poets like Karuppan, Poykayil Yohannan, or Kumara Guru, had stated their writing, with the latter one which explicitly proclaimed the ideology of the *Prathyaksha Raksha Daive Sabha*, a dissenting sect which had split from the Mar Thoma church.[89] Dalit poetry went into an eclipse with the ascendency of the Progressive Literary Movement (PLM) and re-emerged only in the 1980s of the last century. Caste and gender as determining categories were pushed under the carpet by the PLM which considered class as the sole basis for discussions on social inequality and marginalization.

M.T.-yude Lokanghal, thereby is seems to suggest the digitalizing of a golden age of feudalism in his works, thereby eternalizing a golden past into being, in a present that is ominously threatened with political "unrests" and demands for democratization at various levels. Digital media invigorates the appeal of a visual culture in sustaining cultural realities. It is suggestive of a transition from a linguistic turn to a pictorial turn in constructing the social field into being (Mitchell 20). The whole world is conceived and grasped as a picture, where what visualizing does is not to replace linguistic discourse, but to make the truth suggested by it more comprehensible, quicker and more effective. Martin Heidegger says that "a world picture … does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as a picture…. The world picture does not change from an earlier medieval one into a modern one, but rather the fact that the world becomes picture (Heidegger 129-30).

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[89] K.M. Sheriff, "Preface to Writing in the Dark: A Selection of Malayalam Dalit Poetry in English Translation"; www.scribd.com/doc/30465065/Intro-Dalit-Poetry-in-Malayalam; accessed on 30/05/2011.

The Cinematic Popular

The Indian melodrama has been a matter of serious discussions in terms of the ways in which the form attempts to contest the modern structures that Western realism imposes on it technically and culturally. Studies on melodrama may be said to follow three trajectories—one which considers it as the locus of the not-modern traditional form (as in Chidananda Das Gupta), a second one which looks at it as a modern traditional form (suggests tradition as rooted in the modern as in Ashish Nandy) and a third one which considers it as a traditional modern form (suggests modern as rooted in tradition as M. Madhava Prasad, Ravi S. Vasudevan, Ashish Rajadhakshsay, etc).[90] Vasudevan points out "the need for a fresh formulation of an agenda for film studies, where the categories of the traditional and the modern need to be placed more contextually against the historical and institutional conditions which produce these oppositions (8)."

Madhava Prasad perceives the Indian melodramatic mode of production as being part of a heterogeneous form of manufacture, as opposed to the homogeneity that may be found in the realist mode, defining Hollywood.[91] Cinema is a structured co-existence in specific combinations, of several modes of production. Since the social form is everything but unchanging, the elements of the combination is always open to change. This transitory nature of the cinema form is quintessential in understanding it as an allegory of a political based on formal subsumption. Cinema does not reproduce "reality," i.e., the developmentalist rhetoric of a middle class nation state, but rather

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[90] Ravi S. Vasudevan discusses how both Das Gupta and Ashish Nandy, are based on a Western rationale of understanding the "modern," the former looking at modern as the locus of personality that is submissive to authority, while the latter perceiving it as a symbolic enactment of "traditional" society's self-exclusion from the domain of instrumentalist rationality; See Ravi. S. Vasudevan, ed., "Introduction," Making Meaning in Indian Cinema (New Delhi: OUP, 2000) 5-6.

[91] See M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: OUP, 1998).

allegorizes it by reforming itself. Foregrounding the political dimension of the problem of the textual form, Prasad adds that the allegorical text serves to register the instability of their ground of practice and signification, as well as the continuing possibility of struggles over the state, or struggles to reconstitute the state (9). Popular cinema becomes significant in "constituting such a new representational space," which "provides a glimpse into a process of transformation that, instead of coming in with alternative modes, and trying to establish parallel, competing segments, works on and appropriates the existing mode, bidding to replace the dominant rather than wrest a space beside it" (146).

Probably such a perspective tends to stretch the concept of cinema as a social history rather than a cultural one,[92] a trajectory that seems clearly charted out in Ashish Rajadhyaksha's cinema effects, "a domain of textually enabled productions that are as much "productions" as any in the cinema, but which apparently bypass the standard paradigm of industrial production wedded to the box office and linked with its economies of narrative efficiency," Melodrama, withholds in "a peculiarly unsuspenseful way," such affective spill overs. The heterogeneity of productions ought to be seen "not as phenomena belonging to traditions either outside those of or insufficiently subsumed into narration, but—as … 'cinema-effects' show—*within* the domain of an expanded narrative activity itself" (Rajadhyaksha 41).

The reforms that the cinematic popular in Kerala underwent during the 1990s would be significant in understanding the kind of political that it sought to allegorize. It exhibited a constriction at the level of masculinity, as part of redefining and

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[92] Prasad suggested the importance of perceiving cinema as a part of social history rather than cultural history in his paper presented at C. Pracsis International Seminar on South Indian Film Cultures, 13-14 Oct. 2012.

reinstituting the hegemonic Hindu male, the subject of its patriarchal, modular political that was implicated in the discussions around caste at that point of time. The national articulations of caste that happened during the early 1990s following the Mandal implementations, was to have resonances in the cinematic popular, even as the modular political in Kerala maintained a meaningful silence. The constriction was to be symptomatic of the new Brahminical Hinduism, apart from other tendencies, through which the cinematic popular of Kerala was to negotiate the discontents that caste as a political category raised.

The reform meted out in the realm of the masculinity during this period was to prove the conviction of the cinematic popular to reinstate the modular political. The hegemonic male of Malayalam cinema, through reinstitution, becomes the one with a class past, and a beneficiary of the modular political. The class past reaffirms the pastness of feudalism and serves as an alibi for a casteless present, which is a pre-requisite for the modern. Tied to the space of a communist past, any choices for "modernity from below," that were "freed from the past and located in the anticipatory," were unthinkable (Pandian, Nation from its Margins 306). Such freedom from classical pasts, according to M.S.S. Pandian are quite integral as the dominant historiography of the secular nation tries to fossilise alternative renderings of modernity, which in fact could be seen in the attempts of E.V. Ramaswamy. However, the hegemonic masculinity of Malayalam cinema is constructed as the heir of a class past rather than a populist past, which would be looked at in the third chapter, with respect to the films of M.T., one of the most popular film makers in Kerala. The male/subject of M.T. films, arguably, have been handpicked from the Nair-based class history of Communism, where the solicitous male is the

representative of the Nair communist, who, through the agro-based reforms, was to become the agent of change and modernity in Kerala.

The fourth chapter would engage with the ways in which the realm of masculinity was to reconstitute itself, by constricting its heterogeneous manifestations. The reforms at the realms of masculinity in the 1990s was to reveal the homogenous makeup of the patriarchal political as it quickly sought to settle the disharmonies that caste rhetoric brought up by doing away with alternative masculine models suggested by the figure of the villain and thereby augmenting the concept of a normative unitary hegemonic masculinity. However such redefinitions of masculinity were to implicate the Thiyya caste community in various ways.

Chapter Three

Secular Martyrs: North Malabar in M.T.'s Films

"Appootta, you've asked me so many questions now. Now let me ask you one question. What will you be when you grow up?"
"A martyr." (Mukundan 155)

The desire of Appoottan or Appukuttan, the 15-year-old son of an ex-Naxalite, one of the characters in *Kesavante Vilapangal*, a modernist novel by M. Mukundan, to become a martyr, is inspired by E.M.S., whom he has never met but remains enamored by. The contingency that a specific historical context imparts to E.M.S. is eternalized by the character Appukuttan and the writer who attempts to relive it. The desire for martyrdom is suggestive of how this contingent "reality of the world" is transformed "into an image of the world," and History is naturalized (Barthes 155). As the novel says, even a child (in Kerala) is not free from prejudices and has a sense of martyrdom lurking behind his "innocence and simplicity." This chapter would look at how the myth of martyrdom, aligned with the narrative of class-ist Communism based in North Malabar, becomes history and nature at once, over-determining the reproductions of the masculine in the cinematic popular of Kerala, especially in the films of M.T. Vasudevan Nair.

M.T.'s works,[93] both literary and cinematic, have been consistently popular for over six decades, suggestive as they are of (re)presenting a nostalgic past, which

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[93] From 1967 (*Iruttinte Athmavu*) to 2009 (*Pazhassi Raja*), M.T. has been an undeniable presence in the National and state film award scenarios. He has directed seven films, written scripts for around 45 films, many of them based on his own stories, apart from a documentary on Takazhi and a teleserial based on his own novel *Naluketu*. He has won several national and state awards including the President's gold medal for *Nirmalyam*. He was awarded the Jnanapith award in 1996 (*Randamoozham*),

guarantees them a market of instant hits. Their nostalgic rendering of an idyllic rural space, peopled by gullible fatalists and bordered by temples and rivers, seems to have been constructed on a space that has already been redeemed and resolved of its conflicts. The pastness of feudalism and its atrocities, entrenched in the rhetoric of developmentalism, is however reproduced in the narratives of martyrdom of the doomed hero. What I argue is that the feudal spaces that find representation in his films look back earnestly and get mileage from a class communist past. His Valluvanadan scapes and language thus go back to a class communist past, based in North Malabar for their validation and augmentation. North Malabar recurs in M.T.'s films as a desirable space as far as his males are concerned—it gives them the opportunity to play out their roles of the solicitous male, who as a husband, father, freedom fighter etc., sacrifice their lives and happiness for the realisation of a the family [*Oppol* (*Sister*; Dir. K.S. Sethumadhavan, 1980); *Varikuzhi* (*Elephant Pit*; Dir. M.T. Vasudevan Nair, 1982), *Bandhanam* (*Confinement*; Dir. M.T. Vasudevan Nair, 1978) etc.] as well as for the society *Pazhassi Raja* (Dir. Hariharan, 2009). This chapter would examine how the concept of martydom that defines the normative male in M.T. is part of renunciating his own traditional self and defining himself as a past less modern. For the purpose I would look at some of M.T.'s films that locate the Kannur central jail as a significant site in their narratives. The jail presents itself as alternative to the tharavadu, with the prisoners representing the modern, male martyr, both of which are drawn into a jingoistic narrative of ruing and ruining the traditional/past as well as actions of sacrifice in the building up of a modern/present. The fatherless heroes, by virtue of being protectors of chastity of their women, propel themselves as well as society out of a feudal order of things. The said process

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as well as the Kendra (*Kaalam*, 1970) and Kerala (*Swargam Thurakkunna Samayam*, 1986; *Nalukettu* 1970) Sahithya Akadmey awards.

necessitates a sacrifice of their selves and happiness. The burden they are compelled to face on account of two aspects—the lack of a "modern" father as well as the need to determine themselves as protectors of women produces the normative Malayali hero of the cinematic popular in Kerala. The chapter would look at how the patriarchal political, with its basis on a class-ist Communist struggle based in North Malabar, serves as impetus for such representations.

The first part would analyse five films of M.T.—*Olavum Theeravum* (Dir. P.N. Menon, 1970), *Adiyozhukkukal* (Dir. I.V Sasi, 1984), *Panchagni* (Dir. T Hariharan, 1986), *Sadayam* (Dir. Sibi Malayil, 1992) and *Parinayam* (Dir. T Hariharan, 1994)—to look at how the narrative of martyrdom invokes a dominant masculine model. It would look at how these narratives represent the jail as an alternative to the pre modern time suggested by the space of the (Nair) tharavadu, where the communist ideas were sown, and the convicts represent those who fight for the modernization of a community, leading it from darkness to light. These agents of modernity strive hard to establish the pastness of feudalism through two ways—by protecting their (or 'others') women from prostitution and by a denial of the fathers, the paternal relics—as both constituted the remnants of a traditional matrilineal society that ought to be discarded in the sojourn to modernity. These two aspects will be discussed in the second and third part of the chapter respectively.

The Male-Martyr: Things Fall Apart so that the Centre can Hold
In the article "Things Fall Apart: The Cinematic Rendition of Agrarian Landscape in South India," Dilip M. Menon argues that in M.T.'s films, the state is significant in its absence and the community is present only in its imminent dissolution (330). This

significant absence is brought about by the hero ideal who stands in between the "decaying older trope of masculinity and the resurgent, immoral new one" and hence sows the seeds of his own destruction (Things Fall Apart 329). "The state-apparatus-the time of the modern-is kept at bay … through the agency of the hero, who is present only through his absence, i.e., "through his sacrifice at the hands of a cruel fate, that is beyond their control" (328). However, their absence through martyrdom serves in their over-determined presence as the dominant masculinity of the region. The state apparatus is hence anticipated, and not kept at bay, through the figure of the sacrificial male. The communitarian form that justice assumes often translates into the justice of modernity where a masculinity that carries the seeds of his "destruction" is the only means of the rejuvenation of his self as well as his community on the path towards modernity.

In his biographical study on Hemingway, *Earnest Hemingway-Oru Mughavura* (*Earnest Hemingway-An Introduction*) M.T. asserts the idea of death defeating death. "If men come to this world with so much of courage, the world has to destroy them. Just for the sake of destroying. But in such spaces of destruction they gain more strength," the lines from Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*, the quote with which M.T. begins the study, says it all. Masculinity and destruction are never antagonistic; rather one only suggests the other. Destruction only serves the purpose of enhancing maleness. According to M.T., bitterness towards life, which was Hemingway's predominant emotion, represented his unfailing defiance of spirit, although self-controlled, against the harshness that life showered upon him. The words of

Santiago[94] becomes as he says, "Man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (93). A male becomes masculine only by facing destructions, rather than hiding away from them. The sea which is referred to as a female, is characterized expressly by its lack of self-control; "if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them" (Hemingway 30). As Santiago is hurt while trying to fight the fish, he tells himself, "suffer like a man or a fish" (92). Suffering is often a marker of self control, which is the aim of masculinity and which enables him to exhibit his abilities to fight the forces of destruction and emerge triumphant and undefeated.

A responsible male, who suffers from the travails and tribulations of life, is the definition of the normative Malayali masculinity. Agony and suffering are central to his making, as well as important for claiming the secular domain of the modern nation. This trait of martyrdom has been a reassuring as well as a recurring one as far as the normative Malayali film hero is concerned. The film narratives interpellate the hegemonic masculinity by holding the male accountable for the various atrocities happening to fellow beings around him, and for the prevention of which, he has to sacrifice his own life. Although most of the males in M.T. films are cast as martyrs in one sense or the other, as they are sinisterly drawn into insanity, deceit, sacrifice etc., in certain other films the very identity of a modern citizen provokes the necessity of martyrdom, in order to protect their subordinates, especially the women from their eventual debauchery. For the purpose of understanding the narrative of the martyr, I would look at five films of M.T., *Olavum Theeravum* (Dir. P.N. Menon, 1970), *Adiyozhukku* (Dir. I.V. Sasi, 1984), *Panchagni* (Dir. T. Hariharan, 1986), *Sadayam* (Dir. Sibi Malayil, 1992) and *Parinayam* (Dir. T. Hariharan, 1994). In all the five

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[94] An ageing fisherman in Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), who is the embodiment of vigorous masculinity.

films, the space of martyrdom is the Kannur Central jail, either as reference or as the place of action. The narrative of the would-be-martyr, based in the jail in Kannur is consonant with a spirit of progress which converts both into spaces of nascent modernity, with the former as its agent, while the latter serving as its catalyst. These films are taken as metaphorical symbols of the event of modernity to be translated as sub-narratives of not only insanity, deceit, etc., but the hegemonic Nair vision that M.T. conjures in his films. His characters seem imprisoned in their own tharavadus. The latter often takes the form of a prison made up of barbaric customs, daunting and harrowing to the male protagonists. There is a curious way in which the Kannur Central jail and the tharavadu are represented in M.T.'s films. The former is often constructed as an alternative to the tharavadu, and suggesting the inauguration of the Nair male into the modern order of things. My attempt in this chapter would be to focus on how these narratives of martyrdom are often based on a renunciation or destruction of the self for the making of the modern identity. The renunciation of their traditional past, which is imagined to be a lack, is indispensible for the building of the modern masculinity.

The recurring trope of the Kannur Central jail in these films would be important in understanding the construction of the modern male (as martyr) in M.T.s films. While *Panchagni* and *Sadayam* give a glimpse into the jail and the life within, the other three films refer to the jail in similar terms. These films construct the Kannur central jail as "the place where males go." The jails are more the realm of heroes than of villains and criminals, the fact remaining that the hero who goes inside never returns. While constructing the prisoner as a hero on the one hand, it pursues a narrative of victimization of women as a reason that leads to the imprisonment of the former.

Except in *Olavum Theeravum*, where the hero is "denied" any opportunity to go to jail, all the other films follow the same pattern.

In *Olavum Theeravum*, the Kannur Central jail remains "a distant dream" for both the hero (Bapputti) and the villain as none of them make it to jail. Both of them talk about killing the other and going to jail, but it remains at the level of rhetoric. The hero is neither able to protect the chastity of his love (Nabisa), nor is he able to take revenge on the villain. The jail, "which is the place for men" remains unreachable to the hero as well as the villain, both of them Muslims. In *Adiyozhukukal*, the narrative begins with the return of Karunan, from Kannur Central jail, where he was imprisoned after being cheated by his friend (who later turns out to be the villain) Kumaran.

The film ends with Karunan and Gopi—handcuffed by the police for having killed the villain—in an attempt to save their heartthrob from becoming a prostitute. *Panchagni* is another film which is about Indira, a Naxal who is out from prison on parole. She had been serving the jail term for having killed Avarachan, a landlord who had raped, impregnated and killed a tribal woman. The film ends with Indira returning to jail by killing another man (Rajan) who rapes a maid of her friend Sharada. She commits her second murder when her friend Rasheed has quite painstakingly obtained a remission order. *Sadayam* again is about an artist, Sathyanathan, who is being sentenced to death for having murdered a man, who had raped his lover, as well as two children to prevent them from becoming prostitutes. *Parinayam*, once again has a reference to the prison, although quite out of plot. Kunjhunni, a social reformer, compares the widow Unimaya—who is subsequently cast out from the community for entering into a relationship with Madhavan—with the prisoners of Kannur Central jail, who are

awaiting their death penalty. They seem eager for books, a reference to their progressive spirit.

