INTERSECTIONS: COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL HISTORIES

Islam and Nationalism in India

South Indian contexts

M.T. Ansari

ROUTLEDGE

Islam and Nationalism in India

Islam in India, as elsewhere, continues to be seen as a remainder in its refusal to "conform" to national and international secular-modern norms. Such a general perception has also had a tremendous impact on the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, who as individuals and communities have been shaped and transformed over centuries of socio-political and historical processes eroding their world-view and steadily erasing their life-worlds.

This book traces the spectral presence of Islam across narratives to note that difference and diversity, demographic as well as cultural, can be espoused rather than excised or exorcized. Focusing on Malabar – home to the Mappila Muslim community in Kerala, South India – and drawing mostly on Malayalam sources, the author investigates the question of Islam from various angles by constituting an archive comprising popular, administrative, academic, and literary discourses. The author contends that an uncritical insistence on unity has led to a formation in which "minor" subjects embody an excess of identity, in contrast to the Hindu-citizen whose identity seemingly coincides with the national. This has led to Muslims being the source of a deep-seated anxiety for secular nationalism and the targets of a resurgent Hindutva, in that they expose the fault-lines of a geographically and socio-culturally unified nation.

An interdisciplinary study of Islam in India from the South Indian context, this book will be of interest to scholars of modern Indian history, political science, literary and cultural studies, and Islamic studies.

M. T. Ansari is Professor at the Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad, India. He has received fellowships awarded by the Committee on Southern Asian Studies, University of Chicago, USA, and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, India.

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Prologue

Historical as well as popular accounts of Muslim-Hindu relations of the first half of this century generally credit Mohammad Iqbal (1876–1938) with having written "the first manifesto of the two-nation theory which was later elaborated . . . by Chaudhari Rahmat Ali[1] and accepted as the basis for the foundation of a separate state for Muslims (Pakistan) by Mohammad Ali Jinnah."[2] In 1930, Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of the Indian subcontinent, advisor and close intellectual companion of Jinnah, gave his historic presidential address at the annual session of the Muslim League at Allahabad. He suggested, in his address, that the Muslim majority areas in the North-West might be given autonomy so that Islamic norms could be followed, thereby triggering a desire/demand for Pakistan. Setting the theme in play, Iqbal withdrew from public/political life due to illness.

However, much earlier, in his *Shikwa* (first recited by Iqbal in 1909 at a gathering in Lahore), the protagonist asks: "Why amongst Muslims is worldly wealth rarely found?" (44). The companion poem *Jawab-i-Shikwa* (1913), makes it clear that the people of the faith ought to be one people and such unity unmarred by factions and castes is the only way to progress. Since Iqbal,[3] Muslims in India have been haunted by the theme of pan-Islamism and the charge of owing their primary allegiance to a world-community of Islam rather than the proto-nations they actually inhabit. Moreover, such allegiance has often been read as antagonistic, as constituting an aggression on the sovereign integrity of specific nations. Nonetheless, it is also evident that the rebellion of 1857, claimed as the first war of independence even by extreme Hindu nationalists, and the Malabar uprisings of 1836–1921, are instances that substantiate the argument that Islam has continued to be a source of inspiration for concerted and concrete socio-political transformations. Although Hindutva ideologues continue to work with and for the idea of an India without it, India would not be the same without Islam.

In order to rethink whether pan-Islamism was a source of separatism, I focus on a 1938 debate between Allama Iqbal (from Punjab; 1877–1938) and Maulana Madani (from UP; 1879–1957)[4] on community and composite nationalism. It is generally acknowledged that it was Gandhi's emergence on the political scene that worked as a catalyst in Jinnah's gradual shift away from the notion of a unified India towards a divided Indian subcontinent, whether such a shift, as Ayesha Jalal[5] has remarked, was a deliberate ploy that played out of Jinnah's hands or not. Jalal

suggests that Gandhi used the pro-Khilafat Muslims to "capture" the Congress, much to the discomfort of Jinnah. Such a "fusion of religion and politics had left Jinnah cold in the wings. He denounced Gandhi for causing schism and split 'not only amongst Hindus and Muslims but between Hindus and Hindus and Muslims and Muslims [and in fact] in almost every institution' that the Mahatma had anything to do with." He warned, "Gandhi's programme would lead to 'complete disorganization and chaos.'"[6] In December 1920, Jinnah, the first president of the All India Muslim League had commented (to Durga Das, a prominent writer): "Well, young man – I have nothing to do with this pseudo-religious approach to politics. I part company with the Congress and Gandhi. I do not believe in working up mob hysteria. Politics is a gentleman's game."[7] From such a position, into the late 1930s, we find Jinnah adopting what was perceived as a "Muslim dress" for significant public addresses.[8] This must be seen in conjunction with how Gandhi's attire and ideal of *Ram Rajya* were viewed by other communities. In his presidential address at the Lahore session of the Muslim League in 1940, Jinnah openly stated:

> It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. They are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders, and it is a dream that Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality.… To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state.[9]

We should also remember here that Iqbal and the Ali brothers who initially opposed Jinnah in the 1920s and supported Gandhi were to turn around in their affiliations by the 1930s. Jinnah's elitism and disregard of the religious heads was a major reason. The case of Dalits, or the depressed classes, is another instance: Ambedkar supported the move for Pakistan and explained the reasons for Jinnah doing what he had to do.[10] He himself was forced to withdraw his demand for separate electorates by a fasting-to-death Mahatma. Many Dalit scholars of contemporary India still perceive Jinnah as having upheld an alternative that was just and more in tune with the demands of the time.[11]

Another way of understanding our history is by stating that both Nehru and Jinnah got what they wanted but did not actually want what they got. While Jinnah's pronouncements of a secular, multi-religious Pakistan at the inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11 August 1947 created bewilderment among his people, Nehru's secular credentials were constantly eroded by various debates in the Constituent Assembly of India. Vallabhbhai Patel, the deputy prime minister once stated that those who want minority rights, "that kind of thing," have a place in Pakistan, not here, because India is one nation (cited, Pandey, 2001, 162). The hostility with which any issue of minority rights was viewed can be understood from Frank Anthony's response. He, repeatedly asked to drop the prefix "Anglo" from the name of his community if they were

committed to India, responded: "I will drop it readily, as soon as you drop your label.… The day you drop the label of 'Hindu,' the day you forget that you are a Hindu, that day – no, two days before that – I will drop by deed poll, by beat of drum if necessary, the prefix 'Anglo' …. [because that day] will be welcome first and foremost to the minorities of India" (cited, Pandey, 2001, 159).

What does the 1938 debate itself tell us? In fact, the whole debate was the result of a misunderstanding due to a newspaper report and it was soon cleared up in the newspapers. However, the misunderstanding and the fact that various people insisted that Madani further elaborate and clarify his position by publishing a book, as Barbara Metcalf notes, "made clear that fundamental cleavages had emerged in thinking about the future of Muslim political life in the subcontinent" (2005, 37).[12] The starting point of the debate or misunderstanding was Madani's statement in a December 1937 political meeting in Delhi that "In the current age, nations (*qaumeen*) are based on homelands (*autaan*, pl. of *watan*), not religion (*mazhab*)" (Metcalf, 2005, 37). What he had in mind was that all Indians were commonly referred to as Hindustanis. However, the newspapers reported that Madani had declared that in the modern age a religious community (*millat*) is determined by territory (*watan*). But Iqbal "in the throes of his final illness" decided to take on Madani by countering that "Muslims needed a political unit or units of their own, an opinion he shared with people like Maududi and Jinnah (for all their differences)" (Metcalf, 2005, 38). Iqbal's response also belittled *Maulana* Madani's grasp of Arabic. Though the misunderstanding was subsequently cleared up, the central issue brought to the fore "was not a matter of vocabulary but a fundamental difference about the basis of political community in general and the strategies before the Muslims of India in particular" (Metcalf, 2005, 40).

It is interesting that Madani had supported the Muslim League and Jinnah during the 1937 elections. Moreover, Madani probably hoped that Jinnah would move, if not away from the aristocracy, at least, towards anti-British nationalism. But the Congress and the League continued to move away from each other. And here, against Iqbal's general position that modern territorial nationalism is destructive (Metcalf, 2005, 40), his perception of Islam as "the very source of modernity" (Metcalf, 2005, 44) and his particular assertion that Muslims are bound by their religion to create autonomous Muslim states, especially in India where they might face socio-cultural oppression, we have Maulana Madani reconstructing nationalist Indian history by arguing that "the spread of Hinduism happened after the establishment of Muslim dynasties and not before" (Metcalf, 2005, 33). Madani also significantly uses the Prophet's negotiations and agreements with other religions, particularly the Jews, and tribes as setting an example of composite nationalism for Islamic communities the world over. He also delineates "the ways in which India was in fact a sacred land to Muslims, not least because of the descent of Adam to Ceyon [sic] from paradise, the early presence of prophetic companions in the subcontinent, and the centuries of burials of saints and holy men whose charismatic presence continues till today" (Metcalf, 2005, 34).

The visionary Iqbal's modernist interpretation bestows Indian Islam with the honour of rewriting world-historical-Islam as he understands that with the advent

of modern secular nationalism, religion will be relegated to the private sphere. Madani, the pragmatist, is content to work within the given parameters of world-historical-Islam. Both are worried about the plight of Muslims in India, and the world-over, but one thinks of invigorating world-Islam, reconstructing religious thought in Islam, through the lessons of its history and predicament (historical predicament) in the Indian subcontinent; the other of re-interpreting and reconstructing Indian history with the strength of Islamic prudence. One dreamt of creating and establishing an Islamic nationalism that would counter the ethical void left in the wake of modern secular nationalism. The other envisaged a workable composite nationalism as a solution to the Indian situation.

What the 1938 non-debate, quibble as it were, tells us is that in the interpretation of Madani – who graduated from Darul Ulum of Deoband, served as president of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind from 1940 to 1957, and who politely declined to accept the prestigious Padamabhushan award in 1952 – *qaum* and *millat* need not coincide and that a *quam* could consist of Muslims and non-Muslims. Such a position underscores the fact that the partition of the Indian subcontinent was not a product of pan-Islamism.[13] Hence, it is painfully paradoxical that the vast majority of Muslims in post-1947 India who desired and decided to stay, without majoritarian aspirations, are calibrated as embodying a lack that redoubles as excess. One of the main thrusts of this project has been to argue that pan-Islamism actually allows Muslims to live as minorities and their central concerns are of a socio-cultural and economic nature. In other words, if not a history of the Muslims who remained in India, my attempt is to construct context-specific and critical histories *for* those who remained. I am hopeful that my analyses would bolster Minority Studies and further open up the debate on reservations for Muslims.

Against the grain of colonial and nationalist historical narratives, I look at the Muslim in India with the intention of unpacking some of these "accepted" interpretations. My retake on India and Islam will critically engage with the residual memory of our history and the history of our memories. Ranajit Guha has remarked that "[t]he remembrance of things past in a people's life and the urge for a people's own historiography have, of course, one thing in common. Both are informed by a notion of the Other" (1988, 2). His analysis of the ideological underpinnings of Indian historiography brings out the many slippages between the British and the Muslim, which I would argue is, more accurately, a result of a slippage between the Mughal and the Muslim, in the nineteenth century historiography in/on India. In addition to being narrativized as foreign, as Sudipta Kaviraj has commented, there remained a "puzzling and generally unexplained problem … that Hindus saw Islam as a *political*, but not an *intellectual* threat" (1995, 88). This has resulted in a national amnesia regarding religious interactions in the subcontinent and a monolithic image of Islam is constructed by those within and without the community. As a corollary, Indian Muslims are forced to confront, and come to terms with, among other things, an imposed and essentialized Islamicity, regardless of the fact that Muslims in India, as elsewhere (and indeed as any other religious/cultural group anywhere) have hardly ever been homogeneous.[14] What Derrida talks about, in a different context, as a triple dissociation (1998, 55) in the three departments

of the nation-state – community, country and republic – seems to be at work here. By virtue of nationalist aggressions or "monoculturalist homo-hegemony" (1998, 64) a Muslim in India is "thrown into absolute translation, a translation without a pole of reference, without an originary language, and without a source language" (1998, 61). Hence, rather than focusing on the discourses by Muslims, I have dwelled mostly on representations of Muslims by non-Muslims. In fact, half of this project deals with administrative, archival, autobiographical, historical and literary discourses on Malabar, which is far removed from a Mahmud of Ghazni or the Mughals but deeply enmeshed with the Moors and Arabs. I chose the Malabar Mappilas[15] not only because I am one, but also because "the Malabar coast of south India may have been the most cosmopolitan zone of all" (Harris, 17). Malabar symbolizes, among other things, a possibility of critically opening out the time and space of our nation since the moves to systematically erase or exorcise difference have left their indelible mark on the Indian imaginary. Slogans that exhort Indians to send Muslims to Pakistan or *kabristan* (graveyard) and to drive out all Babur's progeny with slippers have persisted through "riots" right from the 1920s to the present. Muslims are the source of a deep-seated anxiety for secular nationalism and the targets of a resurgent Hindutva. The genocidal attack on Muslims in Gujarat during February-May 2002, for instance, exposes the fault-lines of a demographically, geographically and culturally unified nation. It is my contention that an uncritical insistence of unity has led to the notion of differences as a threat to the nation. In this context, my endeavour is to engage with, not the fissures, but the interstices of the nation. Whereas "fissure" denotes a crack, split or breach, "interstice" marks an in-between space or interval of time within a formation that is also an integral part, even connects other parts – anatomically speaking it is the fine connecting tissue between cells of other tissues – of the whole.

The nationalist interpretation of history and constitution of a citizen-hood emptied of subjectivity and coinciding with nationhood has created unevenness across various communities. In the light of a rebounding Hindutva and the post-Babri Masjid communal violence, there is an urgent need to rethink categories and concepts like secularism that play a determining role in nation-formation. In the debate around secular-modernity, it is possible to categorize two major positions taken by various thinkers. Under the first category, which covers a majority of writers, secularism and modernity are still viable, even desirable goals. Writers in this group continue to think of modernity as a singular world-event whose ideals have filtered into various societies in different ways. The solution to the impasse in contemporary thought, they argue, can be overcome by a more critical and even stringent application of the ideals of secular-modernity. In their view, the problem is that secularism was never fully realized, thereby making its failure a methodological, rather than a conceptual, problem. However, the unsatisfactory nature of this explanation comes out when we turn to the Hindutva argument that also claims that the state erred in its avowed secularist creed. They label the prevalent practice as "pseudo-secularism," and would argue that while the state machinery intervened in issues of Hindu religion and advocated reforms in order to homogenize Hindu practices, other religious and caste entities

were allowed, even provided, protection, to preserve their differences; appeasing them, in fact, for their votes. The advocates of secularism fail to understand that what such Hindutva forces are clamouring for is a stringent enforcement of secularism, whereby the state should espouse the majoritarian religion while according some provisions for minorities. However, the multiculturalist debate (see Benhabib, and Bhargava, et al. 1999) raging in American academic circles should give us a clue to the problems inherent in this vision.

Others have argued that instead of being the solution, secularism was and is the problem, and identify it as the root cause of the crisis facing the nation. Writers belonging to this group (such as Madan and Nandy) argue that the concept was alien in the first place and was also imposed on Indian culture. They advocate a return to Indian sources in order to develop institutions and practices in tune with Indian reality. Apart from the issues raised by this valourized nativism, the problems in this view emerge when we concentrate on Gandhi, the Mahatma. Recent studies have drawn attention to the contradictory results of Gandhian politics, a theme that pervades this project as well. However, there is an important variant: a group of scholars who instead of rejecting secular-modernity altogether, tend to reject the modernist reading of modernity and identify the main task as one of studying the hegemonic project of secular-modern nation-state in relation to the "fragmented resistance to that normalizing project" (Chatterjee, 1995, 13).

My attempt to lay open the hegemonizing project of our secular-modern was for convenience envisaged in three parts as Politics, History and Literature. Though the compartmentalization no longer applies, for obvious reasons, I have still retained the three-part structure. The first part has three chapters that dwell on autobiographies and other political writings of Mohamed Ali, M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, on the Muslim educational endeavours after 1857, on some texts and events illustrating the socio-political situation in Malabar during 1583–1855, and on questions of/for community in relation to Islam. The second part in two chapters deals with the colonial and national representations of Mappila Muslims during 1836–1922 and focuses on the construction of a fanatic causality with a Muslim casuality. The third part in three chapters attends to Malayalam literary narratives and the othering of Muslim within, what can be labeled, a literary nationalism. While the first five chapters engage mostly with non-literary material, though autobiographies undermine any such classification, the last three chapters try to unravel the ideological underpinnings of the literary/aesthetic and hence involves a close reading of individual texts, often in connection with its variations either in translations or other texts or filmic adaptations. Let me also note that all translations from Malayalam sources are mine, unless otherwise specified.

