

Margins and Modernity in Early Malayalam Mainstream Novels:

A Comparative Study of *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*

*A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad
in partial fulfilment for the award of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

by

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I, Subha P., hereby declare that this thesis entitled “Margins and Modernity in Early Malayalam Mainstream Novels: A Comparative Study of *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*” submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature is a record of the work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof. M.T. Ansari, Centre for Comparative Literature, School of Humanities, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad. It is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that the dissertation, in part or in full, has not been submitted previously for the award of any degree or diploma in this or any other University or Institution to the best of my knowledge. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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A. Published in the following:

1. Subha P and Sandeep K. “Escaping the Binary of Religion and Secularism: An analysis of Train to Pakistan.” 6-12 Madhya Bharathi. No. 83. January-June 2023 (ISSN: 0974-0066).
2. Subha P. “Bhoothakala Prathyayangalute Varthamanam.” (Present of Past Suffixes). 56-58 Vijnana Kairali , Karala Bhasha Institute Publication. Volume 39 No. 3 March 2007.

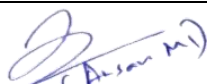
and

B. Presented in the following conferences:

1. Subha P. “Adheeshathwa Viruddha Prathyayashasthram: C.V.yute Krithikalil”, (Counter-hegemonic ideology in C.V.’s Texts), in the National Seminar on “Vaijnanika Malayalam”, 6-8 July 2022, at the Sahithya Rachana School, Aksharam Campus, Thirur, Thunjathezhuthachan Malayalam University, Kerala.
2. Subha P. “Vernacular Modernity as a Resistance Movement”, in the National Seminar on “Intangible Cultural Heritage of South India”, 11-12 May 2015 organized by Indira Gandhi Rashtreeya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, in collaboration with Folkland, Trikaripur and Department of Malayalam, Kannur University, at Dr. P.K. Rajan Memorial Campus, Nileschwaram, Kerala.

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards the fulfilment of coursework requirements for the PhD:

Course Code	Name of the Course	Credits	Pass/Fail
CL 801	Region and Vernacular Modernities	2	Pass
CL 802	Representation and Discourse	2	Pass
CL803	Counter Canonical writing	2	Pass
CL804	Comparative literature and Research Methodology	2	Pass
CL 826	Reading Religion in South Asia	4	Pass
CL 827	Indian Folk-Narratives	4	Pass


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Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to a few people who have helped me a lot during the course of my research. I use this occasion to thank them all.

The luckiest thing I had in my research career was to get Prof. M.T. Ansari as my supervisor. I am thankful to him for all his suggestions and corrections. He has been my strength. I can never forget the kind of moral support I got from him. Though words cannot express my love and gratitude for him, I use this occasion to express the same.

I was also lucky to have Prof. Shivaram Padikkal in my Doctoral Research Committee and I have benefitted greatly from him. I had attended a course taught by at the beginning of my Ph.D. programme. His valuable feedbacks as a DRC member have helped me get a clear vision of the methodology of my project.

Dr. Ratheesh Kumar was another Doctoral Research Committee member of my Ph.D. course till he went to JNU in 2014. I use this occasion to express my gratitude towards him.

Prof. Sindhu Menon, who has passed away, became a DRC member after Ratheesh Kumar left. As a person interested in Malayalam literature, she had an intimate connection with my topic and she had helped me a lot by giving valuable feedbacks and suggestions on my presentations and write-ups.

I am lucky to have Dr. Varghese in my DRC who was kind enough to become a DRC member towards the end of my programme.

I express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Sowmya Dechamma C.C., HoD, CCL, who stood with me in difficult times. I use this occasion to express my gratitude to the faculty members of CCL: Prof. Tutun Mukherjee, who has passed away, and Prof. J. Bheemaiah.

I should also mention the names of my seniors, Leni and Mrinmoy, alumni of CCL, who had taught me during my Ph.D. course work to assist the faculties.

I have to mention the names of my friends who always stood by me: Deepa, Levin, Javahar, Elwin, Themeem, Rajesh, Shinod and Aneesh.

CCL has been my family and I don't know how much I owe this family. I should mention some of my family members that I can't forget: Ambili, Viju Kurian, Elwin, Basheer, Aloysius, Priya, Manju, Lakshmi, Soma and Hemraj. I also wish to thank Rajani Madam and Sree Sailam, the office staff at CCL.

Bivitha has been so special for me and she has been with me in my good and bad times. She has helped me on many difficult situations and I am always thankful to her. I mark my special thanks to Sandeep for being with me during some of my toughest times. I should also mention Saranya, who helped me with some of the administrative requirements during my absence from the campus, for which I am deeply obliged to her and express my sincere gratitude to her. A debt of deepest gratitude is also owed to Ms. Jomina C. George, CCL, for proofreading and editing the whole thesis in the final stage of submission.

I got valuable help from the academic community. Let me recollect their names: B. Muhammad Ahammad, Dr. T. Pavithran, Sheeba Kurian, Dr. Soman Katalur, Dr. A.K. Nambiar, Prof. A.M. Sreedharan, Saji Mathew, Dr. Scaria Zakaria (late), Dr. Dileep Kumar, Dr. P. Pavithran and Dr. Sunil P. Elayidam, I express my sincere gratitude to all of them.

A lot of people outside the academy also helped me. I have to mention the name of Rosscote Krishna Pillai, grandson of C.V. Raman Pillai, who passed away two years ago. I visited him once and had a very long conversation with him. He helped me by sharing some rare articles and books related to C.V. I also wish to express my gratitude to the library staff of Indira Gandhi Memorial Library, HCU, Sree Chithira Thirunal Library, Dr. Rajan Memorial library, Kerala University Library, University Campus Library, Kannur University Library, Calicut University Library, Sahithya Academy Library and Appan Thampuran Library. I have to thank all the members who kindly helped me to get the sources which I need to refer.

It is my friend Jisha back in Kerala who has given the strength and motivation during my toughest time as my backbone. It was her words that has gotten me through when I wanted to give up.

Above all, I wish to thank my family for supporting me all these years. My dad, mom, brothers, sisters-in-law, my nephews and all other family members who always stood by me, spend their whole time to look after my children and provided strength in pursuing this work. I express my deep sense of gratitude to my partner Biju, for his love, understanding, tremendous moral support and the help he extended to me all the time. And to my children, thank you for being there for me at the end of the day even if your maternal care rights were denied.

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Introduction

The present study¹ was initially imagined as an in-depth study of C.V. Raman Pillai's² works in order to engage critically with the particular manifestations of Malayalam, modernity and marginality that can be posed as a critique of any given universal notions of the same. Given that my entire education was in Malayalam, with Graduation, Post-Graduation and M.Phil. in Malayalam language and literature, the discipline of Comparative Literature opened a space to think the "local" in the "global" language and vice versa. In the course of the study, it became increasingly clear that while thinking C.V. in English is possible, writing/translating C.V. was not the same. C.V.'s language that "lacks" and thereby "exceeds" any standardization of Malayalam, with characters in his novels speaking different "Malayalams" according to their regional, social and community backgrounds, simply refused to be translated! In *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, Emily Apter has argued that what is "untranslated" conveys more about the genealogy of a text than what is translated, which can often probably be "mistranslation" in an attempt to make the source text intelligible in the receiving language. Since my writing itself is a process of translation (as I think and write in Malayalam and then translate to English owing to my educational background), I toyed with the idea of continuing with the study by theorizing the "untranslatability" of C.V. However, the thesis required extensive quotations to substantiate my arguments, which I found extremely challenging, if not impossible, to translate. Even when translated it often did not convey the arguments, which are quite often self-evidential in Malayalam, as the regional and dialectical particularities were lost in translation. It is in this context that I requested permission to submit the thesis in Malayalam instead of English. The request initiated a long debate on the appropriateness of submitting a thesis in Malayalam in a Central University where the medium

¹ All translations from Malayalam are mine unless otherwise mentioned.

² C.V. Raman Pillai will be abbreviated as C.V. from here on.

of instruction is English. However, the permission was finally granted as the department emphasized that the discipline of Comparative Literature itself emerged as a critique of globalized English and evolved as an avenue for the study of the regional, vernacular, cultural and communitarian textualities and hence writing in a particular language should not be a problem as long as the study demands it. Nevertheless, to my dismay, the already granted permission was revoked by the University after I completed the preliminary draft of the first thesis, which made it impossible to submit. As many comparatists agreed, such a turn, or return, would not be in the best interests of the discipline or research or students themselves! One cannot but continue to wonder about the calls to “Forget English” (Aamir Mufti) and new education policies (NEP 2020) that propose to ensure primary to higher education in regional languages, against one’s personal/academic experiences.

Though I toiled for a while trying to translate this first thesis to English, it proved to be a herculean task. It is in this context that I had to modify my thesis at a late stage of my Ph.D. to a comparative study of O. Chandumenon’s *Indulekha* (1889) and C.V. Raman Pillai’s *Marthandavarma* (1891) to take the focus away from the politics of language in C.V. alone to the politics of modernity and marginality in the nineteenth century Malayalam novels. Even so, such a comparative study opened up new prospects for the earlier study. The last decade of the nineteenth century in Travancore-Cochin-Madras regions which today constitute the state of Kerala³ is a particularly interesting period as various caste-communities in the two princely states of Travancore-Cochin and the British Presidency of Madras negotiate with the colonial and “native” governmentalities for modernization, English education and democratization of the public sphere. It can also be seen that Malayalam language was undergoing a process of standardization during the same period with the proliferation of print and periodicals. The latter

³ I would be mostly focusing on Malabar and Travancore. Though the Kerala state came into existence only on 01 November 1956, yet, considering that the contexts are not drastically dissimilar, I sometimes use Kerala for generalization, knowing its limits. However, wherever specific contexts of the particular regions are discussed I have treated them separately.

half of the nineteenth century, particularly the last decade, witnessed the emergence of the genre novel, first in the form of translations of English novels and then in the manner of self-writing by regional writers. A study of the novels of the period is still relevant given that they represent the imaginations of national-secular imperatives of modern nation state in its nascent stages.

It was a conscious choice to read *Indulekha*⁴ generally categorized as a “social novel” and *Marthandavarma*⁵ a “historical novel” according to the same classifications, the former from Malabar, British Presidency and the latter from Travancore, a Princely State, against each other as it opened unique perspective into the past that constitute the present Kerala. Unfortunately, absence of Cochin in this study is a limitation that I hope to compensate through future work. Both Chandumenon and C.V., being beneficiaries of their caste positionality as well as English education, is important in order to critically locate the differences in their approach to colonial modernity as emerging through their works.

The term “colonial modernity” has been the subject of long debates. It is generally understood as the advent of “modernity” in the colonies. However, such an understanding attributes a kind of universality to “modernity”, as an ethos that has its origins in Europe and spread to colonies gradually with the process of “modernization” through colonial capitalism,

⁴ Though I have depended on the “original” Malayalam versions of my two primary texts, a note on the existing English translations of these novels may be in order. The first, almost simultaneous, translation of *Indulekha* was in 1890 by John Willoughby Francis Dumergue, a friend of the author who worked as a Malayalam translator to the colonial Madras government. The second translation of the novel was by R. Leela Devi in 1979 entitled *Crescent Moon*, but unfortunately copies are not available. The third translation of *Indulekha* is by Anitha Devasia published by Oxford University Press in 2005, which I have relied on for most of the citations.

⁵ The published English translations of *Marthandavarma*, understandably, do not seem to do justice to the complex text and fall short of contemporary academic expectations. The first translation was by B.K. Menon, published by Kamalalaya Book Depot in 1936, while its revised version, by his daughter Prema Jayakumar, was published by Sahitya Akademi in 1998. The second translation was by R. Leela Devi, published by Sterling Publishers, which saw a reprint in 1984. Needless to say, C.V. is indeed a difficult writer to translate, for as Ayyappa Panikkar observes, in the introduction to B.K. Menon’s translation: “The text of *Marthandavarma* bristles with problems—it brings in a wide range of dialects and sub-dialects cutting across all sections of people from the Maharaja and others in the higher social strata down to the lower rungs at a time when language was a class marker. Individual characters sometimes have their own dialects. Perhaps no translator can do full justice to such an original in an ideal sense, the perfect translation of any truly creative work being an impossibility”, *Marthandavarma*, revised edition, Sahitya Akademi, 1998; 22-23.

missionary activities, English education and industrialization. Scholars have tried to address this problematic by coming up with “vernacular modernity”, “alternate modernity”, “regional modernity” and the like. But that does not solve the philosophical conundrum of “modernity” because even these new coinages continue to conceive “modernity” as European and “vernacular”, “alternate”, “regional” etc. as its derivatives or variations.⁶ Therefore, in this thesis, “colonial modernity” represents the European Enlightenment and Reformation ethos introduced by the colonizer/missionary in the colonies. Chandumenon emerges as a representative and advocate for this notion that what is “modern” is essentially European. Nonetheless, as would be evident from the analysis, this modernity also ensured the modernization of caste Hindu as secular for a new nation state, by communalizing minor communities in the margins. Hence, “margins” in the title implies the margins of this new modern public sphere that was imagined in the nineteenth century. There are already studies that consider Enlightenment as a discourse that was particular only to European contexts which had no entrenched universal philosophical implications. Therefore, this thesis conceives that colonies had their own indigenous notions of “modern”, which were forced to negotiate with the national secular imperatives of European “modernity”. It is important to underscore that this encounter between “vernacular modernity” and “European modernity” had effects on both, and that emerged in the colony is what I differentiate with the term anti-colonial modernity. This encounter is most evident in C.V. as he negotiates his allegiance to the monarchic rule and new association with colonial government in his works.

⁶ Interestingly, in 2013, Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad, had “Vernacular Modernities” as its theme for its annual Researchers at Work Conference (Raw.Con), that “interrogate[d] the ambivalence in the way we seem to be living with modernity, in all its singular-pluralities.... Apart from questions regarding vernacular modernities and whether they were/are imitative, derivative, indigenous/nativist or their relationship with the national and the sub-national/regional”, the conference also foregrounded political stakes of caste/community formations as they negotiate with the “modern”, which helped in the formative stages of this thesis. [Call for Paper 2013 | Raw.Con 2013 \(wordpress.com\)](#).

It is said that classics are those that stand the test of time. However, this statement does not take into consideration the ideological apparatuses that ensure certain texts to survive the time. While both *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma* has attained a classical status in Malayalam literature, the former is still considered “popular” whereas the latter has been confined to intellectual/academic interest, primarily owing to C.V.’s complex language. Nonetheless, both represent the “mainstream” of Malayalam literature owing to its publication and circulation history. Though this attempt to study anti-colonial modernity and margins through “mainstream” may raise eyebrows, it is a deliberate attempt to comparatively read two seminal texts, both considered “mainstream,” against each other, to complicate the given idea of “mainstream” as always/only re-producing the hegemonic, by bringing out the deconstructive possibilities in C.V. Finally, though the “vernacular” has now become an empowering term as opposed to its colonial meanings of “slave language,”⁷ I have deliberately used “regional” primarily because both authors represent two different regions, responding to two different political-economic systems. “Regional” would allow to retain the different contextual histories across space and time, which “vernacular” may universalize for the colony.

The caste system in India has survived for a long time because of its non-static, dynamic nature. It is able to exert its influence even today only because it was able to adopt and adapt to the practices of the changing times. The tendency among the lower castes to imitate the customs and ways of life of the upper castes led even the masses outside the varna system to become Sanskritized.⁸ This is part of an attempt to unify all Hindus ideologically by making practices and rituals based on Brahmanism acceptable to all sections of Hindus. Adivasis and Dalits continue to be enslaved by this upper-caste cultural domination. This is denying a large section of the population their own cultural life. In terms of gender, individuals are conditioned

⁷ See *History in the Vernacular* edited by Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chatterjee for re-readings of/from the vernacular.

⁸ M.N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*.

to accept heteronormativity, and those who go out of that structure in terms of clothing, physical characteristics or behaviour are alienated by the conservative patriarchal system. Therefore, it is necessary to historically locate the premises in which public consciousness is constructed to produce such a social reality and to identify its counter-presentations that existed at the popular level. Studying the environment in which they were formed is relevant as it helps to generate new ideologies to counter such formations.

Any society adopts practices that validate the ideology of power that forms its public consciousness and often serves as its instrument. All cultural products are subject to such symbols of power, and literature is no different. Literature helps us identify the hidden ideologies of power that operate in every fibre of culture. Since modernity manifested itself through literature everywhere in the world, it is possible to identify and explain the characteristics of modernity by analyzing the changes in literary discourses. Novels have more impact on the public due to their narrative style, which is close to the socially existing mode of communication. The theme of the novels which became popular and circulated the most during a particular period can have a profound impact on the social and cultural life of the readers. Therefore, the ideas put forward by the early mainstream novels such as *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma* must have had a profound influence wherever it was discussed. A comparative analysis of the social determinants formed through the mentioned works becomes relevant.

Both “margins” and “modernity” are shaped by socially constructed responses to the interventions of power politics. In the shaping of modernity, a modern space is created by deconstructing existing traditions in some way or the other. The decline of feudalism and the advent of printing, which are considered the common signs of the advent of colonial modernity, made modernity possible by altering the literary traditions and the ways of knowing that had existed until then. Even postcolonial studies approach modernity with the presupposition that

modernity has a universal dimension. As a result, “local” modernities are articulated as outside the common sense of modernity, and they are represented here in the category of margins. “Margins” denote indigenous modernity of those social elements that have been portrayed as subaltern, and alienated or relegated as tradition due to colonial modernity.

As an extension of the colonial power, which spread its idea of modernity as universal modernity to the third-world countries, dominant ideologies like capitalism, globalization, etc., reached countries like India. Networks of power discourse such as these are the leading cause of the erosion of local identities and traditions in colonized countries. The hierarchies of social power put forward as part of colonial modernity are constantly being reworked for the growth of the market in modern times. The relevance of this thesis lies in analyzing this crucial issue at a micro level by locating the margins and the mainstream created by modernity. This thesis aims to compare and analyze the social hierarchies formed and disseminated through literary works with the entry of modernity in the colonial era and the different conceptual levels they compiled.

This field of study includes discourses of caste, class, tribe, marginalities and gender in the novels *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*, which have been viewed as perpetuating colonial ideologies differently. Considering the historical contexts, other works of the said writers have also been referenced in this comparative study for ideological explanations. The primary method used in this thesis is to examine in detail the novel’s characters, theme, presentation style, and plot elements using the review-analysis method of comparative study. This study performs a comparative study by analyzing the similarities, differences, effects and influences of the two novels narrated during the same time but discussed in different places in the mainstream where historically distinct socio-political elements existed. This study naturally advances the narrative style of postmodern studies. Cultural studies methodology has also been

adopted in the analysis. In addition, this study is simultaneously inter-cognitive and interdisciplinary, as it also covers the elements of women's studies.

Although many studies have focused on these two novels, the previous studies have tried to explain the interactions of the said novels with the ideological undercurrents of modernity. Meenakshi Mukherjee's selection is highly relevant as the first study that gave secular national representation to *Indulekha*. Udayakumar's article, in Mukherjee's edited work, was instrumental in marking the modernity in *Indulekha* away from the mannerisms of tradition. *Indulekha: Vayanayute Dishakal* explains the colonial-capitalist factors in the novel. G. Arunima's article "Writing Culture: Of Modernity and the Malayalam Novel", M.T. Ansari's findings on Muslim self-construction based on the colonial historical background in *Malabar: Desheeyathayude Eda-Padukal: Charithra-Sahitya Paadangal* (2008), M.P. Balaram's work *Indulekha: Varthamana Patanangal*, etc., explain the colonial ideas put forward by *Indulekha*. P.P. Prakashan's "Indulekha: Parshwavalkkaranaththinte Rashtreeyapatam" is notable among the recent *Indulekha* studies. *Indulekha*'s colonial ideas were critiqued for a long time, but *Marthandavarma*'s anti-colonial inclinations were revealed recently by N. Santhosh Kumar (2003). He explained that the archaic style of C.V. Raman Pillai does not share the logic of colonization. Therefore, looking back at an anti-colonial and unique continuity, C.V.'s style demands special attention. Vinod Chandran's doctoral thesis on C.V.'s historical novels analyses and mark his protest and resistance against colonial dominance (2004).

The social, political and cultural dimensions of the works formed in the historical context of the colonial period confront the colonial ideology. This study begins with the recognition that early writers engaged with colonial ideas in their works to flush out indigenous characteristics, and they should not be limited to the dichotomy of pro-colonial text or anti-colonial text. Hence, the hypothesis of this thesis can be defined as follows: the decolonial indigenous modernity in *Marthandavarma* allows space for marginalized communities such as

women, Dalits, religious minorities, etc., and is essentially different from the colonial-inspired regional modernity in *Indulekha*.

The first chapter, **A Critical History of Malayalam Mainstream Story**, provides the background to the study. It gives a brief description of the emergence of novels in the Western, Indian and Malayalam contexts and contextualizes the novels *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*. The second chapter is titled **Contextualizing O. Chandumenon and C.V. Raman Pillai**. It gives a biographical description of the authors, O. Chandumenon and C.V. Raman Pillai, along with a brief history of the time of their writings. It also explains the literary contributions of the writers and the factors which led to the novels. The third chapter, named **Margins and Marginalities in *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma***, analyses the caste and communal dynamics in these novels. The fourth chapter, named **Woman/Gender Equations in *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma***, is a close and contextual reading of the primary texts in terms of margins of gender, region and modernity. The **Conclusion** summarizes the main arguments to support the hypothesis and discusses the scope and relevance in the context of the main arguments.

Chapter One

A Critical History of Malayalam Mainstream “Story”

This chapter tries to critically engage with the genealogy of the novel in the European, Indian and Kerala contexts, by focusing on the influences as well as departures from each other. Histories of novel generally adopt a linear approach by which the genre originated in Europe and found its way to colonies with the introduction of printing press, English education, etc. and the emergence of reading public and reformatory zeal as a result of colonial modernity. While European influence in shaping the “Indian” literature and especially “Indian” novel is taken for granted due to the historical experience of colonization, the colonies’ role in shaping the Europe is hardly acknowledged. It may be interesting to explore the idea that it is Europe’s encounter with colonies that shaped its literary and cultural aesthetics which was then universalized and imported back to the colonies as “Western,” “modern” and “universal”. Hence, in this chapter, “novel” is not just a modern literary genre that was imported and/or imitated in colonies, but that which has its own genealogy in the regional contexts. Hence, I attempt to map the social, political and economic imperatives in the region that pressed the emergence of particular novel forms in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The concept of the mainstream also constructs cultural elements that are relegated to the margins or eliminated. Literary works usually assume a mainstream position when most of the population enjoys them or when it attracts considerable attention from literary critics.¹ The narratives generally described as novels are traced historically, and Malayalam novels of the nineteenth century are specifically studied to understand the factors behind the formation of

¹ It is mentioned in the introduction that the mainstream novels in this thesis are defined by considering popularity and popular circulation. The explanations for it are given later in this chapter.

mainstream literature. A general examination of the parameters used in Malayalam novel expression, the factors determining the novels' narrative and the representations of the authorships subjected to the population's enjoyment reveals the discursive space of a dominant minority. I will begin with a discussion of the main features of the early novels, especially the Indian novels. With that context, I will illustrate how early Malayalam novels exhibited similar characteristics. This chapter also briefly describes how these early Malayalam novels confront some of the major theories about the development of Western novels. This chapter explains how the "mainstream" is represented and analyses the novels *Indulekha* by O. Chandumenon and *Marthandavarma* by C.V. Raman Pillai in the context of such formations, which are marked within the said classification.

1.1. Beginnings of the Novel

The genesis of language and the genesis of literature are as old as the genesis of man as a communicative social being, and the fictional stories in spoken languages were formed and developed as part of it. However, the earliest available written literary work that can be considered as an early forerunner of the novel is the *Tale of Genji* (*Genji Monogatari*), written by Japanese writer Lady Murasaki Shikibu between 1001 and 1015 AD. Similarly, *Lazarilla de Tormes* (1554), *Don Quixote* (1601) and *Prince de Cleves* (1678), written in Spanish, are literary works that represent the beginnings of the novel (Ardila 1–55). Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie* (1760) are other examples of early Western novels. All these stories are considered as "representation" of "real" life. However, in European studies, Margaret Anne Doody, in her book *The True Story of the Novel*, argues that the novel has a "continuous history of about two thousand years" (Doody 1). Equally relevant are the opinions of scholars who traced the non-western roots of the novel to oral traditions and "regional" forms of storytelling and writing. Thus, many scholars disagree with Mikhail

Bakhtin, Ian Watt² and other theorists of novel, who view it as a product of the modern age. These scholars have convincingly argued that novels did not emerge with the Renaissance or print capitalism.

Early European novels that emerged with the Renaissance, print capitalism, or industrialization, deal with the concept of “reality” in some way and are sufficient to interpret the theorizations of novel that emerged based on that period in various ways³. In short, the theories derived based on the novels of that period prohibit looking back to the past in many ways. That is why they explain the characteristics of the period as the reasons for the creation of the novel. The early definitions of the novel were various attempts to interpret the novel feature by relating it to “reality”. However, “reality” does not, in a singular sense, pervade concepts. When it is thought of as a device that indirectly indicates “reality”, it becomes a concept that can fully encompass the sense of reality in diverse narrative environments that look at a period in many ways. I will examine the definition of this novel structure and its relevance later in this chapter when I analyze the characteristics of early Malayalam novels. It is intended to indicate here that these early novels conform to the theorization of the early European novel (Gerli 56–78).

1.2. Early Indian Novels

Though the beginning of the novel in India is usually read as an imitation of a European literary form or as a colonial product, it is now acknowledged that even before the arrival of the British, there were long prose narratives that could be classified as novels. Story, as a literary genre, existed in both Sanskrit and Sangham literary traditions and over time, two types

² Ian Watt in his *Rise of the Novel* proposes a three-fold theory of novel: inter-connection between the rise of a middle class, rise of literacy and rise of the novel in late seventeenth century England. He considers enlightenment movement, spread of Protestantism and its Puritan morality, rise of a reading public, economic individualism and rise of a middle class and rise of modern, industrial capitalists as reasons for the rise of a new genre called novel.

³ See the theoretical analysis on the same by early literary critiques like Meenakshi Mukherjee, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, etc.

of stories evolved. On the one hand, narratives about real people and incidents evolved; on the other hand, fictitious stories with no connection with real-life incidents also emerged. However, even in the former tradition, a certain level of fictionality was given importance. Karthyayana and Pathanjali refer to “narratives” in their texts. “Akhyayika” was a particular style of narrative that was imaginatively directed by relating living persons and events. Sanskrit scholars like Patanjali, Karthyayana and others have defined narrative in their own contexts. These narratives rejected the simple narration style evolved in the *Pancatantras* and subscribed to figurative prose with a complex narrative structure. Dandin’s *Dasakumaracaritha* (CE 6th century) and Subandhu’s *Vasavadatta* (CE 7th century) are examples of Sanskrit narratives.⁴ Since these contrasted in many ways with early European conceptions of the novel, they were not generally referred to or located in the genealogy of novel, when novel emerged as a modern genre. Many narratives have not been studied under the category of novels because they have figurative and balanced language and do not fit under the modern conceptions of the novel. The said works, generally known as “Gadya-Kāvya”,⁵ can be categorized as novels.

Literary modernity and modern novels came to India in the mid-nineteenth century by substituting the rich prose literature of stories and narratives (Mukherjee 8). Going by the line of inquiry followed by the commentators of the novel in the West, it would be relevant to study the pre-novel traditions of India while focusing on the origin and development of the novel as a genre. Many problems exist in treating works of a particular phase as early novels and analyzing the available sources through this determination. Such selections tend to choose narratives that satisfy the accepted definition of novels. This can be said about the works that are now considered early novels.

⁴ Many such prose poems exist. But in the literary tradition that gave more importance to poetic texts, prose stories were not given much importance in the early days.

⁵ Prose-poetry. As already mentioned, in Sanskrit literature it was classified into two categories: Katha and Akhyayika.

The first phase of the Indian novel can be traced back to the early novels written in English, like Kylas Chunder Dutt's *A Journal of 48 Hours of the Year 1945* (1835) and Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *The Republic of Orissa: A Page from the Annals of the Twentieth Century* (1845). *Rajmohan's Wife*, published in 1864 by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, is generally considered the first Indian novel written in English. Even before that, the novel narratives that were imported to India in order to facilitate the spread of colonial education and cultural invasions are the ones that forced the beginning of the Indian novel to be read along with the imposition of the English language. Priya Joshi shows that when the novel started to spread in India, the books that were set up in the libraries for Indians to read were chosen only as per the instructions of the British authorities.⁶ Moreover, since the novel was mainly accessible only to a modern educated class, its reading and analysis in many ways was limited to an elite stratum and led to the formation of mainstream literature that suited the interests and tastes of the said group of individuals.

During the 18th century, European women used their free time to read and write novels. They considered novels as a medium to explain and reflect on the world of women: their feelings, identities, experiences and issues of identity, were expressed through novels like Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Nevertheless, in the Indian context, where there was a completely different cultural atmosphere, the act of reading novels was viewed with suspicion, even among a minority of women who could read. Therefore, women writers were scarce. Even then Susie Tharu and K Lalita has laboriously recovered and anthologized traditions of women's writing and reading across periods in *Women Writing in India: 500 BC to the Present*. Men concerned with discourses of nationalism considered novels as having reformatory potential that are crucial for the progressive social movements to change the nation according to their imaginary ideals. Therefore, novels were

⁶ Priya Joshi, *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture and the English Novel in India*.

used to highlight the specific ideology they put forward or solve the problems raised against it. This is evident in how most of the novels written in India during colonialism glorified European domination.

Similarly, narratives about the life of the kings included in the category of historical novels were presented as a representation of the emerging nation by constructing the indigenous tradition and history according to European standards. The construction of the intellectual tradition that considers the Muslim as an Other which was created by the European invasion, is also expressed through such novels. Naturally, as a part of maintaining the otherness of the religious identity of Muslims at the local level, a religious identity that addresses the whole of the natives has been constructed as its opposite duality. Part of this is the extreme religious perspective expressed through novels like *Anandamath*, which puts forward the ideas of religious and cultural nationalism.

Another fundamental characteristic of the Indian novel is its multilingualism. It accommodates several utterances at the same time. This is also a characteristic of the land. Its ability to accommodate different voices makes it polyphonic. India is an amalgamation of many linguistic cultures. The fact that Indian nationalism is a combination of multiple ideologies marks India's dimensions as a nation, which often figures as far as the novel is concerned. V. Divya codifies that Indian novels express this doctrine of multiplicity (433). In continuation, she also argues that when the Indian novel accepts the colonial world without any discussion, ignoring its genetic features of pluralism and creativity, it becomes monotonous, making debates and discussions impossible (436-437).

Indian novels reflect the imaginations of nation in many ways. The fact that the novel is simultaneously a narrative and critique of nationalism becomes an essential feature because novel represents the time and place of nation formation in some way. Hence it sometimes travels in and out of that enchanted land. Moreover, the land is narrowly reduced to a single

person or action, sometimes forming a loose plane that translates into many lands. It constantly moves from a purely local level to the national level to the international level when it specifically addresses the politics of the land. Novels reflect the dynamics of the time and place in which the authorship was formed and put forward the feature of reality. In other words the modern novel is a literary genre that has been formed with the rise of nationalism. Early novels are associated with realism. It is already said that the reason for this feature of the novel is its ability to treat time and place uniquely (V. Divya 432).

Similar to Ian Watt's findings, Meenakshi Mukherjee finds a critical relation between realism and novel in her much-discussed book about the Indian novel titled *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*. She observes that the theories of the novel, as formulated in the West, cannot be applied mechanically in the Indian context. Industrialization and the rise of the middle class are often treated as the necessary preconditions for the novel. Taking the examples of Banabhatta's *Kadambari* and *Tales of Genji*, Mukherjee points out that neither of these factors are required for the emergence of the novel. *Don Quixote* was also written in pre-industrial Spain (Mukherjee 4). Mukherjee points out three characteristic features of the novel in contrast with the genres that existed prior to it. First, the pre-novel narratives were more coherent, whereas the novel, as a genre, is not that coherent. Secondly, the pre-novel narratives had a concept of space and time, which was not synonymous with the calendrical time as the narrators could begin a story with the usual "once upon a time", which changed with the novel's arrival. The novel placed the events within a specific geographic and time coordinate (5). According to Mukherjee, the third important distinction between the novel and the pre-novel narratives was in characterization. The pre-novel narratives used character types or sometimes archetypal figures, whereas the novel's characters were life-like (6). Thus, Mukherjee distinguishes the novel tradition from the pre-novel traditions. In this context, it

would be worthwhile to look at how the novel transitioned in India and borrowed elements from the pre-colonial literary traditions of the nation.

Since the beginning of the novel in India, attempts have been made to conceptualize it as a genre of Indian literature that is instrumental in national unification. As a representation of Indian nationalism, the literary form of the novel became popular as a medium to reflect and explain time and place. While shaping the public consciousness of India against colonial domination, the novel became the most suitable means for nationalists to confront the myths constructed to shape the nation under a Western rule and to promote indigenous nationalism. The spread of printing and the widespread marketing of books were essential factors that stimulated the spread of ideas.

Meenakshi Mukherjee makes an important observation in this context. According to her, novel in India is not simply a result of a new version of literary activity imported from the West. Instead, it is a result of the social and political developments of the nineteenth century; the most important among them being the colonial rule. The first-generation novels appeared one generation after the Macaulay's Minutes was passed. Nevertheless, Mukherjee strikes a chord of balance by saying that it is wrong to attribute the sole reason for the emergence of the new genre to colonial rule alone. There were so many narrative traditions in India even before the novel. Novels cannot be treated as a legacy of the British rule as railways or cricket (3).

The particular literary form was named and articulated in India as part of the novel boom of the 19th century. The early novels reflected a very complex social reality. In each language, the early novels reflect their particular cultural context. The major cultural factors that determined the nature of the novel in each language included: the conflict between Western ideas and traditional norms, the ideas of social reformation, and the results of education, among many other factors (Mathew 26-27).

The first generation of novelists aimed to articulate their ideologies through their novels. So, most of these novels closely resemble propaganda novels. Not all of these instructive novels were written by Christian missionaries; some of them were written by Muslim and Hindu writers with a reformist attitude. The case of Nazir Ahmad's *Mirat-ul-Arus* is an example. He wrote the novel to teach young girls the kind of virtues that are desirable in them. *Mirat-ul-Arus* was written with official patronage for private circulation (Mukherjee 33). Ahmad wrote it mainly for his daughters, and it was one of the gifts, along with many others, which he presented to his son-in-law as dowry. Later on, it was discovered by Ahmad's employer Kempson and was published by him (34). Pandit Gauri Dutt's *Devrani Jethani ki Kahani* has a similar story. Its theme is almost identical to *Mirat-ul-Uroos*. Like *Mirat-ul-Uroos*, this novel also has two brides. One is lazy and worthless; the other has all the desirable virtues. Through such contrasting examples, the novelist would present a suitable model for the readers to imitate. In this way, the early novels set up role models for the readers. The novels written by Hindu and Muslim writers did have a Christian influence, as stated by Ahmad in his foreword to *Tabat-un-Nasub*, which was written as a defense of Islam. These novels were certainly written with a "didactic" purpose, but they had a "pragmatic" dimension as well (35). In both the novels discussed above, one can see detailed descriptions of the precautions against cholera, again revealing their educational motif.

Novel writers were forced to explain and define their identities in the said period because they had developed a respect for the "other" they faced and desired to imitate them. This is because they felt that their indigenous identities exist in relation to the stereotypes formulated of the "other" or conforming to its elite ideals, even when they are uniquely defined. Hence, it can be said that, as far as the diverse and plural Indian context is concerned, there are seemingly disparate national experiences, but also fundamental similarities in the ideology that determines them. This similarity helps to unify them under the general concept of the Indian

novel. This process of nationalism and unification is carefully shaped through literary publications, academics, central institutions and edited anthologies of canonical literature. G Arunima's concern about the politics of only particular works being subjected to interpretation can be read together with this selection process (Arunima 273). The translation process is a popularization process based on mainstream notions.