These films provide a totally different picture of a jail as compared to the popular imaginations associated with it. In *Adiyozhukkukal* and *Panchagni* there are references to the changes in the quality of food (as different from before) that is being provided in the jail, while *Parinayam* constructs the jail inmates as vociferous readers, suggesting the progressive and peaceful ambience in the prisons. This is quite in contrast to the jail life as is represented in other films where the jail is often a frightening place associated with brutal punishments, and as a site of deviant sexualities. This is the image that is associated with the Kannur Central jail in films like *Yathra* (*Journey* Dir. Balu Mahendra, 1985).

The Prison as a Modern Institution of Power

According to Foucault, the technologies of modern power are localized within institutions like prison, school, hospital etc. confinement was one of the solution to the crisis brought about by socio economic crisis and demographic changes that the Western world was exposed to during the 17th and 18th centuries. As Foucault says,

> confinement organizes into a complex unity new forms of reaction to the economic problems of unemployment and idleness, a new ethic of work, also a new dream of the city, where moral obligation was joined to civil law, within the authoritarian forms of constraints. (1973: 46)

Prisons in that sense exemplifies the modern, disciplinary power in its earliest form, which was later on to become deinstitutionalized, lead on to bio-power and the disciplined bodies of the nation state. This chapter would look at how the

representation of the Kannur central prison in M.T.s appears as a preferable alternative for the power structure suggested by the traditional tharavadu. It suggests that the nature of the modern that was in the making in Kerala, was conceptualized on a complete break with the past and the invention of a rootless modern, imitating Western models.

Even while emphasizing on the capillary nature of power that encapsulates each and every realm of a society and those living in it, Foucault also points out that resistance to the relations of power shouldn't be missed out. In fact, resistances are "more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised" (*Discipline and Punish* 142). However, what we find in the representation of prisons in M.T. is a renunciation of the self at the behest of modern power, which is self-destructive. Power offers technologies of the self, which can be adopted by individuals who choose to become involved in the programme of subjectification or who contest governmental practice through counterconducts. Technologies of the self permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. The disciplinary nature of modern power can make one a creator as well as a martyr, the former through the spirit of resistance and the latter by a blind conformity to power. What finds representation in M.T.s films is a martyrdom of the latter kind.

Talking about the two sides of modern power Foucault describes that martyrdom or renunciation of the self, which is destructive, comes from the Christian practice of

Exomologesis, which was a ritual of recognizing oneself as a sinner and a penitent, and had as its model martyrdom, the sinner had to "kill" himself through ascetic macerations.[95] The man here is the aggregate of manifested penitential behavior, of self-punishment as well as of self-revelation. Self-punishment and the voluntary expression of the self are bound together. Penance is the effect of change, of rupture with self, past and world. Penitence of sin doesn't have as its target the establishing of an identity but serves instead to mark the refusal of the self, the breaking away from self. It represents a break with one's past identity. These ostentatious gestures have the function of showing the truth of the state of being the sinner. Self-revelation is at the same time self-destruction (ibid). Whether through martyrdom or through obedience to a master, disclosure of self is the renunciation of one's own self. As Foucault says,

> To be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration …. Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being'; it compels him to face the task of producing himself. (Foucault, What is Enlightenment 37)

M.T.'s jails nevertheless remain as peaceful spaces of premeditations, with cordial and conceding officials and demanding prisoners. The image of the culprit as martyr recurs in all these films. The prison is less a place of punishment, but one of satyagrahis, who sacrifice their lives for the society. However, the evocation of the

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[95] Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," Martin, L.H. et al., *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (London: Tavistock, 1988) 16-49; http://foucault.info/ documents/ foucault. technologiesOfSelf.en.html; accessed on 20/12/12.

positive image of the Kannur Central jail may be seen to be quite misleading considering its significance in the class-ist Communist discourse.

The prison is suggestive of the modern realm that the would-be-martyr willingly submits himself to. It is a calm place in the midst of motion and upheavals in the society outside, an academy of learning (*Parinayam*) and a realm of intense friendship (*Sadayam*). Apparently free of any mundane responsibilities, the jail appears in these narratives as a space of camaraderie of sorts. The self here is constituted through obedience rather than re action, leading to a self-destruction and a sacrifice of the self. This accords with the Christian notion of renunciation which believes that self was not something to be made, but be sacrificed. There is no disobedience to a code of rules or rather an aesthetics of existence that resists the capillary power structures of modern power. The Kannur Central jail thus functions as a means of reclaiming a modern identity which is based on a renunciation of the self and one's own communitarian past. Given the role played by the Central jail in Kannur, in the making of the class community of communism in the region, it is understandable as to how the Central jail that figures in M.T. is not Viyyur, the one which is in Thrissur and nearer to M.T.s own domicile, but that it should be Kannur, which is in the northern most part of Malabar.

Class-ist Communism and the Kannur Central prison

The central jail built by the British in 1869[96] in Pallikunnu, Kannur, to quarantine the prisoners of Malabar from the threats posed by the contagious small pox and cholera, spreading rapidly among the prisoners in other regional jails of Kannur and

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[96] K. Balakrishnan, 2008, *Kannur Kotta* [*Kannur Fort*] (Kottayam: DC Books, 2010). 231.

Thalassery, was however to witness various incidents, formative as well as destructive. A popular imagination is one that is associated with its formative history, serving as a space for beginning a radical wing within the Congress, which was later to lead to the rise and consolidation of the Communist party in Kerala. As memoirs and autobiographies about the prison suggest, the life in quarantine was to prove beneficial, at least for the many for whom the lessons learnt would help a long way in redefining themselves as modern subjects of the would-be modern nation. The lessons of dissidence, that the prisoners were to be acquainted with in the prison, were to lead to the CSP in 1934 and the Communist party in 1939 as per the historicizations of Communism in the region.

The memoirs and autobiographies of several Communists relive the days and months spent in the jail as moments of learning and schooling. Here the early lessons of satyagraha and hunger strikes were learnt. This imaginary forms part of the construction a class-ist Communist history, which narrates it as an emergent tributary of the nationalist movement. This accounts for the narratives of the birth of Communism in Kerala by Robin Jeffrey as a movement emerging as part of the Civil Disobedience movement in the 1930s, and one which gave an opportunity to the Nair masculinity—driven to a crisis in the face of the Marumakkathayam law of 1933—to reinstate themselves in the social arena as agents of modernity in Kerala.[97] K.K.N. Kurup says that there was no consolidated Communist group in Kerala before the 1930s, although there were a number of aborted attempts towards the same. *Swadeshabimani's* biography of Karl Marx had come out in 1912, while portions of the *Communist Manifesto* were secretly translated and propagated by a group of

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[97] See chapter 1 for further discussion.

nationalists like Ponnara, N.C. Shekhar etc in 1931, who created a Communist league in Trivandrum. But none of these lasted long. A strong left based movement and its leaders, were those who were influenced by Marxism after the Civil Disobedience movement in the 1930s (Kurup, *Karshshaka Samaranghal* 9). It is significant that the Central prison in Kannur remains a predominant space in these narratives.

Despite, the narratives of sufferings like difficult labor conditions, bad food, etc., (Murali 49-53) that the prisoners were to put up with, which became narratives of inceptive imaginings, supporting and providing a futuristic glance into the self-renouncing satyagrahi that a Communist ought to be, most of the veterans records the beneficial ambience that the jail had provided as far as learning and meeting people and getting introduced to new ideas were concerned. E.M.S. in his *How I Became a Communist* remarks, "it will not be an exaggeration to say that the seeds of the left-wing Congress—that was later formed in Kerala—and the Congress Socialist Movement, were laid in Cannanore jail and the one individual responsible for it was Tiwari. It was he who consolidated and gave a shape to the leftist tendencies of the Sathyagrahis then in jail" (Namboothiripad, *How I Became a Communist* 133). Chantavila Murali, in his biography of P. Krishnapillai, talks about how—following the Civil Disobedience movement—the jail was to become the meeting place of satyagrahis from all over the country. "With the upsurge of the convicted satyagarahis, the jail has become a Congress city in itself. Calls of "Jai," and national songs can be heard echoing inside the jail all the time" (51).[98] A.K.G. discusses how the meeting with those convicted in the Lahore conspiracy and those of the militant Bengal movement, who had been bought to Kannur jail for fear of keeping them in

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[98] Quoted in Chanthavila Murali, *Sakhavu P Krishnapillai: A Concise Biographical Study* (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2008).

the jails in Bengal (A.K.G. 1980: 101), led to their sauntering into Communism. The young Malayali satyagrahis were advised in their revolutionary reading by Bengali veterans of the "terrorist" organization Anushilan Samithi; many of the recommended books were available in the jails (Jeffrey, Matriliny, Marxism 87).

For several of them, therefore, jail served as a university for learning Communism. "To me," wrote A.K.G., "jail life was like hostel life. One could study there" (1980: 86). Namboothiripad during his time in jail wrote four small manuscripts in Malayalam on the French, Russian, Chinese and Egyptian nationalist and revolutionary movements (87). This learning was to show up in the various struggles of protest that were initiated by the satyagrahis (future comrades) in the jail.

Kayyur and the Augmentation of Class-ist Communism in Kerala

Another popular Communist imaginary associated with the Central jail has to do with the martyrs of the Kayyur protest. Most of the narratives of Communist histories memorializes the way in which the otherwise unflappable. P. Krishnapillai was unable to control his emotions as he went to visit his four comrades in jail. It was to be a rare moment when those who went to console the prisoners had to be consoled instead. The four martyrs were representative of the indomitable Communist spirit of the Communists, undaunted even at the face of imminent death.[99] This was to be suggestive of the second phase, after CSP acquired recognition as the Communist party, when once again the jails were to be filled with the peasants in revolt.

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[99] The reference to the four fearless men finds mention in most of the narratives of communism which includes histories (by K.K.N. Kurup etc), biographies (of P. Krishnapillai Chanthavila Murali) and autobiographies (of E.M.S., A.K.G. etc).

The Kayyur incident was to be a break through event in the history of the Communist party in North Malabar and is symbolic of its first major militant political intervention, after its ideological and political coming-into-being in 1939. The events of March 12, 1941 in the village of Kayyur, in Canara district, was to mark the finale of years-long agrarian political activity in the region, initiated by the *Abhinav Bharata Yuvak Sangham*, under the leadership of A.V. Kunjhambu, V.V. Kunjhambu, etc., that had already politicized the village and prepared it for its anti-imperial struggles.[100] The youth league was formed, directly inspired by the leaders of Anushilan, whom they had met when in Central jail and the Karshaka Sangham of the region had grew out of this youth league, which, for P. Krishna Pillai became too aggressive in nature, compelling him to ask its leaders to use it for the larger benefit of the society.[101]

The Kayyur incident, which led to the death of a policeman, started off from the ban imposed on the AKMS, following conflicts between the police and the peasants.[102] It marked a phase in which, the transition from CSP to the Communist party translated itself into militancy in dealing with the police. When the Chirakkal Raja[103] tried to export paddy from Karivellur to his palace in Chirakkal, the Karshaka Sangham under the leadership of A.V. Kunjhambu demanded the king distribute his grains among the

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[100] E.M.S. talks about how it was part of the leadership provided by that organisation, established with an aim to direct the younger generation into the paths of revolution, that led to the formation of the Karshaka Movement in Chirakkal and Kasargode Taluks then;"quoted in Chantavila Murali, *Sakhavu P. Krishnapillai: A Concise Biographical Study* (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2008) 430.

[101] Kunjambu and the activists of *Abhinav Bharat Yuvak Sangh* planned to kill the Malabar collector twice, but their attempts failed. Nevertheless, they saved the gun for a better opportunity. Krishnapillai somehow came to know of this and decided to bring A.V. Kunjhambu and the others who were moving adventurously to the right path; qtd in Chanthavila Murali, *Sakhavu P. Krishnapillai: A Concise Biographical Study* (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2008) 430.

[102] A ban on the procession of the peasants demanding concessions on the restrictions led to the observing of an Anti-Repression day on 13 September 1940, which led to violent agitations in Thalasseri, Mattanur and Morazha. There were violent clashes between the peasants and the police, resulting in casualties on both sides. The Karshaka Sangham was banned following which the peasant struggle took a violent turn.

[103] Chirakkal Raja (king of Chirakkal) is the title of the senior most king of the Chirakkal branch (Chirakkal dynasty) of the Palli division of the Kolathiri dynasty of the erstwhile feudal state (nadu) of Kolathunadu in North Malabar.

villagers. The king sought the protection of the Malabar Special Police (MSP), which ultimately led to the death of two—Thidil Kannan and Keenari Kunjhikannan. This led to a protest march, in which a police man, Subbaya, was killed. Following this, four peasant workers were imprisoned and for the first time, the CSP sympathisers were sentenced to death.

The Kayyur incident was the beginning of a militant phase in Communist history. A number of incidents, not unlike the one in Kayyur took place throughout the 1940s. The Karshaka Sangham intervened in Pacheni, Taliparamba and Malappattam, when landlords Appukutty Nair and Aboobacker tried to export paddy (Kurup, *Karshshaka Samaranghal* 40). In 1946, 100s of acres of lands of Karakattidam Nayanar were seized by the Karshaka Sangham (43). Collection of grass from the forest lands often led to conflicts between the protestors and MSP. What was characteristic of these protests was that it was largely based on issues of dry land and forest land, and collection of resources from them. The peasant movements of this phase were largely based on *punam krishi* (shift cultivation), rather than wet land paddy cultivation. K.K.N. Kurup asserts that the right to *punam* farming was one of the basic grounds of contestation in the peasant struggles that were to happen after the 1940s although several protests for the same had defined the actions of the Karshaka Sangham in the formative years of 1930-41 as well (40-45).

The nature of these peasant struggles was such that these never invited the questioning of the authority of the landlords, which would imply that they never really contested the very category of landlordism. It in actuality only sought to revoke the excess powers that the landlords acquired in the 1940s. The Malabar Tenancy

Committee report, published in 1940, reinforced the rights of the landlords on waste lands. The state gave the landlords greater control over waste lands and forests, beginning with the recommendations of the tenancy committees of 1940 and culminating in the Preservation of Private Forests Act of 1949. Moreover, these lands were exempted from taxes, unless they were given for cultivation to the tenants. The landlord's refusal to grant permission on these lands hinged on this exemption, apart from the fear of claim to permanent rights to the land, once it was given to the cultivators.[104] Following this, several measures were taken to curtail the customary rights over these lands which included collection of manure and wood from these lands. This created serious problems of existence for the tenants, who were already racked by the decrease in cash crop productions. This peculiar order of things wherein the struggles were never for land per se, but rather were for rights on land, proved beneficial for the leaders, most of them belonging to branches of tharavadus that were impoverished, in as much as it provided them opportunities of leadership at a time when their cultural standing was questioned.[105] The Communist party, built as part of the nationalist movement, was to impart the Communists a halo of saviors of the mass of uneducated peasants, with the class status strategically covering up the leadership's caste interests in the movement.

These peasant movements were to become part of the history of Kerala, in its transition to a modern state. Balakrishnan asserts that in the 1930s and the 1940s, the

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[104] Most of these forest lands served as monetizable commodity to the many Syrian Christian migrants from Travancore, which was to affect the land holding pattern as well as the land use rights in these parts. However, there are also arguments that the communist movement forced the landlords to sell the lands to settlers; See V.J. Vaghese, "Memory of History: A Study of Peasant Migration in Kerala from Travancore to Malabar," Diss. University of Hyderabad, 2006.

[105] The Nairs had to face a group of Thiyyas in North Malabar as they were mobilizing themselves into a modern middle class, working in the various capacities of translators, academicians etc., under the British, apart from the various business endeavors; see chapter 4 for further discussion on the topic.

jail got filled with the brave who fought against landlordism and feudalism and in the freedom struggle. "It was in Malabar, especially in Chirrakal Taluk, where the innumerable peasant struggles that made Kerala, what it is today occurred. The jail became the site of several great political classes and awareness classes. Kannur prison was to become the prison of warriors" (K. Balakrishnan 231). Again, continuing with the history, K. Balakrishnan says, "Just as the Mappila *rioters* were harassed in the 1920s, the Communist *revolutionaries* were cruelly harassed in the 1940s (232).[106]

There is a significant way in which Malabar is imagined in this narrative. This works at the twin levels of redefining the region in terms of a legitimate peasant movement as well as a Communist movement—the former at the cost of "other" communitarian peasant movements that happened in South Malabar (Malabar Rebellion) and the agricultural worker's movement in South Kerala (in 1913, under the leadership of Ayyankali) for instance; and the latter at the cost of a working class ancestry of the Communist party, both integral to the making of a history, the agents of which were not the upper castes. The construction of Malabar as the region of revolutionaries, happens parallel to the relegation of caste/religious communitarian movements to the realm of the pre-modern.

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[106] K. Balakrishnan, in his book *Kannur Kotta*, (*Kannur Fort*) talks about how the Central Jail had been notorious for its cruelties towards the prisoners especially during the Khilafat movement in the 1920s. Following the Khilafat movement, hundreds of people, mostly Muslims, were taken into custody by the British police for participating in the Mappila Revolt, and were hoarded enmasse into the Central jail. The numbers of those who had been beaten up and killed in the jail compound were numerous; (Balakrishnan 231). Dozens were hanged without any trial. A telegram sent to the Thalassery Joint Magistrate from the jail refers to the several Muslims who were killed in the firing that followed a *riot* by the Mappila prisoners in the Central jail. Nine were killed and 12 wounded. The identity of many who were killed remains unknown. This was only one among the gross cruelties that happened in the jail in the 1920s (231); K. Balakrishnan, 2008, *Kannur Kotta* [*Kannur Fort*] (Kottayam: DC Books, 2010).