By and large, a by-product of my orientation to construct a minoritarian critique of secular-modern Indian nationalism is that I have often elided the differences of sects, caste and creed as well as regional variations among Indian Muslims. This could raise the charge of producing a monolithic Indian Islam. However, nothing could be further from my intention. Rather, my focus is on the minoritarian experience of a majoritarian ethos, which is what brings them together as a pan-Indian

community while remaining embedded within distinct socio-specific regional formations. As Javeed Alam notes:

> Common suffering in communal riots brings Muslims together just as economic strangulation unites the tribals, or evils of untouchability unites Dalits, or gender humiliation unites women – all in common political action and generating a strong sense of bonding. But there is one important difference here. Communal carnage and butchery are much more prominent news items. Wherever these occur, they immediately become part of the Muslim consciousness everywhere. The fact of carrying a Muslim name is to involuntarily share in this consciousness. Wherever I have travelled in India since the late 1970s, among the first questions Muslims have asked me are: "Are there riots in your area?," "How safe are Muslims there?," "Are they well off?," "Do they get jobs?"
>
> (2010, 213)

The other objection could be that a foregrounding of the pan-Indian contexts of Islamic communities may unwittingly detach Indian Muslims from the pan-Islamic global community. While Muslims do belong to world-communities of Islam, my project is to locate them in specific local-historical communities. The idea of world-Muslims, similarly, calls for closer attention as such constructs of majoritarian and minoritarian Islamic communities across the planet need to be de-monolithized, whether we are talking about terrorism or the so-called Arab Spring. While such an enterprise is beyond the space and scope of this project, my endeavor, instead, is to critically engage with discourses ranging across various disciplines in order to assess and ascertain certain aspects of these narratives from a textual, contextual, intertextual as well as interdisciplinary manner. Needless to say, I often felt myself on a tightrope, wondering whether I was addressing people like or unlike me! Well, the success of such a strategy is now in your hands.…

Notes

1 Rahmat Ali along with and three others in Cambridge, on 28 January 1933, appealed "in the name of our common heritage, on behalf of our thirty million Muslim brethren who live in PAKSTAN – by which we mean the five Northern units of India, viz. Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (Afghan Province), Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan" for support "in our grim and fateful struggle against political crucifixion and complete annihilation" for a separate Muslim state because "[o]ur brave but voiceless nation is being sacrificed on the altar of Hindu Nationalism not only by the non-Muslims, but to the lasting disgrace of Islam, by our own so-called leaders," "Now or Never, Are We to Live or Perish for Ever?" cited from appendix iv of *The Foundation of Muslim Nationalism*, vol. 1 of *Pathway to India's Partition* by Bimal Prasad (289).

2 Khushwant Singh in Mohammad Iqbal, *Shikwa and Jawab-I-Shikwa; Complaint and Answer; Iqbal's Dialogue with Allah*, trans. and intro., Khushwant Singh, foreword Rafiq Zakaria (25).

3 Apart from Iqbal, Choudhry Rahmat Ali's pamphlet *Now or Never* (1933), S.A. Latif's *Muslim Problem in India* (1938), *The Confederacy of India* (1939) by "A Punjabi," Sikander Hayat Khan's *Outline for a Scheme of Indian Federation* (1939), the Aligarh

professors' (Syed Zafarul Hasan and Mohammad Afzal Husain Qadri) proposal (1939) and Abdullah Haroon's plan (1940) are some of the 70 such schemes proposed between 1858–1940 by Indian Muslims; cited from *Pakistan Resolution Revisited*, eds., Kaniz F. Yusuf, M. Saleem Akhtar and S. Razi Wasti (fn. 60, 579).

4 Mohammad Iqbal (2006) and Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani (2005).

5 According to Jalal, the demand for Muslim majority state should be seen "as a bargaining counter, which had the merit of being acceptable (on the face of it) to the majority province Muslims, and of being totally unacceptable to the Congress and in the last resort the British too. This in turn provided the best insurance that the League would not be given what it now apparently was asking for, but Jinnah in fact did not really want" (1994, 57).

6 Jalal (1994, 8), citing Matlubul Hasan Saiyid, *Mohammad Ali Jinnah: A Political Study* (130).

7 Cited from Razi Wasti, "The Genius of Jinnah," *Friday Times*, Lahore (17–23 March 1994) by Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and the Islamic Identity: the Search for Saladin* (62).

8 See, Akbar S. Ahmed, "Seeing Saladin: What Muslims saw in Jinnah," and "Gandhi and Ram Raj" (86–108).

9 Cited by Francis Robinson (2000, 226), from Jamil-ud-Din Ahmad, ed., *Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah* (153).

10 B.R. Ambedkar, "Thoughts on Pakistan," in Mushirul Hasan (2000, 47–62).

11 See, Krishna Gamre, *Dalit Voice*, 1–15 August 1995.

12 Barbara Metcalf, "Introduction," to Madani's *Composite Nationalism and Islam* (2005, 23–54). See, also, her biographical *Husain Ahmad Madani: The Jihad for Islam and India's Freedom* (2008).

13 In Aamir Mufti's reading, "the Partition of India was an attempt to bring about not only the establishment of a Muslim nation-state but also the minoritization of 'the Muslims,' and through it the nationalization of Indian culture and polity, by means of a massive rearrangement of populations, identities, desires, and memories that sought to turn roughly two-thirds of the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent into non-Indians" (2007, 244).

14 As Said remarks, "[f]or almost every Muslim, the mere assertion of an Islamic identity becomes an act of nearly cosmic defiance and a necessity for survival. War seems an extremely logical outcome" (72).

15 Apart from various titles on Mappilas mentioned throughout, Asghar Ali Engineer (1995) incorporates essays by Keralites, while Roland Miller (2015) is the most recent one.

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Part I

“Two circles of equal size”

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1 "An impossible factor"

Ali's autobiographical fragment

> I know, the only thing that the government dreads is this huge majority I seem to command. They little know that I dread it even more than they. I have become literally sick of the admiration of the unthinking multitude.
>
> (M.K. Gandhi, 1999, vol. 26, 260)

> All other forces having failed the Congress, after it became the government of the day, it saw a new force in the plan of *mass contact*. . . . It can only create exasperation, bitterness and hostility. This is precisely what the *mass contact* plan of the Congress did. For there can be no doubt that this mad plan for mass contact has had a great deal to do with the emergence of Pakistan.
>
> (B.R. Ambedkar, 2000, 59)

From an Islamic perspective, two key events (often referred to as "setbacks") form the backdrop of early attempts of Indian Muslims to engage (with) modernity. The first was the replacement of Persian as the official language in 1835, which "rendered, as it were, a whole nation illiterate" all of a sudden (Afzal Iqbal, 1978, 3).[1] The second was the 1857 rebellion (see Hasan, 2008) and its aftermath, where a community trying to adjust and cope with its changed situation was faced with severe repression. Nonetheless, though reeling under the loss of prestige and cultural power and accustoming itself to the suspicious gaze of the British, this community managed to start three seminal educational ventures during this time; a fourth was started in the 1920s. These educational ventures, with different persuasions and preoccupations, were attempts from within the community to address the new questions raised for the Muslim community at large.

Unfortunately, the leaders of the community, the traditional/organic intellectuals,[2] could not forge an alliance with similar forces among other peoples, given the political turmoil in the Indian subcontinent during the pre-Independence period. Well before the 1920s, contradictions within the nationalist ideology and their resolutions made the Congress party project itself as the sole representative party of all Indians while at the same time it allied with Hindu revivalist movements. In their ardent desire for a unified nation, some of the Congress leaders valorized a notion of continuing love and trust between Hindus and Muslims and

spoke rhetorically about an emotional bonding between the two communities. Such rhetoric flew in the face of the Muslim League position, which was guided by motives of self-preservation and its felt threat of being beleaguered within a future Hindu majority nation.[3] The imagined fraternity upheld by the Congress, being caught between colonial histories of Islamic conquest by various Muslim invaders and the construction and consolidation of Hindu communal nationalism, was pitted against the fear and frustration of the Muslim League and, as a consequence, "nationalism" and "communalism" emerged as contradictory ideologies. However, there was a significant phase in this troubled history when these two communities did come together, politically and passionately. This phase was one of the last joint initiatives between the Hindu and Muslim leaderships, known as the Khilafat movement of the 1920s. The Khilafat movement was part and parcel of the Congress-League initiative of mass mobilization in its anti-colonial drive. However, the Khilafat movement also threw up new questions that exceeded the scope of the Congress-League policy. Hence, I focus on the autobiographical fragment of one of the prime movers of the Khilafat movement, Maulana Mohamed Ali (also spelled/known as Maulana Mohammad Ali Jouhar or Jauhar) in order to analyse the relation between the emerging contours of an Islamic community, reconstituting itself in relation to modernity and the nation, in the context of an individual's experience.

I

The flier of a seminar on autobiography pointed out that its intention is "to examine autobiography as a genre of discourse that has gained special significance in the background of the emergence of Dalit and women's writings, where the genre occupies a privileged position and also of the poststructuralist theories of subjectivity and the construction of the self in language."[4] But, does not autobiography have another minor instance? Or, is it that by its very constitution autobiography is not a viable opening for/from the minority position? Such a question is particularly of interest if only because of the repeated demand made on minorities to Indianize themselves.

Before reading Mohamed Ali's autobiographical fragment, it would be instructive to look at two definitive nationalist autobiographies. The compulsions – political at the most personal level and vice-versa[5] – in the act of writing an autobiography are brought out by Gandhi's and Nehru's forays into the genre. Gandhi notes in his introduction that he started writing *An Autobiography, or the Story of my Experiments with Truth*, at the instance of some of his nearest co-workers, as early as 1920. However, the project was brought to a standstill by riots that broke out in Bombay. Subsequently, he was imprisoned and, urged by a fellow prisoner, recommenced work on his autobiography and was so caught up with it that he was actually sorry when he was released from the prison a year early, since it disrupted his autobiographical project. However, he found another way out. Since he had no spare time, he decided to serialize his autobiography in *Navajivan*. The problems Gandhi had to tackle in this venture were entirely of a new order:

> A God-fearing friend had his doubts, which he shared with me on my day of silence. "What has set you on this adventure? He asked. "Writing an autobiography is a practice peculiar to the West. I know of nobody in the East having written one, except amongst those who have come under Western influence. . . . Don't you think it would be better not to write anything like an autobiography, at any rate just yet?
>
> (1927, ix)

This argument had some effect on him and he justifies his autobiographical project in these terms:

> But it is not my purpose to attempt a real autobiography. I simply want to tell the story of my numerous experiments with truth, and as my life consists of nothing but those experiments, it is true that the story will take the shape of an autobiography. But I shall not mind, if every page of it speaks only of my experiments. I believe, or at any rate flatter myself with the belief, that a connected account of all these experiments will not be without benefit to the reader. My experiments in the political field are now known, not only in India, but to a certain extent to the "civilized" world. . . . But I should certainly like to narrate my experiments in the spiritual field which are known only to myself. . . .
>
> (ix–x)

It is worth our while to note that the language of the finished English version, though translated from Gujarati, reads as if it was the original itself, with such a seamless transparency of self, nation, and text that the regional would indeed seem to be the national.

On the other hand, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote his autobiography, almost the whole of which he finished while in prison, in English itself, possibly with a national reader in mind. In the preface to the 1936 first edition, he states that his primary object was to occupy himself with a definite task so necessary in the long solitudes of gaol life and to review past events in India. Nonetheless, he is keenly aware of his addressee and remarks that if at all he thought of an audience, it would be his own countrymen and countrywomen. Moreover, "For foreign readers I would have probably written differently, or with a different emphasis" (1936, xv). Foreign readers are advised to consider unimportant those aspects that do not interest them, though Nehru felt that everything he touched upon had a certain importance in the India of his day. Nehru goes on:

> My attempt was to trace, as far as I could, my own mental development, and not to write a survey of recent Indian history. The fact that this account resembles superficially such a survey is apt to mislead the reader and lead him to attach a wider importance to it than it deserves. I must warn him, therefore, that this account is wholly one-sided and, inevitably, egotistical. . . .
>
> (xv–xvi)

While Gandhi could not be dissuaded from writing his autobiography, Nehru was worried it would be read as a political rather than a personal document. In the case of Nehru, even as late as the preface to the 1962 edition – apart from the sense of a firm *locus standi* from where he can presumably address other Indians as well as other nationals – he still thinks of his work as having general interest and is glad that a cheap paperback edition has been brought out (xiii).

In this context, it is significant that Mohammad Ali Jinnah never wrote an autobiography, despite the perception that he was the sole spokesman (Jalal, 1994) of all Indian Muslims. However, there are autobiographies by other Muslims, including a fragment of an autobiography by Mohamed Ali, an equally prominent leader of the struggle for independence. His largely ignored autobiographical fragment is of special interest since it can help one study the logic of the minoritarian enunciation of selfhood. The internal conflict involved in minor instances of the autobiographical is succinctly brought out by Afzal Iqbal, the first person to edit Mohamed Ali's autobiographical sketch, written, like Nehru's, in English in the late 1930s.[6] Afzal Iqbal came across the manuscript in May 1939 at the Jamia Millia Islamia. It was hitherto unpublished because M. Mujeeb, as Mushirul Hasan points out in the introduction to his edition (1999, 9), who had the manuscript with him, had by then become highly critical of Mohamed Ali and had not pursued its publication. The autobiographical nature of the work aroused Afzal Iqbal's interest so much that he volunteered to edit the manuscript. The title of the manuscript – "Islam: Kingdom of God" – was deemed inappropriate by Afzal Iqbal, although he acknowledged the possibility of it being apt for the finished work. Given the fragmentary nature of the text, Afzal Iqbal edited the title to *My Life: A Fragment; An Autobiographical Sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali* and the volume was finally published in 1942, more than a decade after Mohamed Ali's death. Introducing the text, Afzal Iqbal comments:

> Curiously enough Mohamed Ali had never meant to write the present book. He started with the life of the Prophet and ended with his own! Like many other good things in life, the hazel-wand of chance has given us this fragmentary account which lays bare the working of a great mind who had so much to do in shaping the destiny of India. It was by chance alone that the book was written in the present form, and it is by another chance, less dramatic, but perhaps equally important, that it is now seeing the light of day, after about eighteen years since it was actually written.
>
> (1946, vii)

Mohamed Ali's autobiographical venture while in prison is often referred to as marking his shift to a more communal position. Hence, it would be instructive to juxtapose here Nehru's observations of his experience of the prison. Asked by the publisher to update *An Autobiography*, Nehru felt that he cannot possibly do justice to the work. Since the request is reasonable, he could not deny it, nonetheless

> I have found it no easy matter to comply. We live in strange times, when life's normal course has been completely upset. But a more serious difficulty confronted me. I wrote my autobiography entirely in prison, cut off from outside activity. I suffered from various humours in prison, as every prisoner does, but gradually I developed a mood of introspection and some peace of mind. How am I to capture that mood now, *how am I to fit in with that narrative*? As I glance through my book again, *I feel almost as if some other person had written a story of long ago*.
>
> (599; emphases added)

Nehru could look back at his autobiography five years later, in 1940, and feel that, though written by someone else, it still was a story; elsewhere he calls it an "egotistical narrative of my adventures through life, such as they were" (595). On the contrary, Mohamed Ali's is another story altogether. His introspection during enforced leisure brought him up against the fact that his life was not a story, or at least did not have a story that could be taken for granted, and his autobiographical endeavour acquires political overtones, in fact becomes a political project of minoritarian enunciation. The fragmentary nature of the text, the long delay in its publication, and the significant change of title point, in an uncanny manner, to the unfinished nature of Islam in India.

I use Mohamed Ali's autobiographical fragment to frame my discussion of some of the pioneer Muslim educational institutions in the next chapter. The following analysis, it is hoped, will provide a backdrop for my discussion of these educational ventures and the different positions they made available for Muslims vis-à-vis re-interpretations of Islamic traditions in terms of modernity, the notion of community and nation they helped circulate, and the subjectivities they tried to institutionalize. Therefore, rather than attempting an in-depth textual reading, I focus on examining the implications of his shift to a (more) communal position.

At first glance, Mohamed Ali's conception of Islam appears to have a world scale. It seems not to be limited to the recasting of a community within India, but envisages a pan-Islamism that stands up against the "White Peril" of imperialism alongside "sturdy little Japan," "the [wakening] . . . sleeping giant in China" and the Blacks (1944, 54).[7] If Europe and America feared the Yellow Peril and the Black Peril, from the perspective of Asia and Africa, the White Peril was more real and alarming. Pan-Islamism, which he refers to as the "Revolt of Islam," is then a countering "force [set up] for purposes of defence, not of defiance" (1944, 55) in the face of European and American imperialism.[8] And Ali would still maintain: "What has the Muslim situation abroad to do with the conditions of the Indian Muslims?" (1944, 70). From his other writings we know that the other prong of his attack on imperialism was to request Hindu Indians to stop their "quarrel with history" and forgo "the unfortunate habit of ignoring the one great reality of the Indian situation – the existence of about 70 million Muslims who had made a permanent home in this country" (1944, 66). Presenting "the communal patriot" as a critical position in 1912, his appeal to Hindu communal patriots was to stop treating the Muslim "as a prisoner in the dock," "as an impossible factor in the scheme of India's future" (1944, 67). While it was possible for Gandhi to give confused

messages about whether to owe primary allegiance to one's religion or nation,[9] Mohamed Ali emphatically proclaims:

> Where God commands I am a Muslim first, a Muslim second, a Muslim last, and nothing but a Muslim. If you ask me to enter into your empire or into your nation by leaving that synthesis, that polity, that culture, that ethics, I will not do it. My first duty is to my Maker, not to HM the King, nor to my companion Dr. Moonje; my first duty is to my Maker and that is the case with Dr. Moonje also. He must be a Hindu first, and I must be a Muslim first, so far as that duty is concerned. But where India is concerned, where India's freedom is concerned, where the welfare of India is concerned, I am an Indian first, an Indian second, an Indian last, and nothing but an Indian.[10]

I draw attention to the crucial use of the word "synthesis" in the above as pointing towards not a stagnant or static notion of subjectivity, but of an individual shaped and reshaped in a historical community.[11] Nonetheless, Ali's exasperation is obvious when examining the different trajectories of Hindu and Muslim communal patriots, he demands that the Hindu communal patriot accept Islamic communities in India such as they are without letting the Muslim "weigh on his consciousness . . . as a troublesome irrelevance . . . [that] some great exodus or even a geological cataclysm could give him riddance" unless the Muslim "quietly shuffles off his individuality and becomes completely Hinduised" (1944, 66).