The missionary activities were primarily responsible for the emergence of the novel across Indian states in the nineteenth century. For instance, in the Assamese context Misra observes that the missionaries encouraged the setting up of the printing press. They brought out Bible translations, religious books, grammar books, historical books, dictionaries etc. They were also responsible for publishing the first Assamese periodical, "Orunodoi" (6-7). The first fictional narrative in Assamiya was *Sudharmar Upakhyān* which was written by Padmavati Devi Phukononi in 1884. This novel should be read in the context of the opportunities opened up by English education, the cause of women's liberation through education, and the anxieties it raised in the minds of the middle class, who were predominantly orthodox (8-9). In this novel, Padmavati Devi argues that women do not have an independent existence, and she is quite content with that state.

She quotes society's elders and argues that a little learning is dangerous. She also argues that women's learning will only be an obstacle for them (Misra 9). The writings of other writers, both male and female, also prove that there was a deep-rooted anxiety among these writers about women getting educated and liberated. Calcutta was already established as a learning centre by then, and the Assamese middle class feared girls getting educated in Calcutta (11). The prospect of women becoming the rivals of men in the public sphere was a recurring theme in the fictional writings of early Assamese writers (12). Another feature of the early Assamese novels was the influence of the Christian missionaries. Padmavati did not write with the

intention of proselytizing, but her ideal wife, in many ways, had similarities with the ideal woman of Mrs. Mullens (13).

Similarly, the novel in Bengali literature started as a result of English education. It is closely linked with the emergence of the middle class (Bandopadhyay 30). The emergence of the *babus* and *bhadraloks* contributed much to developing the novel in Bengali. By the nineteenth century, vast amounts of land were transferred to the *bhadraloks*. A reading public emerged from among the *babus* and the *bhadraloks*. Calcutta began acquiring the contours of a metropolitan city. The medieval characteristics of Calcutta were gradually lost. Religious and social reform, modern education, journalism, newspapers, etc., changed the face of Calcutta (30).

By the nineteenth century, a class of Bengali upstarts had emerged in Calcutta. There were fortune seekers and absentee zamindars among them. They later turned out as *babus*. They were interested in cultural and literary activities (Banerjee 242). Bankim Chandra, the most celebrated writer of the 19th-century Bengali fiction, wrote so many characters from the traditional archetypes like the hero, the righteous priest, the chaste woman, etc. At the same time, he also portrayed such characters as the *babus*, *zamindars*, etc. These characters were unrepresented in Bengali literature till then (356). Here we can see these newly emerging classes coming into the literary frame. On the one hand, the novel was a medium that represented some of the newly emerging classes; on the other hand, it was also written for the same classes.

Venkatachalapathy, on a similar note, has argued that the Tamil novel at the beginning of the 20th century was an art form of the rising middle class. He points out that the number of novels published in Tamil increased exponentially every five years. Between 1890 and 1900, there were only 39 novels, but it increased to 201 novels in the period between 1901 and 1910

(Venkatachalapathy 85). The number of novels published increased exponentially in the next decade (86).

The conventions that the early novelists of different regional languages followed were mostly Western. But equally vital is the argument that the early novelists have taken much from the regional traditions. It has been argued that Bankim Chatterjee's *Durgeshanandini* imitates Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. However, Chatterjee has denied this. He denied even having read *Ivanhoe* (Banerjee 356).

The modern novel took its foothold in India in the contours of the nineteenth century. Colonial rule and its accompanying manifestations of particular modernity catalyzed the development of the novel. It became the medium of the newly emerging middle class (for example, the *babus* and *zamindars* in Bengal). Most of the novelists wrote their works with an instructive purpose. They believed in social transformation and progress, inspired by the Enlightenment rationality and reformatory aesthetics. Therefore, women's liberation was a central idea that many of the early novelists shared. Although the general perception of the novel as a product of "colonial modernity" cannot be denied, it can be argued that regional and Sanskrit traditions of prose writing contributed to the genre's development.

1.3. Early Malayalam Novels

Part of the literary model of the novel in Malayalam shares similarities with the elements that make up the general concepts of the Indian novel that we discussed so far. Therefore, the term "first novel" leads to many questions and critical analysis in the unique context of Malayalam. First novel is only important for literary critics and anthologists who have compartmentalized and categorized novels according to types, periods and genres in order to create a canon. And what is included and excluded from the "canon" would be a reflection of the hegemonic ideologies of the period. It is recorded that *Paradeshi Mokshayathra* (1847)

by Archdeacon Koshy, the translation of the English text *Pilgrims Progress* by John Bunyan, was the first Malayalam novel and Rev. C. Muller's translation of the same text *Sanchariyute Prayanam* (1849) was the second one (Irumbayam 14-15). These novels were printed in the Basel Mission Press, Thalassery. Literary works such as *Bhashashakuntalam*, a prose translation of Kalidasa's *Shakunthalam* by Travancore Maharaja Ayilyam Thirunal Ramavarma, *Meenaketanan* written by Ayilyam Thirunal based on an Arabic story, and prose interpretations of Sanskrit works by Kerala Varma Valiya Koithampuran, are literary works that stand within the novel tradition. Archdeacon Koshy's translation of John Bunyan's *Holy War*, as *Thiruporattam* (1865), Kallur Ummen Philipos's prose adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* as *Almarattam* (1866), etc., can be considered as novels if the modern models of characters that entered the novel's structure is considered. However, none of these were considered worthy of the novel category.

Nevertheless, Hannah Catherine Mullins's *The Tale of Two Women Named Fulmony and Karuna* (1858), translated as *Fulmony and Karuna* by Joseph Pitt, has been marked within the literary form of the novel by some critics. Another translation of the same work is *Padminiyum Karunayum* (1884). *Ghathakavadham* (1872), a Malayalam translation of *Slayer's Slain* written in English by a British woman named Mrs. Collins, is another well-known work of the period. *Pullelikunju* (1882) is a prose narrative by Archdeacon Koshy based on Charles Lamb's Shakespearean stories. *Kamaksheecharitam* and *Varshakalakatha* written by Chidambaravadyar, *Kundalatha* (1887) by Appu Nedungadi, *Indulekha* (1889) by O. Chandumenon, *Indumatheeswayamvaram* (1890) by Vishkekovilakathu Ammaman Raja, *Meenakshi* (1890) by C. Chathunair, *Marthandavarma* (1891) by C.V. Raman Pillai, *Saraswatheevijayam* (1892) by Potheri Kunjampu, *Parishkarappathi* (1892) by Kochuthomman Apothecary, *Parangodiparinayam* (1892) by Kizhakkepat Raman Menon, *Sharada* (1892) by Chandumenon, *Lakshmikesavam* (1892) by Komatil Padumenon,

Naluperilorutthan or *Natakadyam Kavithvam* (1893) by C. Anthappai, *Chandrasahana* (1893) written by the three writers P. Krishnan Menon, T.K. Krishnan Menon, and C. Govindan Eledam are some of the other prose works written during this early period. *Akbar* (1893) and *Kalyani* (1893), written by Kerala Varma Valiya Koi Thampuran, *Sukumari* (1893) and *Saguna* (1893), written by Joseph Mooliyal and *Kamala* (1899) written by C. Krishnan Nair, were included in the vast narrative universe of the nineteenth century. Famous literary historians and critics have considered only a few of these works as part of the history of the Malayalam novel⁷. It is possible to explain how specific characteristics of the novel, which works as a basis for placing them in literary canons, are related to the established interest of the ruling minority.

M.P. Paul, an early literary critic, in *Novel Sahithyam*, ascribed to *Indulekha* the status of “the first finest aesthetic novel in Malayalam in terms of literary finesse” (Paul 181). He also reasons out this evaluation by scrutinizing the particularities of the work. However, Thumbamon Thomas explains, chronologically, that the earliest Malayalam novel is *Ghathakavadham*, and the second is *Pullelikunju* (Thomas 26). However, the hypothesis of the pre-model reveals this as an assessment based on the conviction of the mainstream conditioning of the novel.

The modern Malayalee’s progressive outlook and urge for reform, which came from the colonial consciousness, collaborated with caste-based ideas and upper-class understandings in early novels. Moreover, those outside the literate minority were considered uncivilized and those who have to be educated to become “human”. Through missionary ethos, Nair self-identification, and the significance of English, he posited a social reform construct that satisfied the writings of early literary critics. It also made possible the social atmosphere that validates both “Marumakkathayam” (matrilineal inheritance) and “Makkathayam” (patrilineal

⁷ None of the Malayalam novel literary histories consider most of these works to belong to the category of “good” novel. Some of the earlier works like *Kundalatha* are mentioned in the explanations which can be considered as precursors of the novel.

inheritance). Chandumenon, in writing *Indulekha*, intended to prove that marriage is a matter of personal choice of the members of the society, both male and female (Thomas 40). It is part of the reformation effort to restore the concept of family to the hierarchy of male-female relations and to that of male supremacy. In these novels, the Nair-Namboothiri male was represented as the ideal subject to become “legitimate” citizen in the emerging nation.

Women and lower castes could only be the subjects of reformation at the hands of colonial elites and nationalist upper caste men. In the case of *Saraswatheevijayam*, another nineteenth-century Malayalam novel, the author intended to prove that the lower castes can achieve liberation through education. The ultimate aim of *Pullelikunju*, another novel of the same period, was to prove that the subaltern classes could get liberation through religious conversion. The novel *Phulmoni Ennum Koruna Ennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalute Katha*, which is a translation of a Bengali novel, was to show how Christianity can change the lives of people, both upper caste and lower caste (Irumbayam 46).

While *Saraswatheevijayam*, *Sukumari* and *Ghathakavadham* are discussed mainly in the context of missionary activities, *Indulekha* does not seem to be appended with such labelling that overtly reflects the agendas of the colonial empire; instead, it was always considered among the early Indian “secular” novels. A discussion of how religious ideology negates this construct can begin from Yacob Thomas’ remark that the Hindu tradition can be seen in novels like *Indulekha* and the missionary non-Hindu tradition in *Ghathakavadham* (Thomas 402). It becomes clear when observing such narratives how national consciousness based on the upper-caste Hinduism is reconfigured as secular and how it has become necessary for Indian nationalism to define the indigenous public sphere by forming a concept that can replace Western secularism. The original model to explain secularism was formed by relating it to the living standards of the elite minority and transforming it into a national representation related to nation-building. In this way, the religion and beliefs of the constructed majority,

which are depoliticized, are defined as secular, outside the concept of religion and religious politics.

Mukherjee points out some concrete instances of the British interest in spreading the tradition of novel writing in India (Mukherjee 19-20). Novel became an effective medium of proselytizing for the Christian missionaries. There are so many novels that were written with an instructive purpose. Two examples of this type of novel are *Phulmoni-o-Karunar* by Hannah Katherine Mullens and *Slayer Slain* by Mrs. Collins. The latter was first written in English and was translated into Malayalam. Katherine Mullens' novel was translated into Malayalam with the title *Phulmoni Ennum Koruna Ennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalute Katha*. Even though written with an instructive purpose, these novels did more than that. Mukherjee observes that these novels have introduced realism into literature, and thus, they mark a deviation from the traditional mode of narration in India. Mukherjee cites paragraphs from the novels and shows how these writers paid attention to the details of the physical environment (23). Thus, Mukherjee reveals the close connection between realism and early Indian novels. She calls these novels as Christian novels, but it is clear from these novels that the fight is not between Christians and non-Christians. For example, in *Slayer Slain*, the quarrel is not between Christians and Hindus; but between different denominations of the church. In this novel, the fight is between the Syrian Church and the Protestant church (24).

We have analyzed that all the early "Indian" literary works have given importance to the feature of realism in the novel. The critical theorizations understand that a formative depictions of nation-state formation need to be recovered through regional novels. Literary historians such as Arvind Krishna Mehrotra and Meenakshi Mukherjee tried to define "Indian" reality and build a universal recognition for the same. For example, in her critical analysis of the history of Indian novels in *Realism and Reality* (2005), Meenakshi Mukherjee included *Indulekha* in the category of novels that "depict contemporary Indian society realistically" (16).

As mentioned above, the expression of secularism is prominent in these literary expressions. The micro-politics, which put forward the elements that make the construction of reality possible, also serve as the foundation of the construction of the canon.

As explained, while referring to the general characteristics of Indian novels, the beginning of the early Malayalam novels is described as taking the same path as that of translations. All nineteenth-century novels are apparently modelled after another novel. Especially, the crucial role that *Indulekha* has played in setting the model for novel as a genre continues to be unchallenged. For instance, Kochuthomman Apothecary mentions in the preface to his novel *Parishkarappathi* that Chandumenon's *Indulekha* has inspired him to write a social novel about the life and traditions of Nasranis in Travancore. Therefore, excluding only some of them from the novel's history is biased on the grounds of imitation or translation. The content, language and this translated nature of other literary forms that came before the novel in Malayalam should also be examined when it is criticized that later novels came through narratives and were written to be a tool to spread religious conversion and Christianity.

An upper caste ideology comes in precisely by the author's attitude that the novel is written for the benefit of the less knowledgeable readers, and for the reformation of one's own and/or an-other's community, by propagating secularized notions of sin and virtue, which is not much different from the intentions of *Ramacharitham*. This elite minority has the power to construct the literary mainstream and to announce the final judgment in the fields of education and literature. The early Christian novels and the nineteenth-century Arabic-Malayalam novels, which are thought to have an Islamic religious philosophy, are hidden or pushed out of the mainstream. Whereas, due to such mainstream representations, Dalit writings which mostly appeared through minor periodicals and journals are not even considered as part of any canon.

It is in connection with this that the merit of *Ramacharitham*, which is considered as the first poem in Malayalam, should be evaluated. It is a fact that even though *Ramacharitham*

is a Malayalam work, it is written in a mixed language and according to Tamil rules. Moreover, from the twelfth century, when *Ramacharitham* was written, to the literary period of Ezhuthachan, who is later described as the “father” of the Malayalam language, all the works written can be considered as translations of the works written in the Sanskrit language which itself could be translations. Therefore, there is no logic in setting aside the novels prior to *Kundalata* as prose narratives. This debate about influence is very common to novels in all Indian languages. In the preface to *Indulekha*, Chandumenon modestly states that his intention was to translate Lord Beaconsfield’s *Henrietta Temple* (Chandumenon 2). Despite his modesty, a serious reader of the novels would argue that Chandumenon went beyond his stated purpose. Thus, it can be seen that even when the nineteenth century novelists tried to imitate the novel’s Western form, some exceeded beyond their Western models.

The fact that there is no mention of *Sukumari* in literary histories, including Ulloor (also, Ullur) Parameshwarayyar’s *Kerala Sahitya Charithram*, which describes in detail even those works which are considered unimportant, is mentioned by Sruthi Vinayan and Merin Simi Raj in their article (Vinayan and Raj 6). The method of biographical criticism makes it clear that the writer’s social position or status, which is part of the traditional understanding of poetic qualities, helps the works to gain a place in the literary canons. Several novels such as *Thiruthata Purogathi*, *Ghatakavadham*, *Pullelikkunju*, *Saraswatheevijayam* and *Chardarvesh* have been excluded from the canon of literary history because of the presence of elements that defy the rules of authority. These novels do not satisfy the elite public consciousness of the cultural establishment. The essence of most of them is to challenge the caste system in Kerala and encourage the conversion of Dalits. It is logical that the novel *Ghathakavadham* should be considered as one of the earliest Malayalam novels. Even though it was raised by literary critic Thumpaman Thomas, there are still common readings which consider *Kundalatha* as the first novel.

Even though *Parangodiparinayam* is a satirical imitation of *Indulekha*, it should be read as a mockery of later novels imitating *Indulekha*. Parangodi, the English-educated and defiant heroine, learns English and sewing, reads books at home and sews a hat for the hero. Ramankutty Menon's statement that "Our women are not qualified just because they have learned English" seems to be an accurate and appropriate answer to Chandumenon's statement in the preface of the novel, and it can be assessed that it is the first experimental novel that fully represents the criticisms against *Indulekha*. On the other hand, Pangassamenon, with a "kuduma" [a tuft or lock of one's hair on the head] on his head, is the hero who shoots and kills the lions that escaped the zoo. The critical world, which considers *Indulekha* as an ideal novel, has given consideration to the writer of *Parangodiparinayam* only as a representative of conservatives who are naturally averse to progress.⁸

It has been argued that in *Saraswatheevijayam*, colonial wisdom defends the limitations of Indian wisdom which is based on Brahmanical ideology (Sindhu 265). But the transition of its character from Marathan to Yesudasan is not just a religious conversion or a change from caste law to civil law, but also a shift from the subordinate status of a farmer to that of a white-collar worker of civilization. This invasion of modern capitalism was through the subordination of the agricultural system. In other words, the caste system or any other form of subordination adopted the new world consciousness without letting go of spaces that were already a part of it. Therefore, subordination is not annihilated through the historical evolution and so-called progress, but it is accurately handed over to a changed ownership. That is to say, the structures and contexts of subordination are maintained, and symbols are formed to mark the subordination historically. Therefore, the solution is to make the subordinated identities superior from within that cultural environment. This can only be achieved by integrating

⁸ *Parangodiparinayam* depicts an effort to stem the tide of renaissance that started flowing into Kerala in the late 19th century through English and modern education, argues George Irumbayam in *Adyakala Malayalam Novel* (112).

subaltern symbols into it or culturally marking that condition into the mainstream. Unlike other early conversion novels, *Saraswatheevijayam* does not deal with religion as a cultural or spiritual institution. This is because it invokes a utilitarian logic of using conversion as a tool to provide economic and social status. The logic of capitalism that is advanced by modernity is working here.

Among the novels of the 19th century, which were written with such diverse themes and goals, about twenty works were written before *Kundalatha* in the novel style, but even contemporary studies consider *Kundalatha* as the first work in Malayalam⁹. As pointed out by G. Arunima in her study of *Indulekha* (Arunima 272), *Kundalatha*, which is considered to be the first novel, is the novel in which three-quarters of the people among the various social groups existing in Kerala did not get any representation. Why did *Kundalatha* become the first novel? Who decides this? How is the identity of the hero and heroine formed in *Kundalatha*? Why does this become a majoritarian decision? What are the ideal features put forward by *Indulekha*? A detailed study of early novels is not a part of this chapter, so the following discussion only intends to put forward and problematize critical arguments by taking up such basic questions for further study.

Coming to the Malayalam scenario, one can see similar trends in the nineteenth century Indian novels. Novels like *Indulekha*, *Pullelikunju*, *Sukumari*, *Ghathakavadham*, etc., were written with an instructive purpose. They were written to reform the society. They expected that “colonial modernity” could change people’s lives for the better. Each novelist was keen on transforming the society in general and their own communities in particular. However, the social issues were presented by portraying the individual life experiences of specific characters. With the success of *Indulekha*, many writers started imitating the pattern of that novel.

⁹A long line of literary critics like Kerala Varma Valiya Koi Thampuran, P. Govindappilla, Moorkoth Kumaran, M.P. Paul and others also tried to give *Kundalatha* the title of first novel (Irumbayam 53).

Basically, *Indulekha* and other social novels portrayed individual experience. Each individual goes through unique experiences, and one individual's experience will be different from that of others. Thus, each of the early social novels portrayed a unique life world despite many of them raising common issues. It is this feature of the early social novels in Malayalam that made them an instant success (Thomas 100).

Women's education was a central theme of many novels in different Indian languages. *Indulekha* could be the perfect example of this trend. The integrity that the heroine Indulekha has achieved through education makes her stand on her own legs and counter the patriarchal family set-up. The Tamil novel *Muthumeenakshi* written by Madhaviah, is about a widow's remarriage. The heroine in this novel breaks the custom prevalent in the Brahmin community by getting married again (Sundararajan 15). Writings reflecting the reformation of the Brahmin community in Kerala appeared only later. *Aphante Makal* by Muthiringottu Bhavathradan Namboothirippadu and the writings of V.T. Bhattathirippadu are examples. The women's question can be seen in the early novels of all the Indian languages.

Women's education has changed the status of women in "Kerala" in the nineteenth century. Mariyam of *Ghathakavadham* has a separate room in her house. In *Indulekha*, it has been mentioned that a separate Bungalow has been arranged for her. This private space has significantly changed the condition of women in families. *Indulekha* survives his suitor because she has a separate room (Thomas 46). It was not just a separate room that Indulekha had; she had a shelf full of books and a writing table. She was also able to communicate through letters. Middle-class women had the privilege of leisure time and were searching for some activities to spend their spare time. Reading and embroidery became their favourite pass time activities. The lower class/ caste women did not have this privilege. However, reading changed middle-class women's lives beyond recognition (47). Reading was like breathing air to Mariyam. Chandumenon has complained that his leisure time has been spent translating the English

novels he has read into Malayalam for his wife. The tastes of newly educated female readers have substantially influenced early novels. It is not surprising that many of these novels were titled after female names like *Indulekha*, *Sarada*, *Kundalatha*, etc. (48). But the fact remained that the term woman represents only a minority that is put forward by upper-caste/class male authorship.

The colonial criticism that women in India were not chaste became a cultural insult to the Indian majority, who respected the colonial rationalities. As a response, a cultural stance that lauded the tradition of mythical chaste women like Sita, Savithri, and Sathi became the face of national discourse. V. Divya describes the fact that marriage reform and the marriage bill were made into existence as part of the Nair community activities to prove that our women also had a history against this colonial view, where women were free to follow relationships with multiple males (197). This is one of the main reasons for the didactic interest put forward by such novels, which loudly proclaim through their titles that they are female subjects.

When *Kundalatha* is considered the first Malayalam novel written by a Malayali, other writers who wrote earlier works become insignificant. This novel is not set in the surroundings of Kerala. Appu Nedungadi's *Kundalatha* is a princess from a fictional dynasty. Heroines like *Kundalatha* and *Indulekha* combined the ideals of beauty and high caste in a heroine-centric narrative to suit traditional heroine archetypes. These novels also have the hero and his love affair similar to the traditional heroes of Sanskrit poetics.

Analyzing the early 20th-century novels, P.G. Sundararajan states that the indiscriminate adaptation of the English novels stunted the growth of the Tamil novels. He argues that such adaptations neither represented the Tamil social context, nor sensibility (Sundararajan 11). Some of the early Malayalam novels do follow the same trend. The novel *Paradesi Mokshyatra* is nothing but an adaptation of *The Pilgrims' Progress*. *Indumathi Swayamvaram* and *Kundalatha*, two early Malayalam novels, are not set in Kerala. Such novels

did not express any “Malayalam sensibility” or the sensibility of a particular community in Kerala.

Most of the Tamil novels of the early twentieth century appeared in serialized form in the magazines such as *Viveka Chinthamani*, *Viveka Bodhini*, *Vidya Viharini*, *Viveka Bhanu*, *Kalaimagal*, etc. This is a trend that started in Malayalam much later. The influence of novels from other Indian languages is another important factor that shaped the development of the novel as a genre in each Indian language. The case of *Anandamath* is an example. This novel was translated into so many Indian languages soon after its publication, and like many other languages, it has influenced Tamil novelists also (13). In the case of Malayalam, there is the example of *Pulmoni Ennum Koruna Ennum Peraya Randu Sthreekalute Katha*, which was a translation from Bengali. After this novel was published in Malayalam, many writers tried to imitate the writing style of this translation.

In the early history of the novel, female characters and women writers were a part of the novel. However, early novels in the Indian context did not give women the opportunity for self-expression or self-disclosure. Even though Malayalam novels proclaim women as the subject through the title itself, within the stories directed by the man, they become subjects, experiences and models that are formed according to his interest. *Kundalatha*, which is considered the first novel, and the other novels that were written in that period in the heroine’s name appear to give importance to the heroine. However, the writer borrows from home or abroad and imaginatively creates an ideal female suitable for the male sensibility.

This concern regarding the spatiality of the novel is raised by G. Arunima when she asks: “What kind of reality is contained within the novels whose portrayals have apparently left out three-quarters of Malayali life?” (Arunima 272). *Indulekha* assumed an important position in the literary canons of a minority because it was presented as a model of the major minority’s lifestyle and culture to the excluded minor majority of Malayalees. This is the reason

why *Indulekha* has been celebrated in its reputation as *the* proper novel within the symbolic system of secularism.

George Irumbayam has said that it is the novel's European characteristics that serve as the basis for positioning *Indulekha* as the first novel with literary perfections. What is put forward is the continuation of the judgment of the noble traditions, which produces poetry according to poetic meter, rhythmic structure, the structure of verses, order of letters and couplets etc. The authorship behind such constructions can be read from the common sense that poetic culture is part of the power structure of a privileged minority.

I have already stated that social reform was not the only characteristic of these nineteenth-century novels, especially when it comes to historical fiction. Among the novelists of Kerala in the nineteenth century, one of the dominant representatives of this particular school of thought was C.V. Raman Pillai. Even though a staunch supporter of the monarchy, he stood against the colonial form of modernity. It can be seen that he has put forward a national consciousness emphasizing the noble tradition of Malayalam by glorifying the Travancore dynasty.

In short, the novels included in the early canon of Malayalam novels of the 19th century are precisely narratives that satisfy an upper-caste cultural consciousness. Therefore, it can be seen that the works that reject that cultural landscape and its power structure are not considered as novels. The European model determined the novel's structure during this period. However, the works could not be included in the literary mainstream only by considering the narratives that follow the said structure. Instead, it means that how narratives struggled with power at the local level and established them as canons.

1.4. Early Malayalam Mainstream Novels

Since nationalism and European modernity are interrelated, “colonial modernity” comes naturally with the formation or restructuring of the nation-state as part of it. It can be seen that the advent of modernity everywhere in the world has redefined the existing sense of patriotism in some way. However, the novel is popularly reborn out of the realization of the rulers that grand narratives are the best way to propagate an imagined community of nation in the unique context of industrialization and printing. The construction and dissemination of colonial discourses emerged as part of a new national narrative. Thus, each individual’s authorship in embracing the ideology of “post-colonial modernity” will be unique to their individual experiences and how they respond to it. Therefore, while enabling a common narrative, the epistemic premises put forward by each writer at the micro level will be different. Even when taking a stand for or against a particular ideology, the influence of knowledge from past experiences and the interventions of existing counter-narratives can be seen in many ways in embracing the new ideology. Therefore, the duality of a transitional phase can be seen in all individuals who exist in the phase of modernization through colonial domination. Therefore, it is possible to study the “super-ideology”¹⁰ that they put forward only by understanding this duality.

We have seen that social and historical novels are classified based on European theories of the novel. It is a part of establishing a new genre while giving equal relevance to tradition and to the modern process of shaping a new land by shaping the super-ideologies. When the historical novel and the social novels were written in Malayalam, the cultural world welcomed them with the eagerness to welcome a new culture and new nation. The popularity of *Marthandavarama* and *Indulekha* shows the acceptance of this literary ideology. By the term “mainstream”, this thesis means the popular circulation of the novel, as stated in the

¹⁰ At a particular historical stage of power transition, the influence of two types of ideologies can be seen in the writers of that stage. So, the term super-ideology means the particular ideology which is prominent and which the writer wants to put forward.

introduction itself. It was explained that mainstreaming is formed according to the interests of power in any form. However, based on the general premise that any form of popular literature is capable of popular influence and ideological engagement, such popular works are specifically looked at. The literary works *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma* gained popularity in the 19th century and had a profound impact on the lives of a literate section of the population. This chapter continues to analyze the elements that helped these novels to enter the mainstream or satisfy the ideology of power at the external level. As the ideological bearer of “colonial modernity”, the novel, which came into widespread use in the nineteenth century, is a dualistic representation of the power in question and the elements of traditions that have been transformed as history to enable the new level of power. Therefore, in the following sections of this chapter, I will explain how different approaches were developed among the early novelists based on the novelists’ view of “colonial modernity” and the social transformation it created in Kerala. My argument is this; while social novelists like O. Chandumenon adopted “colonial modernity” as a super-ideology, C.V. Raman Pillai put forth a critique of the same, and this gets reflected in their writings.

In this chapter, I will describe C.V.’s writing style and illustrate how he established a distinct tradition of novel writing. Although many studies have been conducted on the colonial attitude of early novelists, studies about anti-colonial ideology are often rarely found in the analysis of literary works. Therefore, this particular difference of opinion among the writers is of special importance in critically thinking about the early novels. The investigation of how Malayalam novels interact with Eastern and Western theories of the novel leads to the question of whether the mainstreaming of these novels is derived from the notions associated with Western concepts and the fact that the authors of the novels considered these concepts.

In *Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt’s formulation of the Western theory of the novel is based on the feature of realism. Watt begins his study of novels by raising a few fundamental

questions about this genre. The most important question he raises is whether the novel is a new genre. If it is a new genre, how is it different from the previous prose writing traditions? Watt is conscious that these questions cannot be addressed very easily (Watt 4). First of all, it is difficult to distinguish between the novel and the other prose forms. Watt points out that “realism” is the keyword that sets the novel apart from the earlier forms of prose writing (5). Watt’s enquiries and findings are based on the European context. However, it is logical to assume that a historical study of Indian novels may lead us to reach similar conclusions. According to Watt, the novel tried to depict human lives with more scientific precision than ever before. It insisted on the accuracy between the world and its depiction. This scientific precision and the insistence on the accuracy of reflection were unprecedented; these factors differentiate the novel from all the other literary genres (6).

Watt is trying to point out the parallel between philosophical realism and literary realism. The basic premise of philosophical realism is that individuals can understand the world around them and the truth of it through their senses. Descartes, Locke, Thomas Reid, etc., advocated this philosophy (11). In the realm of literature, the novel is the genre that focuses on the individual experience. Till then, no genre used the individual experience as subject matter. The novels did not just borrow their plots from other genres; instead, they placed more importance on the “originality” of the work. This “originality” was a new concept as long as literature was concerned. The word “originality” means “underived”, “independent”, “first-hand”, etc. (13).

Watt’s studies exposed some crucial aspects of the novel, mainly its connection with realism, both philosophic and literary. He views the emergence of the novel as a result of the development of a new epistemological tradition that started with the Renaissance. This new concept of reality led to the emergence of the novel, according to Watt (8). The early Malayalam novelists, including Chandumenon, were a part of this epistemological tradition

that tried to deal with the social realities around them and used the novel as a tool of social criticism. Although it may seem that C.V. does not fit Watt's definition at first glance, this reveals the problems of a monolithic perspective in which we communicate reality in the ordinary sense. Recognizing that he needed the surface of history rather than personal experience to present social issues, he used "historical events" as the subject matter of his novels. It can be said that an extreme level of realism permeates historical narratives because historicization always functions as a unique means of legitimizing the concept of reality. Historicizing any narrative and utilizing the support of historical facts is the easiest and most powerful way to achieve public consensus. All the early Indian historical novels used historical symbols, beliefs and available facts to give authenticity to the story. The reason why the statement that "India has no history" was seen as a declaration questioning the authenticity of the emotional and concrete identity of Indians is because of the preconceived notion that history serves as the foundation that shapes contemporary reality.

However, the difference between Chandumenon and C.V. was not just that one wrote social novels and the other wrote historical novels; it is not even that Chandumenon took the individual experience as the source of his novels, and C.V. took historical events as the source of his novels. The more significant difference between them is how they dealt with "colonial modernity" and structured the new genre called the novel in their writings. I will reach this point in the following discussion and in my next chapter. But before discussing this difference, I will analyze a few more theories about the novel, relevant to the discussions of selected novels.

Bakhtin has a different view of novels. He views the novel as a "unique" genre. The novel's uniqueness is that it is "the sole genre that continues to develop, that is, as yet uncompleted". The novel has not entirely taken its form as a genre, and one "cannot foresee all its plastic possibilities". Due to this reason, the study of the novel has its difficulties. All other

significant genres are already formed. The epic is not only wholly formed but has already been “antiquated”. Since they are already complete as genres, we do not have the chance to observe how they originated and evolved. Moreover, they have their own canons as well. However, the case of the novel is different (Bakhtin 105). Bakhtin’s observation of the “plastic” nature of the novel is powerful enough to override all previous judgments about the characteristics of the novel. Moreover, the very features of the novel reject all notions of legalism. Therefore, rejecting the canonical formation of Malayalam novels ensures representation for all novels. Without the novel’s “plastic” nature, C.V. and Chandumenon could not have structured their novels in two different ways.

Bakhtin points out another characteristic of the novel; while all the other genres are older than printing and book publishing, the novel is the only genre that is “younger” than printing or book publishing. Other genres have their origin in the oral tradition, and they retain their “ancient oral and auditory characteristics” even today, but the case of the novel is different. Since the novel is alive, it is “organically receptive to new forms of mute perception, that is, to reading” (106). Here, he makes an argument which is difficult to agree with. Bakhtin says that the novel does not have a generic canon since it is in the process of evolution. He makes a comparison to illustrate his point. While the study of the other genres can be equated with the study of dead languages, the study of novels can be equated with the languages that are “alive” and “still young” (106). So, the novel is “not merely one genre among other genres” but the “only developing genre”. Other genres are completely developed, and they are just trying to adapt to the new situation, whereas the novel seems to be a “creature from an alien species (107)”. Such readings of the novel stem from a conceptual understanding of the complete or true novel. Such conceptions are based on the idealistic thinking that such a novel is yet to emerge. Therefore, its plastic nature has been designed as a means of elevating the novel from such idealistic thinking.

Bakhtin talks about the dialectics between genres. According to him, the novel is quarrelling with the older genres for “hegemony”. It does not exist in harmony with the other genres, nor can it be fixed into the framework of any “well-defined generic contours”. While the other genres are “already completed genres” that can “mutually delimit and mutually complement each other”, novel does not go for any negotiations; instead, it quarrels with the other genres. Two of Bakhtin’s ideas are crucial in his discussions about the novel. Bakhtin talks about the “wholeness” of genres, which is nothing but the completeness of a genre which a novel lack since it is still evolving. He also discusses about the “harmonious interaction of all genres” (108).

Bakhtin calls the dialectics between the genres as the “historic struggle of genres”. According to him, the novel sometimes “parodies other genres”; sometimes pushes the other genres out of the field; and sometimes incorporates elements from the other genres. The historians of literature might mistake it for the quarrel between the schools and tendencies but the dialectics between the genres is more important according to him. A “remarkable feature” of the novel is that it is an “ever-developing genre (110)”. These observations have important implications for studying the nineteenth-century Malayalam novels in general and mainstream novels in particular. Bakhtin’s view that the novel interacts with other genres and that it sometimes parodies them can be read in the context of the Malayalam parody narrative *Parangodiparinayam* mentioned earlier because the existence of the noble culture that should be maintained for the new nation is satirized by the same.

Early critics recognized only indigenous cultural traditions. But they must also be aligned with or superimposed on the idealized images brought about by Western culture. That is why while creating a heroine who adheres to European cultural characteristics and describing her physical characteristics, a precise regional identity is described based on aesthetic and physical differences. It is a unique strategy of indigenization. That is why even the criticisms

that a whitish woman is presented as a Malayali woman did not touch its brilliance. It is because of this that the indigenous knowledge traditions are superimposed on European knowledge, even as it venerates it. That is, early scholars were interested in considering only a few novels such as *Kundalatha*, *Indulekha*, and *Marthandavarma* that followed the suit as important to the history of the Malayalam novel. But later, *Marthandavarma* was overlooked only as an archaic story of a heroic emperor through paraphrases, abridgements and dramas. Its “anti-modern”, subaltern-feminist elements were kept out of the new discourses and attention was given to hegemonic discourses about monarchic administration, because the cultural implications of an anti-colonial discourse were not easy to digest. While the novel retains academic curiosities, *Marthandavarma* was removed from the “popular” readership due to its complex language presentation, as even with the spread of new language, the influence of the Sanskrit language persisted. The author’s works became kind of pedagogical by being included in textbooks and as Malayalam was systematized through the Sanskrit alphabet, he is considered the “father” of the modern Malayalam language, because the upper-caste Vedanta that he translates is, in many ways, hand in hand with the cultural aspects of the ideologies of regional modernity.