The terminology (riot) used to refer to the Mappila rebellion and the peasant movements (revolution) initiated by the Communists are suggestive of the different ways in which both get imagined in the region. The distinction that is drawn between the communal rioters and Communist revolutionaries in the above mentioned quote is part of the mainstream historiography on peasant movements. The peasant movement which was to become the basis of the Kerala Model of Development was related to the latter imaginary rather than the former one. This in turn follows from a compartmentalization of religion into the private space in the discourse of modernity, which also accounts for the Marxist interpretation of the Mappila Rebellion as seen in people like K.N. Panikker, who refers to it as both an ideology and opium (Ansari 84). This makes them pre-political—and within the discourse of modernism—pre-modern categories, leading to an inferiorizing of religiosity by an overtly determining class consciousness acquiring great importance as the mature philosophy of the time (85).

M.T. Ansari says that a liberal nationalist historiography is problematic precisely because of its engagement with the discourse of liberalism. What is required is a historiography that opposes the eternal hypocrisies of the liberal ideology that constitutes peasant riots as a jolt to order and peace—not unlike colonial history—by including them into the general framework of nationalism, socialism and independence struggle movements. Thereby, the only categories that seem to be able to plausibly explain them within a nationalist historiography are those of religious fanaticism or Communism (Ansari 87). Rather than looking at community as a social formation preceding feudal and capitalist orders, it ought to be seen in its contemporaneity. According to Ansari, it must probably have been this consciousness

that enabled the Mappila rioters to see things in the regional context in relation to the national and global frameworks. In doing so, they represented, not a community that did not require capital, not a community that faced backwardness, on the contrary, a forward facing community, a community contesting with and for capital. Community is not something that is lost or can be revoked, it is something to be newly born and formed (88).

However, the peasant movement represented by the Kayyur protest marked a "modern" class-based community rather than a communitarian identity. Imagining Communism as primarily an agro-based movement has been an aftermath of such a construction, one that has been described and discussed in the second chapter. Most films (I.V. Sasi's films seem to be exceptions), dealing with Communist history, especially in their songs, revisit such a history like the song "Njanghalu Kouyyum Vayyalellam Njhangaludethakim Painkiliye"("All paddy fields that we plough will be ours"). A recent example would be the popular song in the Sreenivasan hit, *Arabikatha* (Dir. Lal Jose, 2007), which was supposed to be a critique of the present state of Communist party in Kerala. However, here too, what is recreated is a class-ist Communism, where the freedom has been directly associated with the peasant history.

> Our harvests that we grew, with care
> Killed and taken away by the feudalists are now history
> The freedom gained by fighting and flag hoisting
> By men who have gone, sacrificing their own lives.

The political will behind the land reform bill of 1957 was shaped by a class Communism which got its leverage from the peasant movements in North Kerala. According to Kapikkad, these peasant movements, which were never movements of the landless, but rather for security of tenure and reduction of land rent were the movements of the varakkar and pattakar communities who basically expressed the

interests of the savarna middle castes (Kapikkad 470). It was thus by obscuring the realities of caste and by firmly avoiding the socio-political questions raised by these realities, that the Left middle-class intelligentsia was able to create the impression of Kerala as a model for the world (466). The Kerala model becomes axiomatic of a casteless society besides putting forward the formula of a development model which ought not to take into consideration categories like caste that count as "pre-modern."

It was part of the hegemonic attempts of an upper caste community to come to terms with modernity that the Communist discourse based on the imaginary of peasant movements, was to suggest. The Kannur Central jail is symbolic of this class history of Communism which is also part of a Nair historiography that in its turn gets recreated through M.T.'s films. The "inability" of a Muslim to "enter" the "prison" recurs in the novel *Naluketu*, while referring to the villain Baputty, "Though he has been put in jail only once, he believes that 'the Kannur jail is for real men." The readers are left wondering as to whether the jail Baputty has gone to is Kannur Central jail or some other jail as the reference to the Kannur jail remains only his belief. M.T.s tryst with the central jail can be nothing but premeditated justifications, validating the specters of his tharavadu, quite often being visualized and narrativized in terms of a prison as in *Iruttinte Athmavu*, *Naluketu*, etc. Almost all of M.T.'s male characters are martyrs, who stand within the community and are unable to cope up with the modern. Stories of modernist writers like O.V. Vijayan may be seen to be following a similar trajectory. O.V. Vijayan's famous story "Kadal Theerathu," which narrates the story of the travel of a father to meet his son, who has been sentenced to death in Central jail, begins thus,

> When Vellayiyappan began his journey, a mass wailing emerged from the
> house. In the next house, Ammini's and in Muthuravuthan's house which lay
> next, people became sad. In the houses beyond, in the 50-odd houses in
> Pazhuthara, this sorrow and compassion filled. Vellayiyappan is going to
> Kannur. If they had money to get into the train with Vellayiyappan,
> Amminiyedathi, Muthuvannan, Naakelachan, Kombipooshsari, and all others
> from Pazhuthara would have gone to Kannur. The train journey to Kannur was
> for the village Pazhuthara. (Vijayan 555)

The whole village is sympathetic towards Vellayiyappan's journey, allowing one to
assume that it is indeed for the community that Vellayiyappan's son had gone to
prison. The construction of a social reformer is always in terms of a martyr, with
social reform assuming the level of a revolution for which nothing less than a sacrifice
would suffice. The journey to Kannur assumes the form of a journey to martyrdom.[107]
The figure of the martyr enables a pseudo-modern subjectivity based on a nationalist
identity leading to the reinforcement of a communitarian identity rather than the other
way round. Martyrdom was the gateway that led to the linear time and spaces of
modernity, imagining a new masculinity into being, which had its past in the atheistic
rationality of Communism. This accounts for the fact that *Olavum Theeravum* remains
the only film where the male remains ambiguously "non-masculine," even as the girl
he loved is raped by the villain. Although the film refers to the Central jail as the
place for males, the hero's inability to protect the women thus emasculates him,

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[107] P.P. Raveendran explains how different *Kasakinte Ithihasam* [*The History of Khazak*] is from O.V.
Vijayan's other novels, which lack the polyphony of the first as one can hear a hidden voice in them,
which tries to subdue the dialogues of characters as well as the regional language forms that energize
the novel. In *Gurusaagaram*, this voice of the narrator echoes the ideology that envelops the novel,
which may be called the ideology of Aryavartham;" P.P. Raveendran, 1997, "Gurusaagaram:
Aryavarthathinte Prathyayashastram" ["Gurusaagaram: The Ideology of Aryanism"] *Idapedalukal:
Sahithyam Sidhantham Rashtreeyam* [*Interventions: Literature, Theory, Politics*] (Kottayam: DC
Books, 2003) 103-112.

denying him permission to the h(e)aven of masculine heroes. This character is a Muslim, whose space within the modern order of things remains ambiguous in M.T. This alludes to M.T.'s understanding of masculinity as one that is indomitable although destroyed. In M.T., the narrative of martyrdom required however two factors for its realization—the protection of women and the denial of paternity, which would be looked at in the other two sections.

Women and the Narrative of Nair Reform

In all five narratives, the prison appears in relation to the protection of the chastity of women. The notion of the martyr is evoked often as one who goes to jail, never to return. It is the protection of the women that is at stake as most narratives construct the villain as a rapist and harasser of women. It is a site of sacrifice where males lose their lives for the sake of their women. Through that, they prove their masculinity.

The question of the chastity of women in Kerala showed growing concern by the first half of the 20$^{\text{th}}$ century, especially in the 1930s, as the region saw a drastic transition from matriliny to patriarchal modernity. However, this had immediate consequences mostly for the upper castes, especially the Nairs and Namboothiris, and to those communities who in one way or the other could stoke the desire to be modern. 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.[108] The Western educated Nair male was already dissatisfied with the notion of joint family property, as they had begun earning at a time when the authority of the tharavadu was diminishing.

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[108] See Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kumkum Sangari and Sudhesh Vaid, eds. (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989) 233-252.

Meanwhile, the custom of *Sambandham,* which allowed the younger Namboothiris to copulate with Nair women, was quite unsavory for the youth educated in Western models of morality. The matrilineal system which allowed this was marked as barbaric by the modern youth.

The efforts to question this "barbaric" practice were initiated in 1890 when a Malabar Marriage Commission was set up, and which ultimately led to the Malabar Marriage Act in 1896. Although the Act sanctioned the registration of customary *sambhandam* unions as legalized marriage, it proved to be ineffective as it was availed by only those who wished to do so. But as we reach 1933, situations had already changed with the Nair youth, many of them tenants, gaining ground with the security of tenure following the Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930. (However this remains applicable to only well-off Nairs, while for those living in penury, it gave little relief as it didn't mean much in a situation where the tharavadu was in a dilapidated condition with nothing much left to share). "The Madras Marumakkathayam Act of 1933 guaranteed the legitimate partition of "joint" property and enabled individuals to inherit separate shares" (Arunima 155). It legalized *sambhandhams*, ending an era of the alliance with the Namboothiris, which also marked their transition to a neo-feudal phase marked by their relations with the colonial state, as well as with the futuristic nation state through the communist leadership. The absence of a sexual contract seemed self-defeating, because, firstly it was easier to sign off from any relationship, and secondly it did not give importance to private property—supposed to suggest economic and subjective independence to the men and women—over shared property. This transition from

matriliny[109] to patriarchy enabled a contract between the newly formed fathers/husbands and the colonial state, evoking in the colonial state a role of intervention in the private, religious space of its colonized. The transition to patriarchal modernity inaugurated the concept of a legally sanctioned sexual contract, which was to lead to a contract with the modern nation state. "Entering into a "marriage contract" involved entering into an already familiar terrain of correlative rights and duties" (Kodoth 365).

The shift to patriarchy marked the attempts of the colonial government to strengthen its hold over the households together with the community's attempts at modernization. It led to the invention of the woman as private and private as feminine—pre-requisites for a state controlled public space. Western standards of moralism were to plague the reformist politics of women in the 19th century. In the entire phase of the national struggle, the crucial need was to protect, preserve and strengthen the inner core of the national culture, its spiritual essence … in the world, imitation of and adaptation to western norms was a necessity; at home, they were tantamount to annihilation of one's own identity (Chatterjee, Nationalist Resolution 239).

Uma Chakravarthy asserts that the fate of women and the fate of the emerging nation became inextricably intertwined as debates on women, whether in the context of sati or widow remarriage were not merely about women, but also instances in which the moral challenge of colonial rule was confronted and negotiated. In this process,

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[109] 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, of the uncle (*ammaman*), in the structure, thus underscoring the lineage through the mother, who is the link between the two.

women came to represent "tradition" for all participants: whether viewed as the weak, deluded creatures who must be reformed through legislation and education, or the valiant keepers of tradition who must be protected from the first and be permitted only certain kinds of instruction (Chakravarthy 118). This could be seen in the way in which the legislative prohibition of Sati was less for the well-being of the woman concerned than for the modernizing of scriptures, i.e., "a question of scriptural interpretation," reinforcing the fact that nationalist debates about women were part of a larger politics of what constituted authentic cultural tradition (Mani 90). This politics involved a "private-ization"of women, entrusting the protection of the traditional religious sphere or rather the realm of the sacred in safe hands, whereby the state could confidently move with its mimicking of the Western in its publics. The abolition of matriliny suggested this very invention of the private in Kerala.

The resolving of the women's question by feminizing the private realm was crucial to the construction of modern masculinities. To be modern, it was inevitable that the private realm be protected against any kind of alien trespassing. Those who went to jail, for the protection of their women were thus figures of modernity, aiming at a reformed community. The prison functions metonymically in as much as it allows mitigating the effects of a rudderless tharavadu; in the meantime, sending out signals of its ostensible desires of reformation. The convicts of M.T., imprisoned in Kannur Central jail, thereby become the social reformers of the community. His heroes ought to be understood in the context of such an idealization—as reformers who have set to reform themselves, and consequently, the state, by privatizing the(ir) females or rather feminizing the private. The narratives of sacrifice that is common to M.T.'s narratives often reveal such an image. Sacrifice and loss are never symbolic of the communities

resilient retreat, but rather it emphasizes the role of the Community in building up (to be) a modern Kerala. The Kannur Central jail is metonymic of the space of the tharavadu that was in its phase of transition, as well as its progressiveness, associated with such a transformation.

However, what is often left out from this discourse of modernity is the father figure, the paternal relic of the matrilineal tradition, the powerless subordinate compared to the totalitarian Kaaranavan/Ammavan. The next section would look at how the resolution of the women's issue had left not only the problems of women in the public unresolved, but also the status of men who had never been a part of the public on the one hand. The hegemonic martyr male often finds expression at the cost of the father figure, who thereby seems to suggest a subaltern masculinity.

Fathers and Matriliny

All the above mentioned M.T. films articulate paternal lacks. The fathers are either dead or unknown or just don't matter at all, like the father of Unnimaya, in *Parinayam*, the presence or absence of whom does not make any difference to her even as she is married to an elderly Namboothiri and subsequently when she is caste out. Inspite of being scholarly, Unnimaya's father presents himself only through his absence, falling to paralysis as he hears of the misfortunes that the former had to face. In *Olavum Theeravum*, the father leaves the family, after which the mother falls into bad ways. In *Panchagni* once again there is no mention of the father, even as the mother as a freedom fighter is valorized. In the other two films *Adiyozhukkukal* and *Sadhayam*, the villainy of Sathyanathan and Karunan is associated with the fact that they were bastards, and that their mothers would have never known who their real

fathers were. All those who give up their lives for a social cause are thus fatherless in one sense or the other. It is suggestive of the way in which the realm of the father gets constructed in Malayalam cinema.

The father has often been a marginalized figure in Malayalam cinema, he being either a traditional autocrat or a modern revolutionary. However, a look at the history of the paternal in Kerala may provide an alternative picture, given the fact that the autocracy was often associated with the Kaaranavan, while a revolutionary spirit was an attribute necessitated by the Nair desires of modernity. Both seem to have been qualities attributed to the figure of the father as an effort to make him part of the secular modern. The realm of the father seems to be a lacuna that was filled by the discourse of secular modernity. In *The Buddha of the Suburbia*, the narrator talks about how the father was completely emotional and quite helpless without women to look after things.

> I'd also begun to see Dad not as my father but as a separate person with characteristics that were contingent. He was part of the world now, not the source of it; in one way, to my distress, he was just another individual .... He didn't know how to make a bed or how to wash and iron his clothes. He couldn't cook; he didn't even know how to make tea or coffee…He handles a piece of bread as if it were a rare object he'd obtained on an archeological dig. Women had always looked after him, and he had exploited them … I began to think that the admiration I'd for him as a kid was baseless. What could he do? (Kureishi 193-4)

The fathers of Kerala may be seen to be of a similar mould wherein the responsibilities avalanched upon them by patriarchy enables them to dominate over

the others and feign the most powerful figure in the family even while being quite unprepared for the public space. Fathers, in the modern sense of the term were apparently nonexistent figure in the matrilineal kinship pattern where the authority of the wife and children were the responsibility of the Kaaranavan. The responsibility of being a full-time father and husband was alien to them. The father, who was a yet-to-be figure, signified all the insecurities, inabilities and yet-to-be ness of the transition from religious/communitarian subjectivity to the linear temporality of the modern. E.M.S. comments on the responsibilities that the modern male had to face after the division of a tharavadu and its property,

> … but, while the income of a united tharavadu, was thousands, when divided among individual wouldn't come to the salary that even an elementary school master would get. The person, who gets this property, having lived unfamiliar to the responsibilities, is one who has no experience with agriculture and tharavadu ruling. The result is that it becomes difficult for him to survive… Borrowing money, taking loans, selling property, after these stages, he becomes a pauper and gets the title of the prodigal son or Asuravithu. (*Kerala Charithram* 184-5)

The opportunities for non-agricultural employment at the end of the 19th century, which provided new public spaces for the younger men of the tharavadus, and which led them to question both the power of the Kaaranavan and the legal basis of tharavadu organization, were limited to a few. It didn't mean much to those who were forced to remain in the traditional sectors, which were not as lucrative as the modern jobs. Although it enabled, through English education, participation as subordinates in the colonial structures, involvement in the language of law, etc., was only for an elite section. Often such authority, working itself through the English language and

disciplinary institutions like the court of law meant a compelling moment of exclusion and disempowerment for the subordinate social groups within the "national community." Cherukad talks about how he was forced to take up the job of a higher elementary school teacher, once he was thrust in to added responsibilities of a husband and a father, because the agricultural activities could not provide much profit and was gradually dwindling in the prospects of its benefits.