Mohamed Ali's shift in position, his turn, if not return, to Islam, has a long personal history. He notes how his mother had to go against his uncle in order to give him "the Godless influence of English education" and thus make a third infidel in the family, after his elder brothers (1999, 50). This family background is counterpointed with his exposure to Aligarh's *raison d'etre* and his new acquaintance with the Quran during his internment (61–68, 112–130). Maybe there is a sense in which this transformation can be re-interpreted. Mushirul Hasan, who follows W.J. Watson's assessment of Mohamed Ali, argues that there was a definite difference after his "enforced leisure" of internment, as evidenced by "the half-moons in his grey cap and the Khuddam-i Kabba badge" (1999, 25). Studies of this crucial phase in the history of the subcontinent invariably conclude that during this time Mohamed Ali underwent a conversion and his outlook became coloured by the communal, whereby the term is placed in opposition to nationalism.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who was "fortunate enough to be included in [Mohamed Ali's strong] likes" (117),[12] notes that he found Mohamed Ali to be "most irrationally religious" (117). Nehru narrates the following incident as if in explanation. As the Secretary of the Congress, a position he agreed to take on only because no other person might have been "able to work as harmoniously with the new President [who was Mohamed Ali] as I could," Nehru introduced the practice of addressing all the members of the Congress "by their names only, without any prefixes or suffixes, honorific titles and the like."[13] But he was not to have his way, for "Mohamed Ali sent me a frantic telegram directing me 'as president' to revert to our old practice and, in particular, always to address Gandhiji as Mahatma" (117). Nehru elaborates on the various discussions they

used to have about God. When Mohamed Ali used to incorporate some reference to God even in Congress resolutions "either by way of expressing gratitude or some kind of prayer . . . I used to protest, and then he would shout at me for my irreligion" (118). However, Nehru's unease with his own received modernity is brought up when he notes:

> And yet, curiously enough, he would tell me that he was quite sure that I was fundamentally religious, in spite of my superficial behaviour or my declarations to the contrary. I have often wondered about how much truth there was in his statement. Perhaps it depends on what is meant by religion and religious.
>
> (118)

As a result of his unease, Nehru avoided discussing religion with Mohamed Ali, since he was indeed a "convinced believer."[14] Annoyed by Nehru's silence, and since he did not "possess the virtue of silence," in 1925 or early 1926, Mohamed Ali "could not repress himself on this subject any more" and told Nehru: "We will have it out. . . . I suppose you think that I am a fanatic. Well, I am going to show you that I am not" (119). However, Nehru remained unconvinced by Mohamed Ali's exposition – which he wound up by pointing out that Gandhi had read the Quran "carefully, and he must, therefore, have been convinced of the truth of Islam . . . [b]ut his pride of heart had kept him from declaring this" (119). Nehru continues:

> After his year of presidentship, Mohamad Ali gradually drifted away from the Congress, or, perhaps, as he would have put it, the Congress drifted away from him . . . the rift widened, estrangement grew. Perhaps no particular individual or individuals were to blame for this; it was an inevitable result of certain objective conditions in the country. But it was an unfortunate result, which hurt many of us. For, whatever the differences on the communal question might have been, there were very few differences on the political issue. He was devoted to the idea of Indian independence. And because of this common political outlook, it was always possible to come to some mutually satisfactory agreement with him on the communal issue. There was nothing in common, politically, between him and the reactionaries who pose as the champions of communal interests.
>
> (119–120)

Nehru notes that the "Moslem League did not represent, then or later, any considerable section of Moslem opinion. It was the Khilafat Committee of 1920 that was a powerful and far more representative body, and it was this Committee that entered upon the struggle with enthusiasm" (47). However, he also perceives that the "political and the Khilafat movement developed side by side . . . and eventually join[ed] hands with the adoption by the Congress of Gandhiji's non-violent non-co-operation" (46), thereby setting up an argument in which the Khilafat movement was not a political movement at all, at least not in its initial stages.

One can look back and wonder: when Mohamed Ali is saying that the position of Muslims in India is an impossible one, we have Nehru saying that he was not an impossible man, since he was ready to compromise on the communal issue for

political reasons. What Nehru in his own words is saying is that Mohamed Ali's communal position was political. No wonder that Nehru has to think the following as a just defence of his own position:

> No minority should be unjustly treated. But Maulana Mohamed Ali is well aware that minorities get on well enough as a rule. It is the great majority which requires protection. A handful of foreigners rule India and exploit her millions. A handful of India's rich men exploit her vast peasantry and her workers. It is this great majority of the exploited that demands justice and is likely to have it sooner than many people imagine. I wish Maulana Mohamed Ali would become a champion of this majority and demand political and economic rights for them. But this majority does not consist of Hindus only or Moslems only or Sikhs only. It consists of Hindus and Moslems and Sikhs and others. And if he works for this majority, I am sure he will come to the conclusion that he need attach little importance to the imaginary rights of individuals or groups based on adherence to a religious creed.
>
> (cited in Hasan 1999, 36)

However, Nehru's own experience of the "great majority" was marked by ambivalence:

> I took to the crowd and the crowd took to me . . . I never lost myself in it; always felt apart from it. From my mental perch I looked at it critically, and I never ceased to wonder how I, who was so different in every way from those thousands who surrounded me, different in habits, in desires, in mental and spiritual outlook, how I managed to gain goodwill and a measure of confidence from these people. Was it because they took me for something other than I was?
>
> (77–78)

The answer is partly visible in "a new kind of experience in Allahabad" (121) that he narrates close on the heels of discussing his unease caused by Mohamed Ali's remark that Nehru was also fundamentally religious.

"Vast numbers of pilgrims [used to] turn up . . . [to] bathe at the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna – the *Triveni*, it is called, as the mythical Saraswati is also supposed to join the other two" (121). But because of the turbulence of the waters, the Provincial Government issued, according to Nehru "perfectly justified," prohibitory orders, which resulted in resistance spearheaded by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. Nehru "was not all interested in this question, as I did not propose to acquire merit by bathing in the river on the auspicious days."[15] Nonetheless, "with no intention of bathing" (122), he too went down to the river. The authorities had erected a palisade to stop the pilgrims and the atmosphere was tense, since "Malaviyaji's . . . polite ultimatum" was firmly refused by the District Magistrate. Malaviya decided to offer *satyagraha* and accompanied by two hundred others, he marched towards the junction of the rivers. Nehru, his interest aroused by these developments, decided, "on the spur of the moment," to join them. On the baking sands, under the burning sun and the watchful eye of the authorities, the

Satyagrahis, hungry and tired, sat peacefully for the whole of the morning and part of the afternoon. Impatience mounted and the authorities decided to take a hand and the cavalry was directed to disperse the group. "I did not fancy the idea of being chased by mounted troopers, and, anyhow, I was fed up with sitting there. So I suggested to those sitting near me that we might as well cross over the palisade, and I mounted it." Others followed his example; a few stakes were pulled out, creating a passage. "Somebody gave me a national flag, and I stuck it on top of the palisade, where I continued to sit. I grew rather excited, and thoroughly enjoyed myself." After some time, "feeling very hot after my exertions," Nehru got down the other side and decided "to have a dip in the Ganges" (122). After the dip, he returned and to his amazement found a greatly agitated Malaviya and many others still sitting on the other side of the palisade. Under the control of some strong emotion, without a hint to anybody, Malaviya suddenly "dived in the most extraordinary way through the policemen and the horses" (123). The crowd followed, "we all dived," and the authorities refrained from interfering. Nehru concludes this section, entitled "Coconada and Mohamed Ali," of his autobiography with these words: "We half expected some proceedings to be taken against us . . . but nothing of the kind happened. Government probably did not wish to take any steps against Malaviyaji, and so the smaller fry got off too" (123). What came out from this new kind of experience, though Nehru does not dwell on it, was the confluence of religion and politics in the subcontinent. Nehru admits as much when he notes that

> Many of us . . . were too much under [Gandhi's] influence in political and other matters to remain wholly immune even in the sphere of religion. . . . The outward ways of religion did not appeal to me, and above all I disliked the exploitation of the people by the so-called men of religion, but still I toned down towards it. I came nearer to a religious frame of mind in 1921 than at any other time since my early childhood. Even so I did not come very near. (73)

The two baths that Nehru took are of different dimensions and denote the inappropriateness of concepts like the sacred and the secular in the subcontinent. While Nehru's first bath, a dip, may be of a personal and secular nature, the second one, a dive, is of religio-political significance.

Narratives of the initial promise that Mohamed Ali embodied and his eventual "comedown" to a communal position never pause on the predicaments of a Muslim leader in the Indian subcontinent. M.N. Roy's assessment brings out the "contradictions" in Mohamed Ali's aspirations:

> Much was expected of Mohamed Ali. . . . The idol showed its clay feet in such a hurry that the admirers were staggered. . . . His pronouncements since he came out of jail are full of mere platitudes and hopeless contradictions. No constructive programme, no positive suggestion as to the future of the movement is to be found in them. He authorizes the removal of the ban on the councils, but holds up the edict of the ulemas on the question. He professes to be a standard-bearer of pure Gandhism, but sets his face positively against

> civil disobedience, without which the political programme of non-cooperation becomes meaningless. He indulges in fearful threats against the government, but finds the demand for the separation from the British empire "childish and petulant." He deplores the Hindu-Moslem feuds, but still insists on Khilafat propaganda, which contributed not a little to the success of the enemies of national freedom in creating communal dissensions
>
> (cited in Hasan 1999, 35, from Adhikari, vol. 2, 181)

Not fine-tuned enough to articulate a critique of nationalism itself, M.N. Roy dismisses Mohamed Ali much too simply and easily. Roy defines the political project of Indian nationalism, and in the process the political mission of Mohamed Ali becomes invisible. However, Mohamed Ali's self-assigned task was to bring out and address the constructive role of community in the scheme of India's future. Though his exposition of Islam during his internment ended up, inevitably, as I have argued, as an autobiographical fragment, it also enabled him to place the communal question in a larger frame. Suffice it for now to point out that Mohamed Ali himself would have argued that his communalism was more nationalist than the so-called nationalism of the major leaders of the independence movement. Such a possibility forces one to read Mohamed Ali in conjunction with the contradictions within the nationalist aspiration itself as signalled by the Gandhian norm of thought and dress.

From the perspective of the community, Mohamed Ali finds nationalism in its popular form to be too constrictive. Having grown up in a particular historical milieu, Mohamed Ali described the situation of Indian Muslims as belonging to

> . . . two circles of equal size, but which are not concentric. One is India and the other is the Muslim world. . . . In one circle was the word "India"; in the other circle was Islam, with the word "Khilafat." We as Indian Muslims came in both circles. We belong to these two circles, each of more than 300 millions, and we can leave neither. We are not nationalists but supernationalists, and I as a Muslim say that "God made man and the Devil made the nation. Nationalism divides; our religion binds."
>
> ("Freedom or Death!" 1944, 465)

The above points to the stress of Mohamed Ali's critique and also implies a critique of the mapping of the concentric circle of Hindu communalism onto that of nationalism. Hence, Mohamed Ali was not mouthing contradictory pronouncements; rather he was only articulating the contradictions within the circles as well as between them. That was the strength of Mohamed Ali, who tried to re-make Islam in the historical milieu of the subcontinent, to critique Ernest Renan's (1823–1892) modern interpretation of Christianity and the secular outlook in Europe,[16] to fight for Indian independence as "United Faiths of India," or a "Federation of Faiths,"[17] as well as to take a stance against the evil of nationalism which stresses "Fatherhood of God" but neglects the "Brotherhood of Man" and leads only to further conflicts and wars (1944, 154–155). Pointing out that "No religious wars,

no crusades, have seen such holocausts and have been so cruel as your last war, and that was a war of nationalism, and not my *Jehad*" (1944, 465), he remarked that the same evil was now affecting India where Gandhi was upholding the secular national ideal and trying to retain Hindu popularity at the same time ("The Last Letter," 1944, 475). Nehru too shared Mohamed Ali's unease. Nehru warned of the danger of the nationalist movement acquiring "a revivalist character," and added that "[e]ven some of Gandhiji's phrases sometimes jarred upon me – thus his frequent reference to *Rama Raj* as a golden age which was to return. But I was powerless to intervene. . . . He had an amazing knack of reaching the heart of the people" (72).[18]

Powerless, like Nehru, in the face of the easy slippage between Hindu communal nationalism and secular nationalist communalism, Mohamed Ali left for England with the desperate hope of convincing the British authorities of the inevitability of an independent India. Nehru was distressed when Mohamed Ali, by now a rebel without a cause, left for England seeking "the substance of freedom" and preferring a grave in a foreign land to a return to a slave country:

> It was a misfortune for India that he left the country for Europe in the summer of 1928. A great effort was then made to solve the communal problem, and it came very near success. If Mohamed Ali had been here then, it is just conceivable that matters would have shaped differently.
>
> (120)

However, Nehru's phrasing, as if the communal problem could be dissolved in the national, gives the lie to his dream. At the peak of nationalist fervour, Gandhi strongly opposed the logic of a separate Muslim state – he even articulated sentimental statements to the effect that he did not want his Muslim brothers to leave, his country to be split and his eldest son, who had espoused Islam, to leave. Simultaneously, Jinnah continued to bargain for more concessions for Muslims if a separate Muslim state was to be avoided. But by then Maulana Mohamed Ali had already died (on 3 January 1931) in England, refusing to come back without independence. He was buried in Jerusalem, in the courtyard of Masjid-ul-Aqsa,[19] with a simple inscription: "Here lies al-Sayyid Muhammad Ali al-Hindi" (Rajmohan Gandhi, 2000, 121).

Throughout his life Mohamed Ali struggled "to translate [his dream of a Federal Nation] into reality [for which] I had launched my weekly newspaper, and significantly called it the *Comrade* – Comrade of all and partisan of none" ("To the Nation," 1944, 256), In fact, the "evil of nationalism," which strives to enlarge a community into the nation or reduce the nation to a community, to make them coterminous, is located by Mohamed Ali in the larger problematic of the secular-modern outlook. Such a conceptual move is evident in the text of Mohamed Ali's relatively unknown address during a trial ("Gentlemen of the Jury!" 1944, 205–244). During the famous trial of Karachi in 1921, in front of the jury appointed by the imperial secular-modern state – which, he goes on to show, effectively hides a church – Mohamed Ali spoke at length, for two days. The transcript of the

trial is significant in that it brings out many of the salient characteristics of the Gandhi-Congress-supported Khilafat movement. This is a particularly crucial document in the context of the popular perception of Mohamed Ali's conversion to communalism, since it was the verdict arrived at by the jury that gave him the "leisure" to reflect on the individual, community, and nation from the perspective of Islam. The immediate context of the trial was "a recent resolution passed at a Khilafat Conference held in Karachi over which he has presided" (1944, 205). Along with his brother and five Khilafat co-workers (among them a Hindu religious dignitary of great eminence), Mohamed Ali was arrested and charged "with conspiring to seduce Muslim troops from their allegiance" (205) to the crown. A verdict of transportation for life was the expected outcome, but, much to everybody's surprise, the jury, composed of one European, two Goan Christians and two Hindus, returned a unanimous verdict of not guilty. However, the jury also convicted all the accused, except the Hindu, for minor offences for a period of two years.

At the outset of the trial, Mohamed Ali asks the court to move the jury, because "I have not seen their faces yet. I want to seduce them like the troops" (207). After the jury had been moved, he observes to the jury: "there was behind that another intention, not the ultimate object, perhaps, but incidental to it . . . I wanted you to act as a screen in front of the ladies now behind you, or the Public Prosecutor may add yet another charge of seduction against me." Amidst laughter, he points out "after all I find that as a result of my effort at seduction I have turned the Judge also towards me to-day. (Laughter)" (207). Immediately shifting to a serious vein, he notes that he is going to take as much time as he can and that not to present a defence, for

> I do not want any defence. I have no defence to offer. And there is no need of defence, for it is not we who are on trial. It is the Government itself that is on trial. It is the Judge himself who is on trial. It is the whole system of public prosecutions, the entire provisions of the law that are on trial. It is not a question of my defence. It is a very clear issue . . . Is God's law for a British subject to be more important or the King's law – a man's law? . . . Gentlemen, I think not for my own sake, nor for the sake of my co-accused, but I think for you. It is a misfortune that there is not a single Muslim among you. Three of you are Christians, and two are Hindus. But that does not matter at all. I am speaking to human beings. I am speaking mostly to Indians. I do not know whether all of you are Indians, perhaps one of you is not though he too may have his domicile in India and may have come to regard India, although an Englishman, as his home, and may therefore be regarded as an Indian. I am therefore speaking to a majority of you at least who come from a country which is imbued with the spirit of religion.
>
> (208)

The rest of the transcript is laced with witticisms, ironic rejoinders to the court as well as pointed questions about the individual's supposed freedom of faith in

civil society. But the overall critique of modernity and the empire is raised from within the secular-modern conception, using its language and logic. To illustrate his point, he puts a poser to the judge and jury by asking what they would do if there became evident a conflict between the dictates of Christ and Caesar. In his autobiographical fragment this critique is elaborated through an analysis of the Biblical proverb "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's" (1999, 133–135). Mohamed Ali is surprised at the ease with which the story of the poser put to Christ circulates, as well as the popular endorsement of His response. What, according to Mohamed Ali, Christ managed to do was to turn tables on those trying to entangle him by the "affair of the coin." However, such a gesture was to become symptomatic of later Christianity and the secular-modern state formation, which has "contributed much to weaken the sense of duty to the citizen and to deliver the world into the absolute power of existing circumstances" (1999, 133).