In the context of early Malayalam novels, all the other novels that were created before *Kundalatha*, which is considered as the first novel, are social novels and it is helpful to read them in conjunction with European definitions. Authors such as Chandumenon have acknowledged in introductory statements that the framework of 18th-century English novels have been superficially adopted. But novelists of *Kundalatha*, *Marthandavarma*, and *Akbar*, as mentioned earlier, are authors who want to keep the social identity connected to the tradition in some way with the construction of historical authenticity. Interpretations that include this style of writing are naturally the “plastic” nature of Bakhtin’s idealistic theory. Both the writers of *Marthandavarma* and *Kundalatha* modelled their works on Sanskrit poetics and regional literary traditions, along with European genres. Consequently, they do not feel that novel is an

“alien species” as Bakhtin felt. Another feature of C.V.’s novels is that he borrowed quite liberally from the epics, legends and other narrative traditions of Sanskrit literature. Thus, he did not shape his works based on European novels or historic Romances alone. However, he drew more inspiration from a wide variety of narrative traditions in Sanskrit, regional, and oral traditions.

In this way, it can be seen that narratives that accept Western novel concepts and Eastern cultural mainstream premises are included or given importance in the early novels. That is, the fact that *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*, as literary works that represent feudal power environments and Western novel concepts in different ways, are the ones that have become popular as mainstream novels, is therefore normative. In short, the distinct nation-state models advanced by Chandumenon and C.V. through the early Malayalam mainstream novels situate modernity differently. But they could only exist under the local authority of the period. Hence, different power elements also function in them as instruments of existing ideologies and those that ostensibly promote local authority’s ideological appeasement naturally have more popular support and find more spaces for public discourse. That is why *Indulekha* gets such literary consideration than other novels. Since *Marthandavarma* clearly supports a position of monarchical power and *Indulekha* presents the feudal caste consciousness as natural, the social cohesion and cultural support of the upper caste is available. As a continuation, Chapter Two details the local experiences and regional contexts that led Chandumenon and C.V. to advance a distinct narrative style and a unique ideology.

Chapter Two

Contextualizing O. Chandumenon and C.V. Raman Pillai

Indulekha and *Marthandavarma*, two novels written in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the former set in Malabar and the latter Travancore, represent entirely different geography and sociality, which has today become part of the state of Kerala. Given that a particular literary work is a discourse that addresses the ideology of the period that shaped the writer's authorship, the various developments of the period have an important role in shaping the authorship of the writer. Hence, in this chapter I attempt to map the diverse social-political-economic-cultural features of Malabar and Travancore that form the contexts of the two texts studied in this thesis. O. Chandumenon choosing to write a "social novel" and C.V. Raman Pillai a "historical novel" has much to do with these contexts as well. Therefore, I proceed by first laying out the socio-cultural background in Travancore and Malabar against which these novels were written, and then proceed to locate both the authors within these contexts. Thereafter, in the light of the discussions on the genealogy of novel in Chapter One, I would delineate the textual universe of both authors.

E.V. Ramakrishnan has elaborated on the levels of meaning that the existence of region posits while explaining the regional novel:

Although the time and place in the story of the novel give the impression of reality, they are not actual reality. Place appears in the narrative through the mediation of a unique vision that produces conceptual worlds, emotional connections, myths about the contemporary world, and the will to survive. It does not exist as an absolute place. The external undergoes an internal evolution of meaning in the endless chain of signifiers the novelist weaves from the empirical structure. ("Atheethathinte..." 13)

Therefore, it is crucial to analyse the social and historical experiences that inspired the writer to construct the reality of the land.

Evidently, the distinctive ways the writers respond to the ideologies of power led O. Chandumenon and C.V. Raman Pillai to adopt two distinct modes of narration that specifically explain and ignore the present (Irumbayam 90). The factors that led the two narrators to compose works with very different ideologies and narrative techniques during the same period become clear by analysing the socio-cultural history of the Malabar region that shaped Chandumenon and the nation-politics of Travancore that shaped the C.V. This, in turn, illustrates how particular regional cultures and social constructs play a role in shaping distinctive contemporary realities. The caste and gender-based ideas reflected in the imagination of nation in the said period help to determine the popular discourses shaped by the social structure that maintains such inequalities.

By marshalling several carefully selected elements from traditional history, the space is conceptually recreated through diverse narratives, and it puts forward a unique historical text capable of interacting with the present, resisting the unifying logic of the “historian’s history”. As historical discourse, all the literary works, which have elements that emphasise the historicity of the text and the textuality of history at the same time, represent such views on space and time. What separates each region from the other is the difference in past experiences. Memories and perceptions of the past differ from society to society. A sense of the world, reflected in all kinds of cultural lore such as legends, myths, songs, rituals, etc., unites society internally. Spatial structures such as land, nation, and world are developed through these types of regional identities. Therefore, regionalism is not a barrier to mainstream history and nationalism. This nuanced approach to space and history fills in the gaps left by mainstream history. They redefine culture as the sum of many subcultures and nationhood as the totality of ideologies (Chamakkala 6). Therefore, while studying the characteristics that led C.V. and

Chandumenon to have distinct ideologies, not only the social conditions of the nineteenth century but also their regional histories should be explained.

2.1. Hierarchical Formations in Early “Kerala”¹

The investigation of how the gender-caste hierarchies were interpreted in the literary works of a particular period needs to be understood by historically reviewing the said social determinations. Therefore, it is relevant to investigate the social discourses that existed and compare how these elements were expressed in the early novels. While studying the caste and gender hierarchies in Kerala, one has to start with the historical circumstances in which they were formed. It is recorded that in Vedic times, women were accorded the freedom and high status they deserved; they attended congregations, participated in sacrifices along with their husbands and composed sacred verses. The 25th verse of the *Rigveda*’s fifth mandala was written by a woman named Vishwavara, and the ninth verse of the eighth mandala was written by a female scholar named Apala. Women’s education was given special attention during the Vedic period. As a result of the high level of female education, there were poets like Maitreyi, Gargi and Lopamudra and geniuses like Ghosha, Apala and Vishwavara (Paravoor 24). Later, during the Gupta period, Brahminical power gained strength, and the Varna system and its legal codes, like the *Manusmriti*, brought subtle restrictions of spirituality and related beliefs over material life. But it is impossible to determine how these features of ancient India historically influenced the Dravidian culture of Kerala. As far as Kerala is concerned, this system did not exist even during the Chera Empire.

According to the available evidence, it is possible to connect the early history of Travancore and Kerala itself with the Sangha period (Nathsen 200). According to the evidence

¹ As already explained, I would be mostly focusing on Malabar and Travancore, though often using Kerala for generalization, unless specifically required to contextualize.

available from the Sangha period, occupation-based caste division existed, though not under a hierarchical system of authority (Nathsen 202). Moreover, women were represented in all the administrative fields, cultural and social spaces. The high social status given to the heroine Kannaki in *Chilapathikaram* in the social hierarchy while also satisfying the notions of a “dutiful wife” is noteworthy. The land of Kerala is associated with the rule of the Chera kings during the succession of the Chera-Chola-Pandya kings. Foreign trade has been active in Kerala since the Chera period, i.e. before Christ. It is believed that Christian faith was prevalent in Kerala from the time of the arrival of Saint Thomas in AD 52, before Christianity fully spread to the western lands, and the eastern lands of Asia were portrayed as a legend or fable like Eden (Manu S. Pillai 12). There is a legend that describes a religious dispute between Thomasliha (St. Thomas) and Kodungallur Bhagavathy inside the Kodungallur temple (21-22). Muslim Theyyams and legends involving Muslim identities existed as part of the ancient ritual art of Theyyam, which was formed in connection with the beliefs of all castes in North Malabar (T.V. Chandran 1). This shows the existence of a regional unity beyond the divisions of religion. In other words, it shows not the rejection of religious identities, but the coexistence and identification with the regional identity by maintaining the religious identity as it is.

With the fall of the Second Chera, the Perumal rule came to an end, and Brahminism came to South India with full vigour. *Manusmriti* and its legal systems came to Kerala, and the caste became systematized. But the matriarchal system and the associated male-female relations in Kerala were not ready to fully accept the Brahminical system of morality and restrictions on women. The women rulers of Kerala have taken social positions that opposed this male-centred law system. Based on several historical accounts, Manu S. Pillai explains that despite the patriarchal system of Brahmanism and the Victorian colonial culture, the private and social life of Attingal queens existed for a long time.

Manu S. Pillai explains the history of such resistance through the descriptions of the queens who did not submit to the kings of Travancore and fought directly with the Portuguese, and lived with pride (81-84) and the prominence of women in the audience of Kozhikode Samoothiri (27) and the power of the Kannur Arakkal Beevis (26). The lives of the majority of ordinary women can be understood indirectly through such narratives. Based on travelogues and historical references, Manu S. Pillai describes the social, economic, sexual and familial rights and freedom available to women of various social groups under Marumakkathayam through the queens who interact with the public with dignity. Similar patterns can be seen in the rule of Arakkal Beevis in the northern part of Kerala, who ruled from Kannur, and their tactics of foreign trade and administrative skills (26). Muslim rulers also followed the matriarchal system existing in the society during the said period. Therefore, male and female members had equal representation in the family.

Based on Susan Bayly's study, Manu S. Pillai explains that not only was there no difference in habits, hairstyle, or anything else between Christians and other religious communities, but intermarriage was also permitted between these religions until the last years of the sixteenth century. In many temples in Malabar, Muslim community members were given an undeniable place in the temple ceremonies, according to legends (Manu S. Pillai 22). In short, there existed in ancient times a land where many schools of thought and communities coexisted without religious identity being more important than collective independent existence.

The Portuguese came to the fore by destroying the trade of the Arabs that had existed in the Malabar region since ancient times and started political exploitation by giving importance to religious existence (21). But the local Christians did not accept the Roman Catholic Church and believed in the Nestorian church of the East ("The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine" 102). The Roman priests then referred to the local Christians as "Hindoo

Christians” (105). The Portuguese constantly waged wars against the non-Catholic Christians and the local Muslims, represented by the Arabs, who had obtained a trade monopoly and against the local rulers who protected them.

In *Tuhfatul Mujahiddin* of Shaikh-Zainuddin, written in the 16th century, it is said that the Portuguese excluded the Muslims from trade and persecuted them religiously. Hence the work calls upon the Muslims to prepare for a holy war against the Portuguese and describes Hindu-Muslim harmony. The work also advises people to unite locally and communally to resist exploitative invaders. But Pyrard’s description shows how Kozhikode remained non-religious even after the Portuguese rule.

[Calicut] is the busiest and most full of all traffic and commerce in the whole of India; it has merchants from all parts of the world, and of all nations and religions, because of the liberty and security accorded to them there: for the king permits the exercise of every kind of religion, and yet it is strictly forbidden to talk, dispute, or quarrel on that subject; so there never arises any contention on that score, everyone living in great liberty of conscience under the favour and authority of the king, who holds that to be a cardinal maxim of government, with a view to making his kingdom very rich and of great intercourse. If by chance there should arise any difference or disturbance on that subject, he who began it would receive corporal punishment, as being guilty of treason, without hope of pardon or remission of sentence. This is why everyone lives there in great peace and concord. (Pyrard 405)

The Arabian travellers who came as traders were the first to address the entire indigenous population of the Indian subcontinent as Hindus. In their travelogues and in early missionary accounts, polygamy was generally presented as the way of life of the natives. Since it was not a relationship like the Western style of family structure with a husband and a wife, the advocates of modern morality used dichotomous concepts of “family lady v/s prostitute”

because they lacked the vocabulary to explain such relationships (Buchanan 75). In such narratives, it is often seen that the social implications of these relationships are not considered because they are written by people who look at these relationships from a different perspective. Therefore, to justify it, they try to establish its necessity or to find reasons for the same. A “moral rationality” was needed to integrate the social experiences of a majority for whom only polygamy or female-centred sexual culture existed as that of a social, moral consciousness necessitated by the spread of colonial modernity. Such narratives attempt to accept only regulated/civilised sexuality and to suppress or alienate anything outside of linear patriarchal desires as exotic, primitive or alien because they stand outside the authority system of the family. For example, early Manipravala poems and message poems written in Kerala in the 14th century were dismissed as mere “prostitution” and sexual narratives. Majority of the Nair historians and commentators influenced by Victorian culture have constantly been trying since the beginning to evaluate even the said period as symbols of social decadence, Namboothiri’s aphrodisiac narration and feudal culture (Dilip 248-283).

Abdul Razzaq, who visited northern Malabar in the fifteenth century, gives information about a caste that allowed polygamy for women, where men take turns approaching the woman and no one is ill towards her (Panickassery 284). It is from this description that the historical significance of the Devadasi system, which is said to have existed in Kerala, should be examined. Portraying the figure of the “prostitute” as the dichotomous other of the figure of the wife is part of the consumptive perspective of capitalism that evaluates human relationships as economic.

The joint-family system was not based on the Western concept of family. The concept of the family is based on power created through different generations of family members living together, unlike the nuclear family in the patriarchal system. The base of this system was the authority of the female, transferred through the mother. Female offspring were more important

than males. The males were just an instrument for sexual relations and producing offspring, as the clan was maintained through women and female offspring. Apart from clergy, men engaged in physical labour as soldiers or farmers. He does his duty as a member of his mother's family to carry out public affairs for women. The slave castes, who are the labourers of the land, are the neglected class. William Logan describes that in 15th-century Travancore, men and women who only nominally hide their nudity travel through muddy paths, jungle paths, and byways instead of travelling on public roads for fear of offending the upper castes (117).

Since ancient times the tenancy system and "Uzhiyamvela"² have existed in Kerala. In Travancore, these systems were banned by Gauri Lakshmi Bhai in 1812 but continued as part of the agrarian system and were abolished later by Utthram Thirunal only in 1853. The justification advanced by the feudal faction in the Travancore State Assembly against banning the tenancy system is that the agrarian system will disappear. But there are indications that there were "Avarnas" like Parayars and Nadars in Marthandavarma's army who opposed the ruling power of Brahmins in the past. But by the time it became the Nair Brigadier Force, most of it was made up of Nair community members only. The Nair community had many sub-castes due to its various social connections, including connections with the upper castes like Brahmins and Kshatriya. As part of that, there were various sections among them. That is why the Nair community organisations concentrated on community issues in its early days. The social law structure of the Brahmin-centred society and the selfish interests of the Britishers encouraged these caste-based vices.

Among the upper castes, different positions are assigned according to social practices. Logan, by describing the eighteen sub-division among the Nair communities, indicates a strong hierarchy of authority despite similarities in customs and traditions. Logan explains how Nairs belonging to different categories do not eat in the same dining place (109). This practice also

² A system of hard work without remuneration.

existed in Travancore. P.K. Parameswarannair explains a situation where the upper caste Nairs left a function because they had to sit at the same dining table as the lower caste Nairs and C.V. took a strong stand against this. By the nineteenth century, there were about 140 castes among Nairs (Parameswarannair 39).

The women of the royal family were free to leave their partners and welcome new ones anytime. The husbands were only expected to serve their wives and reproduce the dynasty. Royal facilities which were available to the wives were not available to them, even in matters of food (Manu S. Pillai 53). Customs did not allow them to live with their wives according to their free will. It was not possible to sit with queens in public or to avail of any status other than a subject (53). According to custom, they had to bow down and speak only using the ritual word “Avidunn”³ (54). This generally has an indirect effect on the social status of women in the said country.

Travancore kings were prepared to perform Hiranyagarbham⁴ with great respect for caste because they realised that the occupation, power and position of Brahmins were very strong. Living under the shadow of this Brahminical power system, the authorities of Travancore had to live in a weak state from early times, paying tribute to the neighbouring kings at all times. This might be a reason why foreign dictatorship was accepted without reluctance in later times.

Like the Brahmins, the Mappila community of Malabar was also not attracted to English education either because of religious reasons or because of their reluctance to break away from agrarian culture or because they did not value Western education over indigenous education. But a rich tradition of Arabic-Malayalam⁵ existed in the said community even during that period (Miller 57). In 1889, Pattalath Kunjumain Kutti Vaidyar, who was a leading

³ Respectful term used to denote “you”.

⁴ Ancient Indian ritualistic ceremony in order to “upgrade” the social standing of the performer.

⁵ Practice of writing Malayalam in the Arabic script.

physician of that era, translated the *Ashtanga Hridayam* into Arabic-Malayalam in the form of a song under the name *Vaidya Ratnam* (Rahman x). In 1866, a translation of the Persian work *Char Darvesh*⁶ came from the Arabic-Malayalam press in Thalassery. It was translated into Arabic-Malayalam by Muhayuddin, son of Maheen Ali of Thalassery and printed by Kannawat Hassan in 1866 (xi). It is crucial to note how only the presses of the Basel Mission, which came with the English alphabet, are recorded in history when there were more than fifteen Arabic-Malayalam presses in Kerala during the said period (xi).

In other words, it can be seen that in the early days, Kerala had a completely different view of women and identity, enriched by religiously and culturally diverse women's notions of gender discourses. The caste hierarchy, on the other hand, has existed since ancient times, but it was not a linear structure but rather a complex system with many sub-groups and anomalies.

2.2. British Domination: A Historical Perspective

Colonial modernity was responsible for creating a comprehensive change in all the social, cultural and political aspects of Kerala and forging new outlooks on life. Therefore, the British colonisation needs to be studied in particular in the investigations of nation-culture formation. This social and cultural situation played a very important role in shaping Chandumenon and C.V. as distinctive literary authors.

Since ancient times there was trade relations with foreign representatives here but when Umayammarani, the regent of Venad, permitted the British to build a fort and a factory in Anchutheng, the English were able to take root in Kerala. Later, British rule gradually started, and the entire Malabar came under the direct rule of the British. Samuthiri and Kolathiri were enraged by Hyder's attack, and the whole local authority had become unsystematic. Most

⁶ Amir Khusru's work was composed 20 years before *Indulekha*.

locally administered rulers could not resist the attacks and took refuge in Travancore and other places. The natives, overwhelmed by the Portuguese-Dutch invasions, followed by the British, were left with no means of resistance. The British seized power by exploiting such a tense situation. Social interventions to satisfy the indigenous aristocratic class were a part of the strategies to strengthen their power. Although “universal education” was permissible in principle under British rule, the highest government positions were concentrated only among the educated upper caste, and this was partly due to the realisation that commercial monopoly could only be achieved by appeasing regional authorities and aristocrats.

Taking advantage of this unique social situation, the British implemented the politics of division with great force at the religious level to grab the trade monopoly from the Arabs, using decentralisation of the former powers very effectively to centralise their power. As a result, the East India Company introduced laws favouring the local aristocrats, which upset the long-standing tenancy system and turned them into archenemies. That is, the Namboothiris and Nairs belonging to the upper section turned against the tenant majority in Malabar and religious factors fuelled this division, which later became a cause for the Malabar Rebellion. This created problems for the entire religious/caste harmony that existed locally. The strong anti-Muslim approach in Chandumenon’s novels illustrates this politics of hate and fear produced over time. In Malabar, the Namboothiris had no social contact with the British due to restrictions based on purity, and by taking advantage of the social distance that existed with the “Avarnas”, the economically and socially superior Nair community naturally came close to the ruling class and became the first consumers of western education and reached the administrative fields and government jobs.

Around 1839, Basel missionary Herman Gundert came to Nettur in Thalassery and established a primary school there. Later, mission schools were established in Kozhikode and Kallai. The school in Kozhikode became the Malabar Christian College. Several instances of

such colonial/English educational campaigns existed in Malabar from early times. Moreover, the direct rule of the British and the strong British administration were crucial factors that shaped the Malabar region. This administration was apparently spread under the guise of public service, but its true nature is often brought out through the exchanges of the colonial spokesmen themselves. It reveals the subtle politics of many seemingly innocuous positions on many levels. For example, in a letter sent by J. Farish, an officer of the Bombay Presidency, to his superior, the agenda behind the British conception of good governance can be seen. “The Natives must either be kept down by a sense of our power, or they must willingly submit from a conviction that we are wiser, more just, more humane, and more anxious to improve their condition than any other rulers they could possibly have” (Viswanathan 2).

In 1844, the government declared that English-educated people would be given preference in government service. As it was against the dictates of the caste for the upper-caste Brahmins to get an education from the British schools, caste groups below them took advantage of this situation. After getting a British Government job, even as a peon, one was allowed to visit a Brahmin’s house and this benefited the Nair and Thiyya communities to quietly overthrow caste superiority and untouchability (Parvathy 35). Such social upliftment of the middle castes with access to state power is exemplified by writers like Petheri Kunhambu, author of the novel *Saraswatheevijayam*.

P.K. Gopalakrishnan notes that a missionary named Rev. Habik came to Kannur in 1841 and established an English school at Varnasseri, where all castes were admitted (520). Until the establishment of an English department at Oxford University in 1893, the study of English literature had a place only among certain working-class groups and women in England, for whom formal education was not available. In other words, the English education program was introduced in the colonies as a means to mould people in the colonies according to the interests of the state administration, as is evident from “infamous” Macaulay’s Minute

(Ravindran, *Adhunikanantharam* 102). This post-colonial understanding can be helpful to look at the educational ideology of the British, who avoided the traditional systems of knowledge.

But it can be seen that the proponents of modernity dismissed the Muslims who resisted or were not interested in the English language and culture as illiterate or uneducated. Like the Muslims, the cultural life and educational progress of the “Avarna” groups were also considered uncivilised in the face of the educational reforms under colonial rule. This is how they become marginalised, and their oral literature was described as archaic in narratives of colonial education, including early novels. The British administration had an anti-Muslim agenda from the very beginning. These anti-Muslim ideologies were taken up by the upper caste minority who were in favour of the British authorities. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was recorded that 94.5% of the Mappilas and 99.9% of the Cheruman sect of Malabar did not know the Malayalam language (Innes 139) and this was also a part of this agenda.

Many Arabi-Malayalam texts, including *Tuhfatul Mujahiddin*, reveal the progress of the Muslim community in the field of education. But the British defined education only as Western education and imposed the system of knowledge they accepted. That is why the rich literary tradition of the Muslim community and the folk literary tradition of the “Avarna” groups, including the Cherumar, which was transmitted orally, were kept away from the literary mainstream. K.N. Ganesh explains that Zainuddin’s accounts are likely to be true, as a rebellion against Islam was the aim of the early colonialists, and the situation of the Mappilas, who were mere tenants in Malabar, became direr in the 19th century (Ganesh 218). Under the guise of new legal rights given to the feudal upper castes, they began to frequently increase rents and threatened the tenants with evacuation. Some of the Mappilas were able to see that the main reason for the decline of the Mappilas was the British rule, and the feudal aristocrats were increasing their exploitation under the influence of British rule. This was the main reason for

the Mappila riots from 1836 to 1895. British tax policy and the activities of Hindu feudalists also became the cause of the Mappila revolt (Chunkathara 32). This can be read in conjunction with Ganesh's observation that it led Muslim sectarians to revolt against the colonial regime and feudalists and provided powerful reasons for Islamic religious identity assertion and Muslim community formation (Ganesh 217). As Guha noted:

Historiography has been content to deal with the peasant rebel merely as an empirical person or a member of a class, but not as an entity whose will and reason constituted the praxis called rebellion...insurgency is regarded as external to the peasants' consciousness, and Cause is made to stand in as a phantom surrogate for Reason, the logic of that consciousness." (46-47)⁷

William Logan, the District Collector of Malabar, was appointed in 1881 to report the history, culture and administration of the district as per the instructions of the Government of India. He presented the Logan Special Commission report with suggestions for giving permanent rights to the tenants over agricultural lands, abolition of the matriarchal system, and provision of security and facilities to the Mappilas for education. The report was severely criticized by colonial high officials, including Charles Turner⁸ and the Governor of Madras asked for the part related to the agricultural background of the Mappila rebellion in 1884 to be withdrawn and downgraded him in service due to unwillingness to do so (Kurup xi). This description clearly shows how social divisions were being reproduced systematically by those who promised civil equality and how those who were supposed to follow the colonial agenda were being monitored and controlled as they tried to move beyond its fabrications.

⁷ In pursuing the history of the Santal rebellion of 1855, Guha comes across statements by peasant leaders who explain the rebellion in "supernatural" terms as the subaltern ascribes the agency of the rebellion to their god to deny the subjectivity of their performances. The same could explain the subaltern views of Malabar Mappilas' rebellion as well.

⁸ A member of the Law Commission of India and a judicial officer of the time.

A man on an elephant dressed in Muslim attire raising a green flag in front of the “Aarat”⁹ of the Padmanabhaswamy temple is a sight of Muslim-Hindu religious harmony that existed in Travancore. This indicates the relationship between the Karnatic Nawab and Travancore. But with the British intervention in the Travancore administration, other types of trade and friendships were prohibited under the treaty of power and this friendship was gradually eliminated. The power hierarchies creating social divisions among the people can be seen in the history of early colonial projects as well. The British often tried to divide Hindu and Muslim soldiers who stood together against a common enemy in the Sepoy Mutiny¹⁰, the first sign of Indian nationalism (Henry 16). C.V. also points to the practice of the Europeans, who created enmity between the community members who were supposed to work as brothers and made it the subject of discussion in the evening meetings (C.V. Raman Pillai, *Videsheeya Medhaviththam* 24).

Arakkal Beevi, who ruled from the Kannur fort in North Malabar, was not ready to accept the British suzerainty or the terms of their administrative intervention, unlike other local kings. In 1791, she made a pact with Tippu to overcome the British invasion against the will of the feudal factions. Later she met with Company representatives in 1791 when survival was at stake (Logan 109). As part of negotiation, it was suggested that the primary sources of Kannur’s revenue income, the trade figures with Arabs and Lakshadweep, should be submitted to the company (310). Instead of submitting the same to the Company officials, the alliance with the English was thrown away. She had to forcefully dislodge them through the alliance with Tippu. But the Company and William Logan (310) tried to give a religious interpretation to all of these defences by Arakkal Beevi.

⁹ A particular ritual festival.

¹⁰ The First War of Independence of 1857 against British rules in India is also called Sepoy Mutiny.

The upper classes of the Nair sections, represented by the local bureaucrats working in concert with the Company, naturally worked against the Mappilas or the Mappilas were turned against them (307). Such facts were denied in the colonial interpretations of the same period. Logan narrates that due to the complete breakdown of the age-old friendly relations between the Mappila-Nair communities, Major Dow was assigned to establish peace in the Mappila districts, ignoring that the Company was the ultimate cause of the incident. The Company's Proclamation guaranteed protection to the Kundoti section of the Mappila tribe who were victims of torture by the Nairs (311).

The only class in the social hierarchy unnecessary to the colonial power was the slave class, who were accused of having no sense of duty or sensitivity to their system of power. It is only when they become citizens with a sense of rights and a will, that is when they come under company laws, that the fruits of their labour are managed in a way that is directly useful to the authorities. Hence, the prohibition of slavery was an essential element of Company law from its earliest period. The *Malabar Manual* explains that when British rule began in Malabar in 1792, the Company government issued a proclamation against the slave trade and introduced strong laws and punishments against slavery (Logan 118). When the Court of Directors expressed strong displeasure with the existence of slavery in Malabar on 21 December 1821, Mr. Vaughan responded to the Court's request with a report on 24 August 1822 that "slaves are protected under the law" (118), underscoring the process of mobilising the aforementioned subjects within the structure.

In the southern parts, royal power became more centralised, and for a century after Umayammarani's era, British involvement was purely commercial. But Dharmaraja, who succeeded Marthandavarma, was a king who recognised British supremacy in Travancore. British supremacy was established in Travancore with Avitam Thirunal, who came to power after Karthika Thirunal. It was around this time that the terms of military assistance were signed

with the British, and Lord Macaulay was appointed as the first Resident of Travancore. Umminithampi was removed from the post of Diwan, and Colonel Munro was given the post of Resident along with the post of Diwan by Rani Gauri Lakshmi Bai during her reign. It was Colonel Munro who administered Travancore on the British model by implementing reforms such that administrative matters were under British control only, making available the high posts of Travancore only for the British and their nominees (Aiya 227).

Less than six months after Swathi Thirunal's birth on April 16, 1813, the East India Company proclaimed him king. A note sent by Swathi Thirunal to the Madras Governor Tweedle about the Resident's actions at a later date provides a glimpse of the British occupation. It is as follows: "The unjust persecutions I feel in my mind in the hard work of the resident against interference in my court affairs and government proceedings, contrary to custom, have brought me to such a point of necessity as to request your protection and support" (Malayinkeezh Gopalakrishnan, 49). This reveals the anguish caused by the British occupation and the helplessness of being unable to take decisions on the administrative matters of Travancore as it lost its independence. Visakham Thirunal's testimony about General Kallan's misrule during his tenure as Resident was recorded by C.V. himself as follows: "General Cullen had been a thick and thin supporter of his protege and shielded him against visitors: newspaper writers, missionaries, petitioners, sober well-wishers of the state, and even the Madras Government itself. Things have gone under that effect to the very climax of maladministration and financial insolvency" (Pillai, *Videsheeya Medhaviththam* 7).

If we examine the administrative history of Travancore like this, all the later rulers who came after Marthandavarma are seen to be very interested in implementing colonial culture and reforms. Similarly, their excessive loyalty to British authority is also noteworthy. During the period, the majority of the local Brahmin community was not willing to come close to the British or even learn English for fear of impurity. "Avarna" groups, on the other hand, did not

have the authority to interact in social spaces and they were considered only as tools of discourse of the dominant groups in a technical sense. At the same time, the ministry of attracting the oppressed to Christianity and transforming them into “human beings” was done in parallel under missionary leadership in the early days. As a part of this, a section of “Avarnas” rose educationally and intellectually. Later, they responded, intellectually, spiritually and physically, against the caste inequality that was constantly reproduced in all kinds of occupations.

Since all the ideas about the family that came to Kerala from outside were male-centric, constant social conflicts arose with the strengthening of the colonial power. Due to Victorian morality, the upper caste Hindus and the colonial authorities started questioning the women rulers in Kerala. Although the nobles did not want to abolish the binding structure of matriarchy, the matriarchal head position in the system was reconstructed into a patriarchal one. But later, when the British authority became strict through new legal provisions and the existing tenancy system became stronger, aristocrats became the absolute authority, and this, in turn, made the upper-class Hindus occupy the central position and naturally the cultural existence along with the social rights of other classes came under their control. Mappila riot in Malabar, Nair-Thiyya conflicts and Nair-Christian conflicts in Travancore are parts of this. At the same time, many social reform impulses arose from the lower castes in Travancore out of the energy of an earlier secularist ideology. They were given the support to question the existing hierarchical world by the philosophical ideas brought by the foreign powers who were carrying out religious conversions. Parallel to this, the colonial proponents had the hidden agenda of presenting the feminine culture based on a monogamous male-female relationship as a new model for the matriarchal society. When Ayilyam Thirunal asked her sister Lakshmibhai to leave her husband Kerala Varma and accept a new husband, she was adamant about preserving her marriage. In 1881, Queen Victoria honoured her with the title of “Order of the Crown of

India” in recognition of her loyalty and devotion to her husband (Church of England Zenana Missionary Society 33). The goal behind such recognition is to present the new culture as a unique example to the women’s community, for a “new” woman who did not exist in Kerala at that time. Similarly, in 1929, the same award was given to Travancore Regent Sethu Lakshmi Bhai, who banned the Devadasi system and reformed Marumakkathayam and put forward paternal ordination.

2.3. Biographing O. Chandumenon and C.V.

Being born in the upper echelon of the Nair community, writers Chandumenon and C.V. lived in a social situation enjoying all the privileges of their caste. Their life interactions were limited to the upper sections of society. Therefore, it can be seen that while their aspire to be “modern,” interested in the new ideas of humanity, religion and women’s freedom, they retain the conceptual framework of caste system as natural¹¹. This in a way is not just a contradiction in them, but symptomatic of internal contradiction of “modernity” itself. Even so, the strong influence of the different regimes that existed locally in their native areas can be seen in their discourses. That is to say, both individuals who were highly educated in universities and had extraordinary intellectual statures were closely associated with the new convictions of colonial modernity. But the alienation resulting from colonial occupation raises a sense of national identity and constantly prompts the reconstruction of a modern conception based on the indigenous culture. The distinct experiences and spheres of activity that prompted Chandumenon and C.V. to formulate the concept of nationalism in different ways in the same period are reviewed here in detail.

2.3.1. O. Chandumenon

¹¹The analyses in the next two chapters explain this.

According to the Treaty of Sriranga in 1792, Tipu ceded all of Malabar except Wayanad to the British. In 1800, the British shifted the headquarters of Malabar from Bombay to Madras Province. Malabar was directly ruled by the English under the Madras government, making Thalassery the main administrative centre. The work of the Basel Mission in Malabar brought about changes in the socio-educational sphere (Parvathy 39). The Mission was instrumental in starting primary schools and high schools in many places in Malabar. Chandumenon started his education at the Basel Mission English School, Thalassery and that helped him to embrace both cultures of Kerala and the West.

Later through legal studies, he managed to get a high-ranking job under the British Government, and he was in close contact with the high-ranking officials of the government. Therefore, he lived to experience only the “benefits” of the British occupation (Tharakan, *O. Chandumenon* 24). His close association with high colonial officials, such as William Logan,¹² G.R. Sharp,¹³ etc., helped him assimilate the British ideology (Tharakan, *O. Chandumenon* 25). Due to his excellence in work, he quickly rose to the rank of Munsif and was awarded the Rao Bahadur honour of the government (Tharakan, *O. Chandumenon* 24).

Chandumenon, who was part of the British administration’s court activities centred in Thalassery, was also a part of the Cricket Club, Evening Club etc., which grew under the British rule in Thalassery during that period (Parvathy 36). It is said that such friendly associations conducted with the participation of the natives also led to discourses that deconstructed the colonial attitude in many ways (Parvathy 37). But only the upper sections (both socially and economically) of the Nair community interacted with the British society in Kerala in the early days. Therefore, it can be said without a doubt that the majority of such groups will be upper-class representatives, including Chandumenon. Such affinities led Chandumenon to develop a

¹² William Logan, the author of the *Malabar Manual*, was Sub-Collector of Thalassery and later Collector of Malabar.

¹³ Kozhikode sub-judge G.R. Sharpe was a prominent colonial authority.

favourable view of the colonial world. Moreover, it is revealed through the narratives that he had unconscious attempts to assimilate the said cultural characteristics as part of his worshipping attitude towards the ruling class.

If we examine the literary works created in Malayalam by the end of the 19th century, it is noteworthy that the majority of the early novels were produced in Malabar. The narrators of most of them are from the Nair community, who were officials of the British Government or advocates of Western education. Therefore, the revival in Kerala due to the activities of missionaries, British rule and English education not only gave birth to the Malayalam novel but also got reflected in it (Irumbayam 30).

Studies of *Indulekha* have recognised the colonial ideas evident in it from the earliest times. “Enlighten with English education. To change the “sambandham” practices of the Nair family by infusing the positive aspects of English education, to give freedom to men and women who are puffed up as playthings of the families’ whims in matters of marriage, get the scientific and practical wisdom of the British, get meritorious titles from the British Government, recognise and respect the virtues brought about by the British, and do not be jealous or scornful of the British. Chandumenon emphasises many things like this”. M. Achuthan elaborates on the straight presentation of this ideology (57).

A group of Nairs in Malabar took over the representation of the British authority in language and culture and became the representatives of Indian English in Kerala as envisioned by Macaulay. For that purpose, the invaders interfered not only in the ways of life but also in the consumption of literature and created the conditions for reading Western literary works which were conducive to cultural exchange and for creating pride in the Western culture. Chandumenon, who was very interested in reading English literature, describes his habit of reading novels in the introduction of *Indulekha* (Chandumenon, 2005, 237). It was his task as a writer to conceptualize a local model equivalent to the “dominant” Western culture in the

context of his land and to validate the cultural reading of the indigenous people and the invaders.

It was the practice of those days for young women from upper-class Nair families to marry into Namboothiris or royal families for the sake of family, regardless of the interests of the women. Polygamous relationships often existed naturally as part of the nobility. The youth who put forward colonial convictions expressed discomfort with such conventional practices and aimed to break free from traditions that did not suit their social convictions and to transition to a modern cultural milieu. While the reformation of tradition was desired from within indigenous paradigms themselves, only Western mindsets and colonial cultural traits existed in Malabar as a suitable paradigm.