> A monthly wage of 7 and half rupees…. I calculated.… An annual income of 90 rupees.… With that one could buy four and half loads of paddy. Even a year of agricultural labour wouldn't provide so much. I shall do farming amidst my teaching profession. (Cherukad 316)

The new figure of the public father/husband provided as much troubles as the privatised wife/mother. However, this figure remains ambiguously absent from the discourses of modernity in Kerala. This realm of the traditional/ father remains absent in the studies undertaken by J. Devika, Praveena Kodoth, G Arunima, etc. while the studies of masculinity by the likes of Ratheesh Radhakrishnan goes back to a revolutionary father figure, defined once again as remnant of a class-ist Communist past of the Nair historiography.[110]

The father/husband identities were quite powerless compared to that of the domineering Kaaranavan figure. This was apart from the fact that they were also symbolic of the pre-modern; one needs to consider the fact that most of them had

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[110] G. Arunima, *There Comes Papa: Colonialism and the Transformation of Matriliny in Kerala, Malabar c. 1850-1940* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2003); J. Devika, *Engendering Individuals: The Language of Reforming in 20th Century Kerala* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007); Praveena Kodoth, "Courting Legitimacy or Delegitimizing Custom? Sexuality, Sambandham, and Marriage Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Malabar,"*Modern Asian Studies*, 35. 2 (May, 2001): 349-384 JSTOR 29 Sept 2008. http://www.jstor.org; Ratheesh Radhakrishnan, "Masculinity and the Structuring of the Public Domain in Kerala: A History of the Contemporary,"Diss. Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE – Deemed University), 2006.

multiple liaisons, quite normal for its times in the early 20th century. In the context of talking about the plight of women in his community, E.M.S. talks about the problems wrought by polygamy, which was, but, quite natural:

> My father had two wives. My six sisters, born out of these two mothers, got married. Of those, the husbands of four sisters had other wives; two of the sisters were the first and two the second wives … of the two wives my father had, the one other than my mother was the result of an exchange marriage, exchange for the marriage for his sister. (Namboothiripad, *How I Became a Communist* 23)

Describing how it was the second marriage for both his father and mother, Cherukad emphasizes on the role of the father, who was just a guest in a Marumakkathayam tharavadu (42). He has a relation to his kid only when he comes to the tharavadu. Even though the kid was his, its permanent responsibility was on the uncle or Kaaranavan. Cherukad talks about the power relations that were prevalent in his Marumakkathayam tharavadu, which was ruled by the Kaaranavan Kunjhaman. He describes how he had tried to establish his authority as the future Kaaranavan of the small daughter of his Kuttiyoppol, Ammu. Ammu's father Ramapisharadi would come three or four times a year. During those visits, he would pamper his little daughter with affection whenever he would be free. Whenever Cherukad would ask Ammu, whose child she was, she would reply that she was her father's child. This would anger the future Kaaranavan Cherukad, who would make her tell that she was Kuttiyammavan's child and not her father's child (193). It may be said that the father recreated in the popular realm is based on a mixed ancestry that could be traced back to the authoritarian Kaaranavan and the revolutionary Communist. The "real" father meanwhile remains absent.

The Kaaranavan who rules the Marumakkathayam tharavadu, sitting in his wife's house, has the mannerisms of a despot who exploits his colony (Cherukad 191). It may be seen that preceding the birth of the modern father/husband identities, there were colonial interventions in the power of the Kaaranavan. According to Arunima, there was a departure from the earlier role of the Kaaranavan by the 1870s, regarding his relation with his sister's children. From a situation, where mothers had retained distinct powers relating to the education or life-cycle rituals of their children, there was a change whereby the Kaaranavan was to become the natural guardian of all in his tharavadu. By the 1870s, the preservation of the powers of the Kaaranavan as an "isolated and strengthened," but "natural" authority was to be augmented so that "the colonial government could retain its social base among the propertied classes, who were the bulwarks of the state" (Arunima 94). It was based on these models that the new father was to be imagined.

In a social structure where natural guardianship was attributed to the Kaaranavan, the father was someone who was comparatively feminine in terms of his apparent powerlessness over his wife and children, and as much by the fact that he was quite ignorant of the public spaces that modernity offered, despite the fact that he was the unquestioned master of the traditional agricultural order of things. It was from this realm of security that he is transferred to the modern space of conjugality that demanded that he be the sole protector and provider of his family. This public-ness that the not-yet-modern-masculinity was to come to terms with was as traumatic as the private-ization that the not-yet-traditional femininity was to suffer from. Quoting K.C. Nayar, Arunima says that the call for reform was directed at men, who were "to

rouse [their] manhood and organize" (175). This rousing and organizing of manhood that the discourses on modernity gloss over is something that is naturalized and taken for granted, as though men were born to be made for the secular public sphere.

Talking about the laws that were to lead to the transformation of concubinage to conjugality in the 1890s and the evolutionary social theories that had influenced the making of laws, Arunima says that none of these theories ensured greater rights to women to exercise their freedom, with regard to their sexuality or to express their individuality. Instead, in Malabar, they had influenced a slow process of social change whereby rights over women, through the control of their sexuality in legitimized forms of marriage were transferred to the new figures of authority within the family—the father/husband (Arunima 129). However, Arunima fails to take into account the expression of individuality of men, even while taking cognizance of the fact that "both men and women were to be affected by the creation of the Kaaranavan as a natural, all-powerful figure of authority" (94).

The father is a void that remains unfilled as far as the popular in Kerala is concerned. Either he is recreated on the lines of the authoritative and strict Kaaranavan or the revolutionary of a Communist past. He remains a residue of the patriarchal Kaaranavan and the Communist martyr, even as the real, quite often powerless, fathers keep dodging its modern popular. The paternal becomes secular on account of his rebellion, the absence of which leaves him unqualified to be the modern. M.T.'s worlds are filled with by such lacunae's, the father being a consistent absence in them. The relationship with the father is ambiguous in many M.T. stories as in *Dubious Relations*, where the relationship between the father, Kunjhimon, who visits the

mother (Pathumma) after several years, and the son, Kunjhi Bappu, is one of heightened tension—the son does not recognize the father and the father leaves without making claims to the latter. The son Shankaran in yet another story, *Unbreakable Bonds*, remembers that there had never experienced a strong bond of love capable of binding the father and son together. He hadn't experienced the affections of his father. His father hadn't helped or done justice to him (16). Other stories like *In Memory of a Birthday*, *In Memory* etc, the father is once again absent, or not accessible, and invokes the pangs of a childhood that suffers insults from the lack of a father, while there is a strong desire to be the son of the Kaaranavan.

At the same time the memory of the rebellious father is a vivid one. The father in such a case is reconstituted in terms of a Communist past, which is what happens as we reach *Nalukettu*. The absence of religiosity that Ratheesh argues, as a pre-condition in the route to modernity inaugurated by the father, is suggestive of a secularized identity rather than a communitarian one.

> 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. (Radhakrishnan, Masculinity and the Structuring 242)

Appunni's complete integration into modernity requires that he doesn't carry even the shadows of the traditional familial system. The fatherly presence that he carries on the other hand is a secular, non-religious, revolutionary one; one that does not belong to the traditional familial system. A revolution based on secularism need not be a resistance to colonial modernity, given that the very notion of the "secular" is contested. That the secular ought to be non-religious is a contradiction of the very concept of secularism, as the very "modern sense of civilizational order is closely bound up with a stringent moral code, which is religious in content" (Taylor 289). It marks a transition of "his" presence in the polity, rather than a complete absence. The non-religious realm of the modern marks the urge to reinstate the divine order, the order of the society being God's design, which is what gives rise to our political identity (286).[111] The king is divine not in himself, but in the way he builds a society that follows God's designs, leading to a morally ordered political space which becomes the basis of modernity (285). The orderliness exhibited by the modern polity being religious in basis, a complete denial of religious identity would in effect be a denial of one's own present. However, various disciplines including Marxism were to advocate such non-religious existence as part of being secular.

> It is the task of history, therefore, once the other-world of truth has vanished, to establish the truth of the world. The immediate task of philosophy, which is in the service of history, is to unmask human self-alienation in its secular form now that it has been unmasked from its sacred form.[112]

The dissolution of "the religious claim" was a necessary precursor for human emancipation to proceed. Such a notion would lead to a leveling of "all shades of

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[111] "The identification of Christianity with certain moral standards makes it part of a political identity, of which England was considered to be the preeminent carrier;" Charles Taylor, "Religious Mobilizations," *Public Culture* 18-2 (May 2007): 281-300.

[112] Robert Tucker, ed., "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978) 54.

interpretive, moral, and ethical ambiguity so as to salvage the dregs of what might have once constituted a tradition or a life-world" (346). It seeks to produce an order in the political realm which was to come to constitute the modern order of things. However, the fact lies that "the dregs of what might have once constituted a tradition or a life-world" are relegated to the private the feminised realm of the secular, masculine world of the modern. The family set up thus, marks the most "civilized" and practical form of this religious order, with the men bearing the baton of non-religious secularism even as the women are compelled to guard the religiously ordered private space. According to Pandian,

> The secular has to contaminate its categories by searching out to other languages, including the language of religion, which recognizes the life beyond bounded identities-such as those of the deracinated individual of secularism and the singular Hindu or Muslim identity of communalism (Dilemmas of Public Reason 2319).

However, the anti-colonial struggles, especially the nationalist struggle sought to maintain this homogenization rather than contaminate it. As Chatterjee says, the nationalist resolution of the women's question was to deny any encroachments onto the sacred dichotomy of such a formula. The "spirituality" of her character had also to be stressed in contrast to the innumerable surrenders which men made due to the pressures of the material world (Chatterjee, The Nationalist Resolution 248). It was based on a "demonization of male qualities and feminization of piety" (Taylor 289). This feminization of piety was to facilitate the possibility of her entry in to the public without hindering her feminine identity, but at the same time was also to hinder the entrance of the male into the realm of the spiritual, threatened by the possibility if

feminization. Probing as to how Brahminical scripture helped reconstituting femininity under colonial rule, Chakravarthy says,

> Indian women were almost built up as superwomen: a combination of the spiritual Maitreyi, the learned Gargi, the suffering Sita, the faithful Savithri and the heroic Lakshmibai. Spiritual power and the sahadharmini model in particular were central to the idea of womanhood because these could be transformed to play other roles in the regeneration of the nation. (79)

Women were to be emancipated by restructuring them along the scriptures. Mani talks as to how the abolition of Sati was part of the modernizing tradition. It was a restorative act of recuperating the natives with the "real" truth regarding their glorious past, based on the scriptures. However, what this was to entail was to construct femininity in terms of the sacred or rather the maternal as sacred, while building up the paternal as a secular domain. Men who ventured into the realm of the private were to be trespassers, and were threatened by allegations of emasculation. This sacred domain of the paternal remained an understatement for both the "feminine traditionalists" and "masculine modernists," while the discussions of the secular realm of the maternal qualified as the subject of feminism.

An ordered political space was based on the sacred realm of the maternal or the feminine private realm, integral to a community in its transit stage from a traditional society to a modern order of things. The threats that colonial modernity posed to the matrilineal customs of *Sambandham,* and which constituted the Nairs as not-yet-masculine and not eligible were furthered by impending threats from the backward Communities, especially the Thiyyas,[113] who in North Malabar formed the major

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[113] See Chapter 4 for further discussion on the issue.

beneficiaries of British rule, serving in various roles in the colonial government. The class-based Communist discourse was to provide the much wanted legitimacy to the desires of the community in recreating the power structure through its secular language of class on the one hand and a disavowal of its own religious identity into the private realm on the other. The father/husband, the new subject of nascent modernity, was to be symbolic of the former, the recreation of which was necessitated by the modern structures of power. Thus, the desired father figure is one who is a rebel and fights for the establishing of a secular modern. The father and the son are represented in mainstream discourses as belonging to contesting realms, one of nostalgia where the father is legitimate only in so far as he is a rebel, someone that the son aspires to become.

In *Naluketu*, there is this nostalgic remembering of the father as one who was a rebel. Radhakrishnan argues this was crucial to the construction of a modern Nair masculinity.[114] Nevertheless, the modern that is suggested by the rebellious father is problematic in the sense that it is part of the rebellious peasant past, of a class Communism based on a Nair historiography, which was often at the cost of what could be called the paternal sacred. The nationalists resolved the women's question by making the mother the abode of the private, the sacred and the traditional. However, this compartmentalization of femininity and masculinity within the realms of the maternal tradition and the paternal modern respectively was to be problematic not only to women who did not want to be traditional, but also to men who did not favor being modern, although they were left with little choice.

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[114] See Ratheesh Radhakrishnan, "Masculinity and the Structuring of the Public Domain in Kerala: A History of the Contemporary,"Diss. Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE; Deemed University) 2006.

The father as a revolutionary figure is, thereby, the wishing away of a "deracinated individual of secularism," rather than engage in a dialogue with him, which is the only way through which one can include him as a politicized being. The absence of a dialogue results in recasting him in terms of the autocratic Kaaranavan or the Communist revolutionary. Dialogic absences enforce a kind of responsibility on the paternal subject, which quite often ends up becoming a burden. While the burden of responsibility disables flexibility and any kind of elasticity, making fathers and husbands too serious and unflinching, it also gives them unquestionable authority to interfere and interrogate in to the lives of their domestic others, like the wife and children who automatically become subordinated creatures as well as demand unconditional services, bordering on mental and physical servitude in most cases. A hierarchy is constructed, where the father/husband/son/brother/lover occupies the topmost rung and patronizes his unfortunate subordinates. However, such an order of things that is a result of colonial patriarchy, affects both the males and the females, in becoming themselves, although in different ways. It expects the male to be courageous, and the female to be timid and naïve and any change to such behavioral pattern would lead to sacrilege. The absence of the paternal presences, or his redefinitions in terms of the revolutionary Communist and the autocratic Kaaranavan, evokes a golden past of revolutionary fatherhood in keeping with the linear time of a modern, patriarchal political of Kerala, while is suggestive of an inability of the dominant masculinity and the patriarchal Malayali political to come into terms with an extra-modern identity. His absence was indispensable in creating the sense of security that secular order actually exists in the patriarchal world.

The domain of the paternal could be referred to as an "alternative domain of politics" associated with the contextual and creative inconsistency with a willingness to partake in different political languages, necessitated in the creation of a modern that is communitarian rather than secular, the absence of which, suggests the maintenance of an ordered civilizational identity.[115] However the popular in Kerala has shown a marked apathy to this sacred domain, the domain of all alternative traditions that have not necessarily made it into the modular political. The hero is one who follows a tradition of sacrifice wherein male-hood is based on the protection of woman and her chastity.

The next chapter would look at the representations of the sacred as it formed manifestation in Malayalam cinema. The realm of villainy in Malayalam cinema was largely attributed to the paternal sacred on the one hand, while at the same time implicating the paternal sacred in terms of the Thiyya backward community. The constriction of villainy and the realm of the sacred to which it supposedly owed its ancestry were indispensible for the secularization of the masculine domain and His modular political threatened by caste articulations. The new secularized male was realized on reel by a co-opting of the backward Thiyya caste.

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[115] See M.S.S. Pandian, "Dilemmas of Public Reason: Secularism and Religious Violence in Contemporary India," *EPW* 30.30 (2005): 2313-2320.

Chapter Four

Sacred Villains: Subaltern Male in Malayalam Cinema

The realm of the sacred, unlike the realm of the secular that want to be part of the modern order of things, is not opposed to the religious domain, according to Agamben.[116] Rather, it is one which cannot be understood apart from the realm of the profane and one that is older than Christianity. In other words the sacred refers to a communitarian realm that pre dates the modern community suggested by a modular political. Jean-Luc Nancy, while referring to a community, the realm of singular being, as the only realm where there can be "the finite interruption of infinite desire, and the infinite syncope of finite desire" (19), suggests that the "unleashing of passion" of any kind is possible only in a community:

> If the inoperative community is to be found in the vicinity of the "sacred" it is only in as much as the "unleashing of passion" is not the free doing of a subjectivity and freedom is not self-sufficiency. What is communicated, what is contagious, and what, in this manner—and only in this manner—is "unleashed," is the passion of singularity as such…. The presence of the other does not constitute a boundary that would limit the unleashing of my passions: on the contrary, only exposition to the other unleashes my passion. (32-33)

Community is inoperative as much as it is sacred—the latter being a prerequisite for the former. The community becomes significant in its very quality of being inoperative, in as much as its consciousness is in the constant process of "interrupting self consciousness" (19). What is more important is its encounters, interruptions,

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[116] See Georgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998).

fragmentations, and suspensions, that the community takes place in "unworking" which takes place around the sacred-the unleashing of passion (Nancy 32). In such a context this chapter would analyze how the Thiyya backward caste community in North Malabar (also known as Ezhava in South Kerala), through its various unworkings was to mobilize itself to wrest a space within the cinematic popular in Kerala. The constriction of masculinity manifested in Malayalam cinema since the 1990s was to construct the Thiyya as the sacred, even as it involved its secularization.

The 1990s was indeed an important phase in the history of the political in India. Questions around the implementation of SC/ST/OBC reservations in various governmental sectors opened up issues that had been looming over the body-politic. Though debates about "reservation" continue with increased fervor and relevance, it cannot be denied that the contemporaneity of caste, apart from energizing gender and community issues, helped unsettle the discourse of secularism. The modern identity that these debates sought to reinvent partook of an alternative rationality that never lost sight of a pre-history of violence even while cherishing the miracle of "the emancipatory goals of the European enlightenment" (Wakankar 6). According to Wakankar, the re-emergence of the question of caste had at its core, this idea of an "incessant modernization" (3) which brought to relief the "partiality"[117] of an earlier discourse of "divinity," (3) postulated as a priori to our actual historical experience, the "secular" became available for analysis as a governmental rationality that went against the grain of lived realities. However, the cinematic popular in Kerala was to respond to the problematic by secularizing itself through a homogenization of the

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[117] The term used by Mouffe and Laclau to describe the notion of hegemony, in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*: *Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001), the further discussion of which may be found in Ernesto Laclau, *Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2004).

realm of masculinity. In other words, it was to manifest a constriction of the sacred, as part of creating a monadic masculine hero.

The first section would look at how villainy in Malayalam cinema came to be associated largely with the realm of the paternal sacred. Its constriction within the public realm of the secular was obligatory for the supposedly pro-woman, hegemonic Brahminical masculine imaginary. One of the motifs which facilitated this constriction was the evocation of the Thiyya community of North Malabar, which the second section of the chapter will look at. For the purpose, I would look at two films, the narratives of which were set in the Thiyya community—M.T.'s *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* (*An Epic of the North*, Dir. Hariharan, 1989) and Ranjith's *Paleri Manikyam: Oru Paathira Kolapathakathinte Katha* (*PaleriManikyam: The Story of a Midnight Murder*, Dir. Ranjith, 2009). These films, apart from the fact that they were narratives based on the Thiyya community, are also significant for their specific periods of release—the former in 1989 and the latter 2009—both periods prominent enough for the re-articulations of caste, to look at caste as "a source of everyday experience of violence as well as an identity for mobilisation" rather than "as a category to measure disability" (Satyanarayana and Tharu 5) around the Mandal recommendations as well as the CPI(M) in Kerala respectively. Both these films conceptualize a return to North Malabar, and more significantly a re-turn to the Thiyya backward caste community.