Mohamed Ali concludes his comments at the trial by narrating the story of Hazrat Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law and successor, who was

> . . . enraged against a Jew who had insulted Islam and the God of Islam and the Faith of Islam, and Ali had jumped on top of him. The Jew thought he was going to be killed and in sheer desperation spat on Ali's face . . . . and strangely enough the wrath of Ali subsided and he left the Jew and walked away. But the Jew was so astonished at this unexpected turn of events that he ran after Ali . . . and said, "That is very strange. When I said a word, you forced me down and would have killed me, and when I spat on your face in desperation, you leave me!" And Ali answered: "You insulted God and I could have killed you, but when you spat on me I got enraged on my own account, and personal ill-will could not go well with public duty. I could be an executioner for the sake of God but not a murderer for Ali." Gentlemen, we two [his brother, Shaukat Ali and himself] bear the revered name of Ali and I have also the name of another greater than Ali. I will not be a party to the killing of a giant for personal malice but for the sake of God I will kill all, I will not spare anyone – I will slaughter my own brother, my dear aged mother, wife, children and all for the sake of God, so help me God!" (And as he said this his voice failed him, drops of tears rolled down his cheeks and he sat down completely overcome).
>
> (1944, 243–244)

This dramatic breakdown compels one to look at the figure of a Muslim leader in the context of colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism. The pathetic spectacle provided by Mohamed Ali contrasts with the bravado of his words, and indeed it is possible to argue that what the court witnessed was not a fanatical defiance or belligerence, but a national leader cowed by the seemingly impossible task he is confronted with. Addressing the individual human beings of the court, whom he had earlier framed as Indian, he emphasizes that his identity as a member of the Muslim community in India is as much important to him as their religion is for

them. In fact, the communal identity is of paramount importance; he will kill for it and not for himself! The court is forced to take note of the fact that the coward weeping in front of it is the courageous man each member of the court would want to be if they ever found themselves in similar circumstances. If he dares to point out to the colonial authorities that he is very much like each one of them, their doubled image in a different historical setting, to the individual members of the court as members of their various communities, he seems to be saying that like them he also belongs to "two circles of equal size" and "can leave neither." However, in his case the secular-modern frame of nationalism brings in a conflict that can be resolved only by rethinking nationalism itself. He spells out the dangers of trying to equate these circles of nationalism and community; they need not coincide and nor need they be concentric. Attempts to try to collapse these circles one into the other will be marked and marred by violence, he seems to prophesy. His perspective of a new conception of a federal nationalism, that allowed legibility for Indian Islamic, if not Islamic Indian, identities, and a new frame sensitive to individuals and communities within the nation, continues to be valid for a secular nation in crisis.

II

Mohamed Ali is indeed a crucial figure who allows us to rethink questions of identity, community, and the nation, in that he brings out the contradictions of the nationalist ideology and its secular-modern frame. He locates Islam as a point of convergence for a critique for most of the Muslims of the subcontinent in their fight against various forms of oppression. The terms in which Mohamed Ali perceived his own life are perhaps best understood by his comments on Syed Ahmad Khan. In the presidential address delivered at the Indian National Congress in 1923, Mohamed Ali relates a conversation his brother had had with an old English official while in the Public Service. The official asked Shaukat Ali who he thought was the greatest rebel in India against the British rule. We are not told what Shaukat Ali replied, but whatever the name was,

> . . . correcting my brother's answer, that experienced official had declared that it was no other than Syed Ahmad Khan, loyalist of loyalists! When my brother protested against this astonishing judgement, he said: "Do you think young Muslims who are being taught at Aligarh almost as well as our own boys at Harrow and Winchester, who live their lives and can beat them at their own games, would obsequiously serve them when they come out as Indian Civilians or members of such other superior services. No, Mr. Shaukat Ali, the days of British rule in India are numbered, and it is your loyal Syed Ahmad Khan that is the arch-rebel to-day!"
>
> (1944, 253)

Mohamed Ali goes on to remark that "Like only too many of us, this English official, too had failed to realize the paralyzing effect of the education given in

the colleges and schools established or favoured by this foreign Government" (1944, 253). Even the "arch-rebel" Syed Ahmad Khan's ambitious programme – which he instituted after he had thought over his initial impulse to retire to Egypt in the face of the post-1857 oppression (1944, 56) – as embodied by the Aligarh Muslim University did not accomplish its aim because, given the British control over it, it had only succeeded in creating people "robbed of all generous ideals and national and communal ambitions . . . poor in everything save its ideals and dreams" (253). The seminaries of Deoband and the Darul Ulum encountered similar problems. It was the need for a Muslim University without government aid and control in accordance with the spirit of non-cooperation that was the rationale of establishing yet another, the fourth educational institution, the Jamia Millia Islamia University. The logic for the establishment of this institution was a perception that "complete divorce of religious from secular learning" (1999, 52) is detrimental, for "what politics is to the West today, religion is still to the East" (1999, 55).

Though Mohamed Ali initially allied with and defended Gandhi's leadership,[20] he was to move away from Gandhi[21] because of the latter's endorsement of the Nehru report of 1928. Sickened by the *sangathan* and *shuddhi* initiatives, Mohamed Ali astutely observed of Hindu communal nationalism: "Not one of these pseudo-nationalists would have talked so glibly of nationalism, majority rule and mixed electorates, if his own community had not been in the safe position of an overwhelming majority" (1999, 37). In a very interesting take, Mohamed Ali reverses the critique and labels Indian nationalism as "narrow communalism," which is exposed by its stance on the cow question. On 5 March 1929 in the *Times of India*, he accused Gandhi of having changed drastically once he had obtained the helm of Congress.

> Gandhi has defeated all Muslim attempts for a compromise. He is giving free rein to the communalism of the majority. The Nehru constitution is the legalised tyranny of numbers and is the way to rift and not peace. It recognizes the rank communalism of the majority as nationalism. The safeguards proposed to limit the highhandedness of the majority are branded as communal.
>
> (cited, 1999, 40)

Mohamed Ali's critique of nationalism was projected from the minoritarian perspective. The fallout of his unease can be garnered from events that marked the birth of an independent India.

It is true that a definite difference can be perceived between the politics of Muslims before 1947 and after 1947. If after 1947, and increasingly in the face of the Hindutva upsurge, Muslims have come to be thought of as a minority, in the pre-1947 era the Muslims of India or their professed leaders were uncomfortable with the notion of a minority. Numbering around 90 million and comprising twenty-five per cent of the electorate, they demanded one-third representation for all minorities, which included Hindus in Muslim majority provinces. However, the Nehru

report had fixed Muslim representation at one-fourth and had done away with separate electorates and weightages, a position that even Gandhi endorsed. The political implications of the Nehru report led to the Delhi manifesto of 9 March 1929, which exhorted Muslims to stay away from the Congress, which they did till Jinnah stepped in again onto the political platform. Muslim unhappiness with regard to minority status can also be interpreted as a critique of a nationalist self-definition that assumed Muslims to be "an impossible factor in the scheme of India's future" ("The Communal Patriot," 1944, 67). Mohamed Ali – pointing out that this was not a position held by Muslims alone, but was also shared by non-Brahmins in Southern and Western India – categorically states that, despite "all the abhorrence we feel with regards to communal representation" ("Communal Representation," 1944, 359),[22] it was the only safeguard for groups such as these. He further characterizes the reluctance of the Hindu majority in this regard as raising more questions about the easy way "communalism" was becoming definitive of the "minorities."

The notion of "minority" delineates more problems than solutions (Ambedkar, 1979). In the wake of the partition of the subcontinent, an Advisory Committee was constituted under the mandate of Cabinet Mission plan to look into the matter of minorities. Its first report, which was discussed in the Constituent Assembly in August 1947, as Rochana Bajpai notes, "rejected some of the central components of the British system of safeguards such as separate electorates and weightage" (1840). Bajpai points out that the "question of minority safeguards, as colonial policies for the accommodation of minorities were termed, had been critical at various stages of the negotiations leading up to Indian independence. The colonial state deemed a satisfactory resolution of this question to be a precondition for any advance towards self-government" (1837). It is from such a perspective that Muslim and Dalit critiques of the secular-modern nation-state and their statement that they would have preferred the British to stay on rather than have independence in a Hindu majority state can be understood. I will proceed to look at an early colonial initiative to engage with the "minority" issue in order to examine its various nodes and to point out how the "communal representation" debate of the late 1920s was suddenly transformed into an event that was the logical conclusion of a nationalist history that valorized the Aryan migration and denigrated the "Islamic invasions." Briefly, standard historical narratives play up the colonial toying with the Muslim community, between Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905 and its revocation in 1911. To run quickly through a complex period in the history of the subcontinent, on 1 October 1906, certain Muslim leaders, what is known as the Simla deputation, headed by Aga Khan, met Lord Minto. They were assured of separate electorates and representation for Muslim minorities. The encouragement they received, triggering resentment among the Hindus, is invariably seen as the seed of separatism. The formation of the All India Muslim League in the same year increased the Congress heartburn at the Anglo-Muslim alliance. B.R. Nanda has commented that whereas the "*Englishman* predicted that the League 'will provide an effective answer to the Congress as well as afford an avenue for the publication of Mohammedan aspirations'" (87), "Gokhale, who had consistently pleaded for generosity

to the Muslim minority, was scandalized by th[e] blatant discrimination" (92) of the Minto-Morley reforms. Nanda also draws attention to Motilal Nehru's perception. One of "the shrewd observers of the political scene" (93), Motilal Nehru wrote to his son in 1909 that "Hindu-Muslim antagonism had grown, and our Anglo-Indian friends have distinctly scored in this matter, and no account of council reform will repair the mischief" (93) of the Minto-Morley reforms that resulted from the Simla deputation of October 1906. In his studied search for the cause of separatism, for which the colonial administration is solely to be blamed, B.R. Nanda also comments on Gokhale's change of stance, but does not bring out the significance of this shift. While an advocate of "generosity" towards Muslims (thereby also underlining their economic backwardness), Gokhale became irritated when the colonial administration actually instituted it. R.C. Dutt echoes Motilal Nehru. On 28 June 1909, Dutt wrote to Gokhale: "When the history of this cleavage will come to be written, the responsibility of those who fomented it, and the folly of those who accepted it, will be recorded . . . . Our simple Muslim compatriots here have been easily gulled and separation has been decreed" (cited in Nanda, 93). It is to be remembered that during 1905–1907 the differences between the moderate faction (an example is Gokhale) and the extremist faction (headed by Tilak and Aurobindo) of Congress, which had been working together against the partition of Bengal, came to a head. After the Congress session held at Surat on 26 December 1907, where 1600 delegates came to blows over their differences, there was a steep decline in the intensity of the nationalist movement. The critical contention between the moderates and the extremists was whether to extend the *swadeshi* and the boycott movements from Bengal to the rest of the country. After the Congress session, most of the extremists were imprisoned, producing a political vacuum that might have prompted the Congress to rethink its strategy and even contemplate an alliance with Hindu communal nationalists. Aurobindo wrote: "When I went to jail the whole country was alive with the cry of Bande Matram, alive with the hope of a nation. . . . When I came out of jail I listened for that cry, but there was instead a silence. A hush had fallen on the country" (cited in Chandra et al., 141, from Aurobindo, 1). This silence that had fallen on the country has been read as the consequence of the outcome of the Simla delegation's success. Even a rigorous historian like Sumit Sarkar allocates the responsibility "for the encouragement of communal separatism" (141) to the Minto-Morley initiative, and thereby the British, without considering at all the Nehru report and its effects on other communities. Against this established historical practice, it is possible to account for this "silence" as ensuing from the differences within the Congress, particularly since there was no place for the Muslims, such as they were, in the Congress.

From a different perspective, the Simla deputation can be read as the political move that was essential for the protection of the community against the claims of a reductive nationalism. In the aftermath of the 1857 revolt, Muslim leaders were ensuring the very survival of their communities through socio-cultural reforms. It was this process of modernization that the community sought to protect. Later on, the revocation of the partition of Bengal in 1911, coming at such a time, raised the hackles of Muslim leaders against both the British and the Congress, thereby

further undermining their position. The short-lived Minto-Morley reforms were replaced by the provincially biased and universally condemned Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919. The joint Khilafat venture has to be seen in this context. Given such a trajectory, it is not surprising, especially after the narrativized trauma of 1947, that the Indian government became wary of reservation on religious grounds. Rochana Bajpai points out that the first draft of the Constitution contained

> . . . political safeguards encompass[ing] provisions for reserved seats in legislatures, quotas in government employment, reserved posts in the cabinet and the creation of administrative machinery to ensure supervision and protection of minority rights. . . . In a remarkable reversal, however, by the final draft religious minorities were excluded from the purview of all political safeguards, which came to be restricted mainly to the "scheduled castes" and the "scheduled tribes."
>
> (1837)

Apart from the partition of the subcontinent, two other factors for such a reversal, Bajpai notes, could be that the "Congress no longer had to conciliate a powerful Muslim League and had few real checks in the way of pushing its agenda through," and that both the Sikh Panthic Party and the Muslim League, the political parties of the two main religious minorities pressing for political safeguards, "were in disarray and therefore unable to present a united front in resisting the revocation of safeguards" (1837). In the context of the socio-economic backwardness among the majority of Muslims in India, the move of imagining a unity that went against the diversity of various communities in India was, perhaps, an unfortunate one.

If, in a secular India, everyone regardless of their gender, class, caste, or creed has equal opportunities, why is it necessary to represent communities as minorities? A minority is not *sui generis*. Though each and every minority may be unique in its own historical location, they are still a product of the demarcation of nation/state/district/taluk boundaries, as well as electoral procedures. The continued use of the term "religious minorities" in state initiatives, hence, can be read as an admission on the part of the nation-state, past its sixty-eighth anniversary, that its educational and socio-economic initiatives have gone awry, so much so that certain peoples continue to be less than equal. We have national as well as regional versions of minorities and, interestingly, whereas some communities are minorities at both levels, some others are not. Given the fact that a person is not given any educational or occupational "reservation" solely by virtue of being a Muslim or a Christian, the notion of minority deployed for Muslims and Christians overall points to the fact that it is the nation-state's self-justificatory gesture of institutionalizing differences in order to explain away difference and expiate itself of blame by shifting it on to "their" difference and recalcitrance. The inverse of such a perspective, as Talal Asad points out, is "the implicit claim that members of some cultures truly belong to a particular politically defined place, but those of others (minority cultures) do not . . ." (1993, 257). Since the issue of secular-modernity

is the primary focus of the third chapter, I return to Mohamed Ali's autobiographical fragment.

Despite being a prolific writer from his student days, Mohamed Ali never took to writing in a serious way. His earlier attempts, while interned, were in fact a biography of the Prophet and a multi-volume history of Islam. When asked by some of his friends to pen down an account of his life, he wrote:

> You suggest to me that I should write a book during my enforced leisure, and that our people expect one from me. If that is so, I am afraid they don't know me. Firstly, I have neither the patience, perseverance nor the temper of the researchist. Secondly, my emotions are much too strong to permit what intellect I may possess to be exerted in the writing of a book. . . . No, my friend, my brain is far too busy (and so is my heart) to allow of any leisure for such "pastimes" as authorship.
>
> (cited in Hasan, 1999, 9)

Against his own professed lack of time and interest in writing, we know that he, apart from running a journal almost all by himself, wrote many letters.[23] Hence, I read Mohamed Ali's reluctance or recalcitrance to write about his life as raising problems about the mode of autobiography itself. The Dalit critique of the autobiographical as inimical to an oppressed self, whose emancipation lies within a nationalist "upper" caste and class norm, is also relevant in this context. Dalit theoreticians have drawn attention to the peculiar nature of some Dalit autobiographies, which start off in a supposedly crude colloquial language and end up in a very sophisticated print register. The "successful" autobiographies from the minority position begin in a local setting and "arrive" at the national. This transition is often achieved by a turning away from their communal identity and culture, as if they had to lose themselves in order to find themselves. In mainstream autobiographies, the local and the national are much more easily intertwined, even collapsed; the regional becomes the national and the national reflects the regional. The sophisticated language of the autobiography, if at all used, would most often quote the colloquial register. The change of register in the case of Dalit autobiographies brings out the unequal translation that the genre imposes. In a similar way, Muslim autobiographies also seem to travel from a rural religious setting to an urban secular frame. Going back to my starting point, maybe now we can begin to perceive why Ali's autobiographical attempt began as a biography of the Prophet and ended with his own. The contours of Indian nationalist communalism, which was consolidating itself in front of his eyes, and the constant equation being established between Hindu and Muslim communal nationalisms created an unease[24] in Mohamed Ali which pressed him to explore the question of Islam. However, he soon found that the question of Islam was pertinent only as far as he was an individual in a Muslim community in the Indian subcontinent. The uneasy juxtaposition of the national and the communal creates a disjuncture in the individual's affiliation that can only be resolved by erasure of one part of the person's identity. Mohamed Ali, however, took a bolder route. Instead of trying to become like the others in order to be counted among them and be authorized to address them,

he was determined to work out the issue of difference. Hence, instead of addressing people like himself, which would be a redundant exercise since they already know what it is like, he writes for non-Muslims, as himself, that is, without denying his communal identity. And, like them, he travels towards a consolidation of his self, by enumerating details of his family, his English education, his career at the Aligarh Muslim University, his exposure to nationalism and elaboration of his religious and political aspirations, very much in the dominant mode of the autobiographical and tinged by the confessional.[25]

Whereas Gandhi gives expression to a national self-hood through his vernacular, and Nehru writes in English for people like himself, a western-educated Mohamed Ali writing in English for the others presents a different picture.[26] The double postulation of the particular and the universal, and the translations involved in this transaction, are different for a Muslim in India. On the one hand, he is the inverse – the other, communal side – of the national. While the Indian and vernacular autobiographer addresses the universal through the national and textual affiliation, the Muslim, as with Mohamed Ali's pan-Islamic posture, constructs a universal in order to give logic and coherence to his minor self. Why, otherwise, would Mohamed Ali start his address in this fashion:

> I fear I shall have to commence my exposition of Islam with a very large slice of egotism. It has, however, been forced upon me not by what I may regard as my merits, but, on the contrary, by my lack of them. This may seem to deprive me of all my title to speak on the subject of Islam; and yet, it is just because I am a very ordinary Muslim with no pretensions whatever to the gradation of schoolmen and still more because I can claim through my ignorance itself a degree of detachment, that I think it would not be altogether unprofitable for the ordinary non-Muslim to give me a fair hearing. Experts often write for experts; but I am so to speak "the man-in-the-street," and I write for the "the man-in-the-street." The individual experience which I relate will make this clear, and being typical of the history of so many Muslim lives of my own generation, it will not, I trust, be altogether lacking in interest.
>
> (1999, 47)

He seems to be addressing his story, of Islam and his self in English, to non-Muslims, and what he wants from them is a fair hearing. The piece "The Misunderstanding and its Causes,"[27] which is now an appendix to the autobiographical fragment, is the only part of the exposition of Islam that Mohamed Ali managed to write. Though he set out to write the story of Islam, he had to start from his own position within it as an Indian and within India as a Muslim.