As far as the higher social groups are concerned, in social thought and experience, all the lower groups are only natural tools to fulfil their needs in the process of production. This is why even when humanist ideas are formed among mainstream authors, the majority of the population is completely ignored. In all the Mappila riots from 1836 to 1895, we have seen that not only the tax policy of the British but also the movements of the Hindu landlords and their subordinates under the shadow of the colonial rule were the cause of the revolt. Chandumenon's narrative also reveals the strong fear and resistance that arose from time to time among the upper castes, including him, when the Mappila community's sense of religion and reaction was strong.

Namboothiris' obsession with "sambandham" and their dominance over the Nair community are factors that work against the social progress and culturally enlightened thinking of the English-learned youth of the Nair community, including Chandumenon. Similarly, the educated youth, who were not economically and socially independent under the authority of the maternal head in the traditional joint family system, advocated for traditional property rights. Conservatives saw this development as a disadvantage of English learning. This, in turn,

led to further aversion to English education among conservatives. Moreover, during the said period, young men filed cases in court against the economic dictatorship of the maternal head of his family. Such actions further prevented families from providing English education to women who had received only conventional education till then. At the same time, the colonial advocates, who only accepted modern education and practices, saw such conservatives as uncivilised and made derogatory remarks about the uneducated Indian women. The question of how to rationally deal with such unique situations was a problem of identity for all the progressive youth of the period. Therefore, there was a unique situation in the early 19th century which saw the emergence of periodicals in which educated youth constantly wrote against the hegemony of the matriarchal head, who was hostile to learning and transitioning to the nuclear family. Chandumenon turned his unique talent of literary writing into a means of addressing such issues.

An English educated modernist who transitioned consciously from a traditional world view to a new world view was present in all of Chandumenon's attitudes. For example, Chandumenon explained to a Guru of his first "Vidyashala" that he does not write in conventional genres because it is just expression of erotism that is not palatable to modern readers (Kumaran 31). Moorkoth Kumaran points out that "Oiyarath" in Chandumenon's name was derived from his father's family name (32). Chandumenon lived with his parents in the paternal house during childhood due to his father's job changes. Here it can be seen that instead of the traditional matriarchal, agricultural setup, the family situation has changed to a paternal system with the father's work as the centre of financial resources. At the same time, the fact that Chandumenon, who was part of the committee preparing the report for the passage of the Malabar Marriage Bill introduced by Sir C. Sankaran Nair in the Madras Legislative Assembly, stood for the old customs in opposition to the other members of it (39), shows that Chandumenon is a conservative who is not ready to give up tradition and its feudal culture even

while accepting the ideas of modernity, and so his narratives find a way to modernize and secularize the same for an emerging modern nation.

2.3.2. C.V. Raman Pillai

C.V. is a person who grew up hearing histories and stories in Travancore, in a traditional dependent home of the royal family, where the royal family was held in awe. With royal pride and a rich local education, C.V. later obtained a university degree and became deeply familiar with Western culture, but he developed his modernist ideas only through the indigenous royal background. The factors that led C.V. to take an oppositional stance against colonial rule despite his colonial education were the disturbances in Travancore's rule and its social and political ramifications at a particular stage in the formation of his personal identity. They can be summarised as follows:

1. Travancore completely surrendered to the English occupation even though it never came under the Direct Rule. The kings had degenerated into puppet-kings who were unable to turn without the permission of the British resident". For C.V., the prospect of his ideal kingdom succumbing to the invasion was intolerable.
2. Travancore kingdom had to pay a huge monthly tribute as part of the military agreement. As a result, various types of tax collections were started to put pressure on the common people and the country was economically depleted as the amount could not be utilised for public service.
3. Colonel Munro's residency discouraged rural military training and ensured the dominance of the British Army. The British Army was taken over by the Treaty of National Defence and the native soldiers particularly Nair Brigade were unemployed and had to put away their weapons in the family attics. Born in the middle of the 19th

century, C.V. naturally recognised this transformation of the local population, as most of the soldiers were from his community background.

4. In order to regulate the administrative system according to the wishes of the British, the British authorities did not give the natives high positions in the administrative field of the monarchy and gave law-making positions such as that of the Dewan only to the foreign Brahmins.

Thus, Travancore came under the control of colonial advocates, and their regional supporters moving away from a culture that incorporated purely indigenous people-centred administrative systems, military formations, and agrarian culture. However, it was impossible to act in protest due to the respect for the Travancore dynasty and the influence of British officials. Due to the massive economic crisis caused by the foreign Brahminism and colonial domination and the backwardness of the natives, the indigenous people, including C.V., often expressed their existential problems and protests secretly because they could not express their grief and anger openly to the authorities.

C.V.'s newspaper activities and social interactions were a part of this. C.V. wrote anonymous articles in Madras newspapers about the political situation in Travancore. Those articles argued for comprehensive political and social changes. It was this attitude that prompted C.V. to start a weekly newspaper, the *Kerala Patriot*, in 1882. He also worked behind *Mithabashi* and *Vanchiraj* papers. C.V.'s heart was full of agitational thoughts to liberate his "Swarajyam" [native country] (Vasudevanpillai 44-45). In the early stages of the *Malayali* magazine, before Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pilla, C.V. took over the chief editorship and handled social and national affairs in *Malayali* critically. To stop C.V.'s press activities, the then Dewan Rama Rao ordered that the government officials should not operate the press, and the *Malayali* was crippled (Niramalanandan 8). He became obnoxious to the authorities, and the government decided to deny him any great rise in service in future. When Swadesabhimani

Ramakrishnan Pilla was deported because of his public protest through newspapers against the evil aristocracy of the monarchy and of the Dewan regime, C.V. wrote, "This action may have pleased the British Government" (Pillai, *Videsheeya Medhaviththam* 43). Where it is said about the Dewan Madhavarayar that he exercised a more crooked, arrogant and selfish policy than the European imperial power (33) and that the foreign Dewans were only disguised actors who wanted to extort money, serve the British government, praise the Madras government and please the Europeans under the pretence of being great intellectuals (48-49), the depth of C.V.'s displeasure with the colonial occupation as well as with the foreign Dewans is evident.

C.V. drew the ire of the king and the higher echelons of government as he published scathing critiques in both English and Malayalam newspapers on the government's policy failures during Srimoolam Thirunal's tenure. C.V. was not opposed to state rule. But he reacted strongly against the corruption of the British rule for misleading the state rule. (Achuthan 127-128)

Although he responded with his colleagues against the dominance of the Tamil-Maharashtra Brahmins and thereby the exclusion of the natives from the higher powers under the monarchy through newspapers, memorials, petitions, etc. (Vinod K. Chandran 291), he felt that it was not possible in the national situation at that time to react against the monarchy or the British rule openly.

It is clear that he recognised from the very beginning that the representatives of the British Empire had a role in deciding the position of Dewan. He refers to Madhavarayar Dewan as later becoming hostile to the powers that favoured him as Dewan in Travancore and Mysore (Pillai, *Videsheeya Medhaviththam* 32) and to Rajagopalachari as a Dewan directly appointed by the British Government despite the presence of others who were deserving (37). But he was not prepared to confront them directly as he did with the state administration as he knew that the administrative control of Travancore was, in fact, in colonial hands and the local rule

required their consent. Therefore, the educated and thinking youths, including C.V., were helpless and indirectly protested against the ruling classes in various ways in the conflict.

C.V. asserted that it was the colonial authorities who brought foreign Brahmins to power while referring to Dewan Madhavarayar. It is common for many of the Brahmins who come from a position of authority to pretend that the caste hierarchy does not apply to them but show affection only for the Brahmins when they are given jobs and high positions (32). In his Administrative Report of 1080 and Praja Sabha Conference Speech of 1081, Madhavarayar describes the attempt to create social rivalry by misleadingly referring to local riots as the Nair-Ezhava riots (32).

C.V. and others joined the Malayali Sabha, which was started in 1884 by C. Krishnapilla, with the aim of social reform of the region (a call to come together locally for restoration of national thought a year before the formation of the Indian National Congress). *Malayali*, which started in 1886, was its mouthpiece. Before publishing the newspaper *Malayali* on 1061 Tulam 1, S. Krishnapilla wrote a letter to C.V. It is described that the name “Malayali Social Union” was first decided for the union, and later it was changed to “Thiruvithamkur Malayalee Sabha” to make it closer to the ordinary people (Varma 29). Moreover, he wrote,

You should write and send me some notes on the tenancy system. Of course, you should write in favour of the people’s side. This is necessary to win the sympathy of the masses.

All these selfless services are done for their glory. This does not mean that we should not be attentive to the legitimate interests of the people. (29)

These words indicate that the tenancy system is the main issue of the union from the outset. It is clear from the facts that have been mentioned that it is not a community movement focusing only on a particular group but a broad level of social improvement that is being put forward. In other words, in the Travancore area, the feudal aristocrats were the Brahmins and the upper

sections of the Nair community. The majority of the population, including a majority of Nair groups, stood in a hierarchy with the tenant and serf groups. There are indications that the Malayalee Sabha and the *Malayali* newspaper started to reform other sections, including the lower sections of the Nair community. But, in later times, such social groups were re-established as Nair groups by the distortion of both Nair communal activists and other critics who analysed history based on their narratives only. But C.V. and others raised their voices against the dominance of foreign Brahmins and Dewans in the administrative field and the social injustices and immoralities regardless of communal preference and upheld the call of “Thiruvithamkur for Thiruvithamkur natives” (Nair, *C.V. Raman Pillai* 30). As community reform was a part of those social movements, these writers were incorporated into the distorted observations of the radical Nair communalists of later times (Kumar 212).

Not only was there a representation of the Nair community in the Malayali memorial¹⁴, but also the declaration of the rights of the Ezhava, Christian and Shudra communities was part of it. There is widespread criticism that there are no Muslims, Pulayars or Parayars in the memorial. But among the other underrepresented castes, over 90 per cent were illiterate at that time. Anisuddin Ahmed notes that it was because of this reason that there was no Muslim representation (Ahmed 17). It is also noteworthy that the memorial called for reform in the field of education as the first step to getting representation for these groups to enter into government service. It also appealed against the denial of admission of lower castes to schools and to give due representation to the Ezhavas in the government service. Later, there was a conflict between the Ezhava-Nair groups, who were in harmony socially earlier, due to the predominance of Nairs in the Malayali Sabha.

¹⁴ The Malayali Memorial was a mammoth petition submitted by the people of Travancore to the Maharaja against the practice of recruiting outsiders to the higher ranks of state service and also against the nepotism of the Dewan, the head of the administration. It produced a huge political commotion; the authorities were shocked and confused beyond measure. It was no secret that C.V. took an active part in the working and the memorial itself was drafted by him.

It is clear from the references in *Videsheeya Medhaviytham* that C.V. recognised that it was the ruling class that created such sectarianism among the natives. As a result of this divide-and-rule strategy, the people who should work together turned against each other and stood alone for their rights. The writings of Robin Jeffrey and others like him tried to discredit the whole of later politics as rooted in narrow communal interest, and the natives who followed the said thoughts approached Travancore history in the same way, and a caste-minded section pursued it for selfish interests. The Malayali Memorial was presented to get government jobs, to protect the rights of the people of Travancore in the government system and to convince the Maharaja of the neglect of the government. It is interesting that *Marthandavarma* was published in the same year that the Malayali Memorial presented the declaration of the right to “rule by the natives”. The similarity of the two needs to be examined in this sense.

K. Kelappan’s article points out that the conflict with the organised Christian community in Travancore was the main reason for the emergence of the Nair Service Society (N.S.S.). Travancore grew with the help of Christians who were skilled in agriculture, trade and the banking industry. It was a bane of Nair clans to hold grand weddings, marriages, and other festivals, to maintain great tradition and prestige. As a result of this, the property of the Nairs passed into the hands of Christians in Travancore and Muslims in Malabar. K. Kelappan explains the social change by saying that the “Avarna” groups who depended on the Nairs relocated their allegiance to the group who had property and money. Their narratives also indicate strongly, though indirectly, that there was a shared consciousness among the Nairs from early times that one of the leading causes of communal decline was foreign invasion. This is the reason why unlike Chandumenon, C.V.’s narratives treat Muslim identities with consideration while putting forward a presentation that completely rejects Christian community identities and associations.

Caste-based prejudices that existed all over Kerala in various forms was also strong in Travancore. An incident recorded in November 1923 by Malayinkeezh Gopalakrishnan (74-76) illustrates how strongly caste elements controlled society even after the period of C.V.

The district magistrate's court is inside the fort where the Sripadmanabhaswamy temple is located. The District Judge was also the chief official who had to perform the royal ceremony called "Murajapam"¹⁵. When lawyer P.N. Madhavan came to his court for work, the district judge ordered Madhavan to leave the court. Madhavan was denied entry into the fort during the Murajapam period as he belonged to the lower caste. The insults that even educated people had to endure in the name of caste were painful to the human race (Malayinkeezh Gopalakrishnan 76).

Among the eighteen sub-divisions of Nair communities that Logan indicates, there is a strong hierarchy of authority even though there are similarities in customs and traditions. Nairs belonging to particular sub-castes will not eat the food prepared at the homes of other sects of Nairs (109). That means Nairs belonging to different sub-categories do not eat from the same "panthi".¹⁶ This practice also prevailed in Travancore, and C.V. had actively worked against it. Thus, in C.V. we find the interstices of modernity and tradition as he had the patronage of Travancore Royal Family as well as English education. However, he was completely against the colonial domination as well as Travancore kingship that worked in collaboration with the same. While the English education enlightened him to initiate community reforms, he continued to recover and locate this new imagined community in a golden period of Travancore monarchy that according to him was always already modern.

2.4. Textualities of Chandumenon and C.V.

¹⁵ Murajapam is a ritual in Padmanabha Swami temple. There Namboothiris recite the Vedams in its entirety in seven 8-day segments, completing it in 56 days.

¹⁶ Pandal/shed for dining.

Chandumenon and C.V. are two of the most discussed writers in Malayalam novel tradition. The role played by these two writers to make possible and enrich the beginning of the Malayalam novel is remarkable. Chandumenon's only literary contributions are *Indulekha*, which we have come to know in detail, and his incomplete novel *Sarada*, written at the end of his life. However, he was able to create a rich after life in the field of Malayalam literature with *Indulekha*.

C.V. wrote his first novel, *Marthandavarma*, in 1885, but it was published in 1891. Historical romances *Dharmaraja* and *Ramarajabahadur*, which can be said to be its sequels, and the social novel *Premamrutam* are C.V.'s published novels (Onakkoor 7). But his first published book was the farce *Chandramukhivilasaam* (1884). It was followed by the *Mathavilasam*, *Kurupillakalari* (1909), *Thannamkot Harishchandran* (1914), *Doctorkku kittiya micham* (1916), *Pundathe Pachan* (1918), *Kaimalasshande Katasshikai* (1915), *Cheruthen Columbus* (1917), *Papi Chellunnidam Pathalam* (1919), *Kuruppinde Thirip* (1920) and *Butler Pappan* (1921) (Shankarapillai 153-154). Thus, unlike Chandumenon, C.V. was a prolific writer.

2.4.1. Literary Contributions of Chandumenon

Although Chandumenon says in the preface that *Indulekha* was written in the style of English novel within the span of a few months at the insistence of his wife, he later explained that he had started thinking about the story long before that and had kept the necessary notes for that time (Preface to the Second Edition). It is said that the reason for the delay in the publication of the book was the late arrival of some reference books needed for the eighteenth chapter. All this indicates that Chandumenon wrote *Indulekha* precisely as a medium to convey certain ideas, not because of random or anecdotal thoughts. Therefore, it is clear that the ideas propagated by the writer through the said novel are written with the aim of social reformation.

But the physical characteristics and living cultures of the main characters are not accessible to common people. Educational equipment, higher education centres and education itself cannot be accessed by ordinary people. These kinds of depictions are a part of the general consciousness that concentrates the entire social world only within a super-culture.

Although colonial scientific consciousness, family morals, politics, economic concepts, and educational concepts appear in the novel, Chandumenon tries to present these colonial reforms as part of the indigenous culture instead of accepting them in the colonial context. In other words, it can be said that the writer is ultimately shaping a modern Kerala by adding the elements that he felt as superior or sophisticated to the Kerala family structure. Therefore, Chandumenon is not ultimately aiming for a way of life that follows colonial modernity in its cultural environment. His heroines are usually created from Sanskrit tradition by emphasising its similarities and differences to European beauty concepts. She is compared with European beauty concepts and female features in the scenes of her introduction in order to clearly distinguish that she doesn't have a European identity. Whereas the early narratives such as *Ghathakavadham* and *Pullelikunju*, which gave importance to the characters of the lower castes and gave equal importance to the heroine, were not the works of Nair authors; they were the works of early missionaries or followers. They accepted the historical condition of subjugation and constantly exhorted liberation from it and believed that the preservation of human essence is possible only through religious conversion.

Describing women in "sambandham" as having more freedom than European women is to assert indigenous identity in this way. Instead of the term Indian cultural tradition, the term Hindus is used by Chandumenon. Similarly, it can be seen that the Christian and Muslim religious identities are alienated as Sayipps (white man) and Bauddhans (Buddhist; but the terms were used to refer to Christians and Muslims as well). That is, the writer aims to integrate colonial modernity with his caste ethics and national consciousness.

2.4.2. Literary Contributions of C.V.

P.K. Parameswarannair says that the legends about Ettuveedar¹⁷ and the “Kalippankulam incident” that forms the historical background of the novel *Marthandavarma*,¹⁸ are baseless and today’s sense of Ettuveedar is very different from what we get from the story. But though stories in the novel like Kalliankatu incident, the Mangoical War and the “Sambandhalochana”¹⁹ at Chembakassery are not real events, they are represented as past realities (118). Such references have to be seen as part of conscious efforts to accommodate anti-Nair histories when Nair caste consciousness emerged.

C.V. in *Marthandavarma*’s introduction says that this book has been prepared with “the intention of creating a model in the Malayalam language for the story tradition known as “Historical Romances” in English. If this is possible, the author’s effort will be successful”. The narrative tradition of “Romance” rejects the colonial structure in the way it presents itself as an antecedent to, or the opposite of, colonial novel literature. As George Irumbayam explains, the English social novel was formed in the 18th and 19th centuries by expressing characteristics like anti-romanticism and realism; for daring adventure, impersonation, idealism, hero worship, belief in ghosts, love of the past, and loss of fortune are typical hallmarks of romance (Irumbayam 89). C.V. has said that it was not English romantic novels but Walter Scott’s historical novels that inspired him to write *Marthandavarma* (Parameswarannair 127). Scott’s work is influenced by the pain of losing the independent existence of his homeland, Scotland (Daiches 91). Extrapolating the previous chronology of

¹⁷ Short name for Ettuveetil Pillamar. Ettuveetil Pillas, as their names suggest, were the aristocrats of the eight regions of Travancore. They were the guardians of the royal throne. They provided security to the country through military force and their gang strength was often a threat to the royal power. (Velupillai, *Travancore State Manual*; Nagam Aiya *Travancore State Manual* 311).

¹⁸ It is believed that Umayammarani, the earlier regent of Venad, lost her five of her six sons who were drowned in a pond named Kalippankulam at the instigation of Ettuveetil Pillamar.

¹⁹ Marriage proposal ceremony.

Travancore with the present time of his own region or community necessitates C.V. to revisit or flee into the past to compose *Marthandavarma*.

The patronage of the later generation of Raja Kesavadasan and the association of those who had constant connections with the royal court were also important factors influencing him (Parameshwarannair 64). Young King Marthandavarma saved the country from enemies inside and outside the palace and the history of that royal rule naturally formed a model of bold handling of domestic and foreign power structures before him. The book *Marthandavarma* was dedicated, according to the royal custom, to the young prince who was to be the next king, in which the king is advised and protected even during the times of danger by the subjects who were given more importance than the royal character.

Looking back to the history of the region from the emerging colonial nation-state, C.V. selected Marthanda Varma's era as the source of his novel, leaving aside the popular kings like Swathi Thirunal, who ruled the kingdom immediately before and who gave excellent administrative contributions. Even if there were differences of opinion with Marthandavarma's actions in many areas, his period was chosen for the narrative as the King who unified Travancore kingdom, without choosing the period of fragmented ancient Venad or Swaroopams or the period of later kings under colonial subjugation. This clearly shows C.V.'s sense of nostalgia for a glorious past and his imaginations of new nation which is neither federal nor democracy, but centralized monarchy that is benevolent to his subjects.

Travancore kings were not easily accessible to common subjects. Commoners were only allowed to show their faces to the king by taking permission in advance and bringing silk and rewards. Similarly, members of the royal family were allowed to enter a public place only with ten or twelve servants. Manu S. Pillai, in his book *Ivory Thrones*, elaborated on the "helplessness" of the royal families who lived bound by such rituals and ceremonies (88-89). But C.V. presented them as kings who are accessible to ordinary people at all times, who

behave like one of them and act according to the criticism and advice of the subjects, which reflects his reimaginings of kingship. But at the same time, C.V. was a person who lived according to all these customs and ceremonies in real life.

Similarly, he aimed to eliminate the reactionary sense among the foreigners about the native kings by putting forward a unique model of state administration instead of colonial patriotism. “The native potentates are either weak, cowardly humbugging, and full of petty jealousies, or pertinaciously whimsical, intolerant of wise counsel from others, possessed of the loftiest notions of self and superbly hot-headed. Neither of these classes is capable of governing wisely. Neither of them would be found favouring the strengthening of administration by the employment of men of good character, ability and energy” (Pillai, *Videsheeya Medhaviytham* 9). He wrote this to a Western writer in 1865 as an explanation for the incapability of indigenous rulers. C.V.’s conception of kingship through *Marthandavarma* is precisely opposed to this common sense. That is, in the context of his three narratives, C.V. is putting forward local kings who are brave, intelligent, act according to the good advice of others, is good-natured, loyal, capable of ruling the kingdom, and powerful. Marthandavarma’s conception of the state, which is both centralised and decentralised, was chosen for the narrative precisely because there was no other administrative history suitable for conducting a dialogue of protest with the existing national culture. After the rule of Marthandavarma and Dharmaraja, there was a system of governance that exceeded the popular agreement and remained subject to domestic and foreign invasion and domination.

2.5. Marthandavarma’s Era: Contexts of the Novel

The period of King Marthandavarma, a century earlier, deserves special mention because C.V. specifically chose it for his narrative. Marthandavarma’s style of power took a strategic position to the colonial power without opposing it or surrendering to it, marking the

stage as distinct from the earlier period before the spread of colonial power and the later regime, which was in favour of the invasion. Marthandavarma, who brought Travancore, which was troubled by the attacks and intrigues of internal and external forces, under a centralised state power through his administrative skills, was in reality not a mild-mannered king who acted according to the interests of the subjects as created in the C.V.'s narrative, but an exponent of aggressive politics (Shankunni Menon 97, 296). In the later period, the conflicts between the different provinces of Venad, including the Atingal Swarupam, became stronger, and the Madambis, the local lords, increased their interference. Venad was full of conflict due to the conflict between the Yogis²⁰ and the king of the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple, the chaos created by the attack of Tirumala Naikkan in Madurai, and the rivalry between the king and the "Ettuveetil Pillamar". The young king Marthandavarma, realising that the latter's establishment of power required a strong alliance to suppress the aristocrats, made an alliance with the Maduranaikars. A princely state and the English East India Company signed a treaty for the first time in India, the Treaty of Venad, 1723, in which the Company and the Venad offered mutual assistance in building a fort at Kulachal to conquer the aristocrats. Thus, the English rose to become an equal power by aligning with the princely states and taking sides in the civil wars of the princely kings to protect their commercial interests. But C.V. has presented the young king as a ruler who asks for the help of the local lords for the establishment of power, is subject to them, and obeys their advice for the establishment of power.

When Marthandavarma became king in 1729, Pappu Thambi and Raman Thambi, the sons of King Ramavarma, argued that they should get the kingdom. A civil war broke out when the Ettuveetil Pillamar and Yogis declared their support against Marthandavarma, who started

²⁰ Ettarayogam: In all the places where Brahminism existed, temple attendants had an important position. The Ettarayoga is a governing body associated with the Brahmin rulers that existed in Travancore in connection with Sri Padmanabha Temple. After the King and one Nair, all the rest were family members of Brahmin birth. They can question the actions of the king and punish them with fines. There have even been cases where the temple was set on fire when there was a difference of opinion with the king.

opposing Brahminism and aristocratic domination. Adopting a policy of blood and iron, Marthandavarma moved forward and re-established the power of modern Travancore. Although Marthandavarma killed his nieces and local nobles who stood in the way of his authority, in C.V.'s story, he was depicted as willing to give the kingdom to the nieces wholeheartedly according to the wishes of the local rulers to restore peace in the country. Marthandavarma re-established the centralised power of modern Travancore by severing the existing traditional powers and suppressing the local aristocrats who administered the territories under Swaroopams.²¹ Atingal was merged with Travancore ending the dominance and independent rule of Atingal queens. But Marthandavarma's consideration of the Attingal queens shows that gender hegemony was not his goal. Even after the annexation of the Attingal, he was prepared to record the supremacy of the Attingal Rani with equal importance in the treaty with the British. Moreover, he was willing to give importance to Atingal over other conquered or annexed provinces as a recognition of kinship. However, despite the glory of the Atingal queens being so strong, there is no mention of a single queen in the novel *Marthandavarma*.

C.V.'s Marthandavarma is a man of integrity, unaffected by the politics of blood and aggression. In other words, C.V.'s attempt is to advise the king of his time to restore the state rule at the popular level. The king utilised the power of the English East India Company for all his aggressive advances. The company needed Marthandavarma to drive out the Dutch. Moreover, what the English required from the princely states was a despotic monarchy that reserved for itself a monopoly on the collection of exporting products and enforced it by force. Hence, they preferred indirect controls to direct dictatorship. For that, the British kept trying to intervene in the administration by forming an alliance with Marthandavarma. But he often

²¹ It has been argued that it is with Marthandavarma and the establishment of Travancore that a new sense of "king" and "kingdom" based on Roman/Christian sensibilities emerged by replacing regional decentralised governmentalities that existed through Swaroopams (Raju, *Petals of the Self-Formed*).

outrightly opposed the opportunistic interference and administrative restrictions of the East India Company. The alliance and friendship were not in the interest of the company but only in accordance with the interests and needs of Marthandavarma. He has also rejected the company's offers of help on many occasions. Note that this fact is mentioned in *Marthandavarma*. It is clear that the patriot who was not interested in the British alliance or the British military agreement was indirectly speaking to the ruler of his time on behalf of the natives.

Marthandavarma also realised that in order to maintain the power of the king, he had to respect the people's power. P. Shankunni Menon has recorded many examples of such popular interventions. The famous "Tripadidanam" took place on 03 January 1750 (42). The entire kingdom was dedicated to the family deity Sri Padmanabhan, and the king became "Sri Padmanabhadasan", (servant of Padmanabhan) who ruled on his behalf as a trustee. With "Thripadidanam", the Kingdom of Travancore became "Pandaravaka", (temple owned) and the officials became "Pandara Karya Sevakar" (servants of temple). As the Travancore was formed by conquering of lands, people did not accept it mentally. That is why Marthandavarma gifted the kingdom of Travancore to Shri Padmanabhan. For the first time, the administration became a centralised power. It is said that Marthandavarma decided to give a religious background to his rule because he realised that the country won through bloodshed could not be maintained by military force alone. But in 1751, the king started the ceremony of "Murajapam" and "Bhadradeepam" to protect himself and his family from curses and sins due to war and massacres. It is recorded that before his death, he had made an agreement with his heir, Dharmaraja, that the money, property or country offered to Sripadmanabhan should not be taken back under any circumstances.

In this way, Marthandavarma had a regional specific national imaginary and governmentality that was both top-down and bottom-up, that was both monarchic and popular,

which is what C.V. tried to enhance and recover through the re-presentation of an ideal king and kingdom in *Marthandavarma*, as opposed to the universalised European modern nation-state imagination. In the third and fourth chapters, I will be analysing *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*, not in isolation but in the context of other works from the period, especially by Chandumenon and C.V. in order to understand how both the authors/texts engage with the new European modernity that was taking its hold, trying to rewrite the con-texts that we discussed in this chapter, both in Malabar and in Travancore.

Chapter Three

Margins and Marginalities in *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*

Colonial ideology since missionary education created the false impression that embracing European modernity is the only way to dislodge the caste system, untouchability and other social inequalities. English education has been hailed as the way out of unequal opportunity, secularization an antidote to communalism, democracy a solution to monarchy and modernization as a rupture from traditionalism. In many ways, this is what many in the end of the nineteenth century, including Chandumenon and Indulekha, aspired for themselves as well as for their community and state. And yet, the contemporary experiences have exposed the contradictions internal to these Euro-centric conceptualization of secularism, modernity and democracy that emerged without critically engaging with the “local” contexts, as it has only resulted in the secularization/modernization of caste-Hindu hegemony and the democratic constitution of the same as majority, at the expense of those at the margins. And hence, the relevance of critical re-engagement with C.V.’s depiction of a multicultural pluralistic world from a bygone era, where inequalities, dictatorships and elitism did not exist, within the frames of a historical story, in order to give a realistic impression of that imaginary world for his times. It is in this unique regional context that the egalitarian/anti-caste schools of thought put forward by the advocates of colonial modernity and the alternative schools of thought deserve a comparative analysis.

3.1. Feudalism and Caste-hierarchy

In *Indulekha*, Panchumenon’s nobility and power rested on the feudal system. The tenancy system was the main factor which determined the caste system. Since it is based on the hierarchical structure of the caste system, the main feature of the Janmi-Kudiyan (tenancy)

system is that it ultimately reproduces caste subordination (Ganesh 161). Therefore, all colonial-oriented narratives with an upper-caste thought support the tenancy system (Bayly, *Caste...* 392). Critics have already pointed out that Chandumenon advocates a nationalism based on a feudalistic/caste-based upper-class consciousness. But although *Indulekha* socially reproduces feudal concepts, it can be seen that the elite class consciousness that appears in it is mainly based on three facts:

1. Capitalism and economic freedom
2. English Education and Colonial Culture
3. A concept of nation centred on the Nair community

These three factors are not only interdependent but also subtly reproduce various forms of social subordination and caste.

Capitalism is always trying to produce or reproduce the economic base. We can see such a social system working at a micro level in *Indulekha*. Madhavan, the central character, who is the subject of a modern system based on capitalism, explains “I have never required that valiammaman (maternal great uncle) spend even a single coin that he has earned from his own toils. I have only said that the money left in his hands by our ancestors for our prosperity and betterment should be used for our well-being” (Chandumenon, 2005, 3).¹ Although they question the centralized economic power of the joint family, he does not try to directly address the causes or correct the system. Rather, it is seen that freedom is achieved through the sale of labour outside the said system. Where Govindapanikkar says that “I will meet all his expenses” (Chandumenon, 2005, 38), Madhavan is making a legal claim of modernity, saying, “Why should you? Shouldn’t valiyammaman necessarily do that?” (Chandumenon, 2005, 38). Although the need for economic independence is made clear, the collapse of the traditional

¹ Cited from Anitha Devasia’s 2005 translation; hereafter the year is used to distinguish from my translations from *Indulekha*.

structure of matriarchy was not part of the colonial project. The entire social caste hierarchy is centered on this power structure. When the marriage of the hero and the heroine is opposed by the maternal uncle, they are not ready to get married by violating his words. In the end, they get married only with the consent of the same maternal uncle. This indicates that the author does not have the vision to demolish the hierarchical system.

Chandumenon is not interested in eliminating the social structure of Marumakkathayam and its hierarchical systems but wants to modernize the said system by making the Makkathayam relationships a part of the said system. The maternal uncle, Panchumenon, gives his wife and children a higher place in his family. It can be seen that the authority given to the sisters is not in accordance with the traditional system. Instead, they are given importance according to the economic status of their husband. Therefore, it can be seen that Panchumenon's sister, Kumminiamma, the poor Sheenupattar's wife, and her children do not receive the same consideration that is given to his other sister Parvathiamma, the wife of the rich Govindamenon, and Madhavan, the son. He created a unique modern structure by superimposing the patriarchal system on the traditional structure of the joint family system. This is why Panchumenon gives more consideration and love to his wife Kunjikuttiyamma, children and above all his granddaughter Indulekha. When Suri Namboothirippad asked to marry Kalyanikkutti instead of Indulekha, Panchumenon's only desperation was that the "sambandham" was for the family of Kumminiyamma (Chandumenon, 2005, 147). In *Marthandavarma*, Muthapilla, the Chempakasseri head lives for his sister Karthyayanayama and daughter, whereas Panchumenon, gives importance only to his sons and granddaughters. They represent the different causal positions of son-in-law and daughter-in-law. The first one puts forward the tradition and the second one is the modern one which aims only at the system of modernity and its practical aspects.

P.K. Balakrishnan stated in 1957 that the purpose of *Indulekha* was to portray the crumbling feudal system and the rise of national capitalism in Kerala, and many such deep and broad goals have been recognized today (68). But as mentioned earlier, the ultimate downfall of feudalism was not of interest to Chandumenon or the British regime he supported. However, the core aim was to achieve social and cultural supremacy by creating the highest representatives of free-spirited modern personalities from the community through English education. Although Chandumenon's Nair bias has been noted since early studies, Anita Devasia and Susie Tharu's observation clarifies it. According to them, the goals of the novel are to construct a fictional Malabar centered on the Nair clan, to assert the Nair identity through inter-caste marriage, to rewrite power relations within the Nair family, to define humanism in Nairism, and to resist imperialist programs that upset the Nair (Devasia and Tharu 17-18). Nevertheless, the novelist has not only made the Nair identity a representation of Malabar but also reorganized the traditional powers of the feudal family structure into just the Nair community. In the new economic-based system, the goal of bringing up a young generation who is intellectually superior to the colonial power system, with both a consciousness of the new world and an affinity for maintaining the traditional customs, ultimately exists in Chandumenon. Therefore, the jurist Chandumenon knows it is also a political necessity to keep the "Avarnas" at their earlier status as it is essential for the traditional survival of the agricultural system and the growth of capitalism.

Panchumenon's financial ability to buy off the English for litigation is also depicted, as well as the faltering of Namboothiri's social powers in the face of the Nair sect allied with the English. When Thassan Menavan informed Suri that Panchu was disputing that four or five lands of their land belonged to him, Suri Namboothiri replied, "If he is so evil, we should forbid him access to the pond, the well, the temple and everything else. Then he will come running behind me like a dog" (Chandumenon, 2005, 65). However, when he realizes that

Panchumenon has bought (appointed) an English barrister, all his feudal Brahmin powers become ineffective, and he responds that they should also have given their case to an Englishman. With the help of British authority, the status of Brahmins was reduced. It becomes clear how the British bureaucrats and their new knowledge and the resulting power began working over the caste hierarchy.

The tenancy system existed in the form of Naduvazhis, Brahmaswam² and Devaswam³ proprietorships, non-Brahmin landlords, Kanakars, tenant serfs and the Adimas [slaves] as the lowest of all the serfs. Similarly, land tenure and powers were determined according to the legal systems decided by the villagers and Brahmins centred on the temple (Ganesh 119). But in *Indulekha*, when Panchumenon asked to take care of the land entrusted to his son-in-law Gopalan, he replied that he did not own the fields and that the tenants would vacate after a year (Chandumenon, 2005, 43). The depiction of Brahmin supremacy over the tenancy system and the gradual transfer of other upper caste rights to his sub-caste and castes below him should be read as part of the Nair community reconstruction. Chandumenon and the other narrators, who are advocates of Western culture and education, consequently promote an upper-class sensibility, and mock, marginalize or scorn not only the Namboothiri and Avarna castes but also those who are economically and socially inferior in the Nair caste itself.

Socialism and civil society were part of the British power structure because it aimed at economic decentralization. In the system of production and consumption, each person is transformed into a consumptive cultural identity to exchange the results of their labour. In parallel with this, the social hierarchy of the caste groups and the notions of superiority and inferiority are maintained very carefully, thereby strengthening the independence and sense of rights in individuals. Just as globalization, which does not contain the dynamics of capitalism,

² Brahmaswam was the land owned by the Brahmins.