These returns, I argue, are suggestive of how the mobilizations of the Thiyya backward have had their effects on the modular political, as interruptions and interventions, so much so that it had to be implicated in its cinematic popular.

However, the representations of the community has been only in as much as legitimizing the class-ist communist past, as the real past of modern Kerala.

The Villain of Malayalam Cinema and Paternal Tradition

The villain in Malayalam cinema was largely a figure associated with the harassment of women. The hero ultimately rescued the women from his clutches. Actors like T.G. Ravi, Jose, Janardhanan etc. rivaled in these roles. Janardhanan in fact, in interviews, referred to incidents in his life, when women kept away from him in case he raped them! However narratives of villainy also prompted a gaze into the afterlife of the subjects of villainy, as in *Novembarinte Nashtam* (*The Loss of November* Dir. P Padmarajan, 1982), *Namukku Paarkan Munthirithoppukal* (*Vineyards for Us to Live*, Dir. P. Padmarajan, 1986), etc. where the victims of villainy behaved in ways quite unbecoming of the expectations of a patriarchal structure. In *Novembarinte Nashtam*, Meera kills her villain lover Das for cheating on her while in *Namukku Paarkan Munthirithoppukal*, Sophia, raped by her step father is willing to accept the proposal of Solomon. *Adaminte Variyellu* (*The Rib of Adam*, Dir. K.G George, 1983), for instance represents the lower caste maid, Ammini, is also a victim of villainy of her master. He rapes her, and eventually on finding out that she is pregnant, dumps her. However, the last shots of the film show Ammini and the other inmates of a women's rehabilitation centre gazing back at the camera that is shooting them. Stopping work, all of them rush past the camera, the director and the crew as Ammini shouts "escape," sweeping aside the camera as they run towards their freedom. Bindu Menon points out that although the shot was to anticipate a unitary subject of feminism, to be defined through class, the film seeks to problematize the "invisibility of class and caste in the representation of the middle class house wife as a stable unchanging

figure in gendered culture" (Bindu Menon 118). Nevertheless, these films were to provide narratives of disclosures which also enabled female representations at various levels. Vengeance against the villain was to take polyphonic forms rather than lead to a moralistic ending of the woman's life; for instance the wife takes off to save her ex-lover even as her husband's life is at stake [*Adiyozhukkukal*, (*Undercurrents*), Dir. I.V Sasi, 1984], or the story of a wife's extra-marital affair "because" she is unable to endure the villainy of the husband [*Menjhil Virinjha Pookal*, (*Blossoms of Winter*) Dir. Fazil, 1983] etc.

These films, as C.S. Venkiteshwaran argues, were part of a response to the art genre by breaking itself from the austerities that the latter had maintained at the level of narration and style, "such films were slowly breaking free from its earlier dependence on literature (something that bordered on slavery) and the austere narrative styles it adhered to till then" (46). And this was to undoubtedly characterize itself with regard to the representation of women in which it was to differ from the earlier models. The body of the woman was to make its presence felt in cinema (Sanjeev 65-71), redefining the form of the vamp and the villain. New sets of films portraying infidelity, adultery, campus love etc. exuded a sexuality that was never overwhelmed by moralistic hues.

> It marked the arrival of the women as individuals, and the shift of the diegesis to their interiorities and their emotional conflicts, the women were "cut loose" from the anchors of the all-too-literary narratives and were "free" to flaunt their body—a freedom that only the vamps enjoyed earlier. (Venkiteshwaran 48)

Venkiteshwaran argues that these women were to liberate the villain and the vamp from their restrictive domiciles—the dungeon, or the bar--which often came at "a juncture when the hero turns into bad ways and strays from the moral values and loftiness that defines him" (47). The woman, who took the place of the vamp, in terms of sexuality, in the films of the 1980s, was to let loose these villains from their restrictive zones. This lethal conflation of the vamp and the villain seemed to suggest a sharing of the common space with the hero. This in turn led to a contestation of heroic ideals, which eventually resulted in the collapse of the villain figure (also suggesting a simultaneous disappearance of vampy women).

The ever popular film *Manichitrathazhu* (*The Ornate Lock*, Dir. Fazil, 1993), would be a classic example of the strategies of annihilation, where the husband (Nakulan) becomes the villain for the wife (Ganga), when she is "possessed" by the spirit of a dancer, Nagavally ("a vamp in the den of the villain Kaaranavan"), whom she has to kill so as to continue her relationship with her lover. However the death of the villain also leads to the death of the dancer Nagavally. Eventually the couple escapes the traditional bungalow for the modern space of Calcutta, which Ganga believes is the best choice for their uninterrupted nuclear living. The figure of the villain anticipated the public-ization of women, in many ways. However post 1990s, the villain was to become redundant once the chastity of women, got resolved by private-izing them, (in the films of the 1990s, unlike those of the 1980s, women can no longer be or are less frequently seen as students in campuses, hostels or workers, occupying working women's hostels, lodges etc.). The constriction of villainy was however not only to impact the restriction of women but also men, which this section would attempt to explicate. Looking at two films during the early 1990s, I would try to trace a tradition

of villainy in Malayalam cinema, which I argue belongs to a tradition of the paternal sacred of Kerala.

> You cannot defeat Chanthu. Many have defeated Chanthu in life, several times. First, my father defeated me courting defeat at the hands of a Malayan, then my guru, whose hands shivered while sharing love, defeated me; when my love lost to the weights of gold and money, the girl I loved also defeated me. Finally … my friends, who forbid to believe the truth, also defeated me. And still, Chanthu is alive, for even more defeats. (M.T., Vadakkan Pattu 94)

A popular dialogue from the film *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* (1989)—which even now rings lively through SMSs, comedy shows etc.—to refer to the pangs of a deserted lover, is indicative of the ways in which the character Chanthu has left an indelible print on the popular consciousness of Malayalis. The film, *Veeragatha*, is an adaptation of the folk narrative *Puthooram Pattu*, songs about the chekavars of Puthooram tharavadu, the Thiyya tharavadu in North Malabar. Aromal Chekavar, the hero of the ballad, and the son of the valiant Kannappan Chekavar, is cheated by Chanthu, the son of Kannappan's sister. Aromal Chekavar fights his maiden duel (angham) with Aringhodar, as part of settling the issue of who is the eldest, Unnikonar or Unnichanthor. Chantu, the infamous villain of *Vadakkan Pattukal*, cheats his nephew Aromal Chekavar in a local duel *(angham),* failing in his attempt to marry Aromal's sister and his heart throb Unniyarcha, as she was married away to Kunjhiraman. As Aromal's sword breaks amidst the duel (welded with a bamboo hilt instead of an iron one) with Aringhodar, Chanthu, accomplice to Aromal refuses to give him a new sword. Aromal fought bravely with the broken sword and killed Aringhodur, only to get killed himself, in deceit, by Chanthu. As he lay resting on Chantu's lap after his victory, the latter strikes him with the hilt of a lamp, killing him

instantly. Aromal chekavar—killed in betrayal—thus becomes the hero of the ballad. The song suggests that Aromal is more duty driven rather than courageous when he agrees to participate in the *angham*. Prior to the duel he says to his brother that as an elder son it is up to him that he replace his 64 year old aged father in the battle. It is this responsibility towards the father and tradition that seems to be the eventual cause for taking up the battle. Rather than his machismo, it is this sense of tradition that makes him the hero of the ballad. The villainy of Chanthu validates the hero-ization. What happens as we reach the end of the film is something very different.

The villain Chanthu becomes the hero while the hero Aromal is villainised. In other words, Aromal Chekavar, the protector of the father and his tradition, is villainised while Chanthu, the marumakan, the legal successor to the Kaaranavan Kannappan is valorized. This plot of the "original" song that formed part of the *Puthooram pattukal*, was altered to form the narrative of *Veeragatha*, where Chanthu is portrayed as the victim of love, as the conceited Unniyarcha seduces him, exploits him and finally abandons him, supposedly for gold and money that was promised from an alliance with Kunjhiraman. Unniyarcha, the brave warrior-woman of the *Vadakkan Pattukal*, becomes the untrustworthy seductress who utilizes Chanthu for her purposes. The film thus concludes by saying that Chanthu was not the villain as people made him out to be. It in fact points fingers at Aromal Chekavar, Unniyarcha and Kunjhi, who make him so. The film, by justifying Chantu, sought to reproduce the concept of a villain in a new light, probably for the first time in Malayalam cinema. The biggest hit of the year 1989, running for more than 250 days in Kerala and winning state and national awards for various

categories,[118] it gave a "distorted" version of the regional ballads, which also meant the subordination of the heroine Unniyarcha along with the heroization of the villain. "Let the history of the betrayer Chantu end here. And let the history of the hero Aromunni, who rubbed off the of Puthooram veedu begin here." These last words of Chanthu, before he kills himself with the hilt of the lamp are to Aromal's nephew and Unniyarcha's son Aromunni, and not to to Aromal's son Kannappanunni. The rightful avenger of Aromal becomes the nephew rather than the son. The history of the uncle Kaaranavan is important, and not the history of the father.

The second film that will be discussed is *Kireedam*, (*Crown*; Dir. Sibi Malayil, 1989) again a hit. The film narrates the tragedies of a young man Sethumadhavan, awaiting the results of entrance exams to the post of police inspector, in keeping with the wishes of his police constable father Achuthan Nair. But when he files a petty case against the son of an MLA, Achuthan Nair is transferred to Ramapuram police station, and for once gets involved in a fight with the local goon Keerikadan Jose. As he is brutally beaten by Jose, Sethu, the affectionate son, intervenes and in an attempt to save his father, attacks Keerikaadan. He is severely wounded. Sethu however replaces Jose, or rather becomes the new villain of the market, although quite unwillingly. All his attempts to stay away from chaos fail as he is frequently dragged into untoward issues. Achuthan Nair asks Sethu to leave the house. Eventually Sethu is arrested for killing Keerikadan, although in self-defense. Sethu is arrested on a petty case and is branded as a villain. Achuthan Nair reads the Police Verification Report which cites Sethu as a "notorious criminal."

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[118] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oru_Vadakkan_Veeragatha; accessed on 13/04/2012: for details on the film.

Once again the son becomes a villain while trying to protect the father. He loses everything, his job, his prospective wife, and is locked up in jail. Such narratives of father-son enmity abound in Malayalam cinema. A number of films like *Devasuram* (*The God Demon*; Dir. I.V. Sasi, 1983), *Perumthachan* (*The Great Carpenter*; Dir. Ajayan, 1991), *Sphadikam* (*Prism*; Dir. Bhadran, 1995), etc suggest a similar pattern. Villainy associates with the paternal tradition, itself a more or less an ambivalent one as far as the history of Kerala was concerned. In a social structure where the natural guardianship was attributed to the Kaaranavan, the father was someone who was comparatively feminine in terms of his apparent powerlessness over his wife and children. It was from this realm of security that he is transferred to the modern space of conjugality that demanded that he be the sole protector and provider of his family. However, as the cinematic popular reveals, this transference into the modern realm was never a complete one. The successful father in Malayalam cinema was constituted on the lines of the all-powerful Kaaranavan, which demanded that he control other members of the family, and especially the son for the well-being of the family. Fathers who were incapable of this were not becoming of paternity as cinema was to manifest. The myth of *Perumthachan* is an overbearing one that looms large over the Malayali cine fathers, the animosity between him and the son being a more or less, uncontestable refrain. Friendly and amiable fathers often cut a comic figure in cinema, as in *Manassinakkare* (*Beyond the Mind*; Dir. Sathyan Anthikad, 2003), while also remaining unsuccessful in life. The father in *Veendum Chila Veetukaryangal* (Dir. Sathyan Anthikkad, 1999), unwillingly has to wrest power over his son, as he wants to see the latter successful in life.

Hostility with the son is a pre requisite to make him a responsible male. This also accounts for the fact that the point of consensus between father and son—in films like—*Raavanaprabhu* (*Raavana the Lord*; Dir. Ranjith, 2001), *Sphadikam* (*Prism*; Dir. Bhadran, 1995) etc., is also the moment of death for the father. The legitimization of the father figure is often associated with the maintenance of the hierarchy that a patriarchal society imposes on its males. As far as Kerala was concerned, it was the Kaaranavan, the centre of the matrilineal tharavadu, rather than the father, who was to be implicated prima facie by the new social contracts set forth by the colonial government, during the transition to patriarchy. The Kaaranavan as an "isolated and strengthened," but "natural" authority was to be consolidated as such by the 1870s, according to Arunima (94). It was based on these models that the new father was to be imagined. The imminent father was to follow in the steps of this reconfigured Kaaranavan. It required the archetype of the "ruler father" to predominate that of the "earth father." According to Burgess (1997: 4) the alternative paternal archetype, of an "earth father", a nurturer . . . and the ancient association of males with birth and rebirth have been severed. For societies that retain earth fathers in their mythologies tend to accept nurturing behavior by men towards children as the norm, while societies which disown earth father imagery perceive such involvement by men as deviant (46).

The initiation into patriarchal society possibly implies a severance of several "feminine" qualities as far as the new fathers were concerned. The inability to recognize such a feminine aspect to fatherhood/masculinity apparently leads to their reconfigurations in Malayalam cinema on the lines of the macho Kaaranavan. The paternal realm was structured as the cause for villainy in Malayalam cinema. The

constriction of villainy since the 1990s symptomatizes the fear of the alternative male posing a threat to the secular domains of nation, already supposed to be punctured by the articulations of caste that followed the Mandal recommendations.

The cinematic popular of Kerala, with its realist-developmentalist aesthetic—as Madhava Prasad suggests, is a mode of cultural production tied to the fiction of the social contract (196)—and demands the intervention of the homogenized and the super humanised male to clamp down the caste/religious/gendered threats. Jenny Rowena, in her study on the laughter films of the 1990s, argue that these films are suggestive of a remasculinization, as a response to the threats that subaltern masculinities posed to the patriarchal Kerala model.[119] The constriction of the villainy in the cinematic form is part of this very anxiety of emasculation. One of the motifs through which this ideological reform found expression was by a renewed interest in associating North Malabar with the Thiyya community, to be discussed in the next section. I will look at two films in this regard, M.T.'s *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* (*An Epic of the North*, Dir. Hariharan, 1989) and Ranjith's *Paleri Manikyam—Oru Paathira Kolapathakathinte Katha* (*Paleri Manikyam—The Story of a Midnight Murder*, Dir. Ranjith, 2009). The North Malabar that these films construct, as a realm of the Thiyya's, I argue, seems symptomatic of a larger trend of imagining a casteless, class based communist past of Kerala, in an attempt to conveniently forget and delegitimize its caste articulations.

Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha

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[119] See Jenny Roweena, "Reading Laughter: The Popular Malayalam 'Comedy-Films' of the late 80s and early 90s," *Diss.* Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (now TEFLU) 2002.

Veeragatha is a rendering of the *Puthooram Pattukal* (*Puthooram Songs*) that is part of the *Vadakkan Pattukal*,[120] popularly known as the Ballads of North Malabar. *Vadakkan Pattukal* are the songs sung by women during their work in the paddy fields. Based on the context in which they are sung, Vadakkan songs are also called *Natti pattu* (sung when planting paddy saplings), *Poripattu* (sung when pulling up weeds), *Charan pattu* (group songs for leisure) and *Thoram pattu* (songs during work). These are songs which recite stories of heroisms and their heroic, folk fighters (*nadan poralikal*). These songs, intended to create a sense of a community at the work place (fields, garden lands etc.), and perform the major function of honing the power of the community to its maximum be it harvesting or sowing, are nevertheless rich in its emotional quotient (Raghavawarrior 36). Its repetitive motifs (that of deception for instance) as Raghavawarrior suggests, is a familiar plot line that helps add to the valor of the hero who cannot be defeated, except by deceit. Also it helps to bring in the cathartic tears in the story at a time when the unexpected occurs (37). Aromal Chekavar, Thacholi Othenan, Kunjhi Kannan of Kolathiri etc. are killed because of such deceptions. It is part of a social imaginary which looks towards an ideal hero who fights oppression, where the one who cheats, or the villain, often becomes an accomplice of the despotic ruling class. Beena Augustine perceives these *Vadakkan Pattuakal* as part of the genre of heroic songs, and looks at how the heroes of the *Ballads of North Malabar* could be compared to heroes like Robin Hood, representative of the spirit of freedom in their fight against the feudal regime in England during the 14th and 15th centuries (227).

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[120] The others are *Thacholi Pattukal,* that describes the feats of the Nair warrior *Thacholi* and *Ottupattukal that* consist of miscellaneous songs.

However, as mentioned earlier, these indigenous structures are transformed in *Veeragatha.* Here the dominant narrative shores up the sacrificial hero who takes over the polyphonic structures of masculinities; alternative masculinities such as those of Aromal Chekavar for whom, it was the duties towards his father that compels him to fight the duel, or femininities as those of Unniyarcha, who was known for her valor. *Veeragatha* was to be a seminal text in bringing about the ideological reform of constriction. The search for secular truth by M.T., "revealed" that villainy was just hearsay, which necessitated that he hear the unsaid (in *Vadakkan pattu*[121]) and say the unheard instead (in *Veeragatha*)! The film that was based on the *Vadakkan pattukal* was to have a completely different rendering of the songs in the way in which it redefined its villain as well as of the whole genre of *vadakkan pattu* based Malayalam films. These films had reigned the screen until the 1970s. M.T.'s *Veeragatha* was to contest and belittle the resilient spirit that these films had shown through their very commerciality, in the midst of the social realist exuberance from all sides, and their subsequent popularity with the people. Jenson Joseph argues that the emergence of the small and broadly defined genres in Malayalam cinema by the late 1950s, mainly "the women's cinema," "the Christian/Muslim socials," and the films based on religious myths and folktales like *vadakkan pattukal* signified the commercial film industry's attempt to cater to the desires and anxieties of different segments of the population who were disillusioned with the model of Malayali nationalism proposed by the Left (26). However *Veeragatha* was to refine the popular viability associated with both the film genre as well as the songs, and reconstitute its hero in terms of the dominant masculine trait of sacrifice.