My intention has not been to present an in-depth analysis of Mohamed Ali's autobiographical fragment. Rather, I have argued that Mohamed Ali's strategy of representing his life offers us a clue to another way of reading this "fragmentary" life. Read as a critique of the very form of secular modernity and nationhood, what emerges is a vibrant critique of the national from the "communal" position. He contends that our "communal consciousness was . . . far more secular than

[religious]"[28] (1999, 65). In an important comment which shows the awakening of Mohamed Ali to the historical situation of Islam in the world context, he notes: "Although we considered Islam to be the final message for mankind and the only true faith, . . . we were shamefully ignorant of the details of its teaching and of its world-wide and centuries-old history," especially given the education provided by "missionary and government schools and colleges where year in and year out the name of Islam was never so much as mentioned" (1999, 65).

The situation is not very different in the secular education provided by educational institutions, where if Islam is invoked at all it is more often in a derogatory sense. Following Samir Amin and Talal Asad, one can argue that the modern separation of religion and state was a forced necessity rather than a benevolent gesture. Foucault (1982) has read it as a ruse of disciplinary control in the pastoral mode. The concomitant logic that social life has to be governed by secular-modern principles is a lie in the face of lived realities, whether it be in the West or the East, whereby we are forced to work with the notions of a citizenhood and a subjecthood which cannot coincide. In a postcolonial, if not neocolonial or not yet post-modern and -secular, context, there is a pressing need to relocate ourselves in less grand, even fragmentary, narratives if we are to find a way out of our impasse.[29] Given the global as well as the national backdrop of Muslims in India, there is an urgent need to come to terms with Islam in terms other than of communal separatism. The Muslim in India continues to haunt our formulations, and what we perceive is not a marginalization that is the consequence of any bias in history nor an obscuring, an invisiblising, nor a suppression (terms used by Chakravarti, vii). Rather what is at stake is a demonization, and the Muslim in India is made to articulate an excess/lack in his/her selfhood. If the colonial is the other of modernity, the Muslim figures as the "other's other,"[30] both as the other of European and Indian forms of secular-modernity and nationhood. She/he is forced to mediate a fragmented existence, a minor fragment in a major genre that is not yet a piece that would make the amphora whole again (Benjamin, 78). The Muslim is in this sense a fragment of the amphora of our nationalist aspiration, while also being a fragment within it. Islam is a fragment that does not fit into the whole as it is being imagined and imaged; hence its supplementarity, as something that denotes an excess as well as a lack. Every such fragment, as Gyanendra Pandey puts it, "is of central importance in challenging the state's construction of history, in thinking other histories and marking those contested spaces through which particular unities are sought to be constituted and others broken up" (1992, 50).[31]

The loss of a language or its instituted erasure only adds a further dimension. As early as 1912, Mohamed Ali had argued:

> Neither in the matter of language nor in that of script can the Muslims afford to concede more than what they have already done in adopting Urdu as their only vernacular or their second vernacular, and retaining the script that is practically common to the Islamic world. But unless we take practical steps to safeguard the language and the script, both are endangered by the narrow and exclusive "Nationalism" which is growing more and more militant everyday.
>
> (1944, 43)

Despite living out his life in a vernacular that was threatened and that he perceived as a necessary concession to be made in his imagined United Faiths of India or a Federation of Faiths, he chose to write out his life in English. Maybe even now for Muslims in India, writing an autobiography – where the *autos* or the self is somewhere, the *bios* or life is elsewhere and the *grapheme* is nowhere, in that it does not work as an intersection point for the other two – remains a fraught exercise. Maybe autobiography here requires too many unequal transactions – socio-political, cultural, national translations and aesthetic elaborations – that only a western-educated, quixotically romantic and religious person like Mohamed Ali would have dared to take on.

Not that other nationalist leaders fared any better! In anticipation of further complexity and contradictions at diverse levels, which will pave the way for further discussion regarding identity and community, I end this chapter with a recce of the six vignettes or short autobiographical sketches penned by Ambedkar around 1935–36, and known, significantly, as "Waiting for a Visa."[32] The first occurs around 1901 when Ambedkar is forced to pretend to be a Muslim while on a childhood journey from Satara to Koregaon. In this instance, a nine-year-old Ambedkar, for whom untouchability was already "a matter of course," is forced to pretend to be a Musalman/Mohammedan in order to trick a Toll-Collector into providing drinking water. What is significant is that the Toll-Collector, deceived by Ambedkar's fluent Urdu, may have deigned to listen to the boy and reply curtly but, nonetheless, does not give any water. This is counterpointed by the fourth incident that occurred in 1934, when Ambedkar along with some co-workers in the movement of the depressed classes visits Daulatabad Fort, near Aurangabad, then in the Mohamedan State of Hyderabad. In this incident, the touring party unwittingly washes their faces and legs on the pavement using water from a small tank. Soon, they are surrounded by young and old Mohammedans in a most menacing mood, who accuse them of polluting the tank. In order to avoid a "riot," Ambedkar dares them: "Is that what your religion teaches? Would you prevent an untouchable from taking water from this tank if he became a Mohammedan?" As the mob falls silent, the touring party is allowed to visit the Fort but not touch water anywhere. Ambedkar draws the lesson from the event that "an untouchable to a Hindu is also an untouchable to a Mohammedan."

All of the six incidents narrated by Ambedkar, striking and stark on the issue of untouchability, do not need any elaboration. But what may be of interest is that while the incidents involving Muslims took place in Bombay Presidency and Hyderabad state, the other four happened in present-day Gujarat state. There is of course a diversity of customs and practices across the Indian subcontinent, but one cannot help wondering about what could have transpired from 1901 to 1934. Ambedkar's sketches also add to our understanding of the fraught relations among various communities and the transformations affecting Muslims as the "vanishing mediator"[33] in the wake of growing awareness about numbers needed for political representation based on castes and communities, and fear of conversions. I conclude with another instance, reproduced as the fifth by Ambedkar, at Kathiawar in 1929, wherein an untouchable School Teacher

narrates how his wife died because a doctor refused to treat her in the Harijan colony:

> I took my wife out of the colony along with her newly born child. Then the doctor gave his thermometer to a Muslim, he gave it to me and I gave it to my wife and then returned it by the same process after it had been applied. It was about eight o'clock in the evening and the doctor on looking at the thermometer in the light of a lamp, said that the patient was suffering from pneumonia. Then the doctor went away and sent the medicine. I brought some linseed from the bazar and used it on the patient. The doctor refused to see her later, although I gave the two rupees fee.

The Muslim, once a mediator, as is evident from Gandhi's childhood anecdote (see, previous footnote), appears to have become by 1934 a menace for the depressed as well as the elite Hindus. While in northern India, it could be a result of political polarization, partly because of the educational initiatives undertaken by various Islamic sects, which foretold Ambedkar's stress on the urgency of socio-cultural reforms before independence, conversion to Islam continued to be a source of liberation from the sourness of caste oppression in Malabar.

Notes

1 Lutfullah, before 24 November 1854 which is the date of his letter of dedication, noted: "I liked Persian, having had the advantage of knowing it colloquially from my infancy, the language being generally spoken by all the members of our family, on occasions of secresy and religious discussions" (1858, 20).
2 Though, as Irfan Habib notes, Islam seems to have from its inception "an urban orientation" (1995, 144), the particular trajectory of Islam in India, the spread of which may also be read as a critique of the caste-system, seems to point to a rural/urban combine which worked in tandem. Gramsci's (18) notion of "a very extensive category of organic intellectuals – those who come into existence on the same industrial terrain as the economic group," and a category of "traditional intellectuals" who have lost their "economic supremacy but [continues to maintain] for a long time a politico-intellectual supremacy and [are] assimilated as . . . directive . . . group by the new group in power" is useful here. The relation between the emerging Muslim political leaders, who can be deemed "organic," and their relations with the traditional *ulema* during this decisive phase of nationalism in very different regional contexts, is crucial.
3 "To the Muslim, the emotional talk of Hindus seemed hollow and merely cloaked strong Hindu interest and potential Hindu hegemony. . . . The Congress Hindu, on the other hand, saw only hostility in what by his lights appeared cold, calculating self-interest. . . . Even the wise Mahatma could not break this impasse because he too had no room in his philosophy for the impersonal," notes Rajeev Bhargava (2000, 199).
4 Seminar on Autobiography, organized by the Kendriya Sahitya Akademi (New Delhi) at Shanti Niketan, West Bengal, 3–4 March 2000.
5 The picture is about the same when we look at memoirs written in regional languages, as we will see in the fifth chapter. For example, K.P. Keshava Menon introduces M.B. Namboodiripad's memoir of the 1921 Malabar Rebellion as sincere, unmediated and therefore a true description of the rebellion that is at the same time more than an autobiography since it depicts the story of a place/nation, a historical story and a political history (6).

6 *My Life: A Fragment; An Autobiographical Sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali*, ed., Afzal Iqbal (1946). A recent edition, Mushirul Hasan, ed., *My Life: A Fragment; An Autobiographical Sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali* (1999) has further, albeit minor, corrections. All citations are from Mushirul Hasan's 1999 edition, unless otherwise specified.

7 I presume "weakening" to be a misprint for "wakening" or "awakening," in "The Future of Islam" (1944, 54).

8 Examining the pronouncements of Margoliouth (who thought of religion as the concern of the individual) and Sir Harry Johnson (who favoured a "defecation [sic] of Islam to a pure transparency" in order to raise the Muslim to absolute intellectual and social equality with the Christian people), Mohamed Ali comments: "It would thus seem that while one physician would kill the Muslim world slowly with the disease the other would do the same more expeditiously with the remedy" (1944, 50).

9 A glaring example of this confusion is exemplified by the following set of statements by Gandhi: on 24 September 1921, Gandhi wrote that "The brave [Ali] brothers are staunch lovers of their country, but they are Mussulmans first and everything else afterwards. It must be so with every religiously-minded man." Four months later, after news of the magnitude of the Malabar Mappila rebellion has trickled in, on 26 January 1922, he writes: "Nationalism is greater than sectarianism. And in that sense we are Indians first and Hindus, Mussulmans, Parsis, Christians after," cited by Pandey (1990, 238), from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (1976, vol. 21, 192 & vol. 22, 268); see, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (Electronic Book)* (1999, vol. 24, 314 & vol. 26, 26).

10 From the speech delivered at the fourth plenary session of the Round Table Conference held at St. James's Palace, London, on 19 November 1930, see, "Freedom or Death!" (1944, 465).

11 The idea of a dynamic Islam was not unique to Mohamed Ali. In fact, Mohammad Iqbal also tried to come to terms with a nationalist subjectivity for Indian Muslims through a commitment to pan-Islamism. Iqbal's experiences abroad made him aware of the double standards of the West and "returned" him from Platonic idealism, Indian nationalism, and romanticism to a compelling awareness of Islam. The Islam that he "discovered" through that turning away was dynamic, its creative impulse capable of directing the raw materials of history into an ethical channel. According to him, the West was inventive, not creative, and lacked a positive moral direction; the Christian theogony was too determinist. He invited the world to join this ethically energizing Islam. Two key terms in his philosophy, often articulated in Bergsonian terminology (though God, for Iqbal, was outside the process of history), are *khudi* (self) and *ishq* (love) through which the self has to be expanded and fortified. Far from being a romanticist of the past or a revivalist, Iqbal called for the creation of a new future through *ijtihad* (literally "exerting oneself"). See, Mohammad Iqbal, especially, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1974).

12 According to Nehru, Mohamed Ali's dislikes were also equally strong, and he lost many a friend because of his "devastating sarcasm," because he could not keep a clever remark to himself.

13 Nehru adds in explanation: "There are so many of these in India – Mahatma, Maulana, Pandit, Shaikh, Syed, Munshi, Moulvi, and latterly Sriyut and Shri, and of course, Mr. and Esquire – and they are so abundantly and often unnecessarily used that I wanted to set a good example" (117).

14 Nehru goes on to equate the "communal nationalism" of Muslims with that of the Arya Samajists (118).

15 Nehru, though he "is likely to get mixed up about dates," is reasonably sure it "was the year of the *Kumbh*, or the *Ardh-Kumbh*, the great bathing *mela*" (121).

16 Mohamed Ali identifies the root cause as the hellenistic graft which infused a new zeal and effected a transition of Christianity from its Jewish to its gentile form as embodied in the transformation of Saul to Paul (1999, 139).

17 This is a position he first articulated in 1904 and re-asserted in 1923 ("To the Nation," 1944, 255–256). Mohamed Ali does not seem to project different circles within a larger

national circle as much as a conglomeration of circles that connect and even intersect others. This may be contrasted to what Devji (2013) termed the "fantastical vision" (71), "anti-territorial and anti-historical world of ideas" (213) espoused by Aga Khan, "a wealthy Iranian nobleman exiled in Bombay" (60) and the "spiritual head of a Shia sub-sect" (61) "into which Jinnah had been born" (218) and who imagined a "South Asian Federation" with India as "the pivot and centre" (71). Devji discusses Aga Khan's *India in Transition: A Study in Political Evolution* and "the secretive if not the esoteric nature of the Shia presence in Muslim politics" (67). However, it has been argued that Devji "has disregarded the importance of religious beliefs and piety in Pakistan's imagination, while at the same time cavalierly dismissing voices other than those of Jinnah and some Muslim League elites, for whom Pakistan could become meaningful primarily as an Islamic state" (Dhulipala, 11).

18 "I felt angry with [Gandhi] at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question, and his frequent references to God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very date of his fast. What a terrible example to set!" (cited in Chatterjee, 1996, 131).

19 Ironically, now an area of religious and territorial dispute between Israel and Palestine (Shan Muhammad, xxi). Nehru observes: "Physically, he was a doomed man, and for years past the grip of disease was tightening upon him. In London his overwhelming anxiety to achieve, to do something worth while, when rest and treatment was what he needed, hastened his death" (120).

20 See especially "In Defence of Gandhi's leadership" (1944, 373–389). From an alliance with Gandhi whereby "[a]fter the Prophet . . . I consider it my duty to carry out the commands of Gandhiji," Mohamed Ali was to distance himself from Gandhi and describe the latter "as a Jew, a Bania" (Hasan, 1999, 33, cited, respectively, by Rajmohan Gandhi, 1995, 104 & Hasan, 1979, 287–288). M. Raisur Rahman terms the initial relation between Gandhi and the Ali brothers as "Love at First Sight" (159), while Rakhahari Chatterji terms it as "Multiculturalism before Its Time" (208).

21 Afzal Iqbal (1978) draws attention to Mohamed Ali's distress and bewilderment when Gandhi, while a guest (September-October 1924) at Mohamed Ali's house, went on a twenty-one-day fast in response to a riot in Kohat in the North-West Frontier Province. "Mohamed Ali's house was [Gandhi's] office. . . . Even though Gandhi never shared a meal with anyone and ate on his own, the whole household went [vegetarian. Hearing about the fast, Mohamed Ali] rushed back home and discovered that he could not discuss the matter with Gandhi for it was his day of silence. Gandhi scribbled on a piece of paper that the light had come like a flash" (318). Mohamed Ali was upset because despite Gandhi's public posture of "O! for Shaukat Ali. I have felt the gravest need of Maulana Shaukat Ali by my side. I can wield no influence over the Mussulmans except through a Mussulman . . . . No Mussulman knows me through and through as Shaukat Ali does" (cited, 280), Gandhi had not consulted Shaukat Ali or Mohamed Ali, his host or, more importantly, the then-President of the Indian National Congress. Mohamed Ali feared that if Gandhi happened to succumb to the rigours of the fast, the Hindu community would wreak vengeance on Muslims. Then "Gandhi merely smiled and scribbled again: 'You are entitled to say all you have said and much more. As soon as you have composed yourself, I shall talk to you the whole night. Only remember that there are things in which there is no interposition between God and man'" (319).