³ Devaswam was the land owned by the temples.

has become an obstacle to capitalism itself, colonialism simultaneously reproduces caste-based social divisions and subjugation for centralization of power and, at the same time posits a civic consciousness that rejects them and promotes capitalism. These conflicting ideas were accepted by the Indian middle class, who were given the opportunity to rise intellectually, but an internal conflict was evident in all spheres of their lives (Mani 46-47). This, in turn, encouraged them to outwardly adopt a policy of opposition to the caste system and at the same time to adopt tradition without acquiring the philosophical will/knowledge to break through its chains. This apparent capitalism described as secularism inspired the Indian nationalists to take a stand against colonialism. For this reason, Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar themselves considered this problem an important part of their thinking and brought new theoretical concepts to explain the Indian social structure as part of Indian nationalism. That is why nationalists approached subordination and social alienation/marginalization through the caste system through different methodologies. Postcolonial studies reveal that colonial pieces of literature were powerful carriers of the ideological mission that maintained this social dichotomy.

The difference between the rich in the agrarian system and the rich in the industrial/capitalist cities can be seen in comparing the wealth of Poovalli family with the rich in Madras and Bengal (Chandumenon, 2005, 170-171). In *Indulekha*, we can see that a society that has changed to a system of economic power and capitalism subjugates the groups based on agrarian culture. Through the detailed descriptions of Indulekha's two-storied bungalow, which is beautifully stocked with "English objects" (Chandumenon 35), and the Bengali millionaire's house, named Amaravati, which is full of decorations "patterned after English designs" (Chandumenon 167-169), decorative objects and gifts that are not useful for the progress of life are presented as the main symbols of nobility, indicating the introduction of the ideology of consumerism. Comments like "What does a horoscope matter when there is money? Wealth is everything" (Chandumenon, 2005, 93), "That (English education) also is

only for money” (Chandumenon, 2005, 95), Marriage raises the economic status of women’s families (Chandumenon, 2005, 30), description of the financial situation of Poovalli family (Chandumenon, 2005, 30), “Is there a girl who cannot be bought?” (Chandumenon, 2005, 136) such money-centric social and cultural depiction can be seen throughout *Indulekha*. But Indulekha and her mother are presented as women who do not fall for money. The Nair community preserves its sanctity even as it uses the economic base of English to uplift the community.

Chandumenon is careful at every step to maintain the elitism of the nation-state by portraying Madhavan as having an upper-class alliance that puts forward the modern world consciousness. But the colonial slave in him takes it for granted that Madhavan does not feel insulted when the English on the ship looks at him with great contempt. However, he is saddened by the same “master class consciousness” that he did not even have a servant while sailing alone (Chandumenon, 2005, 165). In *Indulekha*, the submissiveness of the colonial subjects is seen. All those who oppose “modern” changes are made to feel like old-timers or scoundrels. This is the main strategy employed by all of the early novels from the missionary times. It is also abundant in *Indulekha*; every scene where Suri and Panchu are ridiculed can be read accordingly (Chandumenon, 2005, 52-53, 61-64).

By rejecting the tenancy system and the colonial capitalism that reorganized and reproduced it, C.V. puts forward a “new civic system”, by reforming the old tribal system and rejecting the social hierarchy, instead of the biased civic system of colonialism. Instead of Madhavan’s journeys, which reinforce the identity-based national integration of the upper caste Hindu elite envisioned by colonial nationalism, this social system is primarily represented by the main character dealing with the underclass or elite existence, which expresses itself as subordinate caste-religious identities. At the end of the book, there is a hint that the character Ananthapadmanabhan appears in the form of Bhranthan Channan, in the form of a monk, and

as a Muslim character named Shamsuddin (*Marthandavarma* 370-371). For the historical romance *Marthandavarma*, the discourses of identities in these alternate forms determine the mainstream narrative. In other words, C.V. has reorganized the different identities that have been marginalized or hidden from the mainstream discourse on the basis of caste, religion and class as elements that have equal participation in nation-state formation, social services and national security.

The author explains at the end of the story that these are impersonations or transformations of the protagonist Ananthapadmanabhan, thus indicating that the son of the chief-citizen Thirumugathupilla naturally represents the Nair community and thus satisfies the elite consciousness of the society. This is where the interest of C.V. in forming the character of Ananthapadmanabhan and the historical existence of the said character are of analytical importance. There was a Tamil folk song based on Marthandavarma's reign called "Ootan Kathai Natupura Varalattu Kathai Patal".⁴ Its main story is as follows: When Marthandavarma was an heir apparent, he was hiding for his life from his enemies like Thambi-Madambi and lived in the Tanumalayaperumal's Kalari (training centre for martial arts) with the alliance of a brave warrior named Ananthanpilla. They were accompanied by a Muslim named Vadkan Sahib and an itinerant soldier named Ootan. The Thambi brothers were fatally wounded and were killed in the battle of Panchavankat and Marthandavarma told the others to bury them with rice in their mouths. Their tombs were built near the palace at Nagercoil. In retaliation, Thambi's soldiers killed Mundan-Ootan, who was disguised as the young king. Saddened by the killing of Mundan, the king declared war on the rebels. Under the leadership of Ananthan, the rioters of all the rebel communities were hung, the women were given away to the fisherman community and their houses were demolished. Mundan was worshipped as a god. Even today, Mundan Ulsavam is held at Mundaswamy Kovil, as Mundan is the family deity of

⁴ ANANTHAPADMANABHAN : August 2018 (storyofananthapadmanabhan.blogspot.com).

Potayadi residents under the Tamil Nādu Devaswom Board. Later, Anantan led the Atingal War and Kulachal War under king Marthandavarma (Iiyya 278). A descendant named KP Varatharasan claims that Marthandavarma gave many copper edicts and land to Ananthan, and the edict given in the name of Ananthapadmanabhanadar (the name Nadar represents their caste) is still in existence, and the Kerala Government Archeology Department has confirmed that Cheped was during Marthandavarma's time. This folktale not only rejects the caste elitism of the character Ananthapadmanabhan but also explains that the theme of transformation into a monk, a Muslim character, and Channan⁵ has a unique historical existence (Sabarimuthu *Ananthapadmanabhan*).

3.2. Presentation of Namboothiri Identity

P.K. Balakrishnan's finding that *Indulekha*'s aim was also to establish the humanity of the Nairs against the Namboothiris was an opinion advanced by many other scholars (68). Although the historical contexts that gave rise to the Namboothiri-Nair conflict support this fact, the reality is that the Namboothiris appear in the story, even if as reactionary symbols, because they are a dominant group in feudal history and the Nair class has noble affinities with them. Namboothiri characters like Keshavan Namboothiri and Suri Namboothiri are portrayed as fools or laughingstocks. Sheenupattar and Cherussery are helpless dependents. Although Cherussery Namboothiri appears in the story as a dependent of Suri, we can see that he is submissive to Panchumenon's nobility and indirectly stands in awe of Indulekha's and Madhavan's proficiency in English education. In other words, even when the novelist says that Cherussery is multi-lingual and scholarly, he is placed under those who have received an

⁵ "The Channans of South Travancore are known today as Nadars. In the 19th century, the poor classes were called Channans and a rich minority were called Nadars. The social and economic progress achieved by the Channans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries resulted in the adoption of the name 'Nadar' as a single caste" (Pandian 46).

English education. Similarly, one cannot see any Namboothiri characters who have learned English. The caste supremacy of the Brahmins is opposed through this kind of socially demeaning presentation of the Brahmin characters. Similar narrative styles can be found in *Sarada* like the wicked, treacherous, greedy and poor Vaithipattar (*Sharada* 91-93), Tulubrahmanan (53) and the lecher Cheruppakkaran Namboothiri (62-63). In *Indulekha*, Suri Namboothiri is described in terms of economic decay. The Nair community is depicted as the highest class economically, educationally and culturally.

In his autobiography *Ente Smaranakal*, Kanippayyur explains that in earlier times, all the chores of the Namboothiri houses were done by Nairs. He points out the cultural symbol system through photographs from the past and emphasizes the inferiority and subordination that Nairs have always expressed. He also points out the authority of the Namboothiri in the traditional hierarchy of power, which considers Nairs as their subordinates before the spread of colonialism (Parayil 51). But Chandumenon did not accept this power hierarchy between the Brahmin-Shudra groups into the story and aimed to completely rewrite the historical existence of this subjugation of the Nair community.

Whereas C.V.'s writings were completely devoid of the respect towards Brahmins that existed socially at that time. Moreover, he treats other groups equally and promotes a vision that rejects caste/religion/community-based inequalities. However, all communities, regardless of caste and tribe, used the same name traditionally assigned to their group, and individuals are known by that community name. Not only is it used as a symbol of social inequality, but it is also used so that it is impossible to distinguish whether it is a community name or a title available for royal service. However, C.V. is careful to make it clear that they were not benefiting from the use of the community's name or exploiting the subordinates in the name of communal status and at the same time guaranteeing everyone a social position equal to other individuals.

It can be read along with the social system where the interests of the Brahmins, who take advantage of the “sambandham” system and establish temporary relationships with women without any obligation, cannot be questioned. Sundarayyan in Brahmin disguise and Pattar in the legend of Kalliankattu Neeli were created to decentralise this caste structure of Brahminical power (*Marthandavarma* 47). In the last part of *Marthandavarma*, it is clarified that Sundarayyan is not a Brahmin but Marava, an Avarna caste identity (306). It is also interesting that C.V. has admitted him in all the cultural gatherings, which were not allowed to the Avarna groups then, by dressing him as a Brahmin.

Chilampinethu Chanthrakkaran of *Dharmaraja* appears in *Ramarajabahadur* as Kaliprabhavabhatan with a Brahmin attire and language. C.V. wonders about his high Brahmin status and is doubtful how this Brahmin got the title of “Bhatta”⁶ and from which school or by what kind of cheating (103). That is, the characters of Kaliprabhavabhatan and Sundarayyan are meant to question the authenticity of the caste identity of the foreign Brahmins who come to Travancore.

The character of Mamavenkitan, who appears in *Dharmaraja* and *Ramarajabahadur*, is seen to deconstruct the Brahminical system of authority accurately. Also note that Mamavenkitan, who says that they do not know Kesavapilla’s caste and family, loves him like a son, holds him close and hugs him, obeys him with respect, and seeks marriage for him (*Dharmaraja* 215-216). Similarly, he lives with the evicted⁷ Chilampinethu householders, lovingly touching their servant Kuppassar and preparing food for them all (215-216). At that time, in the social situation of the 19th century, Pantibhojana⁸ was organised against the caste system, and the Namboothiris were not ready to participate in it. It is noteworthy here that such a depiction in the story is based on a century before that.

⁶ An upper sect of Brahmin caste.

⁷ Chanthrakkaran specified them as evicted in *Dharmaraja* (385).

⁸ Inter-dining of people.

There are indications that he was once a kuttipattar⁹ (*Dharmaraja* 215). C.V., who strongly criticizes the dominance of foreign Brahmins in mass media, has presented the foreign Brahmin Mamavenkitan as good-natured, non-dominant and patriotic without community or nativist considerations. Mamavenkitan interacts with all human beings with love regardless of caste. It is clear from the fact that the Brahmin community in Chanthrakkaran's house behaved with respect and happiness when they saw him, that he was not affected by any thoughts of sin and depravity and that all the other Brahmins had great love and respect for him (238).

Nagantali Narayanan Namboothiri is another Brahmin character created by C.V. The physician Nagantali Namboothiri is sent by Kunchaikuttipilla, a follower of the king, who knows the history of the caste of the woman under Perinjakotan's care, to their service. The portrayal of Nagantali as someone who obeys the king's instructions regardless of knowing the caste history of the house he is visiting is noteworthy (*Ramarajabhadur* 455). Knowing that they were his estranged wife and daughter who were evicted by "smarthavichaaram", being near them and offering blessings by touching them were actions that would have even led to communal ostracism for the Brahmins at that time (458-459). C.V. himself makes it clear that during that period, religious ties were strong, caste breakers were considered as Chandalas, out-caste marriages were hellish, and other such beliefs prevailed (460). C.V. created the character of Kallarakkal Pilla, who completely severed his relationship with the mother and daughter when he learned the history of their "smarthavicharam",¹⁰ to clarify the social reality of casteism at that time. Nevertheless, C.V. also narrates that Kallarakkal Pilla's servants looked after the household affairs of the women, mocking their master's fanaticism (461). Maharaja himself mentions the women lovingly and other characters like Nanthiyattu Raghavanunnithan, Ananthapadmanabhan Patathalavan and Mamavenkitan, who are courtiers and high society

⁹ Tamil Brahmin who works as a servant in Namboothiri illams, kovilakams, etc.

¹⁰ Smarthavicharam was the trial of a Namboothiri woman and fellow male adulterers who were accused of illegitimate sexual relations. If the accused women were found guilty, she and the men found involved with her were excommunicated from the caste and banished.

members who interact with the caste-displaced Kazhakoottu family also treat the women with love and respect.

In the seventh chapter of *Dharmaraja*, we see the Chanthrakkaran offering Hastagadagrapatanam¹¹ to all the guests who came to his house to see Yogisvaran, irrespective of caste and caste, during the said period of untouchability and contamination (*Dharmaraja* 236). Similarly, the said chapter deals with the Brahmins in the language of power and pride. Chanthrakkaran was ready to cut the Brahmin's throat because of Mamavenkitan's angry words, but when others suggested that the Brahmin was the servant of the Maharaja and should be treated with care, he went out and vented his anger on the Brahmins outside (243). Here, the people give importance to the royal power rather than the caste status of Brahmins. But in the first part of the same narrative, we can see the common people turning against the royal servants for fear of sin and the Brahmin curse at the time of Annavayyan's murder (271). This means that the said counter-narrative takes place in a society where Brahminical supremacy and politics were strong.

In *Ramarajabahadur*, when it is said that ordering a Brahmin to leave the house is treason, Perinjakotan replies that he does not care even if he is a greater Brahmin than Brahma and shouts at him to put his punool aside (*Ramarajabahadur* 423). Note Perinjakotan's denial of caste rights. In the next passage, C.V. uses the term "brahmanabhavam" in the sense of this hateful nature (424).

3.3. Monarchy and the Conception of Subjects

It can be seen that power structures are always hierarchical. The reactionary consequences of feudal constitutions are what democratic and alternative structures set forth

¹¹ Upper hand handshake.

when they become authoritarian systems. Just as the caste system and related discourses enable the feudal system, so does the distribution of power through oppressive regimes and governmental institutions interact with the identities of ordinary people. Although the order of structure is the same in each period, only the outward appearance varies according to time and context. But in contrast to the majority mindset of the modern system of indirect domination, the strong expression of the people interacting with each other amicably while the caste-community divide exists is depicted in the historical narratives.

From the very beginning, the criticism was raised that C.V.'s approach of rejecting the communal identity of Brahmins was due to Nair bias. However, it can be seen that not only has he created the Brahmins as good-natured people without showing any hatred towards them, but also he has presented most of the Nairs, including the Ettuveetil Pillas, as evil characters. Later, when the Nair section expressed its identity, he received many criticisms from the community too. He supports the Kshatriya kingdom in the main story of *Marthanadavarma*, which is based on a war between the monarchy and the Ettuveetil Pillas, who were considered to be Nairs. In other words, it can be said that *Marthanadavarma* is also a narrative of the supremacy of the Kshatriyas against the Nairs. This is where C.V.'s conception of the country needs to be analyzed.

Suma S. Sukumaran's observation that the central theme of CV novels is a political vision that overcomes the challenges of systemic governance is relevant here (Sukumaran 198). By placing the kingship above Brahmin supremacy, C.V. presents the Brahmins, the "Avarnas", the Muslim community and the Nairs themselves as subjects with equal authority. That is, he does not give a special space or status to any group in the name of caste or religion. If any particular group is over-emphasized in his narrative, it is only the representatives of the subjects who fought with their lives for the king and kingdom.

In *Marthandavarma*, the sick Maharaja is a static symbol of kingship. The creative interactions of the female character Subhadra and the lower caste Bhranthan Channan, the madman, maintain the country's security and peace in each storyline. Whenever the young king's life is in danger, there is the intervention of Subhadra or the Bhranthan Channan, but it is the said Channan character who rescues the patriotic Mangoikkal Kurup from being bound and saves his life (*Marthandavarma* 155, 240). It is the actions of a woman named Subhadra that lead to important turning points for the future of the country by not only finding mainour in Chembakassery (*Marthandavarma* 225), rescuing Parukutty from danger (*Marthandavarma* 183, 201-202), but also removing the misunderstanding between the young king and the civic leader Thirumugathupilla, ending the enmity (*Marthandavarma* 287), finding Ananthapadmanabhan (*Marthandavarma* 266), knowing the details of the treasonous conspiracies of the Eight House Pills and acting against them. (*Marthandavarma* 144-146) Similarly, in the historical narratives of Dharmaraja and Ramarajabhadur, the state politics moves forward through the creative interactions of ecclesia, bigwigs and courtiers, keeping Kartika Tirunal Maharaja as a static symbol of a virtuous ruler.

3.4. Nair Community and Anti-subordination

Historians have accused C.V. of portraying the history of the Nair community¹² because most of his characters have the name, Pilla. Moreover, during this period, the Nair Samaj was established under the leadership of C.V., and Pilla became one of its sub-castes. Although the word Pilla has several meanings,¹³ the word is often added to personal names in ways that are distinctive to Travancore's local politics. Those who checked the administrative accounts and

¹² As many other critics, George Irumbayam also noted that *Marthandavarma* was written with the aim of making the Nair nobility like into a lyrical film inspired by the heroic stories of the Nair warriors of yesteryear, combined with the sadness of the waning community (*Malayalam Novel Pathonpatham Noottantil* 94).

¹³ Child, son, prince, royal child, etc.

lease payments of the Travancore dynasty were called Kanakkappillas.¹⁴ Similarly, the court officials were also known by the name of Pilla. The term was initially associated with the names of those who held high ranks of government service and positions related to national security. The accounts of Venadu Naduvazhis were controlled by six groups of officers called Karuvukaramtil Pillas (Ganesh 119). Pillas were a subsection among some sections of Brahmins and Kshatriyas. In this way, the name Pilla is added to the one's name differently from that of Nair.

In chapter twenty-five of *Dharmaraja*, we see Pavathikochi, Kesavapilla's maidservant, conducting an investigation on the instructions of Ananthapadmanabhan Patathalavan and freeing Kesavan Kunju from enemy bonds and attaining a position as Pavathipilla in the Rajyasamudaya Mandals (481). C.V. states that the social status of individuals is determined by their karma. By acquiring that title, Pilla, Pawathichi, a rice weaver, also promotes the principle that such honours are not just limited to men engaged in

¹⁴ When Marthanda Varma's accession happened in 1720s, the Ettuveetil Pillas vetoed it and decided to overthrow Marthanda Varma's right to throne to place Ananthapadmanabha Thampi (son of the last king) as the new King as they believed the latter could be a better puppet. This led to the accession crisis and civil war, in which Marthanda Varma defeated Ettuveetil Pillas. He then carried out a horrific destruction of nearly 72 Barons and Madampis across the Venad as part of formation of much powerful political entity called Travancore Kingdom. With the formation of Travancore Kingdom, the concept of Pilla was fully changed under the reign of Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma Maharaja who centralized the rule of Travancore. He made Pilla as an imperial title of the state, much akin to English concept of Knighthood. Just like how King/Queen of Britain grants Knighthood (Sir status), the King now has right to confer Pilla title to those who made exceptional services to the state. The ceremony of conferring the title was called *Thirumukom Pidikkuka* or one to hold the face of King where the awardees have right to face the King straight on and the King would raise the Imperial Sword of Padmanabha, signifying the conferring of Pilla title. Apart from those who get the Pillai Title, Marthanda Varma created the Great Offices of the State and all the officers now have the title of Pilla. The Great officers of State are generally referred as Thirukanakku Pillas:

1. Chempakaraman Pilla - The 3rd highest position after King and Prime Minister (Dalawa) who shall be Knight General or Head of Nobles of the Kingdom
2. Meleluttu Pilla - Accountant General (4th highest position)
3. Rayasam Pilla - Privy Keeper of Imperial Seal and Chamberlain of Sree Padmanabhaswamy
4. Pandara Pilla - Head of Revenue services and Maharaja's personal security
5. Kaimal Pilla - Chancellor of Imperial Household
6. Valia Sarvadhikaryakkar Pilla - Justice General and Deputy Prime Minister
7. Kurup Pilla - High Steward of Imperial Court of Sree Padmanabhaswamy

The deputies of these seven Pillas are generally called as Kanakku Pillas who cannot use the Pilla surname, but use Kanakku as Pre-name. So, with streamlining the Pilla position in Travancore, Pilla refers to someone who has been part of Travancore Royal services.

national warfare through martial arts. Plamuttil Asans were described as the chiefs of a royal army to indicate their superior position among the Unnithan sect (*Ramarajabahadur* 115). From these explanations, it is clear that service to the country rather than caste supremacy determines superiority.

In the third chapter of *Ramarajabahadur*, when Trivikraman describes Savitri as Savithripilla, she objects, and then he ridicules her by saying that she should be called Kochu Kunjamma. Here the word “pilla” means daughter. The expression Chellappilla¹⁵ and the poet Kunjan Nambiar’s lines “Thallaykkittoru thalluvarumbol pillayeyetuththu thatukkeyullu”¹⁶ were expressed in the said context for generalizing the word pilla in its various meanings as opposed to the caste name.

The word Pilla in Kesavapilla, the central character of *Dharmaraja*, is derived from his employment as a government officer or is used in the sense of baby/child. In the first chapter, Pokumusa’s companion describes Kesavan as “Nee Bahadur, namuku thambi, thalavarku pillu”.¹⁷ He uses the word Pilla to show that they consider him the headman’s son. The question of Kesavapilla’s caste is raised several times in the narratives. As Kesavapilla is lower in caste, the number of days of Pula-Valaima will be increased, and Unnipilla and his colleagues mock that Valaima is the same for those who are not sure of caste in chapter nineteen of *Dharmaraja*. The author’s interpretation shows that Pilla is not just a word indicating caste. The writer, who has lined up many Pillas, including the Ettuveetil Pillas in his narratives, subverts the caste-centric existence of the word Pilla with a single character named Kesavapilla. When the Pullipattalam formed by Maharaja Marthandavarma later became the Nair Brigadier Sena, it was not only composed of Nairs. He has clearly said on many occasions that only caste-free

¹⁵ Pet child.

¹⁶ “When the mother is beaten, the mother uses the child as shield”.

¹⁷ “You are Brave! Younger brother to me! Son to our leader!”

views are compatible with social progress and communal reforms. It is only by considering this background that C.V.'s social activities can be studied.

In Tamil Nadu, the community name "Pilla" has been communally held in very different ways. For example, even though Tamil actor Vijay's family is traditionally Christian, his maternal grandfather, a Christian by birth, was named Chandrasekaran Pilla. Also, Devasahayam Pilla, canonised as a Christian saint in May 2022 and a state officer during the reign of King Marthanda Varma, makes it clear that the history of the term Pilla is not caste-centric. "The Thiruvithamkur state is a Tamil phenomenon. Its movement northwards is a sign of Tamil dominance over Malayalam culture", when talking about Marthanda Varma's tenure, K.M. Panicker clarifies. As part of this Tamil hegemony, many Tamils were also part of the Travancore region. *Marthandavarma* also has a lot of Tamil influence in the dialogues. "When someone approaches the court with an application or query in Malayalam, the Pillamar (government officials) reject them and force the poor people to come and write it in Tamil" (Mathan 17). It is only by considering this background that it is possible to study the social and political environment of personal names used in the 18th century.

3.5. Caste Depiction

With the advent of cultural studies and subaltern studies, various marginal groups who were excluded from the mainstream began to occupy a prominent position in cultural history. However, what C.V. has done is not only to make subaltern cultural history part of the narratives but also to reconfigure the public sphere that appears in the narratives through the subaltern perspective. How do you write the history of subaltern identities? How can you construct their narratives when nothing is left as its source? These questions have been disturbing the historical authors. Forming a national public sphere based on serving the nation made it possible for subordinate identities to be active participants in the mainstream. Only

when such a counter-system satisfies the socially existing sphere of consciousness by rationalizing the author's interventions does it reach the "authenticity" of history from the level of fiction. Such divergent histories must come together to accept and share common rules of evidence and rationality. The subaltern pasts thus formulated are capable of assimilating concepts that have been analyzed and established in various ways as part of subaltern studies in later times (Chakrabarty 19).

In *Indulekha*, apart from occupational social hierarchies within the traditional caste and class divisions, it can be seen that several social hierarchies are being produced based on wealth. Early admission to the school for all regardless of caste, preference in jobs for English-educated people (Muhammad 51), access to a few in the front ranks and cheap and efficient bureaucracy through them, and allowing British bureaucrats to enter Brahmin houses (Parvathy 38) gives the false impression that any common man can achieve nobility and social status through education and financial perpetuity. As part of the education policy granted by the British government, a section of the "Avarnas" entered the mainstream of the said system, but in *Indulekha*, the Avarna groups, who are the majority, are socially or culturally excluded from the economic system of modernity. Even in alternative narratives, those who belong to marginalized groups who do not come into such positions of power because of social reasons are often ignored. Therefore, it is also noteworthy that in the eighteenth chapter of *Indulekha*, whose main objective is presenting arguments in favour of colonial ideology, only general pro-caste and religious constructs or indifferent counter-opinions are raised (208-209). The hero's attempts to reform and to be of service to the community by teaching Shinnan English do not go outside the community because subordination of the lower castes must be maintained for the survival of the upper castes. The names of the members of the lower community are also used in the novel as derogatory terms like Kurutham Ketta Chandalan¹⁸ (Chandumenon 63),

¹⁸ A lower caste name in caste-system.

Komati¹⁹ (Chandumenon, 2005, 40), Mahapapi Chandalan Karimpoth (*Sharada* 136). Note the usage of “So many low graded people in India” in chapter 18²⁰ (Chandumenon 263).

This reality of the caste system that existed at that time is evident in the conversation between Sundarayyan and Thambi in *Marthandavarma* (95). The Avarna groups were enslaved to the Nairs during the period when the novel was written, and slavery was allowed by law. History has it that the Brahmins, when they saw such Avarna groups in person or accidentally came into contact with them out of fear of pollution, attacked them with their accompanying Nair soldiers, killed them for no reason, and tried to exterminate them. As Thirumugathupilla says while criticizing Thambi’s act of killing members of the Channan caste in anger towards a Channan: “Do you think the lower castes are lifeless or something? Aren’t they also the subjects of His Highness? They did not even think about the pain their children would suffer. So ruthless? When people cannot stand it, they will also act recklessly. Each one should work carefully. Do you think you can behave/ live like this forever?” (102). These words are apt to address such vile historical facts as a whole. In the context of the “Channar riots” of 1822-1859, it is necessary to analyse the opinion put forward by Edgar Thurston that the cause of the revolt was the Channars’ desire to get a higher position in the religious and social order (Thurston 103).

Subaltern Studies, as is well known, is a series of publications in Indian history that was begun under the general editorship of Ranajit Guha in the early 1980s. Its explicit aim was to write the subaltern classes into the history of nationalism and the nation and to combat all the elitist biases in the writing of history. To make the subaltern the sovereign subject of history, to stage them as the agents in the process of history, to listen to their voices, to take their experiences and thoughts (and not just their material

¹⁹ A particular trading community name in caste-system.

²⁰ Such usages are avoided in Anitha Devasia’s translation, as she “the people of India” instead, see 212.

circumstances) seriously – these were the goals we had deliberately and publicly set ourselves. (Chakrabarty 19).

Thus, the narratives that C.V. puts forward represent the leaders of later subaltern studies in various ways. Also, he uses mainstream characters, their local beliefs, experiences and thoughts as part of historical construction to enable social equality to identities that did not exist in history.

In *Ramarajabahadur*, there is a reference to the tribal communities like Odars, Chilapars, etc. (209). It is noteworthy that a couple of mandapas located initially in Mahabalipuram, a part of Ananthakad, are described as the abode that protects them from the weather as if they are the “protection from the pecking order of the world” (209). Another presentation of C.V. that opposes this kind of “pecking order” is the depiction of Kesavanunnithan, who takes care of the communities like Thoti, Pulluvetti and Pakali in the army as their servant. It is important here to explain that the person introduced by C.V. as a member of the upper class is serving the lower classes, and the people who see it do not feel displeasure or breach of custom but wonder and respect. Chapter five of *Ramarajabahadur* contains a conversation between a “Chandalan” and Kodantayashan, who belonged to the class of Valiyathans, whom C.V. described as having significant positions at that time (154). There C.V. portrays Kodantayashan as silent and scared in front of Chandalan’s authoritative and commanding words.

The same presentation that rejects the hierarchical relationship is seen in Shankuvasan, the steward of the Chembakasseri family and Kuppassar, the servant of the Kazhakuttam family. Shankuvasan is given equal status with the power to discipline and advise the family members. The family members give equal consideration to Kuppassar and he is the only person who knows where the family treasure is (*Dharmaraja* 444). It is evident that the family members have deep faith in the said servant.

In *Ramarajabahadur*, it is stated that at least five members of the Nair caste had to accompany nobles and dignitaries of that time during journeys. The historical figure Ananthapadmanabhan, who appears in all three narratives of the C.V., was a most trusted companion and military leader of the kings Marthandavarma and Dharmaraja. In *Dharmaraja* chapter one, when the said ambassador leaves with military ceremonies according to the royal decree, Nairs accompany him as stewards and attendants, and Muslims as associates (154). Moreover, many historical narratives and copperplate inscriptions make it clear that Ananthapadmanabhan Patathalavan was a member of the Nadar community, an Avarna group that does not belong to the Nair caste. The stories of Ananthapadmanabhan saving the life of the young King Marthandavarma many times in the disguise of a Channan and the folk story of the young Nadar named Ananthan saving the life of the young King Marthandavarma many times are similar (Sabarimuthu 4).

Not wanting to associate with the houses of Nairs, Perinjakotan built a very spacious and lordly house in a jungle. He worships the goddess Durga in the “Amman’s elankam²¹”, as a tantri wearing silk, ashes and a sword, indicating a clear picture of Shakteya worship (*Ramarajabahadur* 199). In addition, there are sanctuaries guarded by various sub-castes, such as Parayans and Malavedans, and the fairy garden of Parapanda, a monstrous evil deity in the form of a flesh-and-blood goddess who holds the position of Periyamb²² (200). The communal dimension that C.V. gives to Perinjakotan is a complex existence with the assemblage of distinct identities, together with the presence of out-casted Brahmin woman (202) who adheres to the communal norms of Brahminical culture. However, it is seen that the kinship of Kesavapilla, the royal servant and high chieftain, was given to him so that even readers with a clan-caste supremacy mindset cannot alienate or keep away such caste.

²¹ Divine residence.

²² Chief priest.

Similarly, Lakshmi/Nangema, who lives with Perinjakotan without abandoning Namboothiri family customs, knows that her husband, Perinjakotan, is the Parapanda who eats beef, which is considered the most taboo in their customs (254, 369). But even so, it can be seen that they behave and live with each other in love. The reference “Varnashramam enna Dushkali” in *Videsheeya Medhaviththam* prove that C.V. has taken the same stance against the inequalities of hierarchy created by caste and religion in his social interactions too (47).

3.6. Religious Communities and Social Approaches

The attitude of the upper class of the feudal system towards Muslims and Christians was formed in accordance with their relationship with the colonial ideology and administration. As a result, those who supported colonial rule distanced themselves from the Muslim community, as they were in conflict with colonial policies, and those who opposed it came closer. As Christian ideology adopted colonial culture in many ways, regional approaches towards them were shaped accordingly.

In historical romances, there are many examples of amicable co-existence between the Muslim community and other communities. In the fifteenth chapter of *Dharmaraja*, when Keshavapilla expressed the depth of his royal devotion, the king asked him whether our Islamic subjects would also follow his royal love. Without any second thought, Keshavapilla replied, “If not, there would have been a party here asking King Hyder to attack the kingdom without considering the Kambiniyar and others” (344). He describes that the country’s Muslims also see the king with god-like love. In *Marthandavarma*, Usman Khan is portraying mutual harmony, by saying that there is no xenophobia in Thiruvithamkur and we will not have this much honour even where we have the power of the country (*Marthandavarma* 191).

In all three romances, it is the Muslim chiefs who help the main royal servants, Ananthapadmanabhan and Kesavapilla, in danger and provide them with supreme love and

companionship. In the twentieth chapter, Marthandavarma describes that the head of the Muslim trade group, Hakeem, confers vermilion which was believed to be made by Nabi himself, as a divine medicine to the ill king when he heard that the efforts of the local healers did not cure the Maharaja's disease. It is also described that after serving it, the symptoms of the disease reduced, and the Maharaja began to recover (*Marthandavarma* 230).

The description of Tipu coming with war gear and making a Bhagavati temple his residence, and performing religious rites can be found in Chapter Twenty-six of *Ramarajabahadur* (375). C.V. interprets that the temple was renamed as "Fati-haidar" because of the need for religious rituals and due to filial piety. Fanaticism as a reason is never invoked. "The idol of the goddess and the shrine of the place co-operated in the ritual of digestion... The "Great Man" stood at the front of the temple and illuminated his higher position for a while, and released the "tongue-sacrament" to pronounce the "Khutba" on the inner terrace. Then kneeling on a silken mat, raising his uncrowned head, the celestial Lord, as if from pride to tremble in his possession, chanted his religious pranavas in "humkaradvani" (resounding with the sound "HUM"). Yajna kundas²³ in the temple precincts, sanctum sanctoriums, and the burning of incense in the burning haviss²⁴ blessed the ritual of prayer to be recognised by the heavenly God" (375-376). Such descriptions could lead to the publication of the book being banned in today's times.

It has been explained in *Ramarajabahadur* that King Ajitasimha had full permission to live freely in Tipu's military shrine without any hindrance to his religious practices and that Ajitasimha, an archer, was respected by the Hindu officers and soldiers of Tipu's army and the statesmen like Poornaiya (419). Tipu is thus presented as a person who did not encourage conversion or other religious restrictions. When a girl from an enemy country showed rare

²³ A kind of ritual in front of sacred fire in a temple.

²⁴ Divine fire.

fortitude, mastery of the Hindustani language and Islamic principles, and pride in her country, Tippu exclaimed, “Wow! Allah has blessed us with another beautiful and talented daughter. The fact that there is such a fortune in the kingdom of Ramaraja makes us prosper from today to become the father of that kingdom. Beloved, Ajitasimha, accept her as your adopted daughter. May she enjoy all the freedoms in our palace as our divine daughter! To this maiden, Tipu Sultan vows to be the All-Blessing” (421). Instead of being an enemy king who came to invade the kingdom, C.V. portrays him as a respected man and a ruler equal in influence and glory to King Dharmaraja.

Chandumenon, on the other hand, exhibits strong colonial obedience in reproducing the Hindu-Muslim dichotomy constructed by colonial power from its inception. In the 18th chapter, when Govindankutti Menon said he felt ashamed when sayivs like Sir Lepel, Griffin and others talked about the natives of India (Chandumenon, 2005, 206), Madhavan replied, “Govindankutty, you said that you appreciate Sir Lepel, Griffin and others criticising India. I also enjoy that. It is true that we heed our failures only when we encounter criticism from intelligent rivals. These people are clearly doing India a lot of good. When we continuously hear the insult that the eloquent Babus, Iyyers and Mudaliars cannot find the strength to oppose a Muslim and that they are cowards, it actually makes us more energetic and determined. Therefore, let them say what they wish to say” (211). Here, we can easily read the colonialist who considers the label British as good no matter the harm. More than that, reading between the lines clarifies the construction of self and other identities using words like “India”, “we” and “us”. The above-mentioned types of vilification aimed at fostering social competition and the victims’ accounts of the benefits of such vilifications make it clear that it helps to foster sectarianism. Such views can be analyzed through the close reading of the following quotes too: “If at all someone in the party criticizes the government, I will brand him a madman” (210). His stand on the 1857 revolt was “...it was said that the grease on the ignition strips of

the cartridges was actually animal fat and that biting it would make the soldiers lose caste and people were quick to believe the evil rumour because at that time there were few knowledgeable people who could convince ordinary people that the English government would never behave so cruelly” (213). “Caste, or what is said to be caste in India, depends on religion. If that practice has to be taken away from the Hindus and Muslims of India, they have to be initiated into a religion which will prevail over their religious rituals” (208). Thus, Chandumenon specifies that Hinduism is not an independent religious consciousness, but its religious identity is based on the otherness of the Muslims, and it can disappear only with the existence of Muslim religious philosophy. It can be seen that the Christian religious identity, in which religious conversion constantly happened at that time with the permission of the government, does not come into the religious consciousness that defines itself by otherness. That is what makes this hidden ideology easy to identify.