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[121] Discussed in the 2nd half of the chapter.

This plot of the "original" song that formed part of the *Puthooram Pattukal*, was altered to form the narrative of *Veeragatha*, where Chanthu is represented as a victim of love, as the conceited Unniyarcha seduces him—supposedly for the gold and money that was promised from an alliance with Kunjhirama—exploits him and finally abandons him. The *Puthooram Pattukal* are songs are based on the Thiyya Tharavadu Puthooram, and celebrates the feats of the Thiyya hero Aromal Chekavar and the heroine Unniyarcha. However, it is quite apparent that M.T. heroises the villain Chanthu, at the same time villainizing Aromal as a jealous cousin and Unniyarcha as a seductress. In such an ambience all plotters seem to be women. Regarding the changes made to the story, M.T. says in the introduction to the script of the film:

> As per the song, Aringhodur was the one who prompted Chanthu to replace the iron nail by a bamboo one, sending his daughter and cousin away. There, I have deviated. Such a vicious plan never goes without a female touch. For Unniyarcha to come to his life again, Aromal has to win the fight. The death of his guru is also something that he doesn't wish for. As Chanthu, who always get attracted to the fire Unniyarcha, stands in the midst of confusion, I felt to read it as the ploy of Aringhodur's daughter." (M.T., Vadakkan Pattu XII)

The flexible structure of these folk songs is the grounds of M.T.'s justifications for plot changes, the fact remaining that the flexibility exists within a structure of narrative repetitions.[122] The repetitions, however, that form the basis of the *Vadakkan Pattukal*, are part of the existing power relations that defined the non-egalitarian distribution of communities in the region. The villain, Chanthu is reconfigured in

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[122] Discussing about the structural peculiarities of folk songs in general, Raghavawarrior says that the repeating *Orukkasheelus*, *Muris* and *Kavithasheelus* are the symbols and basis of folk songs M.R. Raghavawarriar, *Vadakkan Pattukalude Paniyala,* [*The Workshop of the Ballads of North Malabar*], (Shukapuram: Vallathol Vidyapeedam, 1982) 35.

terms of the sacrificial hero of the dominant discourse. This leads to the reconfiguration of the tragic hero Chanthu as well as the femininities represented by Unniyarcha. M.T.'s *Veeragatha* relives a tradition of modernity where the hero, who dies to protect the honor of his ageing father, is villainized whereas the villain Chanthu, is heroised. Chanthu's last words at his death bed, "You are my unborn son," to the son of Unniyarcha (who goes with his nephew to avenge his uncle, Aromal's death), proclaim his sincerity to her, and declare that he has sacrificed his life for her, by killing himself, so that he could avoid a fight with Unniyarcha's son, which would have led to the latter's death. Within such a cinematic narrative, the sacrificial male of the hegemonic patriarchy is born while the powerful woman presence suggested by the folk warrior heroine is reduced to a willful seductress.

The sacred paternal tradition is transformed to that of a patriarchal one, with its ideal of a sacrificial male. For this patriarchy, the feminine that is constructed within a realm of restrictive sexuality, any forms of sexual "excess" suggested through Unniyarcha and Kunjhi would merely belong to a campaign of seduction characteristic of "loose women." The annihilation of the villain of this Thiyya folklore is suggestive of the annihilation of a communitarian "pre-history" and a mobilisation by the patriarchal Malayali political, that had to make sense of the diverse subjectivities the OBC reservations had brought in its wake, presenting caste as never before. This disappearance was to concord with, or anticipates the era of "Brahminical" films in Malayalam cinema of the early 1990s. The rise of caste in the political in Kerala, was to manifest or resolve itself in the Nair-Thiyya alliance within the cinematic popular. There has been a curious way in which anxieties of caste articulations in the political have found a respite in the representations based in North

Malabar, narratives of Thiyyas being fundamental to them. In 2009, amidst a flurry of debates regarding the identity vs. class politics within the Kerala CPI(M) another film was to hit the screens, once again to be based on the Thiyyas.

Paleri Manikyam: Oru Paathira Kolapaathakathinte Katha (*Paleri Manikyam: A Midnight Murder Story;* from now on *Paleri*), released in 2009, was an adaptation of a novel of the same name by T.P. Rajeevan. It is an investigative thriller that probes into the hypocrisies of the first Communist government, leading to the covering up of the real rapists and murderers of a Thiyya[123] girl Manikyam, in Paleri, a village in Kozhikode. The film marked a detour from the genre of investigative thrillers in Malayalam cinema in terms of its transition from a vicious villain to a vulnerable one. Unlike the early investigative films, where the ruthless villain, whose presence and prosecution led to the victory of the investigator as well as the genre, in *Paleri*, it is this very absence of callousness that marks the success of the film. Khalid Ahmad, the remorseful villain (scholar) from Aligarh, made so by Haridas, the private detective from Calcutta, is driven to commit suicide from a guilty conscience. In the search for truth,[124] that he had entrusted himself, Haridas however seems to be confounded by what the truth had offered him—a guilty villain.

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[123] The Thiyyas are one of the major backward caste communities in North Malabar, a discussion of whom will be taken up in the 2nd half of the chapter.

[124] In a response to a query by the inspector regarding the intentions of his investigation Haridas replies, "This investigation is not to punish anybody. Neither has anyone entrusted me with the job. Just consider it as part of a search for truth;" T.P. Rajeevan, *Paleri Manikyam: Oru Paathira Kolapaathakathinte Katha* [*Paleri Manikyam: A Midnight Murder* Story] (Thrissur: Current Books, 2008) 11.

The detour facilitated by making a Thiyya girl the protagonist, however follows an ideology of conformation. By killing her off, by excluding[125] her and thereby inaugurating her entrance as homosacer into the biopolitical camp of modernity, Manikyam is made the authentic subject of Kerala's modernity. The "politicization of bare life" (the entry of zoe into the sphere of the polis), constitutes the decisive event of modernity, in that it suggests the birth of a homosacer, the subject of politics who can be killed, but not sacrificed (Agamben 4). The "killing" of a subject thus suggests her inclusion as zoe in(to) the biopolitical realm, as legitimate subject of modernity. The biopolitical form of power marks a transition from a sovereign's right "to 'take life' or 'let live' to the power to 'make live' and 'let die'" (Foucault 1976: 125). To let die (as zoe) means thereby to make live (in polis). The film shows two deaths occurring in Paleri—the Thiyya Manikyam and the Namboothiri, but the latter is inconsequential apart from the fact of serving as evidence that proves the ("legitimacy" of) the former. To "let die" Manikyam thus suggests to "make live" the Thiyya subjectivity over the Namboothiri male.

The Thiyya as well as the community enters the realm of modern sovereignty, through her/his communitarian "death." The next section would look at a history of the Thiyyas of North Malabar to clarify how the backward caste community was to qualify as a community worth representation as far as the cinematic popular was concerned, given the latter's secular credentials. It would describe as to how the reformations within the community had resulted in an ambivalent group of Thiyyas, especially middle class, who became a potent consumer for the Nair propelled communist movement in North Malabar, and an ally to the caste less dominant fold

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[125] "Bare life remains included in politics in the form of the exception, that is, as something that is included solely through an exclusion," Georgio Agamben, *Homosacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Daniel Heller-Roazen, trans. (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998) 11.

while distancing itself from the "not-yet-modern" lower castes, with whom they had shared a history of social and political alienation.

The Thiyyas and North Malabar

C. Kesavan describes the Thiyyas[126] as suggestive of a socio-economically well off Ezhava community as he wonders how in spite of the fact that the Ezhavas were referred to as Thiyyas in North Malabar, they remained Ezhavas in the title deeds of the *Samoothiri kovilakam* as well as of other *jenmis*. The social superiority of the backward caste Thiyya community of North Malabar, compared to the Ezhavas of South Kerala has not had a conclusive explanation, although various explanations attribute it to the British or even a royal lineage.[127] Local lores, on the other hand associate the origin of Thiyyas[128] with a Shaivite cult. Kambil Ananthan, who is of the view that Malayalis belong to the same clan,[129] claims that Thiyyas and other communities like the Vannan's, those who live catching fishes, birds etc. belonged to the kingdom of Varuna, called Varunam, who were practitioners of Shaivism. It is Varunam that was taken up by Parasurama, who belonged to the Vaishnavite sect and hence Vaishnavism became the dominant

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[126] See C. Kesavan, 1968, *Jeevitha Samaram* [*Life as Protest*] (Kottayam: DC Books, 2010) 169-173.

[127] A commonly held view being that the social superiority of the Thiyyas is part of a progenies of mixed British-Thiyya unions, which led to a "generally well-educated Thiyya community, enjoying special privileges under their British protectors, so much so that practically all the Indian born higher officers in the administration of the province until the 2nd quarter of the 20th century came from the Thiyya community, Bardwell L. Smith and K. Ishwaran, eds. *Religion and Social Conflict in South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 1976) 34. The relics of the only Thiyya royal dynasty (Eruvasseri) in Kerala, which is situated in Kannur, might also be suggestive of a distinctive history, although there are not many studies along these lines.

[128] The Lankan connection which is often associated with the community, seems to have come as part of a later historicising as pointed out by Kesari, citing Vadakkan Pattu as the basis of his argument. According to him Thiyyas were part of the army sent to Ceylon, by the Cheraman Perumal ruling Kerala at that time (AD 509-527) on the request of the Ceylon king Datusenan who wanted help to retake his kingdom from the Chozhar, who had conquered it. the later generation of these Thiyyas were to return to Kerala as per the demand of the Cheraman Perumal who was the ruler in AD 745, Kesari, "Theeyarude Uthbava Sthanam," ["The Place of Origin of Thiyya's"], *Kesariyude Charithra Gaveshananghal-Vol 1*, [*The Historical Researches of Kesari-Vol 1*], M.N. Vijayan, comp. (Thiruvananthapuram: Bhasha Institute, 2010) 167-179.

[129] This view seems to be followed by K.K. Kochu according to whom, the denial of the fact that all social structures were tribal in nature before the advent of the caste system, is phallic. One the one hand it constructs a golden Dalit past and on the other sees Dalits as eternal slaves, both of which articulate a notion of a static community, immobile and stuck in history.

religion of the colonized land (Anandan 52-55). The Vasihnava scholars defeated the

Buddhists[130] in debate and won supremacy over them. While the Sudras are those who

joined with the Brahmins, and the Thiyyas and other castes were those that didn't

accept the new religion (21-23). The Shaivite origin is a recurring one in the folklore

of the region. There is a part in the *Shaiva koothu* (Shiva play) in the Poorakali

performed by the Thiyya community. It refers to 15 *koothus* played by Sri

Parameshwaran. *Shivabranthiyattam*, the first one refers to the origin of the Thiyyas

(Balan 98). The origin of Thiyyas is also referred to in the *Thottam pattu* of Vayanattu

Kulavan theyyam[131] of the region (99).

Even as the Ezhavas of South Kerala like Palpu were kept out of government jobs, the

picture was quite different in North Malabar. One might see that there was a

substantial section of the Thiyya community, who were recruited into the

administrative sections of the British government. Many of them were directly

recruited under the British, in the education sector whereas several others had a

commendable position in the traditional sectors of medicine and astronomy, and most

of them were landed. Uppottu Kannan, for instance, was appointed as translator in

Kozhikode in 1850 for a salary of Rs 10 and went on to become the deputy collector

in 1870. It was at the same time that Palpu and his brother were denied admissions to

study medicine despite clearing the entrance and a post for government job due to

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[130] This accords with the belief put forward by some regarding the Buddhist ancestry of Thiyyas. That the Ezhavas had been staunch Buddhists, and thus were constrained to constitute themselves as an out caste society under Brahmin domination, may be substantiated by their still prevalent non-ritualistic and non-dogmatic character and their emphasis on the moral aspects of religion rather than the theological, which are qualities generally attributed to Buddhism, along with the preponderance of Izhavas as Ayurveda physicians and astrologers, which supports their Buddhistic past, Bardwell L. Smith and K. Ishwaran, eds. *Religion and Social Conflict in south Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 1976) 31.
[131] These *theyyams* of the region might probably provide more insights about the community of Thiyya's as distinctive from the Ezhava's, but which remains beyond the purview of this study.

their lower caste status (Palpu 51).[132] Several of them like Mooliyil Krishnan were translators with the Madras government, and initiated the publication of new books (Chalad 27). Books of people like Karayi Krishnan Gurukkal were used as text books for the equivalent of today's Pre-Degree (29). Kottiyath Ramunni Vakeel, entered British civil service and was appointed as the first counselor of Thalassery Muncipality (32). Potheri Kunjhambu, also known as Pulayan Kunjhambu, started a school in Pallikunnu in 1890 (39). Again he was made the Chairman of Kannur Municipality (40) and wrote *Saraswathi Vijayam* in 1892 (41). Several like Oyatti Raman who contributed lands to build Thiyya temples also rivaled as the head of Kozhikode Municipality (46). The first Ayurveda college in North Malabar, as well as the first film exhibition in Kannur were the contributions of a Thiyya, M.K Kunjhiraman Vaidyar, who was an Ayurvedic practitioner, while the weaving industry in Kannur owes much to Aarya Bandhu P.K. Bappu, who began it all with his Vishnu Weaving. Kaambil Anandan, who went on to become an eminent historian of the community, was the founder of the daily *Nava Kerala* published from Kozhikode (74).

"Seeing the condition of Malabar, it is my firm conviction that if there is the support of the ruling class, any community has only such weaknesses as would disappear soon," says C. Kesavan, after getting to know about the Thiyyas in Malabar, although he adds that such Thiyyas belonged to a middle class, "Ezhava bourgeoisie, then, were more in Malabar" (Kesavan 171-173). The Thiyyas under the British rule fared well, than under royal despondency. The distinction between names thus could also be considered in terms of their general social standing, with the Thiyyas suggesting a

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[132] Oru Thiyyan, 2006, "Ezhavarenna oru Jathi Undu Sir," ["There is a Caste Called Ezhavar Sir"], *Narayana Guru*, P.K. Balakrishnan (Kottayam: DC Books, 2010) 51-53.

comparatively well-off community than the Ezhavas, with a certain social capital, if not cultural, that a belonging to OBC in Kerala would imply, and this would be the way in which the community (Thiyya) would be referred to in this thesis. The reasons of such disparities, although beyond the ambitions of the thesis, could also be considered as part of a lineage that could be traced back to the royal ancestry of the Thiyya community in North Malabar, which scholars like Kambil Ananthan has forwarded, as part of his theorisation of Keralites sharing a common ancestry. In the wake of a number of Thiyya tharavadus of the region, Anandan views that the Thiyyas had a indomitable position in North Malabar which was however to be diminished after Brahminical usurpation.

Tracing a number of Thiyya royal dynasties in the region, the most important of them being Eruvasseri dynasty of the Mannannar's[133] in Kannur, Anandan suggests that customs that were said to honour Kshatriya's in Keralolpathi could be seen to be practiced even in Mannannar's case which suggests a royal lineage to the Thiyya's (82). He says that while the Kolathiri was supposed to give way to the Mannanar, the latter did not have to do anything like that (71). Probably, the community's urge for mobilisations, argued by many, which in North Malabar was to manifest in their utilisation of jobs in the colonial government machinery could be seen to be part of this cultural capital that they had enjoyed in the pre-Brahminical phase in Kerala.

However critics like Dilip Menon, whose book *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India: Malabar, 1900*-1948, has been one of the earliest of academic studies

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[133] The Mannanar dynasty was to destroyed by 1077, the last king being Kunjhi Kelappan, after which the properties were to go to the Chirakkal trust by the government, Kambil Anandan, *Pauranika Kerala Athava Kerala Charitra Niroopanam* [*Ancient Kerala, or A Critique of Kerala History*] (Kannur: Kambil House, 1935) 68.

on the community, have sought to look at the growth of Thiyya elite, as part of an "emergent community," that was to happen between 1900 and 1920, and which was thereby to lead to a strained relationship with the upper caste Nairs of the region. The emergent sense of the Thiyya community, as it so seems to have been made out, may be seen to be based on a pro-Nair historiography which marks their new emergence as part of colonial and reformist movements, of the late 19th and early 20th centuries respectively. This was to be based on a Brahminical past, which had ordained the upper castes as the true inheritors of the region.

The emergent "community of equals" of the Thiyyas of Dilip Menon (Menon, *Caste, Nationalism*) however is more of how such communitarianism had flattened out the diverse political, made possible by a shrine culture.[134] The diversities of this culture, according to Menon were made possible by the condescending attitude of the Nair community as they came down to a space demanded by the shrine culture, through a conflation at the level of *theyyattams* and the associated rituals.

> There was an emphasis on the specific roles played by castes in the rituals of the shrine. What is significant is the fact that the Nayar received offerings from the Thiyya priest who was lower in the "caste" hierarchy. At a temple, the Nayar would have accepted offerings only from a Nambudiri priest. In both instances, however, it was in the specific context of the ritual that the secular status and authority of the Nayar was subordinated to the ritual authority of the Nambudiri or Tiyya priest. Status was not unequivocal and was in the same status of flux that the pantheon of deities was. (Menon, *Caste, Nationalism* 56)

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[134] Kallen Pokkudan talks in his autobiography about the inequalities that the Pulaya community had to face at the Thiyya dominated shrine, Cheermakavu, suggestive of the fact that shrines were not aloof from inequalities, Kallen Pokkudan,. *Ente Jeevitham*, [*My Life*], (Kottayam: DC Books, 2010).