22 In "The Last Letter" in the same volume, Mohamed Ali notes: "A community that in India alone must now be numbering 70 million in the sense of Geneva minorities, and when it is remembered that this community numbers nearly 400 millions of people throughout the world, whose ambition is to convert the rest of mankind to their way of thought and their outlook on life, and who claim and feel a unique brotherhood; to talk of it as a minority is a mere absurdity" (1944, 475).

23 Rais Ahmad Jafri, ed., *Selections from Mohamed Ali's Comrade* and Shan Muhammad, ed., *Unpublished Letters*. In this context it is interesting to recall that even somebody

like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had to be constantly pressured to write out his life, despite the fact that as early as 1916 he had written *Tazkirah*, an autobiographical work in Urdu. In the preface to the first edition of *India Wins Freedom*, Humayun Kabir writes: "I approached Maulana Azad [during 1955–1956] with the request that he should write his autobiography. . . . He did not like to talk about his personal life and was at first reluctant to undertake the work. It was with great difficulty that he could be persuaded that, as one of the principal actors in the transfer of power from British to Indian hands, he owed a duty to posterity to record his reading of those memorable times. His reluctance was also partly due to his shattered health" (xi); "As I have already stated, Maulana Azad was not in the beginning very willing to undertake the preparation of this book. As the book progressed his interest grew" (xiii).

24 An unease that should be read in conjunction with the triple unease of Nehru: at Mohamed Ali's assertion that Nehru was fundamentally religious, at Mohamed Ali's religious inclination and at Gandhi's deployment of religious and spiritual idiom.

25 Recent Dalit and Feminist theorizations have engaged keenly with the implied gender and caste of this genre.

26 Probably one of the earliest autobiographies from the Indian subcontinent and most probably the first in English, has the long title of *Autobiography of Lutfullah, A Mohamedan Gentleman; and His Transactions with His Fellow-Creatures: Interspersed with Remarks on the Habits, Customs, and Character of the People with whom He had to Deal*. However, the same is reprinted as *Autobiography of Lutfullah: An Indian's Perceptions of the West*. Lutfullah, who was born in Malwah, sent his autobiography for publication from Surat to London in 1854, with the request that it be "cleared off grammatical errors" (iii). The pedigree provided in the text makes Shekh Lutfullah the 90th descendant of Adam. The editor Edward B. Eastwick comments that the author "is known to be one of the least bigoted disciples of Islam; yet his bias towards his own sect, and the leaders of it, is most evident" (v). Since the preface acknowledges that the manuscript was edited in order to condense and compress with as little alteration as possible, one cannot be sure whether the title is by Lutfullah. But, it can be gathered from the text that by "fellow creatures," Lutfullah means all human beings. Hence, it is indeed very curious that the later edition converts him to an Indian and his fellow creatures to foreigners!

27 This was meant as the beginning of a second book that would critique the relation between Judaic, Christian, and Islamic thought and was to lead to an exposition of Islam and the Prophet; see, Afzal Iqbal (1946, 282–363); Mushirul Hasan (1999, 215–261).

28 The word used is "religions" in *My Life*, ed., Mushirul Hasan, however, Afzal Iqbal's earlier edition has "religious" (1946, 31).

29 Partha Chatterjee notes that "the root of our postcolonial misery [lies] not in our inability to think new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state. If the nation is an imagined community and if nations must also take the form of states, then our theoretical language must allow us to talk about community and state at the same time. I do not think our theoretical language allows us to do this" (1995, 11).

30 Though widely used now, I first came upon the phrase in Susan Harding.

31 Pandey adds: "Given the very great difficulty, if not impossibility, of translating cultures and consciousness into alien languages, a new historiography also requires a more concerted effort to recover what we continue in India to call the 'vernacular' (and also the dialect) in terms both of sources and of the medium of historical debate. Along with that, there is the need to recognize that the 'vernacular' may also be the 'national,' in more ways than one" (footnote 45, 55).

32 Described as "some of the reminiscences drawn by Dr. Ambedkar in his own handwriting. The MSS traced in the collection of the People's Education Society were published by the society as a booklet on 19th March 1990" (www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/53.%20Waiting%20For%20A%20Visa.htm).

33 Devji's phrase (2013, 166), who also cites Gandhi: "When describing his earliest memories of caste in a speech delivered in Ahmedabad to the Suppressed Classes Conference in 1921, Gandhi recalled that 'While at school I would often happen to touch the Untouchables, and as I never would conceal the fact from my parents, my mother would tell me that the shortest cut to purification after the unholy touch was to cancel the touch by touching any Mussulman passing by'" (166–167, cited from "Mr. Gandhi and the Suppressed Classes: A Chapter of Autobiography" [*Young India*, 27 April 1921] 4), and juxtaposes Ambedkar: ". . . perhaps the greatest antinational leader in India of today is Mr. Gandhi, who has made it a life-mission to prevent the fusion of Untouchables with other communities and to retain them in the fold of Hinduism without any real fusion even between them and the caste Hindus" (173, cited from Vahid, 365–366).

2 Muslim responses in colonial India

> People always quote Marx and the opium of the people. The sentence that immediately preceded that statement which is never quoted says that religion is the spirit of a world without spirit. Let's say, then, that Islam, in that year of 1978, was not the opium of the people precisely because it was the spirit of a world without a spirit.
>
> (Michel Foucault, 1988a, 218)

> The fundamental concepts that often permit us to isolate or *pretend* to isolate the *political* . . . remain religious or in any case theologico-political.
>
> (Jacques Derrida, 2002, 63)

Mohamed Ali, however, has also to be viewed against the backdrop of the socio-cultural and political aims and aspirations of Muslims in the subcontinent, which were vastly improved by the successful establishment of four pioneer Muslim institutions of learning.

I

In the wake of the 1857 rebellion and the severe and systematic colonial repression that targeted all potentially subversive communities in the north of the Indian subcontinent, a 52-year-old "royalist" travelled to London to find out what was wrong with the world. Syed Ahmad Khan belonged to a well-to-do aristocratic family and might have thought of himself as belonging to an international fraternity that shared progressive ideas of government. But the colonial intervention had already substituted Urdu for Persian in 1835, a move touted as having rendered a nation of "Muslims" illiterate. The flip side of this would be that it must have made another nation, in all senses, literate. New centres of power – along diverse ideas of a nascent nationalism that happily married at convenience and lived a turbulent life, working with such imponderables as the secular, the communal, the feudal, the capitalistic, the social, the cultural, the political, the public, the private, and the like, adopting strategies of antagonism and collaboration as and when required – were springing up. The London visit gave Syed Ahmad Khan a rude shock and a new calling.

Syed Ahmad Khan left the Indian subcontinent in 1869 with the hope that he would be able to "prepare a refutation of British attacks on the history of Islam by using the wide range of sources available to his adversaries" (Lelyveld, 3). He was not planning to come back. But going over *The People of India* (see, Watson and Kaye), a publication of the India Office, and reading the English descriptions through his sons' translations, Syed Ahmad Khan was shocked to find "photographs of nearly naked men or people in unfamiliar dress" (Lelyveld, 6) featured as representative of Indians, Hindus, Muslims, etc. The third volume describes an Aligarh District landholder as having "features [that] are peculiarly Mahomedan, of the centralasian type; and while they vouch for the purity of his descent, exemplify in a strong manner the obstinacy, sensuality, ignorance, and bigotry of his class. It is hardly possible, perhaps, to conceive features more essentially repulsive" (cited by Lelyveld, 6). Syed Ahmad Khan's exposure to the other's representation had a telling effect: he decided to come back and live among the "natives." He started various English-medium schools, much to the chagrin of ardent and hardened nationalists, whether of religious or secular credentials. He also established the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1875, which in 1920 became the Aligarh Muslim University.

If what shocked Syed Ahmad Khan was that he could be represented, enumerated, as belonging to peoples with whom he had nothing in common by the same people with whom he thought he had many things in common, the Sachar Committee Report (Sachar et al.)[1] provided us with another kind of shock. I only draw attention to findings related to education: less than four per cent of Muslims graduate from school; contrary to right-wing propaganda, only four percent go to Madrasas, principally because in most areas of high Muslim concentration even primary state schools do not exist for miles; where they do exist, Muslims invariably prefer to send their wards to them, even when the dropout rate of Muslim children is much higher compared to other community wards due to "poverty," as these children are pressed into work by their indigent parents.

Whereas caste was the main node of an alliance among various Hindu communities, the Muslim elite, in the wake of the revolt of 1857 and the first all-India census in 1881 that tabulated 19.7 per cent of the Muslim population as participating in Hindu religious festivals and ceremonies,[2] concentrated on the common denominator of Islam in order to construct a "corporate identity."[3] If Indian nationalism gave birth to national communalism as well as Hindu or Muslim communal nationalism, the common denominator of community made it even more impossible for "Nationalist Muslims"[4] to work within the secular nationalist frame. This is all the more significant if we take into account the fact that Muslims, by virtue of their pre- or post-national spill over, could be read as an always-already community. This presumed always-already-ness of the Muslim peoples has given strength to the notion that Muslim academies were a decisive factor in reinforcing communalism, if not fanaticism, among Muslims. However, against the common practice of analysing them as hotbeds of Islamic separatism of varying degrees, my attempt is to re-frame these academies so that their troubled history – an integral part of the pan-Indian anti-colonial social mobilization and of various reform initiatives

that were taking place all over the Indian subcontinent – will become accessible for a critical analysis of nationalism and communalism.

Recent studies draw attention to the presence, at least by the late 1880s, of an already awakened modern consciousness among the peoples of various regions within the subcontinent. These studies have initiated a re-assessment of Gandhi's role in the nationalist movement as one directed towards harnessing and appropriating the masses for a nationalist struggle against colonialism, even as the people struggled against various oppressive practices locally. Whereas the peoples' moves were characterized by the urgent agenda of social reform as imperative for political emancipation, Gandhi worked with the ideal of political liberation (loaded with religious symbols and rhetoric) as a means for the establishment of a community free of all modern evils.[5] Contrasting it with the following succinctly brings out the different pull of the Gandhian notion of politics:

> As early as 1889 when the Prince of Wales visited Poona, Jotiba Phule had one message to convey to the Queen – the need for education of the lower castes. He made the first generation school children of the Mahar and Mali castes recite: "Tell Grandma we are a happy nation, but 19 crores are without education. Before the turn of the century, Sri Narayana Guru advised his followers: Educate that you may be free and organize that you may be strong." A couple of decades later, Dr. Ambedkar thundered: "Educate, Organize and Agitate."
>
> (Aloysius, 82)[6]

The Gandhian strategy is best exemplified by the massive movement he triggered in 1919, combining such disparate issues as cow protection, Khilafat, non-cooperation and untouchability on a single platform. With a single stroke Gandhi tried to offer cow protection to the elite caste/class, support for an Islamic symbol that was at worst confusing and at best threatened a post-national spillover, and removal of untouchability as well as capture of the leadership of Congress at Nagpur in 1920. In contrast, Jinnah became the "sole spokesman" of Muslims much later. Countering the tendency of traditional nationalist historiography, which traces the source and spread of Islamic separatism to colonial policies and elite Muslim manipulations, Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal argue that it was primarily Gandhi's support of the Khilafat that weaned power away from the Muslim League and possibly set off a two-nation policy. After the fall of Khilafat, the Muslims did not have any significant platform and some Muslim politicians from minority provinces turned to Jinnah. Deploring Gandhi's mix of religion and politics, Jinnah had already left Congress. After being shouted down at the Nagpur Congress session in 1920, he seemingly bid farewell to politics, chiefly on account of his disenchantment with the Congress position on the Nehru Report of 1928. It is in this context that we find Jinnah, by 1934, at the helm of the Muslim League (Bose and Jalal, 1999, 139 & 171).

Against the grain of the standard practice of reducing Islam in India to pan-Islamic separatism (in this context, see Sajjad), and then tracing the beginnings of

a teleological narrative of this mode, I argue that pan-Islamic interests can be read in terms other than that of separatism. Even after the collapse of the Khilafat agitation,[7] which lost wind when the Turkish National Assembly at Ankara announced on 21 November 1922 that the Khilafat and the Sultanate were two different offices not necessarily vested in one person, there was hardly any serious thought of a different nation. An examination of the relationship between Islam and modernity[8] in the Indian subcontinent as exemplified by the initiatives of two of the four main centres of Islamic thought and culture, the Darul Ulum Deoband and the Aligarh Muslim University, would substantiate such an argument[9] as these institutions were also driven by a felt need for socio-cultural reforms. However, for such an argument to emerge, it is necessary to set up a framework in which these institutions can be situated in frames other than those of Islamic separatism. Given the complex of Hindu and Muslim political negotiations, deadlocks, and resolutions, the idea of a separate nation can perhaps be understood as evolving across, rather than because of, these educational institutions. However, these educational and reform initiatives have consistently been placed within a narrative of separatism, inherent or accidentally incurred, that had such disastrous consequences for the subcontinent. Whether it is Peter Hardy, Rafiuddin Ahmed, Bipan Chandra, Mushirul Hasan, Francis Robinson, B.R. Nanda, or Bimal Prasad,[10] to cite a few examples, we find religion framed as pre-modern, impinging on and finally overwhelming modern politics of nationalism. In keeping with the logic of charting a continuous pre-historic past, except for the Islamic rupture, the pre-1947 Islamic past is also being systematically cast as part and parcel of Muslim separatism in India and thereby a part of the history of Pakistan, and not of or belonging to India.

However, most of these historians also agree that the period between 1833 and 1864 marked the trough of economic depression among the Muslim communities, though Indian historiography has not overall been bothered by statements that can be culled out from various sources to establish the existence of harmony or of discord between Hindu and Muslim communities. For example, Al-Beruni, who had accompanied the invading Mahmud of Ghazni, invoking a rhetoric of "us" and "them," notes that "they [Hindus] differ from us [Muslims] in everything which other nations have in common," be it language, religion, manners, or usage, so much that they "frighten their children with us, with our dress, and our ways and customs, and as to declare us to be devil's breed, and our doings as the very opposite of all that is good and proper" (cited in Prasad, 79, from Sachua, 19–20). In the context of the rapid decline of the Mughal dynasty after the death of Aurangzeb (in 1707), Shah Waliullah (1703–1762; see, Rizvi) spearheaded a movement among Muslims – much before the somewhat parallel initiative of Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833) – a partly revivalist initiative directed towards resurrecting and energizing the Muslims of India. He sought to do so by making them aware of the message of Islam and by trying to purge Islam from all its accidental accretions in the Indian subcontinent. However, he also sought for himself an Arabic lineage and "wrote to one Muslim ruler or nobleman after another imploring them to muster courage and start a *jihad* for the restoration of Muslim rule in India" (Prasad, 74). Shah Waliullah's attitude towards people of other faiths, one of

absolute scorn (Prasad, 75), should be read in the context of the rising Maratha power and the economic degeneration of the Muslim community. After the battle of Plassey (in 1757), whereby the British took over from the Mughal dynasty, Muslims were systematically kept out of the revenue, judicial, and military departments of the new state apparatus. Motivated by a desire to stop the economic as well as intellectual degradation of Muslims, Shah Waliullah established a *madrasah* and translated the Quran, going against the precept that it has to be read in the Arabic alone, into Persian, the language of the state apparatus, so that Muslims in India could read and understand it for themselves. After his death, his son, Shah Abdul Aziz (1746–1824), vigorously upheld Shah Waliullah's ideals. Angered at the institutional neglect of Muslims, in 1803 Abdul Aziz declared India "the country of the enemy" (*Darul Harb*), thereby giving legal/religious sanction to Muslims to either migrate or fight the British. In the fatwa, Abdul Aziz outlines the reasons:

> In this city (Delhi) the *Imam-ul-Muslimin* wields no authority. The real power rests with Christian officers. There is no check on them; and the promulgation of the Commands of *Kufr* means that in administration and justice, in matter of law and order, in the domain of trade, finance and collection of revenue – everywhere the *Kuffar* (infidels) are in power. Yes, there are certain Islamic rituals, e.g., Friday and Id prayers, *adhan* and cow slaughter, with which they brook no interference; but the very root of these rituals is of no value to them. They demolish mosques without the least hesitation and no Muslim or any *dhimmi* can enter into the city or its suburbs but with their permission. It is in their own interests if they do not object to the travelers and traders to visit the city. On the other hand, distinguished persons like Shuja-ul-Mulk and Vilayati Begum cannot dare visit the city without their permission. From here (Delhi) to Calcutta the Christians are in complete control. There is no doubt that in principalities like Hyderabad, Rampur, Lucknow etc. they have left the administration in the hands of the local authorities, but it is because they have accepted their lordship and have submitted to their authority.
>
> (cited in Hashmi, 20–21, from Aziz, 1893, 17)

One of his disciples, Shah Ahmed Barelvi (1786–1831) led the Wahhabi movement (see, Qeyamuddin Ahmad), a religious reform initiative with socio-political implications. This movement fed into the 1857 rebellion (see, Thomas Metcalf, 1965, and Stokes, 1986) in which both the Hindu and Muslim communities participated.[11] The suppression of the rebellion only led to an even more drastic repression of Muslims. Following Bourdieu,[12] it is not difficult to see what a Muslim leader's agenda would have been in the post-1857 period: an acute realization of the increasing contradictions in the Muslim social world, whereby what was held as social capital became untranslatable or convertible to economic capital and whereby the Muslim cultural capital lost its value in terms of exchange, called for institutionalized ventures to recharge and re-circulate the various forms of capital

in the Muslim socius. Two prominent Muslims of this time, Maulana Qasim Nanautavi (1832–1880) and Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898; see, Shan Muhammad, 1969, and Troll), both disciples of Maulana Mamluk Ali of the Waliullahi school of thought, reacted differently during and after the 1857 rebellion, thereby starting, respectively, the *Darul Ulum* (as Deoband was known) in 1867 and the *Madrasatul Ulum* (as the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College, later the Aligarh Muslim University, was initially known) in 1877.[13]

Darul Ulum of Deoband "emphasized the diffusion of scripturalist practices and the cultivation of an inner spiritual life" (Barbara Metcalf, 1994, 278). Barbara Metcalf[14] notes that, when confronted with social changes with far-reaching implications, the leaders of this movement adopted "a strategy of turning within, eschewing for the time all concern with the organization of state and relations with other communities . . . [in order to] preserve the religious heritage . . . and to disseminate instruction in authentic religious practice and belief" (1982, 11). Their turn away from politics was to foster the "dominant activities [of] education and propaganda" (1982, 352), but, warns Barbara Metcalf, "this overriding meaning given to the movement is crucial if one is not to be misled into seeing 'modernity' where the participants would see Islam" (1982, 360). However, her concession that some of the "unique characteristics of Islamic movements," in that they are shaped "by new means of communication, Western domination and resulting forms of economic change, and by mass participation in political activities" (1982, 360)[15] may reduce some of the seeming differences between her and my framing of these Islamic movements. The basic similarity in our positions is also brought out when she writes: "Yet the Islamic quality of the movements is central, not only because it gives them meaning, but because it has a life of its own, apart from any abstract model of 'modernity' that regards such symbols as only veneer" (360). In a frame that looks at religion, especially Islam, not as antithetical to modernity and acknowledges modernity as having other trajectories, Islamic initiatives, even the strictly religious Deoband movement, can be seen as engaging with modernity without foregoing the religious aspect.