Chandumenon explains everything on the economic basis of capitalism. Nair supremacy and anti-Muslim attitude work closely for him as he is disturbed by the existence of another power in Malabar that can help Namboothiris by lending a huge amount of money. This description of the Mappilas who cheat the illiterate landlords and extort property is also an indication of that: “Two or three Mappilas are ready to lend him money at Rs.5 interest for every hundred. This stupid man will write off anything in his hurry to get money” (99).

The brutal policeman and the robber became Muslims due to a mindset that saw the Muslims as outsiders. “Shiyar Ali Khan was not a Muslim but was becoming a Muslim” (Ansari 144). The identity that is assigned or alleged to a person is important because there is a choice of many identities, and the character is restricted to a particular identity because the writer feels that the said identity is the most suitable for what the writer is trying to express. This becomes clear when we consider reality as awareness manifesting itself to consciousness. This policy of identity construction must be understood through the context of active

proselytization in the nineteenth century. The writer confines each Karma-Dharma to each unique authorship with the awareness formed by his social experiences and, thereby, culture. The writer is consciously constructing the authorship to be accurately accused of plunder and murder. It may be led either by past experiences that have shaped the writer's sense of community or by the writer's conscious effort or narrative strategy to create a new awareness of particular authorship.

Here we can see that Ansari explained that the Muslim authorship appearing in the case of Shiyar Ali Khan and in Indulekha's dream is shaped by the preconceptions of the narrator or the narrator's society. Envisioning a broad national culture, for Chandumenon, "Muslim" is a racialized term for structural alienation. Moreover, for him, it must be culturally certain, and the Mappila identity formed in the historical background of the Malabar Mappila uprisings (Ansari 143). This means that the above-mentioned Muslim identity becomes the only identity to be assigned to "the stateless and nameless outside" (203) of Shiyar Ali Khan. Chandumenon constructs the protagonist Madhavan's upper-class male Nair identity as a symbol of nationalism and emphasizes it through the identification of similar upper-class citizens in modern India shaped in colonial cities based on the otherness/alienness of Shiyar Ali Khan.

The same religious ideology is followed even more strongly in *Sarada*. The crooked Vaithipattar made a false story to show that the woman named Sharadha is not the daughter of Poonjelakkara Achan's daughter-in-law and is a disguise by wicked Raman Nair to grab money. Sarada is being accused to be the daughter of a Muslim prostitute (*Sarada* 129). Thus, there is double ostracism or dual alienation in terms of caste and gender. The cultural subjugation of the prostitute is not considered by the upper caste community, instead the social reaction caused by the communal alienation of Muslim was very strong (130). Chandumenon explains the context to show the disgust and fear of the upper caste communities towards the other.

The Muslim identity is presented as a powerful antagonist that can unite the Nairs and Namboothiris despite the internal animosities between them. “Why didn’t you tell Udayantali this information immediately Vaithipattar? Udayantalis and we are bitter enemies, but defiling their temple is a matter of widespread harm to Brahmins? Why didn’t you tell them yet?” (130). Achan shouted to Vaithipattar. Chandumenon describes the scene in which the entire Brahmin community was shocked by the news that the Muslim woman had come to Thirumulpad’s house. (137). Achan’s shout when he learns that the child is a Muslim is likened to that of an elephant’s trumpet that is not used to hearing gunshots (131). In short, Chandumenon ascribes an Islamic religious identity to identities that are socially abhorrent or vile, such as thief, cruel, usurer, prostitute, rioter, and murderer.

3.7. Impersonations and Subordinate Representations

The conservative society, which consists of the ruling class and its victims, the subordinate class, will not accept a presentation of history that completely rejects this hierarchy while presenting a period in which distinction of caste and religion and its hegemonic subordinate cultural experiences were strongly present. Hence, C. V. used a kind of mixed narration, including the impersonation of the characters, as a narrative technique to overcome this dilemma. Various caste, religion and community identities are created with a sense of identity and disguises of such identities are presented throughout the narratives. It gives society the idea that communal or caste identities are just roles that can be changed as needed.

In the 18th century, there was an unwritten rule that Avarna groups, including the Channans, had to keep physical distance from the upper class in social places. So, when a person from the Channan class acts against the upper class in public, violating the social rules and going against the social order, he is said to be insane (*Marthandavarma* 37, 83). When a man of the Channan caste achieves amazing ability in martial arts, and he rescues the Maharaja

while highly skilled eminent soldiers look on, it is considered uncanny. In order to overcome it, the myth was formed that the Mankoyikkal family deity came in the guise of a Channan and saved the Maharaja (151). Subaltern communities are said to achieve responsiveness with colonial modernity, but only those who are socially or occupationally transformed from the social hierarchy into pleasing to the colonial power. The Channar revolution, in which many Channar members became martyrs, has been described as Breast Cloth disturbance or Breast Cloth mischief/controversy in all colonial interpretations (Shiju 22-24). “Due to the lack of responsiveness by the subordinate groups in the making of history”,²⁵ the prominent historians of dominant representation depict the protest of different communities as revolution, satyagraha, agitation, rebellion, or riots.

Moreover, in order to satisfy the readers, the author had to come up with the justification that it was Ananthapadmanabhan’s disguise, but it is noteworthy that all his assistants were actually from the Channan community (*Marthandavarma* 85). The social lesson performed by Beeram Khan and Shamsuddin, who enter the Patani camp in disguise, is no different (300-302). Such narratives of impersonation are also likely to be influenced by the social order and disorder that created the unique situation of religious conversions that existed in the nineteenth century. But it is noteworthy that the C.V. does not present even a hint of religious conversions during the period or the author’s time, and there are no references to indigenous Christian sects or character creation in the historical depictions in the narratives. The reason for this might be the Nair-Christian conflicts that existed in Travancore during the period of C.V. His view, which treats the indigenous tradition exclusively, needs to be assessed against the historical background of the Christian sects of the time, backed by the missionary sects spreading colonial ideology. Through missionary support, individuals, in a single day, evolve a completely

²⁵ Gayatri Chakrabarti Spivak in “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

different visionary identity and acquire a distinct social position. The same level of social transformation of people can be seen in C.V.'s characters, who change their identity through caste change.

All impersonating characters completely identify with the new identity in costume, language, and movements, even in traditional folk narratives. In this way, disguise is not just a change in the external appearance. Through the evolution of identity, it serves to overturn the sense of social hierarchy in the readers and to create a new sense of the world based on communal harmony. With the announcement, "Here is another guise, my friend", Mangavil Badarayanan came to the porch as an old servant dressed in Muslim robes and shaven hairstyle and bowed both hands and touched his saffron-clad forehead to the earth (*Ramarajabahadur* 376). Thus C.V. beautifully coordinates the Sujud of Islam and the saffron-clad forehead of the Hindu believers. There are many accounts of Thrivikraman being constantly addressed as a Muslim because he wears his hair and dress in an Islamic manner (170). During the said period, the system of tying kuduma with long hair existed for both men and women. Contrary to that, young people cutting their hair is described here through Thrivikraman. It indicates that it came with the imitation of the Muslim community. Similarly, the Dewan often addresses him as "Pattanikuttan" with passion. There are many artificial contexts and explanations to show religious coexistence, like the melodious sounds of the Muhammadan bheris and the muralis, like celestial pulses, swayed the inhabitants of the Salkara Mandir like the Gandharva Githa (*Ramarajabahadur* 376). Caste transformation through impersonation is an important narrative strategy C.V. adopts to subvert the systemic tenets of the hierarchal system.

3.8. External Appearance and Caste Dominance

Narratives advanced by colonial ideologies have always imaginatively recreated imaginary worlds based on the physical characteristics and concepts of the physique of colonial

identities. Chandumenon's narratives are no different. That is why the part explaining the colour, features and physical qualities of the hero and heroine in *Indulekha* is so long. New concepts of cleanliness and beauty are presented to common people who work in the dung and mud, in the fields and in the sun. We can see the dress patterns of the upper classes, the simplicity of wearing only one ornament even though they have many, and the sense of cleanliness of the upper classes, who wash their bodies and change their dress twice a day (Chandumenon, 2005, 8). Such a sense of cleanliness and the construction of physical characteristics as part of the upper-class/caste formation accelerated the dominance of later capitalism. Physical characteristics, nature and material qualities are depicted as corresponding to each other, like Indulekha's ability to study correlates to her beauty (Chandumenon, 2005, 9) and Madhavan's intelligence to his handsomeness (Chandumenon, 2005, 2).

Characters with an element of madness, stumbling or disordered characters, sick people etc., do not define the modern mainstream created by Chandumenon. By giving a "white mask"²⁶ to the hero and heroines, beauty and good nature are attributed to complement each other. Note the expression, "Indulekha's education and manners matched her physical beauty" (Chandumenon 6). The same concept was used in the description of Kalyanikkutti too: "...don't imagine that she has even a hundredth of Indulekha's beauty—that is one story and this is an entirely different one... she had a little education and was quite pretty to look at" (Chandumenon 130). The use of phrases like "horse-faced" Suri (Chandumenon, 2005, 92) posit the otherness of colonial identities. Adopting all traditional and modern upper caste symbols, self and community are placed at the top and everything else is subsumed or subordinated to it.

²⁶ A term by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Unlike Chandumenon, C.V. does not care about his character's position and nobility in the story while depicting their physical appearance. Thambi, Haripanchanan, the young king, and other characters are portrayed as handsome irrespective of their position. Along with that, the main characters like Maharaja (*Marthandavarma* 151-152), Parukutty (165), etc., are depicted as sick, Ananthapadmanabhan as a madman and a monk with charcoal and ashes all over his body (303). The main characters of *Dharmaraja*, such as Chanthrakkaran (*Dharmaraja* 486), Devaki (*Ramarajabahadur* 502) and others, are portrayed as infatuated, and the best characters, like Kuppassar (*Dharmaraja* 171) and Pavathikochi (267), are portrayed as "ugly".

3.9. Linguistic Discourses and Subordination

Chandumenon pursues the ideological mission of purifying the vernaculars and promotes linguistic colonization²⁷ over the vernaculars through colonial language reform. He praises the greatness of English language and culture throughout his novel. However, he says in the preface of *Indulekha* that the Malayalam he used in the novel is the language used in common homes in Malabar (Chandumenon, 2005, 239). He puts forward a style of language that represents noble culture by mixing the language of the Nair community with the "dominating language" of the Namboothiri community (Balaram, "Pathrabhashanavum..." 89).

The novel extolls the glory of the English language and culture. The main aim is to create free-minded individuals in the community through English education and to create the highest representatives of modern identities from the community, and achieve social and cultural supremacy. They recognized the fact that not the Western concept of secularism or the

²⁷ Under the older model of coloniality, colonizers imposed their languages and cultures by forcing non-western people to learn to speak a different language. The loss of African and American indigenous languages illustrates this phenomenon well. Colonial government discouraged and suppressed thousands of years of linguistic diversity and knowledge by forced assimilation and integration policies.

monotheistic missionary concept, but the hierarchical Indian social stratum, which was complex with many caste and religious groups, under the colonial power would be helpful in achieving the objectives of the occupation easily. Statements like “Can any other caste be found more intelligent than the English?” (Chandumenon, 2005, 212), and “The English Government and Kings should be India’s own Kings (207) are found in *Indulekha* that reveal this attitude. Thus, it can be seen that Chandumenon’s attempt is to mobilize the indigenous communities, hierarchy and culture under the Western culture.

The conflict in the novel is not because Indulekha and Madhavan have learned English, but because Madhavan takes Shinnan, the son of poor Sheenupattar, to teach him English without the permission of the maternal head Panchumenon. The “retrospecters” in novels like Panchumenon have a kind of fearful respect for English.” (K.E.N. 84)

That is why Panchu says that “See, how English is showing!” when Indulekha defies their authority (Chandumenon, 84). The power that comes through English is above the supremacy of the caste system. A case in which it becomes clear is when Panchumenon brings a British lawyer to litigate against Suri (Chandumenon, 2005, 65), where all the constraints of Brahmanical authority are rendered helpless. The height of English power is made possible by an economic basis. None of the English learners is portrayed as bad. But the “traditionalists” of *Indulekha* frequently voice the socially prevailing opinions that “they do not respect elders” and “despise everyone” etc., reiterating the belief that English education will corrupt the minds of the young. However, Indulekha, who has English education, is pious, trusting, and humble. The author describes that she does not show pride in her education when she is with her non-educated friend (Chandumenon, 2005, 8).

In the middle of the 19th century, when anti-colonial nationalism was formulated, Hindi and Urdu were mainly highlighted by the nationalist leaders as the national languages of India in debates about which Indian language should emerge as the national language instead of

English (Upadhyay 675). While Persian and English, symbols of the Mughal Empire, were kept away as languages of colonialism, some Madras newspapers pointed out that Hindi and Urdu in no way represented the South Indian languages or people and English was often put forward as the common Indian language instead (Brass 147, 190). The Malayalee Memorial and the declaration of the right of the people of Travancore to make Malayalam the official language took place during the national language debates that gained momentum at the end of the 19th century. In parallel, C.V.'s historical novels entered the mainstream with words in the vernacular tongue, Adi Dravidian and Sanskrit, that can be identified as traditional Indian languages. C.V. presents a multi-voiced narrative. Malayalam is used for characters from an urban background; Malayalam mixed with Tamil and abbreviated words is used as the language of the rural and unsophisticated people, and for foreigners, a mixture of languages like Kannada, Sanskrit, Hindi and Hindustani is used. Thus C.V.'s world is anti-hegemonic, expressed through the expression of a variety of languages, both local and non-local (Krishnappilla 23, 358).

In post-modern novels, all the different communities in a region speak in the same dialect, and the narrator gives importance to the mainstream language. Ezhuthachchan, with an elite life consciousness, proposed language reform and social change with Sanskrit words and letters in the 16th century. Likewise, C.V. makes new Malayalam words using Sanskrit and Dravidian folk words. Dravidian words were assimilated in the Sanskrit manner to form new Malayalam words, and the Malayalam words themselves were modified to form distinctive new words. Thus, the linguistic elements of the elite and the non-elite were mobilized by C.V. B.C. Balakrishnan, who created *C.V. Vyakharanakosham* for the Lexico Graphical Society of India for the interpretation of C.V. works, describes the narration as follows:

Recently, when I engaged in the effort to make a dictionary of the author's works, I found that the number of words used by C.V. Raman Pillai in his works is many times

more than the vocabulary of the author. The semantic load attributed by C.V. to the words is surprising. The inextricable relationship between word and meaning is deep within us. But when we read C.V.'s works, our understanding seems to be inadequate. (B.C. Balakrishnan, *C.V. Vyakharanakosham* 91)

The natives of the late 19th century, who recognized the attempts to codify the colonial power and its state ideologies, were harmonizing Indian local cultures in a way that could be described as a miniature version of a universal cultural integration or its practical beginnings. C.V., on the other hand, through his historical narratives, represents a national regionalism, the history of its cultural diversity, with a multi-faceted narrative of marginalized identities and strongly declares through regional dialects that any culture must survive through its biological diversity.

Dialects have always been somehow excluded from the mainstream, representing the vast majority of the population to whom the written language is inaccessible. It was first introduced into literature as a form of narration from outside the traditional literary structure. But even in the book published in 1957, the conclusion is "Dialects have no place in literary history except in language history" (Parameswarayyar 19). The reasons given by Ulloor are that they do not represent the vernacular in a uniform form and do not obey the rules of grammar. However, C.V.'s position on the comments of linguists about the linguistic defects in *Marthandavarma* makes it clear that he has deliberately chosen a narrative that rejects the said qualities.

P.K. Parameswarannair clarifies that C.V.'s response was severe when Kerala Varma wrote to him after reading *Marthandavarma*, pointing out that the use of words "manosukham" and "manokatinyam" in the work were unforgivable mistakes and that other misapplications could be pointed out if necessary. All those words were pointed out and corrected by Valiyakoipandala. However, C.V. decided to leave them as they were and wrote, "If

“manobhangam” and “manovegam” are correct expressions, why is “manosukham” not so?” (Parameswarannair 133). Even the writer’s authorship in the literary language has deliberately added colloquialisms, misnomers, and artificially coined new words to form a highly complex linguistic pattern.

N. Krishnapillai’s comment about the language in the narratives that there was not a single dialect copied from life (Krishnapillai 359). Thakazhi Shivashankarappilla’s notes confirm the same that he researched ancestor’s language to write the novel *Kayar* [Rope] and searched for the language of that time by going up and down in many taluk offices. He found some written language but not the spoken language of the people. He failed but wrote the novel *Kayar*. The supreme C.V. made his own language (Shivashankarappilla, *C.V. Ramanpillai* 32). The many distinctive dialects and speech styles show that he organized them without recourse to previous models. Thus, C.V. uniquely asserts the cultural position of regional identity by recording the orality of languages. C.V. also uses dialects as a powerful medium to bring into the mainstream many distinctive caste and tribal communities that have been left unmarked by history or hidden from history itself. He brought many words that did not exist in Malayalam into dialects. Another feature is that he artificially created many new words and adopted and embellished words from all the foreign languages he was familiar with. For example, the word “Achaa” in Hindi was Sanskritized and used as “Achathwam”, meaning “goodness” (Ramarajabahadur 420). C.V. explains through narrations that the authors are the ones who decide the language rules. He even translated phrases and created new words. An example of that is the English phrase “Bluebloods” translated into Malayalam as “Neelarakthachavikal” (497).

Another characteristic of narratives is that words deconstruct existing meanings at the practical level and extend the meaning to discrete levels. In this way, the narrator subverts the linear identity construction of power. Although the term “masculinity” is generally assigned to

the factors that determine the social construction of “male”, he describes masculinity as the main characteristic of female protagonists like Subhadra, Savitri, etc. Moreover, one of the instances where the said word is used differently is as follows, “Kudamanpilla’s sword again turned on without any pity and masculinity aimed at Biramkhan’s throat” (*Marthandavarma* 309). Here it is clear that neither of the two meanings mentioned above is indicated. Instead of forming a feudal system based on the linguistic level, the human identity was constructed on the linguistic level, and the dominant structure of the Malayalam language was reshaped by the ideology.

Instead of forming a feudal system based on the linguistic level, the human identity was constructed on the linguistic level and the dominant structure of the Malayalam language was reshaped by the ideology. Even before the unification of Kerala, C.V. started a newspaper called *Kerala Patriot*²⁸ and brought a sense of common patriotism to Kerala and submitted a petition to the Travancore administration to make knowledge of the Malayalam language essential for government jobs.²⁹ To situate a language is to situate its speakers. That is, the oral cultures of marginalized community groups are marked as part of bringing pluralistic culture into the literary mainstream through their communication, and it is depicted as confronting social and political issues. Thus, he gives life to the tribal languages through vanished dialects (*Marthandavarma* 85).

3.10. Myths and Construction of Subordination

²⁸ *Kerala Patriot* is a weekly newspaper started by C.V. in 1882.

²⁹ “For all public servants in the state, a knowledge of Malayalam (the language of the country) must be made absolutely necessary. In the case of foreigners, it must be insisted that within a prescribed period subsequent to their appointment they should pass an examination in the vernacular of the country. They should not be eligible for service unless they furnish evidence that they have attained a prescribed standard of qualification in Malayalam” (“Malayali Memorial”).

As representatives of colonial modernity, the feudal culture promoted through Sanskrit literature can be seen in the characters of *Indulekha*. Taking on the representation of the Indian upper caste tradition, the Nair community is presented as the traditional inheritors of elite culture. As a part of this, the heroine, who is used to English-style studies and facilities, always reads works of Sanskrit literature and identifies herself with the heroine of the same in romantic situations (Chandumenon, 2005, 13, 16-19). Chandumenon constructs English-style identities by adding scenes and similes reminiscent of the heroines of Sanskrit literature. Along with English embellishments, Sanskrit texts and poetic skills are part of the narration.

The “Ivory tower residents” of Sanskrit narratives are in no way representative of the majority of common people of Kerala. When Madhavan says he does not read anything, Indulekha advises him to read Bhartrhari (14). It explains their connection with the literature of their ancestors. Indulekha and Madhavan constantly discuss works of shringara rasa, like *Shakunthalam* and convey their love indirectly (Sreejan 13). They use literature only as a vehicle for their personal pleasures. Chandumenon describes her mastery in Sanskrit theatrical arts (9).

In C.V., in contrast, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are presented by changing their noble face and placing them among the common people by giving them the language and life discourses of the rural people (*Marthandavarma* 237). For that, Puranic verses are misrepresented, and even irrelevant/inferior characters are portrayed with mythological characters and storylines (*Ramarajabahadur* 449).

Folk songs are a medium of representation and response for marginalized people who have no right to express themselves in the mainstream, and who have no language or means to express their identity. However, their responses to the outside world are expressed very subtly (*Marthandavarma* 37). They are only commanded in social spaces to answer the questions of the “upper world” with reverence and respect. It can be seen that because of the social context

their responses are often judged to be insane. They seem to give crazy answers, that seem to have nothing to do with context, to the questions through songs (91, 92). But each song is a sign of denial and a response to the questioning authority. For example, when Velukurup, who came to look for the young king, asked, “Hey Payal,³⁰ did you see two people running this way?” (36), the Channan gives an answer that ignores the system by saying something else without considering the linear structure of the question and answer (36-37). Through unique songs, Channar depicts the bitter social experiences of caste hierarchy. But the authorities cannot understand the logic behind their irrationality (83, 91, 92)

The genre of folk songs, like nonsensical poems (66), and entertainment songs (*Ramarajabahadur* 241, 242), are also part of the literary richness of the narration. The apparently unrelated phraseology often reflects the singers’ existential woes. Another kind of folk song included in the historical novels is ballads. The story of a Thalapulayan called Villi and a high caste member Tamburatti is the essence of the ballad presented in *Ramarajabahadur*. The ballad is a huge narrative which tells the story of Villi, who says that he will marry the Tamburatti and how she escapes him disguised as an old woman, and how he goes in search of her with a thousand Pulayas (448).

3.11. Spirituality and Minority Construction

Power structures have always used spirituality and divinity as a means to produce and reproduce subordination. Chandumenon’s texts have also utilized metaphysical beliefs for the same. Panchumenon’s act of donating gold to Brahmins to dissolve his vow may seem innocuous. However, it goes without saying that wealth has the remarkable ability to provide salvation from any problem in life (Chandumenon, 2005, 221-222). The rich could rewrite even destiny and bribe not just British authority but divinity itself. As proof, after the donation is

³⁰ A particular disgusting name to address lower caste people.

made, a telegraphic message of Madhavan's return is received (Chandumenon, 2005, 223). Similarly, when Madhavan is in danger, Indulekha gets a premonition through a dream, establishing a divine aura to their relationship (218-220).

In *Indulekha*, factors such as supernaturalism, which stand against the scientific conceptions and rationality of colonial modernity, play a significant role. C.V., on the other hand, is trying to establish an alternate space by deconstructing such belief systems and rituals carried out by the "modern" society at a micro level so that they cannot reject the same. Subaltern voices that could not be heard even at the beginning of subaltern studies are created through distinctive historiographical strategies. C.V. uses the same spiritual school of thought to correct the elitist history it produced. Alternative texts of the same belief easily modify beliefs traditionally created through layman's conversation.

One: "But if we make someone starve, God will lead us across the thread bridge".

Another said: "All the sins committed will be removed if you perform four Ekadashi fasts". (*Marthandavarma* 236)

This is relevant because such counter-narratives were formed in the feudal era, which was governed by worldviews and philosophies constructed by such beliefs.

Maharajah: "Are the temples perishing?"

Karyakkar: "If Gods can't save their own dwelling, let them reside in heaven".

Maharajah: "Non-believers will increase in Kaliyuga".

Karyakkar: "One who created lust should have known the consequences".
(*Ramarajabhadur* 469)

Look at the introduction of a woman named Pavathikochi. She is a servant in the Diwan's house, and details about her family are unknown. She is well-versed in the most esoteric mantras, like the Pranavadi Vedic mantras, only known to upper-caste men/Brahmins. C.V. describes the woman as Dhanvanthari, whom Vedas and Puranas consider the lord of

Ayurveda, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and worshipped by Brahmins as the god of medicine and health (268). According to their religion, the Brahmanda was a “Tholayavatam”³¹ inhabited by many invisible ghosts (267). It is noteworthy that Brahmanical concepts are given subordinate status through her perspective.

Social beliefs that influence the mindsets of particular people play a major role in shaping the social consciousness among them. With this realization, C.V. showed the courage to rewrite the central ideas contained in the same in accordance with his ideological views to make them compatible with the subaltern concepts. He uses a version of the legend of Kalliankatu Neeli which is very different from the versions of Kottarathil Shankunni³² or Ulloor.³³ When Parukkutty complains to her mother that there is no such thing as divine retribution because the culprit Brahmins are enjoying the world without any harm, the mother replies that sometimes the judgement of the god is deferred, but it is as irrevocable as fate itself. Then she describes the final sequence of the story where Kalliankatu Neeli reappears as a giant spirit to take revenge. Kalliankatu Neeli here is the cosmic force that punishes wrongdoing (*Marthandavarma* 47).

Another example is the re-enactment of the legend about “Ammachiplay” located in Neyyatinkara Srikrishna Swamy Temple, Thiruvananthapuram.³⁴ It is believed that the young king escaped his enemies by hiding inside the jackfruit tree and was helped by Lord Krishna who came in the guise of a child. However, C.V. presents this myth as an actual incident. When Yuvaraja and Parameswaranpilla were trying to escape the warriors of Velukkurup, a member of the Channan caste gesticulated to them to hide inside the stump of an old jackfruit tree which had been hallowed out in the nature of a cylindrical room. When the two were safely concealed

³¹ A colloquial expression denoting an infinite expanse.

³² Kottarathil Shankunni's *Ithiyamala*, 587.

³³ Ulloor's *Kerala Sahithya Charithram*, vol. 1, 179.

³⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neyyattinkara_Sree_Krishna_Swami_Temple.

within the tree, the Channan began to run to the west (36). By debunking the myth, C.V. has introduced Channan as the saviour instead of Krishna.

Similarly, there are many examples when myths are created to explain things that are beyond usual understanding. When a Channar community member who is not supposed to learn martial arts saved the young king in a daring act while the warriors and swordsmen were watching, people created a story that it was the family deity of the Mankoyikkal lineage that saved him. But Parameshwaranpilla described that it was Lord Vishnu, who incarnated in the form of the Channan, before the divine final incarnation to save his devotees and exterminate the wicked (155).

Chapter Four

Woman/Gender Discourses in *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*

Traditional societal notions of sexuality and morality are constructed and reproduced in relation to female identity in general. Although there are references to genders other than the male-female dichotomy, it took a long time for them to be recognized within the ambit of gender discourse. Among the many views that have been eliminated in this way, the gender identity envisioned in *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma* should be examined to understand the “new” woman imagined and emerged in Travancore and Malabar of the nineteenth century. Feminist thoughts put forward by these can be analyzed as the representations of the early novels presented with emphasis on female education and female characters. It is possible to see in the early writers the urge to create a new social discourse of equality between men and women. However, this chapter is a comparative analysis of how much they have been able to reject the ideology of power put forward by the said period and the conception of the nation state put forward by them.

4.1. Educating the Woman

Malayalam novels written in the 19th century have given importance to women’s education. The basic reason behind emphasizing female education through these novels was due to the impact of the colonial report of the 1883 Calcutta Educational Commission, which revealed that 99% of women in India were uneducated. This was a hindrance to India’s cultural growth, and novels undertook the ideological mission of reforming the society and shaping women’s identity to progress (Gupta 599-600).

Chapter twenty¹ of Chandumenon's *Indulekha* asks women to learn English if they want their minds to be enlightened. If they learn that language, they will know many things they need to know. It is said that only when they have such knowledge can they know that they are fellow creatures with men, that they have freedom like men, and that they do not need to be mere slaves of men because they are women. Similarly, Chandumenon thought that Indulekha should be proficient in the richest language in the world as one of the most important things in life is how to make a decision about marriage. He suggests that the knowledge of the English language helped her to take a stand on love. But when we realize that the English-educated heroine is different from other women only in her particular decision to accept Madhavan, who is educated, economically high, sharp and approved by the elders of her community, as her husband, it becomes clear how limited that revival is. The fact that the modern-educated Indulekha opposes Suri Namboothiri's relationship proposal against family interests is the core of this modelling. Still, even in the said instance, she is seen mourning by Govindankutty Menon, unable to make her decision bravely (Chandumenon, 2005, 75).²

Chandumenon singles out Indulekha's character traits, in particular from the usual depictions of other women, and attributes her intelligence and her sense of independence to her English education. Panchumenon, the maternal uncle, says that Indulekha uses language and responses that express rationality and reasoning, unlike the systematic methods of the women's community (Chandumenon, 2005, 52). See the depiction of Kalyanikkutti in *Indulekha*: "She knew how to read and write, and could sing a little. She had a little education..." (Chandumenon, 2005, 130). Suri Namboothiri is able to marry Kalyanikutty without considering her interest, not because of her lack of education but because of her lack of

¹ In this thesis, chapter 20 of *Indulekha* refers to parts added in April 2014. According to literary critics P.K. Rajasekharan and P. Venugopalan's article published in *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, the modern printed popular version of the novel deleted many sections of the original novel (1889), present also in the first translation by Dumergue (1890), which advocated women's empowerment.

² Cited from Anitha Devasia's 2005 translation; hereafter the year is used to distinguish from my translations from *Indulekha*.

education in a modern perspective. It is clear that such unmodernized “commoners” are bound to suffer the ill effects of the conventional system.

The phrase “extraordinary friendship” with people who do not learn English (Chandumenon, 2005, 7) expresses the confidence and self-esteem that English education gives. It is noteworthy that Chandumenon has presented the heroine who is educated, practical, and perfect in all virtues at the end of the story in the twentieth chapter. Madhavan, having performed his duties with particular skill and fame, and Indulekha, because she caressed and saved her children and gave her husband all the comforts and care he needs, are also in the highest position of comfort (Rajasekharan and Venugopalan 35). It can be seen that Chandumenon’s concept does not change at all from the orthodox sense of being a good family woman.

Only the male-centered transition from the territorial confines of Malabar to the urban India of Madras, to the husband-wife-centered nuclear family, is distinctly marked³ (Chandumenon, 2005, 225). Indulekha, the heroine, puts aside all her knowledge, influence and skills for the private pleasure of being with the man she loves. Love and lover are not just a part of their life; it is love for the hero that determines life, moves it forward and even sustains life. Beyond that, she is unwilling to use her education and “self-sufficiency” to freely shape her sense of identity or respond to the social injustices around her. Chandumenon proposes modernization through English-educated Indulekha only to effectively implement women’s role in a male’s private consumption under the patriarchal system.

William Logan describes the historical reality of Malabar that not only boys but also girls used to travel to “Asan Pallikutam” (vernacular school system) and acquire education (Logan 108). But Chandumenon does not value such vernacular education like English

³ In his autobiography, Moyyarat Sankaran says that there was a community rule that if you cross Korapuzha, you will destroy your clan. The community was very angry because Patannakot Rairu Nambiar, who worked in the Madras High Court, took his wife to Madras (11).

education. On the other hand, the fact that C.V. has selected the period before the introduction of English education in all his historical narratives, including *Marthandavarma*, and has given importance to the traditional native education system is noteworthy. C.V. and Chandumenon are the writers who gave a lot of importance to the education of women. As mentioned earlier, Chandumenon emphasized education in the English language and Sanskrit culture, while C.V. put forward an education culture that is gender-neutral in the Eastern concept of education. One of the central characters of *Ramarajabahadur*, Savithri, who practiced martial arts, joined the grandsons of the army chief (*Ramarajabahadur* 120). At a time when the English schools and educational schemes came into existence and became part of the national culture, and “vernacular” education was completely rejected, C.V. is certainly putting forward a unique ideology through the writer who teaches Arabic and Quranic culture to the main characters in the narrative as part of education. It can be seen that he has taken care to direct the stories in such a way that all the things the characters studied and learned are useful in their lives. In Tipu’s royal audience, Savithri was able to protect her life and the lives of her relatives due to her knowledge of the Hindustani language (421), conversational skills and the ability to present her arguments logically and win the respect of the enemy King Tipu. Similarly, she uses martial arts against enemies and u for self-defense (487). Above all, she can respect other religions and cultures and live as one of them in the Muslim community (413). Indulekha, who rejects or mocks the other community, must be judged in relation to the greatness of Savithri, who speaks to Tippu’s son about the greatness of the Quran (465). The heroine Indulekha mocks Namboothiri women as uncivilized and treats all other fellow beings as beneath her (Chandumenon, 2005, 25). Moreover, Chandumenon has created her personality with a sense of alienation and fear of the other community. That is why she dreams that Madhavan was killed not by any other man but by a Muslim (Chandumenon, 2005, 218).

In *Marthandavarma*, Subhadra's knowledge of jurisprudence and polemics and her ability logically review facts and solve problems stand ahead of any other character. Subhadra is not only able to solve the problems of the Chembakassery clan by analyzing every detail but also advises the young king, who has a more formal education, to solve problems by advising reasons and logic. Subhadra is able to remove the misunderstandings that happened to Thirumughatupilla, an experienced citizen, by giving reasonable evidence (*Marthandavarma* 287). Rather than being the result of formal education, that wisdom may be informal wisdom or knowledge acquired through life experiences. Subhadra's extraordinary ability to uncover the scam in Chembakassery (202-204) with the intelligence of a detective is also noteworthy.

Moreover, in *Indulekha*, the heroine's sense of independence as a consequence of her English education is expressed through her protest against her proposed marriage. C.V.'s 18th-century heroines, such as Parukutty in *Marthandavarma* (118-119), Meenakshikutty in *Dharmaraja* (253), and Savithri in *Ramarajabahadur* (170) express themselves in a similar situation, protesting their objections directly to the men who have come for marriage. For example, in the tenth chapter of *Marthandavarma*, when Thambi asks if she was worried that he did not come here as soon as he came from Thiruvananthapuram, Parukutty says without interest that she is not worried at all. But Thampi forgets himself in the beauty of Parukutty and replies drunkenly that he was ready to do anything for her and ready to present everything to her, even his country (*Marthandavarama* 124-126). It cannot be considered a coincidence that the main idea put forward by Chandumenon is exactly refuted through similar instances.

4.2. Marumakkathayam: A Female Perspective

It can be seen that Chandumenon is trying to transform the system of Marumakkathayam and its functions into the system of Makkathayam. Hence, the system of women-centric power characteristic of the said system is also deconstructed in it. Therefore, it

is possible to see various contradictions and inconsistencies in it. Kunjikuttiyamma's dialogue illustrates one of them:

“If women become prosperous, they will make their ‘tharavads’ [ancestral home] prosperous. Women should take good husbands—eventually. It is wealth alone that counts; there is nothing greater than wealth. When I was a child, I was beautiful, and so many handsome men wanted to begin a ‘sambandham’ with me. My father and mother did not allow any of them. Finally, they gave me to your grandfather. I have brought a little bit to our household, enough for us to live happily”. (Chandumenon, 2005, 86)

Note the contradiction in this statement in saying that she earned wealth for her wealthy husband Panchumenon by her skill for them to live comfortably. Here in the husband's family, Kunjikuttiyamma is the one who lives under him. The writer has limited it to a monogamous relationship according to the ideological premises of the time. Thus, she advises her granddaughter to increase her family's wealth by marrying the rich Suri Nampoothirippad (Chandumenon, 2005, 86). One can read the cultural background of the *Vaishikatantra*⁴ and “Laghukavyas”⁵ here.