Moreover the Nair tharavadus, thus would have to stage their ancestors along with those of the local heroes and heroes and heroines (46). Thus, they had to constantly *attest their legitimacy*[135] by "atoning" for excesses committed, suggesting that the problem was the excesses rather than the legitimacy, which was however, already a historically proven fact. This atonement defined the limits of an authority (46). The shrine culture thus was an attestation of the liberal Nair, which enabled him to define the "limits" of his authority over the others, the ambiguity being that of the limit of authority rather than authority itself, which seems to have been taken for granted. As an instance of the community of equals that was formed around shrine worship, Menon looks at Kottiyur, where the "central theme was the temporary dissolution of differences between the participants and the transgression of the limits imposed on interaction between high and low castes" (50).

> Before the festival began, a Tiyya would perform worship at the shrine, only after which were Nayars and Nambudiris were allowed to worship. The chief representative of the Nambudiri's paid a certain amount of money as dakshina (offering) to the Tiyya priest and received charge of the temple from him…. Seemingly, the caste hierarchy was stood on its head as upper castes could worship only after receiving permission from a Thiyya. The Brahmin paid the money to the Tiyya for the intangible, symbolic benefit of his blessing, just as the washerman was anointed with sandalwood paste, so that the Brahmin could share in a "lower" caste's temporary divinity. All the actions were seemingly contained within the parenthetical ceremonies in which the Tiyya handed over the temple to the Nambudiri at the beginning and end of the

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[135] Emphasis mine.

festival. However, in both these instances, a reversal of roles was implied and they marked continuity with the rest of the activities during the festival. (51-52)

This imaginary community of egalitarianism is based on the assumption that Kottiyur shrine was "managed by a few Nayar tharavadus (Menon 1994: 51), while Anandan views that the shrine had belonged to a Thiyya family, until the whole place fell into the hands of the *Naaluveettukar* of the Kottayam king (96), suggesting that the rituals that were to begin the *utsavam* (festival) at Kottiyur were to be initiated by the member of the Kattan (Malayodan) Thiyya family of Purali mountain. The dynamicity of social order, that Menon proposes, occurs through the process of the formation, expansion and intermingling of castes at the level of shrine culture, is based on the upper caste inheritance of the shrine, which stands to contestation, and which constructs the Nairs as the liberal subjects and agents of history.

As per this liberal historiography, the establishing of separate temples by the Tiyyas becomes attempts to "move away from aspects of shrine community which emphasized caste subordination and to recreate a sense of a community of equals around temples," leading to "flattening [of] all variation and thus bringing about an equality between castes in the sphere of worship" (Menon, *Caste, Nationalism* 61). The transition to temple culture was part of a modernization of the community made possible by reformations by Sree Narayana Guru, which was to foster community unity and one which was based on a policy of contestation with the upper castes. However this gets translated into connived attempts by the Thiyyas to reverse these "complex communities of worship." Menon states:

The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed efforts by an emergent, urban Tiyya elite to draw away worshippers from the shared culture of the shrines…. More significant, in its consequences for the trajectory of politics, was a re-evaluation of the complex nature of shrine festivals to emphasize only those aspects which reproduced caste inequality. (62)

There is no attempt to acknowledge the caste as a community, which forbids perceiving shifts in ideologies as part of modernizations of a community, while demanding a static identity to it. This may be seen in the reasons quoted for the building of temples, like the commercial power of the Mappilas, excise policy of the colonial government, etc. (62-63), all external motivations, which had led to the temple constructions, whereas Sree Narayana Guru doesn't find a place in this plot, negating assumptions of modernizations that could probably have taken place in a backward caste community.

The larger movement of the modernization of the community of Ezhavas was to be initiated by Sree Narayana Guru. SNDP was formed in 1908 as an organization to follow the principles of Sree Narayana Guru, who is hailed to have laid the foundations for renaissance in Kerala, by a symbolic act of the socialization of Shiva in Aruvippuram. According to Dileep Raj, the Guru's philosophy was part of a Baudelerian modernity which was to be conscious of the existing structure, and at the same time engage in activities that would change them independently, by bringing them together (40). This could be seen in Guru's thoughts, when, for instance, he said that one should pray for the British to win the war as they had given us *sanyasam*. Even during the time of Sri Raman, Shudras and the others were not allowed to do penance (43). As far as the lower castes were concerned, Atmam (self) was necessary

for social renaissance. The realization that we too can have a self … a tradition of problematizing Atmam, was not at all lucrative for the colonial discourse. It was something that would strengthen the colonial subject (42). P.K. Balakrishnan notes that Sree Narayana made it clear that the Ezhavas were not to engage in protest to become Nairs. But Ezhavas ought to solve the disparities within them, and from a plain of a unitary subjectivity, move on to become a Pulayan. This was the message of Guru which was clearly not a sanskritized one (P.K. Balakrishnan, *Narayanaguru* 51-53). To imagine the present differently, and the attempt to convert it without destroying it was integral to the understanding of Guru's philosophy.

The building of temples was part of this philosophy of building a sense of the community. However this was to take a reverse swing as these temples began to keep away other lower castes. Guru's "One Caste, One Religion, One God" philosophy was to become a philosophy for the oppression of the Pulayas and other castes below the Ezhavas. Even as the Guru's philosophy of building temples helped to expedite the growth of a middle class among the Thiyya's in North Malabar, symbolizing and authenticating their estrangement from those below them in the caste hierarchy, it nevertheless was to be part of a movement from within the community. As far as their relations with the upper castes were concerned, the construction of temples was to give the Thiyyas a platform of restitution, of a past glory or a futuristic one. It enabled a space of confrontation with the Nairs as equals, while at the same time prompted as much distancing from the lower castes. The resentments that Dilip Menon says as having followed after the Thiyya's stopped performing their "traditional"

obligations[136] at Kottiyur, like supplying toddy and cocks to festivals" seeing in them "an occasion for the upper castes to get free liquor," in the 1920s may be seen as part of this bourgeiozation of the backward castes in the wake of reformations prompted by Narayana Guru. It was a rupture indeed in these otherwise subtle, but "secular" egalitarianism of shrine culture, but one that was to suggest a transition of the Thiyyas to a community, provoking a dialogue with the hitherto culturally unapproachable upper castes, while remaining demandingly monologic with the lower castes. The community thus was to become a threat to both the upper castes in as much as it challenged its domination in the region, as well as to the lower castes by proving to be yet another casteist community.

This marked the flip side of the philosophies of Narayana Guru. J. Reghu describes this as the religio-reform phase, a phase of ritual reforms, by which Narayana Guru sought to "de-stigmatize their modes of worship, rites, marriage, etc."[137] which he thought to be integral for a self-critique of the Ezhava communitarian identity. The Guru's strategies of disowning Hinduism by owning it parodically was, but to have reverse effects:

> Narayana Guru failed to realize that the apartheid system of caste is ultimately grounded in a transcendental source of signification, that is, in the metaphysical core of Hinduism, that, in turn, is upheld by him through his ascetic subjectivity. Mere opposition to the social manifestation of caste cannot undermine it, unless the metaphysical ground of Hinduism has been challenged. (ibid)

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[136] See Dilip M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India: Malabar, 1900-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 64-69.

[137] J. Reghu, "Sahodaran Ayyappan: Overcoming Narayana Guru," http://utharakalam. com/ english/ ?p=303; accessed on 15/04/2012.

Realising that his efforts have gone amok, the Guru tried to relieve himself as the head of an organization which was going through "a change in dharma, from abandoning the idea of no caste, to being its consumers by maintaining it at the same time" (Kattel 9). While he tried in his own ways to do away with the evils of caste by constant interaction and attempts at upliftment of the depressed sections by visiting their "*chalas*" and accommodating Dalit children in his Ashram, his followers were to follow their discriminations (Kattel 9). Although the anti-caste movements of Guru and Ayyankali were simultaneous movements, the latter, following the former five years after the consecration, through the "*villu vandi samaram*" from Venghannur in Neyyattinkara, had to exist parallel to the Guru (11). His notion that the Shiva that he had consecrated was an Ezhava Shiva was an added incentive to the Ezhavas for whom the message that Sreenarayana Dharma was Ezhava dharma helped to be a powerful slogan to fuel caste pride among the Ezhavas (10).

Ostracizations by the Ezhava community were frequently proclaimed against those Ezhavas who participated in the community feasting organized by Ayyappan in Cherayi in 1917 and 8 years later, in Ezhukon, near Kottarakara, where the Sahodara Sangham had organized a community feasting. Such practices of ostracizations were rampant in North Malabar as well. Several like Potheri Kunjhambu, Aryabandhu P.K. Bappu, T.V. Anandan, Ravunni Vaidyar etc. were excommunicated from the society for having participated in a community feast that was held in 1938 by Aryabandu in his own house, while K.P. Gopalan was ostracized for participating in a Harijan's marriage function (Sahadevan 85).

The Sree Narayana movement was thus to serve as a catalyzing force for the middle class Thiyyas in their mobility towards modernity. It was to provide an added incentive to their sense of superiority that they harbored in North Kerala compared to their counterparts in the South. It is in such a context that the relationship with the upper caste Nairs ought to be seen. As suggested above, Narayana Guru reforms were only to add on to their views of superiority during the 1920s which meant being in conflict with their culturally superior, upper caste Nairs. Thus, while the Thiyyas received the fruits of modernization dictated by the SNDP, on the one hand, they sought to maintain the hierarchy as they kept those below them in a state of abjection. The Kuruvadi attack by the Thiyyas of Kandoth against Keraleeyan and A.K.G., as they held a procession in relation to amass mass support for Vaikkam Satyagraha is quite famous. The presence of lower castes had suggestively irked the Thiyya community, who were a majority in the region. Kallen Pokkudan says of various instances in his village about the discriminations that he had to face from the Thiyyas and later the communists. He talks about a protest when a person belonging to the Thiyya community didn't allow a Malaya to draw water from the well. The Thiyyas attacked the protestors and finally the problem was solved by the communist party intervening in to dig in another well and reaching a compromise (Pokkudan 74-5). Pokkudan says that the discriminations around Cheermakavvu, owned by the Thiyyas did not end with disallowing the lower castes to take part in the *ulsavam* (festival) but also by denying them permission in the shops of the surroundings. Pokkudan talks about a shopkeeper who was threatened by the Thiyyas of the region if he served tea to the Pulayas. "The Thiyya community coming from the Cheerma kavu won't come here if I touch a Pulayan or if I don't make one wash their own glasses. My shop will shut down (25).

Even in North Malabar, SNDP served to strengthen the already middleclass base of Thiyyas, especially in Kannur, whereas the lower caste Thiyyas were always skeptical about its relevance to them. Many of them like Oyatti Raman and Kottiyath Raman Vakkeel gave their lands for the construction of Thiyya temples and madams which was a major part of SNDP. Many of the industrial endeavors that were to have begun in the region, were backed by the Guru, which involved the permitting of a railway stop at Thalassery in front of the Thiyya Jagannatha temple as well as the lighting of electric lamps for the first time, in the exhibition site in the precincts as well as in the temple.[138]

It is in such a context that the growth of the communist movement in the region ought to be seen. The CSP, and later the communist party, that was to emerge since the 1930s as a class-ist community offered a space of ideological conflation between the upper and backward castes. The reformations that Narayana Guru advocated in the ritualistic realm as part of his religious-reforms were to concord with the projects of the Civil Disobedience movement of the 1930s, like the picketing of toddy shops, Harijan upliftment etc. Considering the fact that the latter section had always defended their rights of traditional occupations, like the selling of toddy etc., which was the chief means of survival for the Thiyyas especially around Parassinikkadavu etc., even in the face of their siege by the SNDP, it was integral that this section of the community be pacified, owing to their very prominence in the region. These attempts at pacifying were ultimately to lead to steps like establishing a Welfare fund for the

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[138] A dynamo was bought from Gujarat for the purpose of setting up an All India Exibition nagari as part of the temple Mahotsavam (78); Bagyasheelan Chalad, *Kannurinte Kalvilakkukal* [*The Stone Lamps of Kannur*] (Kannur: Vangmaya Books, 2009).

first time, for the toddy tappers (in 1969).[139] This change of tastes may be seen to be quite integral in understanding the ideological underpinnings of a class-ist community.

The community serves as a communist forte in North Malabar, making it significant as a vote bank, and making it a political force to reckon with. Talking about the community factor in the forming of the communist party, Jayashsankar suggests that communist party came into prominence in Kerala as a continuation of the SNDP movement (12). He says that Ezhavas had been a significant part in determining the political milieu of the state. It was community sentiment that was seen in 1987, as most of the Southern districts as well stood with LDF, when K. Gowriyamma stood as a candidate. Similarly, as she was ousted from the party, it was also to be seen reflected in the poll results as the Front failed in the 1996 elections (13). Those who had voted for the party, was to desert it, following the anti-Gowriyamma sentiment within the party.

The success story of the communist movement in Kerala is one of failure as far as the philosophies of Narayana Guru as well as SNDP are concerned. The latter were strategically used by the former as part of its construction in the region.[140] The anti-caste ideology and socio economic democracy that were at the basis of Sree Narayana'a philosophy, when adopted, by the speakers of modernity, became, anti-

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[139] The Welfare Fund model of social security for informal sector workers in Kerala, was initiated as part of attempts to gear in the inconsistencies that resulted as "the limitations of militant political unionism began to clash with the developmental imperatives of a low income agrarian economy," the addressing of which was significant for the government, lest it loose the support of the communities involved; K.P. Kannan, "The Welfare Fund Model of Social Security for Informal Sector Workers— The Kerala Experience," Working Paper-332, CDS April 2002. 1-65; http://unpan1.un.org /intradoc/ group/ public/documents/ apcity/ unpan010720.pdf; accessed on 13/01/2012.

[140] See third chapter for further discussion.

caste alone. Casteist regionalism was replaced by a universalistic nationalism. The modern Keralite became a combination of savarna nationalism and universal humanism. According to B. Rajeevan, the Guru was wrongly assessed by the communist movement as part of their class discourse, which saw the former and the movement that he led as part of a bourgeoisie Renaissance and thereby one which was not worth historicizing. Failing to take cognizance of the relation between his philosophy of *Dharma* and his developmental ideologies, the communists undermined his developmental aesthetics which in a way was a direct outcome of the former. The failure of understanding Guru, thus was a failure to come into terms with a non-western model of modernity. The Narayana Guru movement was undermined by a discourse, which saw the struggle by the Indian National Congress as the only legitimate one and all others as struggles that happened under it. What Guru started was a national struggle, the basis of which was anti empiricism (B. Rajeevan 249).

This accounts for the fact that even as the communists were quick to adopt the religious-reform phase of Narayana Guru, the latter phase was ignored. Also, Guru had focused on the importance of industrial endeavors and encouraged the organizing of industrial exhibitions for the first time in Kerala. Most of the Ezhava nobles who had stood behind SNDP during its early stages, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, were proponents of modern capital that was forming in Kerala. But these "modern" aspects of the Guru's discourse were sidelined by the class discourse of communism in Kerala, which still thrives on the meta-narrative of class struggle where the destruction of one class by the other would lead to a classless society.

However this class-ism has cost it dear, at least in the electoral front, which seems to be one of the major reasons for its defeat in the recently held assembly elections, with the seepage of votes occurring significantly in Malappuram and Wayanad, in North Malabar, suggestive of the attitude of the religious minorities and the tribal communities towards the left.[141] This political loss of North Malabar is also symbolic of a threat to a class-ist communism with the emergence of (lower) caste in the realm of the political. This prompts narratives of nostalgic returns, which may be understood in terms of the film *Paleri*. The mobilizations of the backward community in the region have always been at the cost of the lower castes.[142] On the contrary there has been a movement towards the opposite direction as the community began to be internalized more into the dominant hegemony.[143]

Here, the community that is evoked is, less a caste based community, but rather a "caste less," secular community of the North that got incentive from the class rhetorics of communism as early as the late 1930s. This is appropriated as the new history of the community, and one that is recognized as integral for its modern being. Pre histories of violence are conveniently forgotten as part of reinforcing the pastness of feudalism that is essential for imagining the modern. The Thiyya becomes a new

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[141] The class politics is largely being questioned by an emerging communitarian politics which can also be seen in the recently held assembly elections, where votes leaked more from North Malabar, especially Wayanad and Malappuram—both districts with a majority of tribal and Muslim communities respectively.

[142] The Osellas, in their work on the mobilizations of Ezhavas in South Kerala, describe the way in which the Ezhava mobilisation into an ex untouchable community was more a matter of uniting with the upper castes and separating themselves from the other lower castes, "The Nayars and Christians are taken by Izhavas to be imitated in economic endeavor and style. Pulayas, the group from which Izhavas strive to distance themselves, are for the great majority … still employed either as permanent or seasonal/semi-permanent agricultural laborers;" Filippo Osello and Caroline Osella, *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2000) 57.

[143] It was the V.S. factor that had created history in the 2011 elections with the Opposition front UDF winning the elections on the margin of 72–68 assembly seats. This is considered as loss for UDF as they had victory in 100 constituencies during the 2009 Lok Sabha Election. After this election V.S. has been considered the man behind the uprising of LDF after the 2009 Parliament and 2010 Municipal election loses.

signifier for the secular modern, having as his/her centre, the ambivalence of being a modern backward caste, one that has almost cast away its history of social alienation, while being initiated into a class community, set in motion by upper caste communists. The conjunctural nature of the latter facilitated the desires of both the communities to experience the modern. While the Nairs were forced to acknowledge the presence of the middleclass Thiyyas, also due to the fact that their Ezhava counterparts in South Kerala were indispensible in building up a basis for the party; as far as the Thiyyas were concerned, it was an opportunity to get mobilized into a new future with a new past. The appropriation of the Thiyya community in the films of M.T. Vasudevan Nair and Ranjith may be seen to be part of redefining the secular in Kerala. The appropriation offered the best bait, with the Thiyyas passing off as a caste community for those who demanded the inclusion of caste, while at the same time being modern and acclimatized enough for not stifling the secular equilibrium through unnecessary questions of representation, and thereby qualifying as governmental categories, with a shared responsibility of forgetting caste as a thing of the past. In other words, the Thiyya community that gets represented in these films is a heir to North Malabar, or rather its class-ist communist past as well as the modular political of Kerala.