The Aligarh movement and the Deoband school of thought embodied two different, and even antagonistic, alternatives available for Muslims vis-à-vis nationalist politics. The Aligarh movement, which was instrumental in shaping Mohamed Ali, was formatted by the religious and reformist zeal of Syed Ahmad Khan, the loyalist-turned-nationalist. It would help us to remember here that the opposition to Syed Ahmad Khan "came neither from opponents of modern education nor from people discontented with British rule . . . [but from] people who had come to terms with British rule without the kind of modifications of religious belief that Sayyid Ahmad proposed" (Metcalf, 1982, 324–325). The Aligarh movement held on to a position that Dalits have articulated more forcefully later; it was interested in educational initiatives and institutionalization of a modern subjectivity, even if it meant allying with the British, before political emancipation could be thought of. On the other hand, the Deoband movement, comprising the poor strata of society and guided by more orthodox religious leaders, followed the Congress initiative for a full-fledged anti-colonial move. Blind to the fact that "religion was

inextricably mixed up with politics" (Ali, 1999, 151), and especially so in Gandhi's Congress, it was Syed Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh movement which was severely chastised by nationalists for introducing western ideals and the seeds of separatism. The urgency felt by Syed Ahmad Khan for socio-cultural reforms is exemplified by the following statement:

> Now, suppose that the British are not in India and that one of the nations of India has conquered the other, whether the Hindus the Muhammedans or the Muhammedans the Hindus. At once some other nation of Europe, such as the French, the Germans, the Portuguese or the Russians, will attack India. . . . Everyone will agree that their governments are far worse . . . than the British Government. It is, therefore, necessary that for the peace of India and for the progress of everything in India the English Government should remain for many years – in fact for ever.
>
> (Syed Ahmad Khan, 1886, 196–197)

He should also be seen in the light of his, at times idealistic, conception of a future where Hindus and Muslims share representative power in the government. But he also felt that Muslims were not ready for such a power-sharing, and hence, opposed the Congress thrust for immediate political freedom and supported an Anglo-Islamic alliance in order to safeguard the Muslims of the subcontinent. Later, he was to talk of his life's work as a bitter failure; Lelyveld notes: "The fathers of Aligarh's first generation sought change and acted to bring it about, but the changes they got were different from what they had in mind" (103). Nonetheless, Aligarh was to become a political symbol because of the social and cultural changes taking place around it and also because of it.

B.R. Nanda, guided by his desire to absolve the Congress by blaming the British, reads Syed Ahmad Khan's ideas as coinciding with W.W. Hunter's recommendations to neutralize discontent leading to resistance by Muslims. Hunter had "suggested that the Government should do, through English education, to the Muslims what it had done to the Hindus, and bring the Muslims also into the 'present state of easy tolerance,' which was characteristic of the majority community" (Nanda, 75). Hunter had earlier envisaged a new breed of Muslims, "no longer learned in their own narrow learning, nor imbued wholly with the bitter doctrines of their Mediaeval Law, but tinctured with the sober and genial knowledge of the West," with "sufficient acquaintance with their religious code to command the respect of their own community," who could be English-trained so that they could "secure an entry into the lucrative walks of life" (182). In his eagerness to trace the seeds of separatism in the Anglo-Islamic alliance, Nanda turns a blind eye to the major thrust of Hunter's statement that Muslims were economically as well as socially backward when compared to Hindus. What should be stressed is that Syed Ahmad Khan had a different agenda, that of regenerating a community by enabling it to mediate modernity. This is brought out by the fact that his pamphlet *Strictures on the Present State of Education in India* stresses the inadequacy of the education offered by the British to Indians.

It must be remembered that Jotirao Phule (1827–1890), who was conferred the title "Mahatma" in 1888, had made a representation to Hunter's Commission stating that the majority of "Hindus" and "Muslims" have been categorically kept out of education (Joshi, 34–41). Syed Ahmad Khan notes: "The sum total of all that has been effected by the English Colleges, has been to qualify an insignificant number, as letter-writers, copyists, signal-men, and railway ticket collectors" (cited in Lelyveld, 107). Moreover, as Lelyveld points out, there is a significant area in which he differs from Hunter's position; he did not think that Muslims were bound by their religion to oppose the British (Lelyveld, 112). This was a crucial part of Syed Ahmad Khan's programme, since a perception that Muslims were bound to fight by their religion would have been detrimental to his programme of educational initiatives.

In this context, it is of interest that Syed Alam Khundmiri[16] (1922–1983) articulates a different critique of Islam and of the initiative of Syed Ahmad Khan. According to him, the problem for Islam, especially in India, is to enable itself to move towards an understanding of the need to fill the gap between absolute reason and historical reason. Given the plethora of legal and juridical codifications of the proper Islamic way of life, which draw on a ten per cent of verses in the Quran, he argues that various Islamic communities are called upon to supplement the absolute reason, as embodied in the Quran, with their own particular historical reason. He sees the situation of Muslims in India as challenging in that they have to play the role of a minority in a state that calls itself secular, whereby politics have been separated from religion. Hence, in an aporetic move, he argues against his own understanding of "the intimate relation of politics and religion in early Islam" (46) and advocates a "[s]eparation of politics and religion and minimalization of religion in public life [as] the only sensible solutions for a multi-religious society like India" (104).[17] I would place such contradictions, as was the case with Mohamed Ali, as inherent in the critical-subject position articulating a critique on different levels. Nonetheless, Khundmiri also points to the sad fact that in India, secularism is yet to be the mode of life that informs all its institutions (225) and "[d]esacralization becomes one of the inevitable consequences of the march of modernity or secularization" (230). Hence, Syed Ahmad Khan's ideals cannot be read as motivated by his vested class interests alone, as M. Mujeeb seems to do when he bemoans that a "selfish and parasitical" North Indian Muslim community became the "residuary legatees of all cultural values" for Indian Muslims (cited in Nanda, 73, from Mujeeb, 507). Considering these facts, the majority of Indians, Hindus and Muslims alike, were hardly made part of the elite domain of Indian nationalist thought, and thus Syed Ahmad Khan may be seen as embodying an earlier form of the Indian secular nationhood, as imagined later by Jinnah and Nehru. But it was the Darul Ulum of Deoband that interested the Congress. The phenomenon of Gandhi presents a picture where the secular elite nationalists (Hindu and Muslim alike) were caught on the wrong foot by the mass mobilization unleashed by Gandhi.[18] Gandhi's initiative[19] transformed the scene of nationalist politics once and forever. However, it is not scrutinized for pan-Indian or pan-Hinduistic trends as is, say, the pan-Islamic

separatism of a Syed Ahmad Khan or a Mohamed Ali (1878–1931). Khundmiri comments:

> It is a significant fact, which is often ignored, that – though the Muslim intellectuals, led by Syed Ahmed Khan, did not agree with their Hindu counterparts so far as politics was concerned – there was complete theoretical agreement between them so far as the dominant ideas of rationalism and a scientific criticism of the past were concerned. . . .
>
> The situation, however, changed with the coming over of the nationalists on the Indian scene. The Hindu liberals were replaced by extremists like Tilak, B.P. Pal, and Aurobindo, and the Muslim liberals by the young obscurantist Abul Kalam Azad. Rationalism was replaced by religious authority, and the "present" was reduced into the past.
>
> (233)

We must remember here that Ambedkar (1891–1956) had to give up, for the sake of national unity and to save the life of a fasting Mahatma, his thrust for separate electorates for the scheduled castes and other underprivileged in the historic Poona pact. While examining how the Social Reform party lost out to the Political Reform party, Ambedkar, who almost espoused Islam in 1935, comments that "the emancipation of the mind and the soul is a necessary preliminary for the political expansion of a people" (1990a, 41). Writing out his thoughts of Pakistan in 1941, we find Ambedkar being almost pensive about the "common destiny" (2000, 54) of Muslims in India and remarks: "So obvious is this destiny that it is somewhat surprising that the Muslims should have taken so long to own it up . . . [though] some of them knew this to be the ultimate destiny of the Muslims as early as 1923" (2000, 50). Reading the idea of Pakistan as a "pre-appointed destiny" (2000, 56) which was working within the Muslims, unknown to them, Ambedkar notes the dominion status and the adult franchise scheme of the Nehru report which touted "the principle of one-man-one-vote and one-vote-one-value and that, however much the benefit is curtailed by weightage of Muslims, the result cannot fail to be a government of the Hindus, by the Hindus and therefore for the Hindus" (2000, 56). Any attempt to force a unity will only lead to a complete frustration of India's destiny, he writes, wondering whether "integral India is an ideal worth fighting for" (2000, 57). Ambedkar observes that though the "distinction between a community and a nation is rather thin," the Muslims should have talked of a nation from the very beginning instead of "mistakenly calling itself a community even when it has in it the elements of a nation" because they were not "possessed of a national consciousness although in every sense of the term they are a nation" (2000, 53). Recalling Mohamed Ali's 1923 Presidential address, where he had noted that "[u]nless some new force other than the misleading unity of opposition unites this vast continent of India, it will remain a geographical misnomer" (2000, 59), Ambedkar argues that the Hindus and Muslims have met but never merged.

> Only during the Khilafat agitation did the waters of the two channels leave their appointed course and flow as one stream in one channel. It was believed that nothing would separate the waters which God was pleased to join. But that hope was belied. It was found that there was something in the composition of the two waters which would compel their separation. Within a few years of their confluence but as soon as the substance of the Khilafat cause vanished – the water from the one stream reacted violently to the presence of the other, as one does to a foreign substance entering one's body. Each began to show a tendency to throw out and separate the other. The result was that when the waters did separate they did with such impatient velocity and determined violence – if one can use such language in speaking of water – against each other that thereafter they began flowing in channels far deeper and far distant from each other than those existing before.
>
> (2000, 55)

Ambedkar is severe in his criticism of the mass mobilization programme launched by Gandhi and the Congress, for it "was intended to produce political unity between Hindu and Muslim masses by ignoring or circumventing the leaders of the Muslims," essentially similar to "the plan of the British conservative Party to buy Labour with 'Tory Gold'" (2000, 59). Though it may produce unity, such unity would be suppressing an opposition by unfair and despicable means, like false propaganda, by misrepresentation and would only end up by disarming the community. Ruminating on the common destiny of the Muslims, Ambedkar, wistfully, compares them to the Dalits:

> A people who, notwithstanding their differences, accept a common destiny for themselves as well as their opponents, are a community. A people who are not only different from the rest but who refuse to accept for themselves the same destiny which others do, are a nation. It is this difference in the acceptance and non-acceptance of a common destiny which alone can explain why the Untouchables, the Christians and the Parsis are in relation to the Hindus only communities and why the Muslims are a nation.
>
> (2000, 54)

Hastily pointing out that there "cannot be any radical difference between a minor nation and a minor community, where both are prepared to live under one single constitution" (2000, 54), Ambedkar notes that if the differences are not addressed, but only suppressed, then "India will be an anaemic and sickly state, ineffective, a living corpse, dead though not buried" (2000, 57). In hindsight, we can point out that India did not die; it successfully united itself by constructing the Muslim as "something other than the other," which holds the nation together and haunts it at the same time.[20] This haunting it to hold it together inevitably points to the unfinished nature of the nation-formation so that we are required to blatantly chant our patriotism so as to deflect attention from its own "spectral truth" in the face of the other's "material truth" (Derrida, 1995, 87).

We are again and again brought to face the possibility that "spectrality" of Islam is constructed in order to blunt Dalit critique of Brahminical Hinduism. Ambedkar's statement that "[a] caste has no feeling that is affiliated to other castes except when there is a Hindu-Muslim riot" (2000, 52) makes one wonder about the bogey of the Muslim, a bogus Indian, serving the nation by haunting it. A recent example of such a tactic, as Dalit writers have pointed out, would be the raking up of the Babri Masjid issue in order to side-step the Mandal Commission's guidelines for reservation. Such re-readings from the minoritarian/Dalit angles force one to rethink Gandhi's opposition to separate electorates for the "lower" castes. Beverley Nichols notes:

> Gandhi fiercely opposed this scheme. "Give the untouchables separate electorates," he cried, "and you only perpetuate their status for all time." It was a queer argument, and those who were not bemused by the Mahatma's charm considered it a phoney one. They suspected that Gandhi was a little afraid that 60 million untouchables might join up with the 100 million Muslims – (as they nearly did) – and challenge the dictatorship of the 180 million orthodox Hindus.
>
> (39)

In marked contrast to the valorization of a pan-Hindu identity, pan-Islamism of the Aligarh or the Deoband variety is labelled separatist in a very easy manner. The success and failure of Gandhi's adventure is absolutely tied to his vision of an Indian *modern* nation, a *Hind-swaraj*.[21] Gandhi's intrusion or intervention into the nationalist scene sparked off more problems than solutions: an upper-caste and western-educated Gandhi "returning" to the people with a South African exposure to racism and abjuring his clothes in order to serve the "people of India" with strategic alliances with Muslims captures the complexity of the issue. He thought of Muslims as another community and easily walked into alliances with the Ali brothers, who duplicated Gandhi's initiative among the Muslim communities. Hence, pan-Islamism must be seen as parallel to the pan-Hindu initiative of Gandhi and the Congress, and both are culpable, if that is the right word, for the creation of two nation-states. In this context, it is actually the Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama that embodied a post-national pan-Islamic position. Combining the Deoband's religious initiative and the Aligarh's modernizing trends, they advocated a return to Arabic and critiqued the Arab nation-states for their adherence to the nationalist ideology of the West. They intended to re-charge the world of Islam by writing the Indian experience into it (see, Zaman). Unlike the Deoband, the Aligarh, and the Jamia Millia ventures, the Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama's stress is more on the Arab-Islamic heritage than on the Indian experience of Islam.