The concept of family that came forward through the Victorian eyes of modernity and the missionary religious consciousness was considered socially anarchic and vulgar. Chandumenon enables his heroine to address her lover by modernizing the Sanskrit word “Bharthav” for “husband” to bring the core relational system of son-in-law into modern marriage (Chandumenon, 2005, 219). Marumakkathayam places women's freedom to choose or leave their mates at a higher level than European women's sense of freedom to solve the uncivilized feeling that was generally associated with the colonized nations (Chandumenon,

⁴ A Manipravala literary text, which advises the daughter to use her beauty to acquire wealth by establishing many relationships.

⁵ Manipravala short poems like *Medineevennilaav*, etc.

2005, 29). This is how Chandumenon is actually justifying the system he supports through his heroine.

The Madras High Court judgment of 1896 did not give legality to the affair “sambandham”, but in 1891, as a member of the Malabar Marriage Commission, the colonial-minded Chandumenon argued that the relationship was a dignified and authentic form of Nair marriage (254-255). His heroine, Indulekha, a role model for Kerala women, justified the relationship system by linking it with women’s freedom in the second chapter (23). Indulekha’s attempt to idealize women’s freedom in Marumakkathayam is an attempt to embrace modernity while maintaining Kerala’s unique traditions. The fundamental ambivalence of the intellectuals of the colonial period is revealed⁶. It is not easy to devise a new family system that combines the joint family system’s kinship with the Makkathaya system’s financial security. Efforts were made throughout India during this period to inculcate the values of the Indian Sanatana tradition in colonial institutions. In the eighteenth chapter, Madhavan interprets the Indian tradition in the light of Western logic (208-209).

However, *Marthandavarma* presents many different social and familial relationships between men and women that are promoted by the matriarchal system of in-laws. Although the in-law families of the eighteenth century are depicted, the consequences of Western modernization in the nineteenth century can be seen indirectly shaping authority on many levels. As seen in *Indulekha*, it is for this reason that the concept of the power of the father in the modern family system is slowly introduced. For this reason, the relationship between the novel’s main characters, Subhadra and Ananthapadmanabhan, and their father, Thirumugathupilla, becomes part of the novel’s main plot. Thirumugathupilla, who is in death-like pain due to the disappearance of his son, and Subhadra’s pain when he lives without knowing who his father is, and the mutual love and charity that arose when he finally

⁶ We already discussed the same in the previous chapter.

recognizes his father are the beginnings of Marumakkathayam's entry outside the general system.⁷

In *Marthandavarma*, the character named Karthayaniyamma was created keeping in mind female supremacy and family powers of the matriarchal family that existed in the pre-colonial phase. As a widow, she has no social taboos attached to her and even has the power to decide on her daughter's marriage, Parukutty, unilaterally. When informed about Thampi's visit to confirm the wedding, her brother, the matriarchal family head, Chembakassery Pilla, said, "Have you discussed it with Karthyayani?" (114). The counter-question is raised. He only wanted the answer that Karthayaniyamma was happy and agreed to the decision. Similarly, she has the power to receive a Brahmin called Sundarayyan, who comes with a proposal of marriage every day, as per her wish in the "arapura"⁸ where no other men from outside are admitted.

That day, Sundarayyan appeared at Chembakassery with the sunset. When Karthayaniyamma saw the Brahmin, her face became "like a full moon". On seeing Sundarayyan, all the house servants would immediately huddle in corners. Those who are interested in listening to the dialogue between Sundarayyan and the Chembakassery heroine have realized that it will be a bitter experience like Shanku Asan's punishment. Sundarayyan and Karthyayaniyamma continued their privations quietly for two or three hours. At the end of that day's conversation, Karthyayaniyamma praised Sundarayyan with appropriate phrases like the Lord appearing to grant aspiration. (114)

This passage illustrates the freedom granted to women by the Marumakkathaya system.

⁷ G. Arunima has accurately observed this evolution in matriliney through social analysis in *There Comes Papa: Colonialism and the Transformation of Matriliney in Kerala, Malabar, c 1850-1940*.

⁸ Arapura refers to the main house within a traditional matrilineal clan residential complex. Local people in Travancore area also address arapura as "thaiveedu" or "mother's house" signifying ownership and inheritance that follow female lines.

Marthandavarma provides an example of senior women's power over anyone else in the matriarchal family system. Look at the portrayal of servant Shankuvasan in Chembakassery. Shankuvasan is portrayed as the son of Kurup, a scholar who was the keeper of an armory in Chembakassery by a maidservant of that house (57). He was well-versed in weapon training and was given the name Aasan because he trained the household members of Chembakassery and Thirumugath family in a Kalari in Chembakassery itself. When that old man, who sometimes harshly reprimands even Chembakassery Muthapilla, the head of that house, took the same authority as the older woman of the family, Karthyayaniamma, she asked a servant and unilaterally forbade him to tell Shankuvasan that she had told him not to enter into the "arapura" without her permission, and the old man who defied everyone obeyed that ban without defying her (61-62).

It can be understood from the fact that, Subhadra and her mother fell victim to the anger of the matriarchal head that the male ruler of the family can keep women, who defy the legal system, outside of that family authority. That is, it is in the interest of the male authority to respect women who obey the general rules formed in the family and to have family power available to them. But it can be seen that no social reprimands are available to male members who violate the same rule. Even when Thirumugathupilla had a child with another woman, there was no change in his social status (145). When it is understood that a dispute with a prostitute caused Ananthapadmanabhan's murder, people only sympathized with him, including his lover Parukkutty (45). It can be seen that he is not blamed for his actions. In the same way, Shanku, who was born to a concubine, can get the martial arts rights in the family that Shanku Vasan's father had and can become the "Kalari guru" of the sons of the ruling class and get the honor of Aasan (57).

4.3. Nation-State and Woman Representation

In the mainstream history of modernity, the nation-state is constructed as exclusively androcentric, and the central position of all social discourses is vested in men. Even the European culture that gave equal freedom to women in public places did not give equal representation to women in any of the arenas that required creative interventions of nation-state discourses; look at the Indian wing of the European bureaucracy in colonial India. In this way, Chandumenon also follows the same colonial feminist thinking that confines women's freedom to specific areas where traditional "feminine spaces" can be meticulously reproduced.

The fact that Indulekha is an English-educated, piano-playing woman in a room decorated with English-style objects and skilled in handicrafts (Chandumenon, 2005, 7) and trained in Victorian education shows that the traditional heroine is only provided with social superiority through Western education. In her article, Joanne Mencher points out several examples of upper-caste women in the last quarter of the 19th century who managed their family property in the same way as Avarna women who worked in the fields (Mencher 116-141). In other words, Chandumenon does not adopt the precedent of such social discourses and presents only a static image of the beautiful woman of Ananthapura, who puts forward the upper-class consciousness. It can be seen that the novelist has not included social commitment, willingness to serve and to be of service to the nation among the female characteristics. That is why he puts forward the presentation of his motif as entertaining "ladies" who find it difficult to spend time at home.

As a result of social reform, the "modern gender" was formed as the basic principle of the modern family, in which the male form of authority and the place of the ideal woman under it were conditioned as naturally as the modern household. Indulekha puts forward the concept of a housewife who has made it a duty to have children and housekeeping and who does not

give up self-control, and Indulekha puts forward the female symbol of pretty woman, who does not give up self-control and who pleases only her own husband.⁹

Anita Devasia and Susie Tharu's study of *Indulekha* suggests a universal ideological dimension of naturalness that eliminates the cultural diversity of nations (Devasia and Tharu 74). This, in turn, indicates the global acceptance of the female model put forward by *Indulekha*. Indulekha, who is simultaneously pretty woman and housewife, is presented by Chandumenon as a female model that is acceptable even to imperial concepts (Rajasekharan and Venugopalan 27). The heroine of *Indulekha* makes the argument that all women who entertain themselves by talking with other men should not be thought of as bad-natured (Chandumenon, 2005, 25). But there is no instance in the novel where the heroine interacts with men outside the family, let alone women, with empathy. Moreover, the novelist does not emphasize that the presence of the heroine, the central character in the novel, is important in the religious-political-social-administrative discussions. Such discussions are reserved for male-only public spaces. She entertains or passes the time on private occasions by playing the piano, reading (English novels and Sanskrit dramas) and sewing. She can share her thoughts and knowledge about the reforms brought by the British (the railways, the wire post, the spinning mill, education, "morality") in private only with her mother or "husband" (Chandumenon, 2005, 51-58). Thus, Chandumenon himself seems to have predicted and testified that Geetha was right in predicting that her fate will be to decorate her husband's house in the city by her presence, by playing the piano or by doing stitching work, and her destiny will be to wither away in laziness and restless days and nights even after losing her family home (Geetha 67).

C.V. explains in *Ramarajabhadur* that the powerful men are proud to claim that they are the emperors of the world. Some dominant communities also argue that women are only

⁹ The concept of "pretty woman and housewife" is a theorization by J. Devika ("Bharya..." 42).

mortal and soulless living beings. In civilized colonial countries, even today, there are contests and riots about equality between men and women and the peaceful conditions of those countries are divided (*Ramarajabhadur* 231). These words of C.V. make it clear that he raises an argument in favor of the first wave of feminism when European women rallied against the social system that considered women as the second sex. Significantly, C.V. explains how such an argument stands out in the Indian context and history, even before Indian thinkers had the realization that the Eastern concepts of feminism are very different from the West (Chatterjee 17). This unique position is reflected in C.V.'s portrayal of female characters, which is conceptually maintained from the beginning. Instead of the mainstream history of modernity in which the nation-state structure was formed in an androcentric manner, and the central position of all social discourses was vested only in men, C.V. portrays women characters in a dynamic and high position in national security, nation-building, social and cultural public spheres.

Although *Marthandavarma* also deals with the political animosity and subterfuge of the young king and Ettuveetilpillas, Subhadra is the most dynamic character who engages in social interactions that relate to the crux of the story. The said central character in *Marthandavarma* saves the young king's life many times with her intelligence and opportune interventions (*Marthandavarma* 228, 259, 280). She is prepared to work against clans for the country and to directly oppose her enemies based on her willpower and to fight with self-sacrifice.

In all three historical narratives, the conversations between the couples Subhadra-Ramanamatam, Savithri-Thrivikraman, Parukutty-Ananthapadmanabhan, Meenakshi-Kesavapilla, etc., were about the protection of the king and the protection of the country (*Ramarajabhadur* 127, 170, etc.). But C.V. could depict such conversations with great naturalness due to his expressive presentation style. The conversations between Savithri and

Thrivikraman are all about national security and the future of the country. It is also noteworthy that Thrivikraman's gift of love is "Veerashrunkhala" (169) which he received in recognition of his service to the country. That is, even the most private moments are portrayed as part of social commitment. These instances illustrate that the country and the security of the people are part of the daily life of any individual and are not imposed by power politics. The nation state is not presented as an androcentric concept. Rather, C.V. describes women and the privacy of male-female relationships as part of it.

The middle-aged female characters like Pavathikochi and Thripurasundari Kunjamma in *Dharmaraja* also respond to the social and political problems of their country or community with a strong will to fight against the hegemonic practices of male power. Such female characters are personifications of sincerity, responsiveness, self-reliance, mental strength etc. Thripurasundari Kunjamma's pride is clear in just this one conversation.¹⁰ In *Dharmaraja* chapter five, after hearing the arguments of Umminipilla and his threats, those two women do not find the dinner tasteless at all, and the heroic and brave Kuppassar does not even get to taste a single grain of rice. C.V. Explained this part to indicate the impossible mental strength of those women (214).

In *Marthandavarma*, an androcentric discursive mode is generally present, whether in a position of authority or a position of victory, but a female intervention that rejects it is put forward through the central character of Subhadra. The writer's favorite heroine highlights women's representation by giving a dynamic and elevated position to women characters in national security, nation-building, and social and cultural public spheres. Subhadra, who donates all her wealth to the king for the kingdom's security, is not only an indirect part of the

¹⁰ "Pha! What did you say? Who do you think you are to say that? Haven't you heard of a family with courage that never fades? You think that the women of such a family can be a beggarly lot? Let me see that man who wants to teach us a lesson! Has the gallows and exile diminished our name? Rather, it only increased our fame so much that it cannot ever be erased. What else? Our relationship with you is over as of today. Go, go, get lost!" (*Dharmaraja* 213).

national discourse (*Marthandavarma* 286), it is her opportune interventions that save the life of the young king who is supposed to be the head of the state many times.

But the evidence that describes Subhadra's character as different from the established female model and the way in which she is depicted only from the twelfth chapter is also worth analyzing. At the end of the story, following his friends' insinuations and criticisms, C.V. made changes in the storyline by introducing female models of modernity, creating a female character who is not subjected to the changes of modernity and, at the same time, questions the conditions of the androcentric world. Still, the progress of the new civilized society and the modern authors who are its advocates have caused it to be confined within the orthodox system to a certain extent.

Marthandavarma is a story presented in the context of the tug-of-war between the young king and the Thampi family. Yet, there is no mention of the female characters related to the royal family in the novel, and the promises made to the queen in relation to the tug-of-war are part of the story, but C.V. does not mention it.¹¹ Until Marthandavarma came to power in the Kupaka dynasty, the queens had equal importance in the Travancore kingdom, but there are no such references in the historical novel of the said period. C.V. has given the context and opportunity for equal service of men and women only in the subjects who protect the royal power and the country, which is unilaterally existing in an androcentric manner. That is to say,

¹¹ The main reason for the persecution of the young king Marthandavarma during the period of the story was due to the power struggle of the Makkathaya family against the dynasty that had the Marumakkathaya tradition. That is, the king at that time, married a woman from the northern region where Makkathaya tradition was followed and promised kingship to the son born of her. The power struggle between the traditionalists and the advocates of the Makkathaya is at the heart of the dynastic power establishment in the novel *Marthandavarma*. That is, the novelist's inclination is on the side of Marthandavarma, the traditionalists of Marumakkathayam, against the Thambi sect, who are on the side of Makkathayam. But Pilla describes that the sons of the Maharaja usually have no authority in the dynasty and are like ordinary subjects. But it can be seen that Padmanabhan Thampi, presented by C.V. in the novel, is a person who enjoys royal comforts and indulgences. In other words, Thambi's glory is explained as a person who is equal in every way to compete with the young king. Moreover, only the relationship between Thampi and the father is described there. If C.V. were to put forward a favorable attitude towards Makkathayam, it would have been easy to develop a favorable feeling for Thampi by giving the accounts of the mother and the description of the oath that the Maharaja is said to have taken. Moreover, if he had a Nair community bias, he would have presented such facts as historical evidence to avoid portraying the so-called Nairs, Thampi and the Ettuveetil Pillas as evil characters.

the line of power is maintained in the matriarchal system, but C.V. has given equal importance to all types of subjects regardless of caste and gender, only under a centralized and patriarchal power.

4.4. Central Female Characters in the Novels

Chandumenon puts forward a modern female role model through the novel's title character Indulekha. This portrayal reflects the traditional concept of the heroine, which gives too much importance to a special character, bestowing her with all the progressive ideas the writer wants to put forward. But it is noteworthy that various critics have commented that the heroine Indulekha is an artificial creation from the very beginning. For example, see what C.P. Achuthamenon explained:

Although *Indulekha's* work is very special, there is no such woman in Malayalam. It doesn't seem like there will be within a hundred years. Some people do not think it is unrealistic to say that instead of bringing a woman from a Malayalam family as the heroine, Chandumenon has made a smart white woman with a Kerala-style dress and made her speak Malayalam. (Achuthamenon 68)

Since the author mentioned in the introduction that the novel is based on natural events, it is obvious that the physical features that stand out from the general concepts of the land have come under criticism.

It can be seen that Chandumenon created a heroine by combining not only the model of women put forward by European civilization but also the concept of upper-class women that was formed based on the concepts of Sanskrit literary texts. Valsalan Vathussery's 2009 critical article describes this in detail. That is to say that Indulekha is a character that embodies all the characteristics of the category of a virgin, which was presented in the *Kamasutra* of Valsayanan, which was written in the 4th century AD and was described as the best heroine to

completely fulfil lust, which is one of the “purusharthas”. Valsalan Vathussery accurately analyses and establishes that Indulekha is a heroine who shows knowledge even in the 64 arts presented in the text, which women should master to attract men. He concludes his observation that no benefit was attributed to Indulekha’s personality, education or special skills by Chandumenon or by Indulekha herself beyond being the wife of Madhavan (Vathussery 24-28).

The love scenes of the heroine are directed with emotional feelings and can be compared with the charming heroines of Sanskrit literature. In order to complete it, it is stated in the second chapter that the heroine has learned the poetic elements of Sanskrit dramas (Chandumenon, 2005, 7), and in the twentieth chapter, it is clarified that Sanskrit dramatic art is the main requirement to achieve mastery in “sringara” rasa (Rajasekharan and Venugopalan 26). She talks to Madhavan in private about the feminist aspects of Marumakkathayam and women’s marital freedom (Chandumenon, 2005, 25). But it can be seen that she is not ready to come out of her palace, to interact with society or to react when women’s freedom is violated (149). Even in her own life, she does not move beyond the hero’s shadow (Rajasekharan and Venugopalan 34).

The author’s view that his heroine is not an ordinary woman and that marriage is the most important thing in women’s life is clear in describing how a young Malayali woman with innate attractiveness and intelligence and knowledge of the English language will decide on her own about marriage as an important matter in her life. The author’s satisfaction that by “giving” them freedom in marriage, women’s equality and freedom can be achieved is evident from the depiction of Indulekha living as a “good housewife” under Madhavan’s protection (Rajasekharan and Venugopalan 34). This illustrates the construction of the “male” identity that is legitimately formed from the neutralized identity of Marumakkathayam. As part of this,

J. Devika explains that women have become a social force that emphasizes sexual restraint and discipline (Devika, *Imagining...* 329).

Instead of the Sanskritized version of a Western female role model in *Indulekha*, the concept of heroine advanced by *Marthandavarma* is distinct in several ways. The very concept of the heroine, whether in Sanskrit literature or Western literature, is based on a monogamous male-female relationship of high caste or all-around wealth. But as far as *Marthandavarma* is concerned, the very concept of hero-heroine is presented in a decentralized way. The young king, who is the hero of the title itself, has no heroine. Subhadra is the central female character who is connected in some way to all the subplots of the story. But the said character appears only from the twelfth chapter onwards and multiple heroes can be attached to that character (Krishnan 52-53).

The novel *Marthandavarma*, it is the Parukutty-Thrivikraman connection that stands alongside the systematic heroine concept. But their love story can only be considered as one of the main subplots in the story of the novel. His remark clarifies that the writer presents the character of Subhadra with the importance of the heroine rather than Parukutty, who is composed of systematic female qualities. George Irumpayam quotes C.V.'s opinion which he described in *Athmaposhini* that "My heroines are not flirty girls. They are just male characters. That's how I feel about women's worldview. Our girls must be determined and strong-willed" (Irumbayam 100). This means that he does not want to exemplify the concept of a female heroine mixed with the traditional emotional paradigm.

Meenakshikutty, the heroine in *Dharmaraja*, and Savithri, the heroine in *Ramarajabahadur*, who face their enemies and plead their case in front of them, are the ones who put forward the said concept of heroine for C.V. The traditional concept of the hero and heroine is based on systematically constructed concepts of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity is what he posits as the idealized female characteristic, although he presents male

and female categories by specific identity characteristics. In this way, he completely overturns the traditional notions of male and female constructs. It is clear that a cultural dimension exists in C.V.'s public consciousness where the critical self-evaluation and accusation of Shankuvasan (*Marthandavarma* 200) as doing things that normal women do not do and that this deconstruction enables a conception that negates that public consciousness itself. That is, he makes a conscious effort to reject it from within the existing ideology. He puts forward masculinity as the ideal female characteristic, completely overturning the traditional constructs of male and female characteristics. He ideally put forward the concepts opposite to the reactionary female models that existed and were built in the narrator's time, such as those who walk with "Other males" like Subhadra (*Marthandavarma* 146), those who swear to men and demand justice like Subhadra (*Marthandavarma* 184), Thripura Sundhari Kunjamma (*Dharmaraja* 213), Savithri (*Ramarajabahadur* 126). Therefore, that concept naturally stands in opposition to the characteristics of the model heroine put forward by *Indulekha*. Also, C.V. describes a special feature of Subhadra's character as putting effort into things to be done instead of wasting time with worldly things, sweet words and sentiments (*Marthandavarma* 168).

Unlike the literary methods that place more importance on describing women's faces, bodies, and movements, it can be seen that the male characters are narrated similarly, perhaps in more detail (*Marthandavarma* 33, 51, 75). Jessy Joseph emphasizes the said thought in her Ph.D. thesis: the male and female characters are detailed in their costumes to create a three-dimensional look (396) In this way, the mainstream male and female identities are presented in various ways in historical fiction.

Chandumenon's Victorian conception of woman explains femininity in accordance with the elite conceptions of the Sanskrit heroine. Indulekha is the heroine who keeps her love a secret and expresses her love for the hero in a secret way (Chandumenon, 2005, 26-28).

Therefore, Indulekha portrays a “high-cultured” heroine who keeps her love a secret and a hero who is attracted by the heroine’s beauty and walks behind her in love. At the same time, Parukutty in *Marthandavarma* is a heroine suffering from the pain of love (*Marthandavarma* 45). Through the character Subhadra, C.V. has also created a heroine who openly declares her love for the hero. In this way, it is possible to see heroines who are overwhelmed by one-sided or unrequited love for the hero in all three historical narratives. This means that the love expressed by the central female characters, which can often be considered the heroines of C.V., subverts the androcentric mainstream moral concepts in many ways.

4.5. Gender Stereotyping and its Subversion

The “superior” Nair society represented in *Indulekha* is a society that combines the concept of a woman enjoying the protection of men constructed through Manusmriti and the moral and ethical thoughts of the Western missionary. In *Indulekha*, we can see most women living under the authority of the family system that controls them in the form of duty without even recognizing the androcentric concepts. Chandumenon has introduced his heroine with an open declaration that she is far superior to other females in education, beauty, artistic talent and birth (Chandumenon, 2005, 6-7). But not only does the heroine, who is thus heralded, ultimately not break out of the system but these extra qualities are used as catalysts to re-establish the identity that that system demands. Not only the heroine Indulekha but her mother and all the other female characters are living in the shadow of the man, and their wishes or opinions are constructed according to the interest of the dominating world. As explained by Nandyathu Gopalakrishnan, the female role models presented by the modern age are the silent and weak ones who fall into the cycle of giving sexual pleasure to their husbands without considering the freedom of women, serving them, giving birth to children, raising them, sacrificing everything for the life of children and husband, and finally falling somewhere (54).

He observes that those who lay down their lives for others in silence are hailed as long-suffering mothers and regular wives through precise interventions of power (55).

When his wife Lakshmi Kuttiamma talks to Suri Namboothiri, who pretends to be a rich man, Karuthedathu Keshavan Namboothiri gets worried (Chandumenon, 2005, 114-115) and he believes that if Indulekha meets Suri Namboothirippad, she will definitely agree to marry him. All these assumptions are formed because of the hidden social recognition of Suri's opinion that he can get any girl he wants if he pays enough (Chandumenon, 2005, 134). Madhavan's comment, doubting Indulekha's character, that "no matter how much education one has, it is a woman's nature" (Chandumenon, 2005, 157) is from the protagonist's position, and the public consciousness about women is put forward more powerfully. Madhavan is presented as opposing the "sambandham" system in the second chapter because the androcentric society views the women's freedom given by Marumakkathayam in a critical sense (Chandumenon, 2005, 24-26). Discussions about sexual morality can be found in many places in *Indulekha*. Chandumenon's heroines are also prohibited from travelling outside or speaking against the family structure. It can be seen that any travel outside the family is termed demoralization or misbehavior. It means that the concept of women put forward considers only a category that obeys it by precisely reproducing the good-evil dichotomy of housewife-prostitute (Chandumenon, 2005, 24).

Such anti-women ideas that existed socially can be seen in the dialogues of Suri Namboothirippad (134) and the discussions of Shastris against Indulekha (93). The conversation between Indulekha and Paru, Kunjikuttiamma's servant, is about the fact that whatever superiority and inferiority exist among women, the moral system has to be appropriately maintained. In *Meenakshi* also one can read such a stand in the remarks like how

women who are not very beautiful to look at commit adultery (Chathunair16) and it is now common for women with very eligible husbands to commit adultery (Chathunair 15).

The upper elite considered sex only a means of reproduction; even thinking about it was a sin and a highly secret matter. Therefore, modern literature generally presents the life of middle-aged people as focusing only on children and spirituality. It can be seen that all the private conversations between Panchumenon and his wife are never about their private pastimes or personal matters. It can be seen that they always discuss only the family's reputation, children's life problems, solutions and future. But C.V. has plenty of middle-aged love and flirtatious performances in his novels. A case in point is the relationship between Ramanamatam and Subhadra in *Marthandavarma* (144, 227). The relationship between Perinjakotan and his wife Nangema in *Dharmaraja* (255-256) and the love dialogues between Meenakshiyamma and Kesavanunnithan in *Ramarajabahadur* (508) are beautifully presented by C.V. The relationship between Dewan Kesavapilla and Meenakshiyamma is also formed through this anti-mainstream cultural concept (*Ramarajabahadur* 307, 348).

Similarly, in *Dharmaraja*, Thripurasundari Kunjamma, who was abandoned by her husband and her granddaughter Meenakshi, live alone, travel with their servant to lands outside Travancore, take their own decisions in their lives (208) and show extraordinary courage in all adverse situations (212-214) against the mainstream notions of women. Similarly, they are close with male friends outside the immediate family and stay together with them sharing joys and sorrows (415).

The female characters in *Marthandavarma*, like Karthyayaniyamma, Subhadra, Parukutty, Sulekha etc., all represent very different social groups/cultural characteristics. In other words, C.V. does not express a single type of female built according to any kind of casting model. They all have their own interests and choices. Everyone acts according to their personal will in matters including marriage. Although remarriage is common in Marumakkathayam,

Karthyayaniyamma is living with her daughter and brother without being ready for it (*Marthandavarma* 40). The character of Sulekha is a woman who falls in love with Shamsuddin of her own free will, and when she finally comes to know his truth, she faces reality with pain (310). On the other hand, Parukutty waits for Anantha Padmanabhan, even when she is notified with proof that Padmanabhan is dead. She does not believe it, despite the opposition from her mother, and finally marries him. Subhadra, on the other hand, is the one who disregards the moral fences of society and does all the family and social affairs according to her will as she sees fit (228).

Even the characters of *Dharmaraja* and *Ramarajabhadur* can be seen to have unique personality traits. Meenakshi, Pavathikochi, Arathammapilla Thangachi, Thripurasundari Kunjamma, Nangema/Lakshmi, Devaki, Savithri, Kunjipennu, Mangoikkal Madhaviyamma are strong characters representing a distinct social stratum. It can be asserted that C.V. puts forward a unique narrative environment of characters that defies the conditioning of modernity. There are diverse and distinctive cultural representations of women who live in other communities undermining their existing beliefs, socially excluded women,¹² hysterical women,¹³ depraved women,¹⁴ sick women,¹⁵ prostitutes,¹⁶ women in polygamous relationships,¹⁷ women travelling alone outside the country,¹⁸ those who travel “out of time” at night,¹⁹ those who do “what men are told to do”, and those who live in other communities by practicing their customs and they are not properly channeled into one surface even in modernist literature.

¹² Thripurasundari Kunjamma and Meenakshi in *Dharmaraja*.

¹³ Devaki in *Ramarajabhadur*, Thripurasundari Kunjamma in *Dharmaraja*.

¹⁴ Nangemma in *Ramarajabhadur*.

¹⁵ Devaki in *Ramarajabhadur*.

¹⁶ Mankovil Madaviyamma in *Ramarajabhadur*.

¹⁷ Subhadra in *Marthandavarma*.

¹⁸ Thripurasundari Kunjamma and Meenakshi in *Dharmaraja*.

¹⁹ Subhadra in *Marthandavarma*.

4.6. Adherence/Refusal of Monogamous Family

Chandumenon ultimately puts forward social reform and missionary ethics based on a monogamous relationship as an educational achievement. Note that the novel describes the contents of an English book read by Indulekha: A woman fell in love with a man despite her father's displeasure, but the marriage did not take place, and even though her lover married someone else, she did not marry anyone else. Her father died because of that grief (Chandumenon, 2005, 47-48). Panchumenon describes this story as a false story and that children will become evil if they read such stories (Chandumenon, 2005, 48). The description strongly suggests that monogamy should be more important than anything else. It is because of this ideology that even when she dreams that Madhavan is in danger, she laments to Lakshmi Kuttyamma that she cannot live without her husband (Chandumenon, 2005, 219).

When Madhavan opined that women's freedom in Marumakkathayam gives a woman the bad freedom to change her husband as she likes, note the arguments that Indulekha refutes. Indulekha interprets that if a woman does not practice regular rites, she is an adulteress, and then Madhavan alleges that most women in Kerala are adulterers (Chandumenon, 2005, 24). In Madhavan's comment that he does not think that it is good for the husband and wife to have the freedom to let go of a relationship with each other whenever they want, it is also seen that Madhavan is a person who does not have any illicit relations with other women (Chandumenon, 2005, 26). This is the reason why male characters who have polygamous relationships are portrayed as ridiculous in the novel (Chandumenon, 2005, 136-137). Even if they live in the shadow of a man in their family relationships, it is because of this moral idea that Chandumenon's characters can see a mutual relationship based on the love of a single husband and wife.

In the eleventh chapter, in the conversation between Indulekha and the maid Paru, when she says that her partner has not come for six or seven months and that he has another relationship when Indulekha asks her to have another relationship, we can see that the answer is no (Chandumenon, 2005, 96). Although presented as an idle dialogue, the fact that women do not always use the relational freedom of patriarchy as they seem is illustrated. The said fact mentioned in second chapter is thus exemplified.

The heroine's mother is the only re-married female character written by Chandumenon. Since widow marriage was the main agenda of modern reform in the national mainstream of India, Chandumenon, the spokesperson of that general nationalism, portrayed Lakshmikuttyamma only as an element to advance the said issue. Note Chandumenon's efforts to convince the readers that she is pure of character as she enters into an affair with Kesavan Namboothiri after her husband's death. Kesavan Namboothiri is afraid because she has the social and communal freedom to leave him and embrace another man at any moment. A close reading shows that the writer's interactions in her conversations with Suri Namboothirippad are his attempts to reveal her purity of character (Chandumenon, 2005, 114-115).

During the period, the freedom of polygamy and cohabitation with one's wife was socially and communally possible for the higher Brahmin classes. That is why Suri asks if Cherussery had "Seva" with Indulekha when Cherussery explained Indulekha's habits; he does not have any objection to speaking openly because the relationship was before his proposal (Chandumenon, 2005, 66). For those caught up in the modernist debate between modernity's ideologies and tradition, Suri's speech becomes a proclamation of foolishness and a matter of derision. Suri Namboothirippad, who came to marry Indulekha, later expresses his desire to marry another woman (Chandumenon, 2005, 136) there because the logic of the same tradition remains. It is presented in a very ironic manner as a witless remark by the crazy Namboothiri. Listen to Cherussery's constant moral advice and banter, then. Through the zeitgeist of

modernity, it is advised that to be obsessed with more than one person at the same time is a beastly feeling and that it is cultured to confine it to a favorable woman (Chandumenon, 2005, 137). That's where cultures that have traditionally had polygamous marriage become obsolete or ridiculous. Given that our perspectives are only formed within the rationality of modernity, it is impossible to recognize the colonial/Victorian/missionary-bound linear familial constructs of this work, set in a period of culturally alternative relationships. One can see the freedom of Nair women and the freedom of the Namboothiris and subtle attempts to mark socially constructed situations as distinct from a moral perspective.

“During the heyday of Aryadharma, crores of “satis”²⁰ have entered the fire with the bodies of their husbands. Love stories have also been declared literary forms to gain world fame. But the mythological world is not familiar with a Harishchandran or a Rugmangadan who imitated the sacrificial act of a Pulindhi who burned herself to make the ashes at the end of the Shiva Puja of her husband” (*Ramarajabahdur* 255). C.V. states that Perinjakotan, who sacrificed his life for his wife and daughters, was created to solve the absence of Pulindhans.²¹ In other words, even in the Puranas, there are only stories of satis who sacrificed their lives for the sake of men. This means that C.V. makes feminist constructions through his characters with exact conviction. Mangoical Madhava Menon's family, who are thrown into prostitution as a clan and rise financially because of it, are depicted in a state of high social connections and with access to royal favor (*Ramarajabahdur* 296). All such representations are part of the diverse cultural structure created by C.V. instead of the emergence and transition new patriarchal world and the nuclear family system. Such narratives reject the unified social system of power.

²⁰ Virtuous women who were suicide with their husbands' dead body as part of a belief existed in the earlier period in India.

²¹ This term is coined based on the purana story *Pulindhimoksham*. Pulindhi, wife of a devotee person named Sambara, sacrificed her body and life for the sake of her husband. Here, C.V. reminds that Purana stories always consider females as volunteer of their favorite male partner. Hence, he uses the word “Pulindan” here to indicate such volunteer male persons.

Man-woman relationship outside the family system is beautifully presented in *Marthandavarma*. The mutual love between Kesavanunnithan's wife, Meenakshiyamma and Dewan Kesavapilla rejects the narratives that place women as symbols of sentimentality and men as symbols of idealism. It is not emotional love. Rather, it is presented as an ideological romantic relationship. "Other" relationships between men and women after marriage are generally expressed in literary works only as physical love. Beyond that, there is a special kind of closeness without direct contact or emotional sharing, where mutual love, attention and care are provided without any condition/expectation in return (Leelavathi 77-84).

The central character Subhadra, who is in relationships with many men simultaneously, refutes the Victorian notions of social acceptance confined to the monogamous family system and rejects all male-female romantic relationships and sexuality outside of it. Subhadra is the daughter of an unmarried woman in a secret relationship (*Marthandavarma* 145). In her youth, she entered into relationships with young men like Thampi, Chempazhanthipilla, etc., and some elders like Ramanamatam etc. Subhadra showed no partiality in any way and made everyone equally happy. Later, after six months of mutual love, her husband started having doubts and one night, she did not see her husband (146). Earlier acquaintances resumed their practice. Some of them abandoned her later. Only the old man Ramanamatam comes to serve her without compromising his devotion..." (146). This is how C.V. has portrayed his favorite heroine. The work has many images of Ramanamatam entering Subhadra's bedroom. Her body is adorned with rich clothes and jeweled like Rambha.²² The gold ornaments arranged around Subhadra's body did not suffer for any reason. With alcohol inside him and the charm of Subhadra's beauty outside, Ramanamatam becomes caught between two forces and suffers, sometimes like Keechakan in the presence of Sairandhri, sometimes like Hanuman in the presence of Bhupathi

²² According to the *Adi Parva* of the epic *Mahabharata*, is one of the prominent "Apsaras", the celestial nymphs of Svargam/heaven.

Sita. He expresses at intervals his lustful pleasures or the pleasures of devotion and respect. Then, she accompanied him as far as the outer gate to allow him to depart for a while. After rekindling the fire of his passion that stood the risk of being drowned in an inordinate quantity of drink, she whispered in the most bewitching tone: “Don’t fail to come this night. Don’t delay, good times are coming. And now hurry” (218). In the first manuscript, C.V.’s Subhadra is depicted as a chaste woman rather than a person with sexual freedom and open relationships. Later, during publication, she was consciously re-created as a free and self-willed woman (Parameswarannair 117-119).

Therefore, it can be understood that Subhadra is a character he consciously created for his ideological mission. It is detailed in P.K. Parameswarannair’s book *C. V. Ramanpilla* that the friends who edited the work at the time of publication could not accept this character assassination of Subhadra and due to their strong protest, C.V. tried to recast Subhadra as a woman of nobility and regularity in the later chapters (257). There were several parts in the first version, such as reference to Anantham’s previous partner before her relationship with Sundarayyan, the reference to the maids from Thanjavur, but all of them were removed to accommodate the new convictions of modernity (Venugopalan 67).