Paleri, through its representation of the Thiyya as a central character is suggestive of the way in which it constructs the Thiyyas in the mould of this modernized caste identity. It alludes not to a communitarian identity, rather, a modern one, which is the subject of the service sector, and forms a concrete basis for the class-ist communist party in Kerala. The Thiyya subjectivity in the film is strategically interwoven within a class-ist communist past that the film suggests. This forms a part of how the film

deters from the novel, in terms of its communist critiques. Although the novel was suggestively provocative, and invited criticisms for openly clawing at the narrative forte of communist infallibility, Ranjith, through the film, was to cathartically redeem the forte from the allegations through resuscitating it in his own natural, Brahminical way. The results were immediate, with the film having a state wide second release, following a huge success at the State awards, with it bagging awards for several categories.

Ranjith was to have his presence formidably felt in Malayalam cinema during the early 1990s with films like *Aaram Thamburan*, *Narasimham*, etc., which were quintessential in redefining Mohanlal in terms of a feudal overlord and thereby beginning an era of Brahminism. Claimed by many to be the real successor of the golden period of Malayalam cinema, Ranjith's films, however, seem to be constantly reliving the memories of a class-ist communist past, the present-ing of which requires a minority as its eternal other. *Paleri*, seems to resonate the same anxieties by its representation of a Thiyya woman as the central character of the film. Although the film is based on the Thiyya community, its worries evoked by caste and religious identities are explicitly that of the modular political.

The resonances that the character Barber Kesavan posits in the novel and the film are quite revealing in the way in which the latter contributes to being the rightful heir of a class past. The role, quite significantly, is played by the Thiyyan, Sreenivasan, who is also a staunch communist from North Malabar, the land of class based communism in Kerala, and has influenced the making of his star persona of a progressive intellectual that recurs in films like *Katha Parayumbol* [*While Telling the Story*; Dir. M.

Mohanan, 2007], *Arabikatha* [*An Arabian Tale*; Dir. Lal Jose, 2007], *Traffic* [Dir. Rajesh Pillai, 2011], *Diamond Necklace* [Dir. Lal Jose, 2012] etc., is the one that finds expression in *Paleri* as well. Barber Kesavan is significant in the texts, not only for the fact that he was one of the earlier members of the communist party in Paleri, but that he was an ardent critic of the feudalistic bent in the party then, which had ultimately led to the covering up of Manikyam's murder. At stake was the feudal lord Ahmad Haji's son Khalid, with Haji and his feudal capital being important baits for the party in the region, in its growth into parliamentary politics.

Talking about how the "true" significance of Chauri Chaura in Indian history that lay outside the time and place of its occurrence, as it became an event and metaphor for "a trope for all manner of untrammeled peasant violence," specifically in opposition to disciplined non-violent mass satyagrahas, Shahid Amin talks about the importance of local memories which would enable a return to the pre-history of the event.[144] Kesavan represents a similar memory[145] in the novel, as a much required re-look into "pre-history" of the event communism or the place Paleri that symbolises it. This enables introspection as to the violence that is associated with it, thereby suggesting a history that lies outside the time and place of a modern state. It tries to contest the metaphorical significance of 1957, as the communist government was to come into power in Kerala, as an event symbolizing the coming of socialism in Kerala, and re-read in terms of its feudalistic basis. Kesavan's memory seeks to "recover the event from the judicial and nationalist record," and reveal the violence that was associated with it. However, while the novel draws on the barber as a source of memory of the

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[144] Shahid Amin, Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922-1992* (New Delhi: OUP, 1995).
[145] T.P. Rajeevan, *Paleri Manikyam: Oru Paathira Kolapaathakathinte Katha* [*Paleri Manikyam: A Midnight Murder* Story] (Thrissur: Current Books, 2008) 272.

violence that happens in Paleri, the film suggests that he is more than a memory, rather he is the very consciousness of Paleri, thereby reducing the memory to the political consciousness of a class-ist communism.

> The task of the "consciousness" of class or collectivity within a social field of exploitation and domination is … necessarily self-alienating. It is within this narrow sense of consciousness, where the self-determination and an unalienated self-consciousness can be blotted within the framework of a strategic interest in the self-alienating displacing move of and by a consciousness of collectivity, that the notion of subaltern consciousness is developed in the Subaltern Studies volumes (Amin 343).

According to Spivak,[146] consciousness becomes subaltern, when it is derived as part of spontaneity, in terms of identity formation of the group, the idea of becoming, significant for its conceptualization. However, the film, unlike the novel, makes it clear that the character of Kesavan, who becomes the consciousness of Paleri, is not just a barber but rather a worker, the former being suggestive of a communitarian/religious identity. Again the novel records Kesavan saying "I am neither a communist, nor an anti-communist, only a barber," (T.P. Rajeevan 219) which, in the film becomes, "I am neither a communist, nor a believer, only a barber." Anti-communist is translated to believer, suggesting the incompatibility of believer ever becoming a communist and vice versa.[147] A believer raises questions of caste and religious communities while at the same time reinforcing the fact that a communist ought to be a non-believer. This distinction quite succinctly converts the job of Kesavan as part of a caste community, to that of a worker of a class community doing

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[146] Gayathri Chakravarthy Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," *Subaltern Studies-Vol IV* , Ranajit Guha, ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1985) 330-363.
[147] A recent example of the conflict between the religious and the secular in the party would be the decision of K.S. Manoj to quit the party, as it didn't allow a freedom of religious expression.

the work of a barber. The novel looks at Kesavan as part of the various communities that are part of the village. Rajeevan describes:

> This is the fate of all castes groups like carpenter, goldsmith, blacksmith, artisan, barber and the others who make the village active. When they are alive, several come in search of them. They are the ones who drive the village. (T.P. Rajeevan 273-274)

Kesavan, thus becomes representative of a class consciousness, suggesting a making of a history of the proletarian who is the only legitimate subject of a class history, for which memories of a casteist, religious and patriarchal feudalism are a burden.

Kesavan becomes the representative of the earlier communist of North Malabar, who has been the subject for the land reform bill and to which the film harks back to. Thus, the polyphonic novel of T.P. Rajeevan is strategically transformed to suit the needs of the neo-Brahminical structures, that is manifested in the class ideology that a communist Kerala suggests. Having done with the religious, communitarian memory, Ranjith moves on to the "secular" realms of neo-middle brow narration, which makes it indispensible that Haridas becomes the bastard son of the Muslim feudal landlord Murikkumkunath Ahmad Haji (but who "escapes" the "evil" influence, suggested by a flight to Calcutta) and Khalid Ahmad, becomes the guilty villain, so that the progressive returnee from Calcutta can guide the prodigal son (and his half-brother) from the bad Muslim, tainted by a religious ancestry of Ahmad Haji and Aligarh, to the good Muslim.

As a matter of fact, there was a follow up to the film, in the form of a concentration towards the North in several films following *Paleri*. Its cartography was to move

beyond the dreamy ambience of Central Kerala, and its Valluvanaadan dialect.[148]

Pazhassi Raja (Hariharan 2010), that was to "memorize" Kerala's "first independence struggle" into being as well as *Urumi* (Santhosh Shivan 2011), which was again a historical narrative of indigenous resistance to colonial power were to closely follow, while characters like Ansari (*Chappa Kurishu*) provided their own backups in imagining the technologically naive but politically conscious North Malabari. Kozhikode, Thalassery and even Kasargode, at the northernmost part of Kerala, get re-inscribed in/as Malayalam cinema. These features serve to produce a narrative of nostalgic return rather than a transition.

The cartographic shift alludes to a larger process of feudalistic nativism that may be made sense of as a modernizing of communitarian consciousness, as can be seen in Paleri, where the death of a Thiyya subject happens subsequent to the birth of the respective region. Or rather the death of the sacred leads to the birth of the secular class modernity. The former is also part of reaching a consensus with a caste community that had posed an imminent threat to the desires of modernization of the upper caste Nairs. The demise of one presupposes the re birth of the other in a way that in no way dissuades the narrative of an imagined community. The film, thus, while interpellating the Thiyya subjectivity, also marks her as integral to the forming of the modern nation. It inscribes the Thiyya community as well as North Malabar as part of its larger project of a nostalgic rendering of a class-ist communist past.

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[148] Following the North Malabaric slang in *Paleri*, there appeared a song in the respective slang, in the film *Urumi*, for the first time in Malayalam cinema.

Conclusion

While the first chapter focused on the class-ist and populist trajectories that have been integral to the discourse of Marxism and discussed how the class-ist trajectory had been a reductionist one, in so far as it sought to undermine the importance of culture, the second chapter dwelled on how the CPI (M) in Kerala still stringently holds on to this trajectory of class, determining the political in Kerala. I contended that the preoccupation with class usurped the possibilities of a caste-based communism and contributed to the making of Kerala as a modular political. The narrative of sacrifice swamped in a class-communist cause has been integral in molding hegemonic masculinity as well as in determining the contours of the modular popular in Kerala. In the third chapter, I analyzed how the popular masculine heroes of M.T. have been part of this nostalgia for a class-ist past, which established their sacrificial demeanor and served as archetypes for the heroes in Malayalam cinema. The fourth chapter traced the history of an alternative masculinity within the realm of onscreen villainy and examined films, primarily of M.T. and Ranjith. The constriction of specific kinds of villainy in Malayalam cinema since the early 1990s was read as a necessary allegorization, involving an iteration and reiteration of the mainstream narrative of classist hegemony, following the implementation of SC/ST/OBC reservations in governmental sectors. I also suggested that the emergence of a middle-class, middle-brow *madhyavarthy* Malayalam cinema was a strategic response to contain emergent caste-community aspirations in the interests of a projected classless society, especially since the upper caste interests of various socio-political and cultural "heroes" coalesced with a modular develop-mentality.

Since Thiyya/Ezhava communities are vital to the past-present-future configuration of the "political" in Kerala, it is no wonder that the cinematic popular of Kerala often portrays them as modules within a larger political formation. The masterstroke was achieved, around the time that caste became a political category, by a negotiation whereby the Thiyya community was coopted as part of the cinematic popular. The modular political in Kerala was formed in part by usurping various populist streams of communism, spearheaded by the Ezhavas and Nairs, all in the service of class-ism. But the class-ist past that was based in North Malabar was however pitted against the casteist basis of communism in South Kerala, the nostalgia towards which constructs the cinematic popular in Kerala. The return to North Malabar thus becomes also a return to the Thiyya community that has to be redefined according to the mandates of secular-modern modular political. In such a context, it doesn't take much of an imagination to see that the Thiyya community of North Malabar became the battleground of modularity. While being addressed as a caste-community, the Thiyyas were also urged to look beyond such caste-community perceptions in the service of class-ist formations. In a way, the Thiyyas were being accorded secular-modern credentials much against their own conflicted affiliations. Whether they will be able to refuse and reject such stamped passports, negotiate with the Ezhavas of the South in order to imprint their own caste-community aspirations, is a question for our future.

Caste-community negotiations, of course, were predicated on gender. The normative masculinity in Malayalam cinema has had a sacrificial male as its model, which I argued was suggestive of this nostalgia towards the figure of the Nair reformer of the class-ist communist past, who was imagined to have led the people of Kerala to modernity. The male is modeled as a martyr who has to renounce his past/tradition for

the modern present. Alternative models of masculinity, on the other hand, have been constantly cast out, especially during the 1990s when the very notion of secularism was questioned by the various articulations of caste that the Mandal implementations bought about. The cinematic popular in Kerala was to overcome the "crisis" by a further brahmanization of its multifarious masculinities which involved a constriction of its villainies, paternal presences being part and parcel of it. However, these constrictions were also to implicate the Thiyya community in various ways, constructing them as the other of the normative masculinity. Two films, M.T.'s *Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* (*An Epic of the North*, Dir. Hariharan, 1989) and Ranjith's *Paleri Manikyam: Oru Paathira Kolapathakathinte Katha* (*Paleri Manikyam: The Story of a Midnight Murder*, Dir. Ranjith, 2009) that were released when caste was being asserted as political category conceptualize a return to North Malabar, and more significantly a re-turn to the Thiyya backward caste community. The Thiyya male in these films are those who have been stripped off their communitarian identities, while being remolded as the sacrificial male with a class-ist past. It was through "recognizing" and "real"-izing the Thiyyas as cinematic that the popular in Kerala was to negotiate with the rhetoric of caste during the 1990s.

Studies on Malayalam cinema have shown a tendency to see cinema as part of cultural representation, wherein the industry tries to reproduce the modular political. However, there is a need to look at cinema as part of a social history[149] which, as far as the cinematic popular of Kerala was concerned, had articulated anxieties of caste and re-assertions of casteism in a way that was quite specific, considering the almost negligent dialogues that Kerala's modular political had manifested in its negotiations

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[149] According to Madhava Prasad, cinema ought to be seen as a part of social history rather than cultural history, in his paper on South Indian cinema, presented at C. Pracsis International Seminar on South Indian Film Cultures, 13-14 Oct. 2012.

with caste as a political category. Unless there is an attempt to look at cinema as a social text, its cultural manifestations will remain ambiguously understated. Studies, which, for instance, begin with an assumption of male as an oppressor and female as the oppressed tend to be blind to the regional constructions of masculinity and femininities which again are based on caste, religious and class specificities. What I have attempted to analyze is the regional manifestations of masculinity that could be seen in relation to the representation of the Thiyya as a community in the cinematic popular of Kerala.

My attempt in this thesis has however, not been to understate the alternative kinds of masculinity that have found expression in Malayalam cinema more so in the last 3-5 years, in what has popularly been called the New Generation cinema. But, once again, these films, apparently less masculine in the absence of "stars," nevertheless reproduce the sons who are more or less bastards or are simply fatherless. Almost all these films [*Passenger* (Dir. Ranjith Shankar, 2009), *Traffic* (Dir. Rajesh Pillai, 2011), *Chaappa Kurishu* (*Heads or Tails*; Dir. Sameer Thahir, 2011), *Salt N Pepper* (Dir. Ashiq Abu, 2011), *22FK* (Dir. Ashiq Abu, 2012), *Ee Adutha Kaalathu* (*Recently*; Dir. Arun Kumar Aravind, 2012), *Usthad Hotel* (Dir. Anwar Rasheed, 2012) to name a few] are set in the global spaces of the urban, within and without Kerala.

Either such urban masculinities recognize they are wrong from their traditional, progressive counterparts associated with North Malabar [*Chappa Kurishu*, *Usthad Hotel*, *Salt N Pepper* etc] or are the postmoderns who are aspiring for a past-less global reality [*22FK*, *Traffic* etc]. The new, urban masculinities of Malayalam cinema

are those who have taken a leap towards the global, without making sense of the local, still remaining within the confines of a colonial-feudal hangover. The paternal lack in these films are suggestive of the unanswered issues of a regional modernity as well as the resolving of masculinities within the ambit of a modular political defined by modernity. It is hence essential that one historicize alternative regional masculinities as part of dis-covering a "one's own modernity."

Works Consulted

Primary Sources

a)   **Films**

No.	Film	Year	Director	Script
1.	*Olavum Theeravum* (*Waves and Shores*)	1970	P.N. Menon	M.T. Vasudevan Nair
2.	*Novembarinte Nashtam* (*The Loss of November*)	1982	P. Padmarajan	P. Padmarajan
3.	*Adaminte Variyellu* (*The Rib of Adam*)	1983	K.G George	K.G George
4.	*Adiyozhukkukal* (*Undercurrents*)	1984	I.V. Sasi	M.T. Vasudevan Nair
5.	*Namukku Paarkan Munthirithoppukal* (*Vineyards for Us to Live*)	1986	P. Padmarajan	P. Padmarajan
6.	*Panchagni* (*Sacrifice*)	1986	T. Hariharan	M.T. Vasudevan Nair
7.	*Peumthachan (The Master Builder)*	1991	Ajayan	M.T. Vasudevan Nair
8.	*Sadayam* (*Clemency*)	1992	Sibi Malayil	M.T. Vasudevan Nair
9.	*Manichithratazhu* (*The Ornate Lock*)	1993	Fazil	Madhu Muttam
10.	*Parinayam* (*Marriage*)	1994	T. Hariharan	M.T. Vasudevan Nair
11.	*Oru Vadakkan Veeragatha* (*An Epic of the North*)	1989	T. Hariharan	M.T. Vasudevan Nair
12.	*Devasuram* (*The God Demon*)	1993	I.V. Sasi	Ranjith
13.	*Sphadikam* (*Prism*)	1995	Bhadran	Bhadran

14.	*Aaram Thampuran* (*The Sixth Lord*)	1998	Shaji Kailas	Ranjith
15.	*Veendum Chila Veettu Kaaryangal* (*Domestic Issues, Again*)	1999	Sathyan Anthikkad	A.K. Lohithadas
16.	*Narasimham* (*The Lion-Man*)	2000	Shaji Kailas	Ranjith
17.	*Raavanaprabhu* (*Raavana the Lord*)	2001	Ranjith	Ranjith
18.	*Manassinakkare* (*Beyond the Mind*)	2003	Sathyan Anthikkad	Ranjan Pramod
19.	*Paleri Manikyam: Oru Paathira Kolapathakathinte Katha* (*Paleri Manikyam: The Story of a Midnight's Murder*)	2009	Ranjith	Ranjith
20.	*Pazhassi Raja*	2009	T. Hariharan	M.T. VasudevanNair
21.	*Urumi*	2011	Santhosh Shivan	Shankar Ramakrishnan
22.	*Chappa Kurishu*	2011	Sameer Thahir	Sameer Thahir, Unni R.

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