This is how the C.V. presents Ramanamatam entering Subhadra’s bed chamber on the night when the Ettuveetil Pillas conspired against the young king. Seeing his amorous dances, the lady of his love said with a ravishing smile that aroused the passions of Ramanamatam (*Marthandavarma* 144). In this way, C.V. describes Subhadra’s lust-inducing antics to attract Ramanamatam. Subhadra said in another moment that one should live knowing the will of one’s husband. Or they will suffer like me (221). Subhadra’s words to Anandam reveal a remarkable fact. It is clear that Subhadra lived her life against her husband’s will. Yet it is significant to establish by the end of the book that it was only a misunderstanding of her husband and that she had no “unlawful” relations with other men. It is also a clear example of

the social and cultural formation of the new world consciousness that brings individuals into its dictates of right and wrong.

Subhadra is a rare female character in Malayalam literature. She resides in the social mainstream without bowing down to adjectives like prostitute or harlot, does “manly work”, accepts civil reforms unsuitable for the concept of family and rejects the ideologies of modernity to some extent. The relevance is that a social environment is made available for a man and a woman who does not have a socially recognized relationship to interact privately at any time and that the construction of the said space is shaped by mutual consent, and that the discourses of female authority are given equal importance there. The women celebrated in mainstream literature have always been constructed according to the vestal ideals and virtues imposed by male-dominated ideology. Hence, it is important that C.V. overcame that reality and introduces a woman who enters the bedroom of other men alone in the middle of the night as a central character symbolizing national progress, service to the country and mainstream social discourses.

4.7. Agency of Woman in Choosing Partners

The writer himself has indicated that self-determination in the matter of marriage is the renaissance of women promoted through *Indulekha* (Rajasekharan and Venugopalan 28), and English education is the means for it. But in the second chapter, note that Madhavan accuses the women in Kerala of not observing chastity like women in other places and having bad freedom to accept or leave their husbands at will and Indulekha replies that such freedom is very commendable for women and that this freedom does not even exist in Europe, and many high-ranking people in America and Europe have commented on the need for this freedom (Chandumenon, 2005, 25). It is established here that the narrator’s aim through the novel is women’s freedom, which is provided by the existing marriage system in the traditional

matriarchy. The distinction between the traditional system and the new concept becomes clear when these two opposing concepts are analyzed contextually. Chandumenon aimed to bring the plurality of choice contained in this traditional form of freedom into the singularity of modernity. That is, the traditional condition of sambandham is that the woman accepts the spouse in independent authority. But we can see that the freedom of marriage that is available through “English education” is shaped by women whose preferences and interests are molded according to the interests of the patriarchal system.

The author sees marriage as one of the most important things in women’s lives. Since women are not given equal consideration in all public discourses in an androcentric system based on monogamy, the future life of women is indeed determined based on the man they marry. Therefore, marriage itself is given utmost importance in the concept of family, which is presented as the representative of the said system. Therefore, not to re-introduce the traditionally existing freedom of self-determination of marriage, but to provide freedom of choice of spouse in a civilized culture of monogamous marriage in a patriarchal system, is Chandumenon’s aim.

That is, Chandumenon’s concept of the heroine is based on the practical intelligence of consciously choosing a hero who is acceptable to the community and to society. In *Sharada*, the Karanavar Idathil Achan’s daughter-in-law, Kalyani, casts out the old and ugly husband and marries the painter Raman Menon in Kashi according to her own choice. Here her choice refers to the freedom of choice within the social norms and its qualifications (*Sharada* 28-30). This fact is revealed by the heroine’s own words in *Indulekha*: “When she sees a handsome young man, her mind enters into him knowing whether he is worthy to be her husband” (Chandumenon, 2005, 12). She likens it to being interested only in money earned in a fair way and adds that being interested only in earning is an innate quality that only a few have

(Chandumenon, 2005, 12). Here the ideological strategies that shape the practical level and the ideological rationale of qualification are revealed.

By saying that Panchumenon's wife, Kunjikuttiyamma, was subjected to a marriage decided by her father and mother, even though she was in a matrilineal family, Chandumenon is putting forward the primacy of the patriarchal colonial system over the matrilineal system (Chandumenon, 2005, 86). Similarly, note that Paru, the maidservant's dialogue, suggests that women generally use the relational freedom afforded by Marumakkathayam only to a limited extent and "fairly" (Chandumenon, 2005, 96). In other words, when given the freedom to choose one's spouse, this explains the strategy of making that freedom subject to the authority that determines the ideology of power. In other words, K. Divya explains that Marumakkathayam was put in place through male polygamy, not through women's freedom, as Chandumenon apparently suggests. Within the system there was a patriarchy that forbade women's relations with the outside world. Before sambandham ceremony, heterosexual relations were not allowed at all (190).

Colonial-missionary convictions never allowed women the authorship of romantic and sexual discourses. As a result, those who approached men with romantic interests were labelled as bad women and socially shunned, and women were presented as tools to be chosen according to the will of men. Because of this common sense that existed in epic mythology, Shurpanaka, who is physically attracted to Lord Rama, becomes a mocking character and anti-heroine. Sanskrit literature allowed only male love describing women as physically attractive and beautiful. Colonial Victorian cultures became another version of the same upper-class androcentric ideology. Any views that differ from it are considered uncivilized, inferior or anti-social. But contrary to that, it is possible to see heroines in C.V. history who are attracted to men unilaterally, physically or otherwise and suffer from the pain of love.

Shaeikh Zainudheen indicates that matriarchy does not demand emotional intimacy beyond the physical need for sex in, so the partner is only a part of the physical relationship (Zainudheen and Panickassery 73, 77). Therefore, there were no modern concepts of sex, nudity, physical need and the love-lust dichotomy. It can be seen that physical interest was not considered crude, ridiculous or something to be treated as a secret. Parukutty, who came in front of Thambi, was supposed to “act” shy but no one had ever taught her that (*Marthandavarma* 124) while Anantham “acted” very shy in front of Thambi (250). These instances question the social perception that women are born shy and emotional and makes it clear that such feelings are only social behaviors that are consciously or unconsciously acquired.

The androcentric reformation of deciding marriage, often ignoring consent, entered Malayalam through the novels of the 19th century. The centre of such stories is the charms of women’s beauty and the heroes who get absorbed in women’s beauty. But the central part of C.V.’s love stories is the female characters who are attracted to the man and make sacrifices to get the men’s love, like Savithri and Devaki in *Ramarajabahadur*; Parukutty, Sulekha, Anandam and Subhadra in *Marthandavarma*; Ammukutty, Meenakshikutty in *Dharmaraja* etc. Similarly, he has given equal importance to male and female physical characteristics.

Devaki, who is in love with Kallaraikkal Pilla, asks her mother, why shouldn’t she have him if her mother could have her father (*Ramarajabahadur* 204). It is because of this independence that she, who loves Ananthapadmanabhan later, asks her father to bring him as her husband. In *Marthandavarma*, Moothapilla, the matrilineal head, is seen to be extremely upset when he realizes that Parukutty’s sambandham with Thambi was decided against her interest (*Marthandavarma* 121). On seeing Parukutty closing the door, Muthapilla realized that his sister Karthyayaniamma’s efforts were against Parukutty’s will. The elder was confident that his sister would not harm the status of the Chembakassery family and would not do

anything against Parukutty's wishes. Muthapilla is of the opinion that it would be better if Thambi married his niece. However, since he was in a position where he could not retreat, he decided to suppress his resentment and walked forward to knock on the door. He walked for a while, tossing his head to and fro, gnashing his teeth, wringing his hands, and doing other antics in disgust at what he had done, with doubts as to whether Parukutti would open the door if he called and whether she would not object to seeing Thambi if she opened it (122-123). He steps forward to knock on the door, then turns back, thinking that it is not an uncle's justice. Thinking that he defied Thampi, he moves forward again. He turns back again with anger that his sister's lust forced him into that position; he moves forward again with the thought of how lucky he is if the matter is successful. After about an hour like this, he finally decided and knocked on the door. The picture is complete when we add that the man who is so fickle-minded is the one who courageously went against the decision of the meeting of the Ettuveetil Pillas (136-139).

Unlike Chandumenon's concept of single partnership, C.V. presents a loose social hierarchy that gives freedom to women in various ways in choosing a partner. Although it is clear that this selection is trying to deconstruct the androcentric social system in many ways, it means that the practices of the powerful system within which it exists can be read between the lines in various ways.

4.8. Status of Widows

In most parts of India, where the patriarchal system existed, widowhood was depicted as a social taboo. Widows were considered as bad luck and sati was practiced as a symbol of honor and devotion to the late husband. Therefore, nationalism and social revival activities in India addressed widowhood. It was during the said period that novels with the theme of widow remarriage which created revolutionary movements among the conservatives were written. During the same period in Kerala, matrilineal rules and polygamy existed among different

communities, especially among the Nair community. So, widowhood was not a social problem for the women of such communities. But Chandumenon, the advocate of Western ideology and Indian nationalism, have done such a portrayal in *Indulekha* to present widow marriage as a natural social experience in Kerala. The only widow portrayed in *Indulekha* is the heroine's mother, who has remarried in favor of matriarchy. It can be seen that they also experience the status of "noble housewife" in the family and society in their new marriage. It can be understood that the author supporting Marumakkathayam also had counter-ideological objectives by presenting its progressive features to society. But a closer look shows that this remarriage is part of keeping the woman as a family woman in the "prostitute-family woman" construct in the second chapter. In short, Chandumenon does not regard the status of a woman outside the family without male protection as a sign of "nobility", even if it is in the name of widowhood.

Note that in *Marthandavarma*, the widowed Karthyayaniamma is introduced. It is described that the Chembakassery Karanavar was sleeping in Arapura, but since his sister Karthyayaniamma came to the house with her daughter after her husband's death, that place was given to them (40). There is no question asked in the chapter about her remarriage or widowhood. Moreover, it can be seen that she has commanding authority over the members of their family. Not only that, she is free to invite a complete stranger Brahmin at her own will to Arapura where strangers are not allowed and to entertain them regardless of day or night. Moreover, several re-connections of the sambandham are presented in the novel (114-115). That is, even though the social situation in which the possibility of remarriage exists, marriage is not considered a necessity and Karthyayaniamma, the widow, take decisions in important matters according to her own will and presides over all the ceremonies and noble occasions of the family. There is no indication in the novel that she does not remarry because of the thought of her dead husband, nor does she express any concern about it. Neither the novelist nor the

character presents is concerned with the fact that whether the husband is dead or alive is in any way relevant to the woman or to their daily life. Also, look at the advice Karthyayaniyamma gives to her daughter who is crying over a person believed to be dead: “There is no point in crying like this. It’s been two years, and that’s enough for you to be worried. Do you think that a boy played with you for a few days, and you are dying for him? What will society say if they hear it? Is there any point in meditating on a dead person? Will the dead person come back, then why all this melancholy?” (45-46). In *Dharmaraja*, Thripurasundari Kunjamma, a widow and a social outcast, is a woman with commanding powers, her own decisions and extraordinary courage. Similarly, Subhadra, the central character in *Marthandavarma*, also lives in a way that the absence of her husband does not retroactively affect her lifestyle and activities.

4.9. Caste Representation of Woman

Women’s multiple marginalization owing to caste becomes clear while reading through an intersectional lens. It is evident by analyzing how women within the caste identity are treated and neglected and the attempts made to reconstruct or reject the caste system in a society where it was very strong.

4.9.1. Portrayal of Nair Woman

Since both the writers are writing the narrative under the authorship of Nair identity, it is possible to see many instances in the novel where it is clear that even the anti-caste approach considers the characteristics of the community on the basis of caste. Chandumenon places the main family in his novel at the highest position in the Nair existence. In the third chapter, the novelist describes the highest status of the said family in the community in terms of financial status, language and culture (Chandumenon, 2005, 30-31). He gives his ideal heroine Indulekha

an ideal position in the community. Note Cherussery's remark, "Indulekha is a very intelligent child. She is not like the children of these common Nairs" (Chandumenon, 2005, 67).

Note how Karthyayaniamma is presented in *Marthandavarma*; a solemn gait and gaze, a garment that extended to the feet, a white cloth worn to cover the breast, hair tied in front and pushed back, and a golden thread worn around the neck. Anyone can understand that she is born in a noble family (44). That is, Karthyayaniamma is presented as a symbol of nobility of the family. But all the noble elements of the family are not presented as being associated with caste but as a reward for royal service. Moreover, there is no mention of Nair Tharavad, but the name Shudragriham, which means the family of those who does servile work for the Brahmins, is used throughout the novel to indicate the family. Therefore, instead of communal assumptions, such descriptions should be considered in the context of the monarchy. The Chembakassery clan and its architectural features are explained in two or three pages of the novel. But it can be seen that these are not presented in terms of Nair houses and Nair women. It is described because this house was built when the Karanavas were ministers of the Venad rulers.

4.9.2. Portrayal of Brahmin Women

V.T. Bhattathiripad²³ and Lalithambika Antharjanam²⁴ have written a lot about the Namboothiri women who floundered in the nineteenth century amidst the patriarchy and immorality of Brahminism. The said women who do not enter the public are described by the heroine of Indulekha as "... Nair women, who lead a cloistered life without talking to other people and without being educated" (Chandumenon, 2005, 25). She added that they live like "beasts" (Chandumenon, 2005, 25). *Sharada* also presents the poor Namboothiri class, who

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V._T._Bhattathiripad

²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lalithambika_Antharjanam

performs daily ablutions from the alms received from others. In it, it can be seen that the women of the family are presented as beggars (*Sharada* 91-93). He has portrayed Namboothiri women in the same way that Namboothiri men have been portrayed in a distorted manner by the Nair community.

Women who were outcasted from the Brahmin community were considered vile, even below the existing lower castes. But in *Dharmaraja*, Nangema, who was outcasted, is married to a Nair named Perinjakotan, who takes her as his wife and loves her daughter as his own daughter. It is noteworthy that they have the freedom to live according to their old beliefs even in the new social situation (*Ramarajabahadur* 255). Moreover, the women are seen living happily and lovingly with the man, who ate beef, which was considered the vilest act according to the Brahminical concept, even though the women disapproved of that act (256-257).

The incident of Nangema's "smarthavicharam" also indicates the same picture of life where the social customs of Brahmin women created misery. Here, she was a victim of communal corruption due to a misunderstanding caused by the activities of a woman who was having a relationship with Nangema's husband, Naganthali Narayanan Namboothiri (202). It is clear that the communal identity of Namboothiri women can be easily destroyed by the evil action of an outsider.

4.9.3 Portrayal of "Avarna" Woman

Chandumenon's narrative, which presents the Nair community in the mainstream, brings in the Namboothiri characters as the "other". The Avarna caste and the Muslim community, which is the majority, are rarely presented, and when they are presented, they are used as a tool to belittle other characters. The women of the Avarna castes are portrayed by subordinating them in a suitable manner. In *Indulekha*, Chandumenon completely eliminates

the instances where “Avarna” women are presented as demonstrating their identity or community existence.

Whereas, Sulekha and Fathima are strong characters who appear as representatives of lower-class women in *Marthandavarma*. The women employed in the Shudra family may belong to the upper sections of the “Avarna” castes, but it is not revealed for sure. There are no strong characters in the servant class with faces or personalities. However, in later novels, there are many female characters who are outcastes.

4.10. Presence/Absence of “Thinking Woman”

Traditionally, androcentric authorship in literary narratives usually did not consider that women should be given the right to familial or social self-determination. The methodology of presentation of literary narratives is seen until the post-modern writing phase, where women are considered tools with no existential pain or sense of identity. Even in the thoughts of Sartre²⁵, who wrote the principles of existentialism, thoughts about such feminine mental states do not exist. They have nothing to worry about or any anxiety about the future. Neither the authority of the land nor the power or transfer of power directly affect their grand inner life. In the case of Kalyanikutty, who has no position or respect in the family, her identity or decision has no role in deciding her fate. Even if we take the other female characters in Indulekha, they are only engaged in the chores in their family and live only for their family, husband and children. They seem to have no sense of identity or mental slavery.

Kunjikuttiyamma’s servant Paru has no worries that her husband has started another relationship, and she has no desire for a new relationship. She tells Indulekha that she is in pain because her necklace broke and her mistress Kunjikuttiyamma did not repair it (96). She wept with immense joy when Indulekha gave her a garland from her ornaments (97). In other words,

²⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre “Existentialism is a Humanism”.

the absence of jewelry governs her thinking, not the future of her marriage, which the author said was the most important thing for women in that period. In this way, the thinking of the uneducated woman in society is presented as completely immature, and the highly educated Indulekha's thoughts are not useful for her in practical life. Indulekha does not present a revolutionary female mindset in this way.

But Subhadra in *Marthandavarma* has this existential pain. The female characters in these narratives break through the containment and narrowness that is a part of female control in the social arena, where the inner world belongs to women and the outer world belongs to men. There are many instances where even misogyny in entertainment discourse is broken by giving controversial answers.

Subhadra returned to her room.... Whatever sorrows had scared her young life, the memory of them did not seem to disturb the trend of her thoughts now. But she was once more in an introspective mood, weighing the "why" and "wherefore" of her own actions. She was made for love and laughter! Her natural instincts shrank from the evil of all shapes and kinds. Some mysterious power, perhaps the shroud of secrecy that hid the truth of her origin, perhaps the breath of scandal that had stained her character from the very start, perhaps the utter lack of sympathy had armed her with a dangerous defiance and an indomitable will, and urged her to stand up and fight for truth and justice, the very things denied to her by an unfeeling world. But this strange feeling she could not analyse or understand now. (*Marthandavarma* 260)

In *Marthandavarma*, we see instances where she looks at herself, introspects and takes decisions. Conflicting thoughts commencing within her are explained on another occasion as follows: "Why should I be interested in these foul deeds of blood? Is it my love for that poor girl lying in Chembakassery? And if so, why am I so much drawn towards her?" (260). Such self-questioning manifests itself as a means of self-examination.

Similarly, on another occasion, Subhadra is seen analyzing her life, actions and their consequences and shaping her future. Such self-talk can be seen in anticipating social and familial questions about one's actions and decisions and making appropriate decisions. "I held back, thinking that it was unbecoming of women to be involved in these quarrels and so on, though I had often stood silently. This girl no longer hesitated. Will you agree to triumph over the evil crowd? A time, if it can be prevented by this Subhadra, is not going on. If uncle finds out? Let him know. When asked, the answer will come" (*Marthandavarma* 228). She does not depend on or is afraid of anyone while taking important decisions.

4.11. Portrayal of Sociable and Isolated Women

The writer has explained that Indulekha is socially amiable and empathetic even to her friends who do not know English. Although the writer's exemplary female character is explained in such a way, it can be seen that he is not ready to give the same liberal freedom to women in practical terms (Chandumenon, 2005, 7). It can be seen that there are no such amicable social interactions in the presentation of the heroine in the novel. She is shown as a woman who lives in the inner chamber; the women with whom she usually interacts are her close family members and maidservant. Her reactions when she learned that Suri Namboothirippad is planning to start a relationship with Kalyanikutty show that she has only a formal relationship with those who are not close relatives. When she heard that news, "Indulekha laughed a lot, laughed for a long time and caught her breath, then said, 'Alas! Why should not have informed that girl about the beginning of the relationship?'" (Chandumenon, 2005, 149). She is only expressing her sympathy. It can be seen that despite Kalyanikutty being a relative, Indulekha is not hurt by the decision; neither does she react against it or try to prevent it.

Instances of mutual involvement, where they show closeness to each other or are emotionally present, are rare, even among other female characters. Indulekha is close only to her mother and grandmother. Even with Ammu, the maidservant, her conversations reflect the language of authority towards the servant. The fact that the heroine has no friends or relationships with the villagers should also be considered in conjunction with the writer's description of the heroine.

But there are many scenes in *Indulekha* where the male characters maintain mutual harmony. Men who have no prior acquaintance can be seen to bond quickly and share mutual trust and love. From the Shastris, who are distressed by Madhavan's plight, to the deep friendships with men, both native and foreign, at every stage of the national journey are examples of this male bonding.

Strengthening a collective companionship among women enables the practical level of feminism. In *Marthandavarma*, Subhadra gives mental support to Anandam, Karthyayaniamma and Parukutty. "Karthyayaniamma got up from the couch, went to Subhadra, and with tears in her eyes, embraced the woman. Subhadra was overcome with ecstasy. Not having known the pleasure of her mother's affectionate caresses, and because she had thought Karthyayaniamma's feelings towards her ridiculous, on her embrace, Subhadra felt some new emotions. Overwhelmed by the excitement that arose, Subhadra forgot her age and rested for a while on Karthyayaniamma's breast as if in comforting infancy, and with one hand unconsciously caressed the woman's outside. Subhadra began to think about the status that had come to her from being influenced by Karthyayaniamma's caress" (166). Note Subhadra's reply when the young king Marthandavarma asked her for a reward of her choice for her services to the kingdom and to himself: "If something is due to me in return for what slight service I was privileged to render, it is enough if that consideration is shown towards the

female subjects in this country''. The idea that deeply clarifies this sense of community consciousness is manifested here.

The deep emotional bonds men have with each other are also remarkable. See how the relationship between Kudamanpilla and Ramanamatam is depicted. His life, soul, family, kingdom and God were one with Kudamanpilla. Ramanamatam Pilla did not sleep on the days when he did not see Kudamanpilla. It is enough to see his wife and children once a year. It is essential to see Kudamanpilla daily. But if he cannot see Kudamanpilla, he should see any of his relatives. The relationship between Sundarayyan and Thampi is also presented in this way.

Strengthening associations with each other is important for human beings as social beings for social progress and achieving social rights. The social immobility of women and the creative social interactions and dynamics of men can be seen in *Indulekha*. Therefore, Chandumenon presents social group strength and collective interactions as a natural need only for men. But in *Marthandavarma*, it can be seen that creative interactions are depicted as a part of women's social discourses and their social association is also presented as important. The importance of forming women's collectives was highlighted as part of the first wave of feminist thought, so it can be understood that C.V. was important as a writer who was aware of that thought in its first phase itself. The woman characterization and references made by C.V. in his later novels and the female interactions in his novels support this line of thinking.

Conclusion

Regionally formed modernities offer new modalities by critiquing, if not rejecting, existing and entrenched discourses. And such new sensibilities often find their first expression in literature. But transitions most often tectonic in nature, give rise to a plethora of complex and complicated negotiations. Given the nascent state of India, and indeed Kerala, at that time, it is no wonder that *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*, in more ways than one, embody most of the confusions of the time and wherein we can still search for questions, more than answers, to our own contemporary predicaments.

Truly, these probably are two early novels in Malayalam which has been studied over and over for a very long time! However, going over various M.Phil. and Ph.D. theses submitted in various Malayalam departments, I was surprised to find that these two texts have rarely been studied together. Probably, the generic variation, one being classified as a social novel and the other as historical, may have something to do with that. Which also alerted me to the possibility that certain accrued and celebrated notions of modernism may also be at play.

I should confess that my own particular interest was to “read” C.V., since many of my friends also acknowledge that reading C.V. is indeed a struggle, which, honestly, I also found to be true, as C.V. is difficult, even impossible to read even with the best of resources, like the *Sabdatharavali* (stv.sayahna.org/stv-a1.html). Of course, I did not tell my mostly English language and literature educated friends then that their attempt to read C.V. would be more difficult than my own attempt to read *Finnegan’s Wake*! Apart from the readerly/writerly aspects, I also found it intriguing, wondering and worrying whether we have moved past C.V. or are we just losing another heritage?

However, as already mentioned, my plan to work on C.V.’s texts was, unfortunately or not, curtailed by my own University decision to revoke the already granted permission to write

thesis in Malayalam, without which I did not think that I could do justice to C.V., replete with various registers, idiolects, dialects, even languages, and what not.

Thus began this comparative study of two texts, more than a hundred years old, by two authors imagining a modern era for their respective regions and communities in the emerging nation. However, while for Chandumenon, modernity had to come from above and outside, for C.V., it had to come from below and within. In *Science and Civilization in China*, which is a multi-volume series with 27 books in seven volumes, after showing that China was the hub of many scientific and technological inventions, even before the Europe started thinking about them, Joseph Needham asks a strange yet crucial question: why did capitalism not develop in China despite being ahead of Europe in many ways? Though he does not answer the question, it reminds us that the world does not revolve around Europe, even if they pretend so and we would also like believe so, and more importantly, when it starts to revolve around Europe everyone only can/have to reach Europe! That is to say that even when Europe was sleeping in the supposed ‘dark’ ages, life thrived outside and beyond. It is this possibility that C.V. puts forth in *Marthandavarma*. C.V. is not just nostalgically reliving a ‘golden’ past; he envisages a regional world that completely critiques both colonial and “native” hegemonic views. This is the main aspect differentiating C.V.’s ideology from the colonial modernity of Chandumenon. The background of the historical novel is suitable for the said depiction, where the state administration is presented as powerful enough to negate colonial power. Whereas, the modernity imagined by Chandumenon through *Indulekha* is focused on feudal power, which deconstructs the systematic matriarchal system in the name of modernizing, based on a new patriarchal Nair caste consciousness, with which he can belong to the imagined community of nation.

The thesis began by critically examining the history of novel in Malayalam as well as other ‘Indian’ languages, in order to deconstruct the general view that novel emerged in Europe

with modernity and print capitalism, and then was imported to colonies along with English education. Hence the title “The Critical History of Malayalam Mainstream ‘Story’” of the first chapter as it mapped the genealogy of “vernacular” novel to the traditions of story telling and writing long before “novel” emerged as a modern genre. In the second chapter, “Contextualizing O. Chandumenon and C.V. Raman Pillai”, I tried to locate the textualities of the authors of the texts under study within this critical history of story tradition. The chapter has also laid out the differential social, political, cultural and economic contexts of Malabar and Travancore within which Chandumenon and C.V. composed *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*. The third chapter, “Margins and Marginalities in *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*”, tried to grapple with the politics of representation of minor communities in both novels. It critically examined the margins created by the modernity as it is exposed in/through Chandumenon and *Indulekha*. In a comparative reading, C.V.’s novels blur this binary between centre and margin and brings the margin to the centre stage, which is what forms modern for him. The final chapter, “Woman/Gender Discourses in *Indulekha* and *Marthandavarma*”, exclusively focuses on how both authors/texts imagined the making of a “new” woman for an emerging nation. During the Pre-Submission seminar of this thesis, I was asked about the choice of treating women/gender exclusively in a chapter without including them with “other” marginalities. However, and especially working on two novels by two upper caste/class males, I retained the division as it allowed me to study the gender question with an intersectional framework that cuts across “other” marginalities that I explored in the third chapter. At a time when woman’s choices are increasingly under scrutiny, by both the state and the public, based on her caste/religious affiliations, re-reading women’s discourse through intersectionality punctures the contradictions internal to a universal top-down modernity.

Chandumenon accurately reproduces the social hierarchies of the modern world, similar to how the feudal colonial powers constructed the social and political mainstream by constantly

creating caste, religious and class inequalities. It can be seen that his narrative was controlled by the belief that it was natural to have subjugation strategies that alienated others and maintained his caste, caste, and religious identities. While making the Nair identity a representation of social superiority, their caste position, which was considered inferior to Brahmins, is subsumed or subjugated in various ways. Language, dress, ornaments, colour, rules of conduct, education, economic status, etc., are all used in the novel as symbols to reject the upper caste, but these symbols later became tools to institutionalize the social system.

Whereas, C.V. rejects the colonial occupation and its modern rationale by finding the counter-authority from the same environment that conditioned these phenomena. The counter-space he presents is an entirely different environment with the authenticity of history and tradition. An alternative pluralist authority that emphasizes populist ideologies is emerging in practice as populist/regional modernity. C.V. became an icon of this alternate power by protesting against the colonial power, giving new democratic interpretations to the structure of the country's monarchic administration.

This study focuses on the historical novel *Marthandavarama* and the social novel *Indulekha*. It was a period in which the drive for social reforms controlled the public consciousness of the common people. The caste and gender elements which colonial modernity presents through the social novel as progressive were socially acquired, and the hegemonic ideology constantly reproduced said elements even in the contemporary world. Therefore, they naturally maintained the social hierarchy that enforced the colonial agenda. At the same time, the anti-colonial ideology introduced by the historical novel was naturally marginalized and suppressed. The historical methodology of literature becomes a tool for modernization or a tool for reliving the past.

Any question about the relevance of anti-colonial modernity actually comes from colonial authorship. A subjugated special identity must be modernized from the natural space in which it exists at a stage of modernity. In other words, subjugation is not naturally a cultural or social process, and it is necessary to make modernity possible from the natural space by realizing that the spaces representing the said identity were only a false concept of the existing power system. That is, this regional modernity is also engaged in the process of re-creating the elements of subordination of the outside world of power and subordination, and this is the main difference between existing subaltern modernity and the said subjugated modernity. But C.V.'s strategy of adopting feudal power to advance anti-feudal ideologies does not fit the methodology of modernization, which focuses on modernizing by alienating history. But this study reveals that this model can be constructed using structures such as the colonial-produced nation-state system to create counter-cultural nationalism and capitalism in the new era. New propaganda tools or practice-based ideological models can be formed for the same. That is the ultimate fact that this thesis puts forward on the basis of analysis.

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by Subha P

Submission date: 26-Jun-2023 04:51PM (UTC+0530)

Submission ID: 2122915427

File name: Subha_P.pdf (1.45M)

Word count: 55972

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Escaping the binary of religion and secularism: an Analysis of *Train to Pakistan*

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Abstract

The present paper analyzes the characters of Khushwant Singh's historical novel *Train to Pakistan*. The ideas of secularism and religion are presented through the narratives of the major characters in the novel. The paper briefly presents the arguments of the postcolonial scholars who took up issue with the mainstream historians' conceptualization of the secular vs religion endorsing the former and rejecting the latter. By analyzing the character called Juggut Singh, it has been argued that alienation is a way of escaping this binary of secular/ religious. The paper argues that both secularism and religion may fail in certain historic moments whereas alienation/ liberation from both these ideas may create a change.

Key words: secularism, religion, alienation, subaltern studies, partition, historical novel

One of the most hotly debated themes in postcolonial theory is the binary of the "pre-modern" vs the "secular modern." Post colonial theorists in India and Europe took up issue with this binary and led a tirade against it. Much of the subaltern studies project¹ contains an outright rejection of this binary. The postcolonial theorists viewed the "secular modern" with much skepticism while sometimes romanticizing the "pre-modern." They rejected the primacy given to the "secular-modern" and attempted to attribute agency to the "subaltern" classes, especially the peasant. These scholars rejected the categorization of the peasants into the domain of "pre-political." The subaltern collective argued that the tendency among the Marxist historians to equate capitalism with modernity and label all the pre-capitalist classes as "pre-modern" would naturally lead to an "elite" historiography. Taking peasant revolts in the colonial era as a case in point, the subaltern collective has rigorously argued that the peasant was not "an anachronism in a modernizing and colonizing world" but a "real contemporary of colonialism and a fundamental part of the modernity to which colonial rule gave rise in India (Chakraborty 9)."

Peasant insurgency was the concrete context based on which the subaltern collective developed their theories. In this paper, the arguments of the subaltern/ postcolonial scholars will be analyzed in

¹ The subaltern studies project, in essence, was a form of postcolonial historiography. This has been pointed out by many including the members of the subaltern collective(See for example "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism" by Gyan Prakash). Hence in this paper subaltern scholars/ subaltern theory are/ is not treated as different from postcolonial theorists/ theory.

ഡോ. സി. ഗണേഷ്
കോ-ഓർഡിനേറ്റർ
ദേശീയ സെമിനാർ



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ഭൂതകാലപ്രത്യയങ്ങളുടെ വർത്തമാനം

ശുഭ പി.

അനുദിനം മാറ്റം നടന്നുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന ആധുനിക സാംസ്കാരിക പരിസരത്തിൽ, ഭാഷണവ്യവസ്ഥയിലെ കാലഗണനയുടെ ആവിഷ്കാരകൃത്യത പാലിക്കേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. ചരിത്രബോധവും പാരമ്പര്യാവലോകനവുമുള്ള ഏതൊരു ജനതയുടെ ഭാഷയെ സംബന്ധിച്ചിടത്തോളവും ഭൂതകാല പ്രയോഗത്തിനും പ്രയോഗരീതിക്കും സവിശേഷമായ പ്രസക്തിയുമുണ്ട്.

മലയാളഭാഷയെ സംബന്ധിച്ചിടത്തോളം വ്യാകരണപഠനങ്ങളെല്ലാം തന്നെ ഭൂതകാല രൂപവൽക്കരണത്തെക്കുറിച്ചു വിവരിക്കുന്നതിൽ വളരെ പ്രയാസപ്പെടുന്നതായി കാണാം. ലഘുവായ വ്യവസ്ഥീകരണത്തിനു വഴങ്ങുന്നവയല്ല മലയാളത്തിലെ ഭൂതകാല പ്രത്യയങ്ങളും അവയുടെ പ്രയോഗങ്ങളും. ഇ, ഞ്ഞു, ടു, ഞ്ഞു, ഞടു, ചു, ണു എന്നിങ്ങനെ നിരവധി ഭൂതകാല പ്രത്യയങ്ങൾ മലയാളത്തിൽ ഇന്ന് ഉപയോഗത്തിലുണ്ട്.

ക്രിയകളെ പല അടിസ്ഥാനങ്ങളിൽ വർഗീകരിച്ചശേഷം ഓരോ

വിഭാഗത്തിനും ഏതേതു ഭൂതകാലപ്രത്യയം ചേരുന്നുവെന്നും അങ്ങനെ ചേരുമ്പോൾ രൂപപരമായി എന്തെന്താറ്റം സംഭവിക്കുന്നുവെന്നും പഠിക്കുവാനാണ് എ.ആർ-നെ പോലുള്ള ഭാഷാപണ്ഡിതന്മാർ ശ്രമിച്ചത്. 'ഇ'കാര പ്രത്യയത്തിനും 'തു' പ്രത്യയത്തിനുമൊക്കെ എ.ആർ സർവ പ്രാമുഖ്യം നൽകുന്നത്. കേരളപാണിനിയുടെ വിധിപ്രകാരം

കേൾ+തു → കേട്ടു

വിൽ + തു → വിറ്റു എന്നിങ്ങനെ മിക്ക ധാതുക്കളും നിയമാനുസൃതമാണെങ്കിലും

അരുൾ + ഇ → അരുളി

ഏൽ + ഇ → മുളി എന്നിങ്ങനെ നിരവധി അപവാദങ്ങൾ കണ്ടെടുക്കാം. 'തു' കാര 'ഇ'കാര പ്രത്യയ വിതരണത്തിൽ ഇത്തരത്തിൽ പല അപവാദങ്ങൾ കണ്ടെത്താം. കേരളപാണിനിക്കും ഇവയെ വ്യവസ്ഥപ്പെടുത്താൻ സാധിച്ചിട്ടില്ല.²

എ.ആർ നൂശേഷം വന്ന വൈയാകരണന്മാരെല്ലാം തന്നെ കേരളപാണിനിയെ അന്ധമായി പിൻതുടരുകയോ വിമർശിക്കുകയോ അദ്ദേഹത്തിന്റെ വിധികൾക്കു അപവാദങ്ങൾ ചൂണ്ടിക്കാണിക്കുകയോ ചെയ്തതല്ലാതെ ഭൂതകാല പ്രത്യയങ്ങളുടെ അവ്യവസ്ഥിതി ഒട്ടും ലഘൂകരിക്കാൻ അവർക്കൊന്നും തന്നെ സാധിച്ചിട്ടില്ലെന്നു കാണാം.

ക്രിയാവിഭാഗ നിർണയത്തിന്റെ ആവശ്യമില്ലാതെ തന്നെ പ്രത്യയം ചേരുന്ന സ്വനിമ സാഹചര്യത്തിനനുസൃതമായി ഭൂതകാലരൂപം വിശകലനം ചെയ്യാൻ കഴിയുമെന്ന പുതിയ നിരീക്ഷണത്തിന്റെ പിൻബലത്തിൽ ഭൂതകാല പ്രത്യയങ്ങൾക്കു കുറേക്കൂടി വ്യവസ്ഥാ പുർണമായ വിശകലനം മുന്നോട്ടുവച്ചത് ടി.ബി. വേണുഗോപാലപ്പണിക്കരാണ്.³ യ്, ര്, ങ്, ഉ്, ന് എന്നീ വർണങ്ങളിൽ അവസാനിക്കുന്ന ധാതുക്കളിൽ പ്രത്യയം 'തു'കാരവും (അതിനെ