In Khundmiri's perspective, Syed Ahmad Khan set out to enable Muslims of India to engage with modernity, even if it required a "depoliticiz[ation of] the Indian Muslims" (267). What is also relevant is that he understood the danger of falling into the trap of a mentality that looked backwards to a golden age of Mughal power.[22] As Khundmiri remarks: "The conflict between the two outlooks of two

Indian communities is, really speaking, a conflict between two past-oriented outlooks. It is a fact that most sensitive minds among Hindus and Muslims adopt an apologetic attitude towards their respective traditions" (279). This happened among Muslims, in Khundmiri's words, because

> . . . a community whose existence is being questioned by a powerful section of the majority can hardly be expected to take a bold jump into the unknown future. The suspicions of this articulate section of the majority are not merely based on ignorance; there are reasonable grounds to believe that a totalitarian-fascist trend is the source of an antipathy towards Indian Muslims. To think in terms of cultural revival is itself irrational and unscientific, but when the majority talks about it, it becomes a greater threat to the growth of democratic institutions.
>
> (281)

As a corollary of this threat, Islam in the modern context became dominated by elitist, conservative, anti-democratic, and authoritarian thought (271) which tried to shake itself off lived historical accretions, like folk-religious practices (50), which were also the mark of its history in India. According to Khundmiri, instead of advocating a pan-Islamic exclusivity or separatism, Syed Ahmad Khan in his "passion to bring science and religion closer landed him[self] in a deistic position [whereby] in the ultimate analysis God was almost banished from his religious consciousness" (78). Khundmiri goes on to identify the cause for this in Syed Ahmad Khan's perception of myth as contrary to contemporary science. This could have been an extreme reaction to the philosophical stagnation in contemporary Islamic thought, which started imitating its own past. What is required is for Islam to move "forward in time and . . . forc[e] a re-entry on the stage of history" (Khundmiri, 101). Khundmiri is able to identify the problem with Syed Ahmad Khan's initiative as a negation of historically developed religious practices. However, written in the heyday of the Nehruvian promise, Khundmiri is not able to grant such historically developed practices a political edge. In Mohamed Ali's words,

> Syed Ahmad Khan had no less aversion to the schools and colleges of a religiously neutral government and he attributed the backwardness of his co-religionists in Western education to their sound instinct and the cherished traditions of their past which could not tolerate such a thing as a complete divorce between secular and religious education.
>
> (1999, 62)

Also, when Khundmiri talks about Syed Ahmad Khan's depoliticization of Muslims, he is reading politics in a limited manner. That is the reason why he cannot look at Syed Ahmad Khan's move towards a depoliticization of Indian Muslims as being political. Reading the existentialist movement as the consequence of a clash between the theocentric and the anthropocentric attitudes, Khundmiri notes: "The 'dead God' still haunts the imagination of the secularized humanity of the

twentieth century and in a certain sense this idea seems to determine the quality of human existence" (288). Hence, we can see that Khundmiri's position is that religion and politics have to be read as always-already connected, given the Christian ethos of the western secular-modern. The cry for their separation is usually raised against minoritarian communities in a majoritarian world. Arguing against the easy equation arrived at between the majoritarian and minoritarian "communalism," Jalal comments that "such an overarching and loaded term as communalism ends up essentializing the very religiously informed identities, politics and conflicts it purportedly aims at explaining and combating" (1998, 78). She warns against an "academic communalism" in that our debates acknowledge communalism as at best the pejorative other of nationalism or at worst a borrowing from the colonialist project of essentializing Indian society and history. Stressing the need for charting out a new typology that sidesteps the facile and rigid distinctions between liberals and traditionalists or between modernists and anti-modernists or between communalists or secular nationalists, she points out that a "decidedly elitist discourse," especially that of the exponents of the Muslim-minority provinces, has been usually taken "as not only reflective of Indian Muslims but also their 'communal consciousness'" (1998, 80). And the elision of religious difference, she argues, with an essentialized homogeneous Muslim community is explained, as in the work of Farzana Shaikh, in terms of "the legitimizing ideals of Islamic solidarity and the necessary subordination of the individual will to the *ijma* or consensus of the community" (1998, 80). Jalal notes how Altaf Hussain Hali and his mentor, Syed Ahmad Khan, had no conception of their Muslimness as being at odds with their Indianness. She shows how the Deoband orthodoxy, which she describes as more culturally exclusive and "harbouring anti-colonial and Islamic universalist sentiments, immersed themselves in religious strictures at traditional educational institutions" (1998, 82) and how, later on, the more religiously inclined young Abul Kalam Azad ended up siding with an inclusionary and "secular" Indian nationalism. Such a move, in Khundmiri's words, was premised on "a mystification of the past rather than a preparation for building a new future" and the "seeds of the glorification of the past were contained in the movement for independence itself" (277). According to Jalal, in the face of increasing Hindu revivalist ventures, especially cow slaughter and a Hindi with a Devanagari script, "the interests of the 'majority' religious community could be subsumed under the umbrella of the emerging Indian 'nation,' those of the largest religious 'minority' remained marooned in the idea of the 'community'" (1998, 85). Jalal comments that almost all analyses of the Montford reforms underplay "the extent to which the provincial dynamic in electoral and representative activities countered the process of 'communalizing' Muslim politics at the all-India level. . . . The convergence of Muslim and Punjabi or Muslim and Bengali did not mean exchanging provincial interest for a common religious identity" (1998, 89). She adds that the dismal performance of the League in the 1937 elections substantiates the view that there was not any primary cohesion among Muslims of India at the national level; it was rather "the perceived threat from the singular and uncompromising 'nationalism' of the Congress to provincial autonomy and class interests which gave the discourse and

politics of the Indian Muslims as a subcontinental category a fresh lease of life" (1998, 90). Moreover, the demand for Bangladesh in the Islamic nation-state of Pakistan has to be read as disproving claims of a pan-Islamic cohesion at the subcontinental level. Also, as Jalal notes: "More successful in deluding itself than large segments of society comfortably positioned to simultaneously live out multiple layers of identity, the inefficacy of the Pakistani state's Islamic card is a powerful indictment of the argument that the religious factor in 'Muslim consciousness' outweighs all other considerations" (1998, 99).

II

The narrator in *Shame* speaks about Pakistan as a failure of the dreaming mind, as "just insufficiently imagined" (Rushdie, 1995, 87). Is it possible then to think that probably India was just excessively imagined? While colonial interpretations of and nationalist reactions to various multi-layered narratives of the 1026 raid of the Somanatha temple, especially after the 1843 United Kingdom House of Commons debate (see Thapar, 2004), may have had telling effects on North Indian Hindu/Muslim nationalist imaginings, so much that it interrupted Syed Ahmad Khan's journey, it may be productive to counterpoint it with histories of Indian Muslims who stayed put. In this section I engage with a text and an event separated by 272 years in order to gesture towards the predicaments and preoccupations of Malabar Muslims. The first is a sixteenth century epic written in Arabic[23] in Malabar in 1583, exhorting Malabar Muslims to *jihad* against the Portuguese, and the second is comprised of narratives about the murder of British Malabar District Collector H.V. Conolly in 1855. My brief discussion of *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin* by Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum (1498–1583) and the circumstances of Conolly's murder, attesting to the influence of the Mambram (Mamburam) Thangals (1750–1844 and 1824–1900), will hopefully demonstrate that pan-Islamism is not to be necessarily equated with separatism. In fact, it could be argued that pan-Islamism actually counters separatist tendencies, unless accentuated by socio-political and other exacerbating circumstances!

According to *Kerala: Webster's Timeline History*:

> The first mention of Kerala occurs on one of the rock inscriptions left by Asoka, the Mauryan emperor during the third century BC. It was then an independent kingdom known as Kerala putra, which was ruled by the powerful Chera dynasty until the fifth century AD. The history of Kerala from the sixth to eighth centuries AD is obscure.
>
> (Parker, 4)

Leaving aside the vicissitudes of the Chera and Chola dynasties, we start hearing about Malabar (often, Manibar, Malibar, etc.) from around the eighth century onwards from various Arabic sources (see, Nainar). While St. Thomas is acknowledged to have reached present-day Kerala around 52 AD, and Jews in 69 AD, Arab trade with many parts of present-day India is understood to have started much

before, and Islam is supposed to have reached Kerala during the time of the Prophet. According to one legend, the ruler Cheraman Perumal dreamt (in another version, he actually saw) that the full moon appeared on the night of the new moon and, at the meridian, split into two, one half remaining and the other half descending to the foot of a hill. The two halves then joined together and set. Puzzled as to the meaning of this dream/vision, the Perumal is supposed to have found a satisfactory explanation when some Muslim pilgrims told him that the Prophet had performed such a miracle to convert a number of non-believers (Logan, 1989a, vol. 1, 193–195; Miller, 1992 46–48; Wink, vol. 1, 76–77). According to received Islamic tradition, the Perumal became a convert and allowed the construction of mosques in various places. There are various other regional and tribal Cheraman Perumal legends, since very likely the name is generic to a dynasty which ruled for 12–20 years. However, it is generally agreed upon that the first mosque in the Indian subcontinent was thus built at Kodungallur around 629 AD and underlines the fact that Islam was a palpable and by and large peaceful presence in Malabar from then on. However, the arrival of the Portuguese drastically changed the equation. The Portuguese held sway over the seas from 1498 to 1663, when they were superseded by the Dutch- and then the British.

The background of Makhdum's text is of course Vasco da Gama's 1498 journey, whereby the Portuguese King was "induced . . . to order [India] to be discovered" (Jackson, 217) and the ensuing violent conflicts along the Indian coastline from Gujarat to Kerala. Makhdum's text testifies to the manner in which Portuguese dealt with the natives and, thus, is a testament of resistance. The text is divided into four sections. The first, "A Treatise on the Necessity of *Jihad* and Instructions thereof," is followed by two sections: "History of the Advent and Spread of Islam in Malabar" and "Certain Strange Customs of the Hindus in Malabar." The fourth and last section is further divided into fourteen chapters which detail the arrival of Portuguese, their shameful deeds, the Zamorin-Portuguese rivalry and the five treaties between them, the deeds of the valiant Marakkars and the unsuccessful and brief episode whereby the Turkish Sultan Bahadur Shah tried to establish control over Gujarat. My interest in this text, however, is both parachronic and prochronic, in the senses of being beside as well as before time. It will be impossible to continue to ignore the fact that the text was written in Malabar but in Arabic, or that it was first published in Arabic in Lisbon and was widely translated into many other foreign as well as Indian languages, or that its message was orally transmitted among Malabar Muslims almost immediately and was probably the topic of various Friday sermons, or that it raises serious questions for our times.

How does one try to read and understand a 1583 document that was written to inspire/exhort native Malabar Muslims to resist the Portuguese for their atrocities[24] during the eighty-five years of Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum's life? Incidentally, he was born in the same year Vasco da Gama (1460s-1524) landed at Kappad beach in Malabar, on 20 May 1498, and died the same year he wrote *Tufhat al-Mujahidin*. Da Gama's journey was of course occasioned by the prevailing European situation. According to Mamdani (4–7), the year 1492, "stands as a gateway to two

related endeavours: one the unification of the nation, the other the conquest of the world" (5). Let us recall that 1492 saw "the onset of the European Renaissance and the birth of political modernity. It is also the year Christopher Columbus set sail for the New World and the year the armies of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella conquered the city-state of Granada, then seen as the last Muslim stronghold in western Christendom" (4). Following Max Weber, Mamdani argues that political modernity need not necessarily be equated with the beginning of democracy, but can be understood to depend upon the centralized state monopolizing violence, which was also the political prerequisite for a civil society. The unification of Spain, first and foremost a Christian nation, began with an act of ethnic cleansing, for Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, incidentally, signed the Edict of Expulsion designed to get rid of Spain's Jews. The choice offered to Jews was stark: baptism or deportation. In 1499, "the Spanish state gave its Muslims the same choice: convert or leave" (5). Mamdani's point is that "the history of the modern state can also be read as the history of race, bringing together the stories of two kinds of victims of European political modernity: the internal victims of state building and the external victims of imperial expansion" (5–6). Hannah Arendt has pointed out: "Of the two main political devices of imperialist rule, race was discovered in South Africa, and bureaucracy in Algeria, Egypt and India" (cited, 6). Mamdani notes that both racism and genocide had occurred in the American colonies earlier than South Africa: "The near decimation of Native Americans through a combination of slaughter, disease, and dislocation was, after all, the first recorded genocide in modern history" (6). Hence, the "Holocaust was born at the meeting point of two traditions that marked modern Western civilization: 'the anti-Semitic tradition and the tradition of genocide of colonized peoples'" (7). And one of the major obstacles to critical thinking in the West is the nature in which the Holocaust is recounted. Instead of a larger framework that re-cognizes it as part and parcel of the modernity project, this return of the repressed is often touted as a mistake, as an unfortunate moment in history.

In marked contrast to the Europeans, for whom trade was often synonymous with plunder,[25] maritime trade had been going on relatively peacefully – according to Greek and Latin sources from the sixth century BC and according to Chinese sources from the first century onwards – and Arab sources indicate that travel and trade was rampant from at least the seventh century. Moreover, from 899 AD onwards Hadhrami migrants belonging to the Shafi'i persuasion of Sunnis are known to have migrated and settled in various places, particularly in Syria and Yemen and in many places in the African continent, and from 1220 AD onwards in places like Bijapur, Surat, Ahmedabad, Broach, Hyderabad, Delhi, Baroda, Malabar,[26] and Bengal, in the Indian subcontinent, in addition to Java, Sumatra, Malaya, Borneo, and the Philippines. Thus, Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum's parents are known to have migrated from Ma'bar in Yemen to Ponnani in Malabar in the early fifteenth century while Mambram Thangal Syed Alawi migrated from Tarim in Yemen to Mambram in Malabar in 1768.

Tuhfat al-Mujahidin: A Historical Epic of the Sixteenth Century[27] was written by Shaykh Zainuddin Makhdum, also known as the second, in Arabic around 1583.

This sixteenth-century historical epic, as described by the publishers, probably played a major role in shaping the Malabar Mappila revolts against colonialist invasions. Though details of the Malayalam translations of the Arabic during this period are not available, it was very likely circulated in parts; the Arabic text was also definitely used to teach students of various Islamic institutions, including at the Ponnani Mosque, which was built by Makhdum's grandfather around 1519, and where he himself studied and later taught for thirty-six years after pursuing higher education in Mecca for ten years. Interestingly, Makhdum, with a Sunni lineage from Yemen, dedicated his book to Ali Adil Shah I, who was the fifth king (1557–1580) of the independent Shi'ite Muslim southern Indian dynasty founded in 1489 by Yusuf Adil Shah, who came from Persia. While C. Hamza notes that this dedication is "an exemplary attitude of tolerance to be imitated by scholars of all sections of all time" (Note 14 to the Introduction, 99), it is also likely that it was a strategic move, since he is supposed to have "tried his best to create a confederacy of Muslim rulers against the Portuguese" (Foreword, xv). But the Foreword also adds: "the concept of *jihad* is projected not to dethrone the Zamorin or to capture his territories, but to seek a peaceful life for the Islamic community in a *dar al-harb* (non-Islamic country)" (xiv). Moreover, Hamza comments that one cannot translate *jihad* precisely as military campaign or holy war. Rather, the word usually used for "war" in Arabic is *harb* and that *ijtihad* (intellectual and epistemological efforts in research) and *jihad* are from the common root *jahada* and hence the latter should be understood as an "exclusive technical term of Islam" and could mean the "struggle taking place in one's soul and mind," "a conflict between two opposite forces, or tendencies," which could also be ideological (Note 2 to Section One, 100).

We must remember that Makhdum does not exhort Muslims of Malabar to fight against the Zamorins. In fact, the text records the peaceful co-existence of natives and Muslims for a long period. Moreover, Muslim migrants who settle down are known to adapt to the new conditions, as amply demonstrated in the North Indian and South Indian contexts.[28] Hence, it was the advent of the Portuguese and their attempt to loot and plunder not only the natives and settlers but also the ships of many other peaceful traders, especially from Arabia, that triggered an international conflict around Malabar. As we know, conflicts between peoples, and religions, have to be also understood within their historical milieu. Otherwise we would end up making statements that imply that Shivaji Maharaj was the first terrorist in the world.[29] Makhdum's sixteenth-century call for *jihad* against the imperialistic Portuguese then becomes a response to the shameful deeds against the natives, of which a sizeable portion are foreign settlers. From such a perspective, it also seems obvious that we have to re-conceptualize present-day terrorism, not as a resurgence of a pre- or anti-modern religion but as contemporary response (postmodern, if you wish) to current global conflicts. A clue to our inability to do so also lies within the English translation itself. In the foreword, by a noted historian (Makhdum, xiii), the title (the full Arabic title: *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin fi ba'd Akhbar al-Burtughaliyyin*) is translated as "Glory to the Victory of Martyrs" when it should really be "Tribute to the Holy Warriors in Respect of a Brief Account of the Portuguese," as is evident from the text itself. The inaccurate choice of "martyr" rather than

"warriors" is significant. It is indeed the blindness of a modernist frame, which is thereby uncritically accepted along with the ethos of a particular historical period in a specific region and religion, which makes contemporary political subjects into pre-modern fanatics and/or terrorists. It is indeed surprising that amid all this talk of Islamic terrorism no serious attempt has been made to listen to their side of hi-story. In fact, today there seems to be a demand, and maybe a desire among Muslims as well, to disown the present-day terrorists; for Muslims to proclaim that terrorists are not Muslims. In fact, Vilayathullah, in the short biography of Makhdum, given in the text, goes one step further:

> The success of the Malabar Muslims, a negligible force in comparison, in their struggles against the Portuguese, the foremost imperialistic power of the time, will be inspiring to the present generation. . . . Further, it establishes, once and for all, the fact that Islam and the Muslim community have always been considered an obstacle to the imperialistic ambitions of all times, the Portuguese and the British in the past or the U.S. and its allies in the modern times.
>
> (xxii)

But what about the inhuman murder of Conolly, who was stabbed about twenty-seven times by three Muslims? Details of the event that can be gathered from administrative records[30] are as follows: On 4 August 1855, two prisoners escaped while doing penal labour in Calicut. After hiding out in the homes of friends and relatives and offering prayers at various mosques, particularly at the shrine of Syed Alawi Thangal at Mambram, accompanied by another person, they reached a house near Conolly's residence on 10 September 1855. The next night, between 8 and 9 pm, they silently entered Conolly's residence. He was reclining on a sofa with his wife sitting opposite. The small lamp did not help Mrs. Conolly to see the assailants as they stabbed Conolly from behind. As the lamp fell down, Conolly was stabbed repeatedly, so much that his left hand was almost severed. Mrs. Conolly's cries did not attract any servants. As the assassins fled, they attacked and cut off four fingers of a servant who accidentally saw them. Thereafter they moved from place to place till they chanced upon a group of Muslims who were not followers of Mambram Thangal and who tried to apprehend them. Firing twice, using a gun they had snatched from a peon, they fled into a nearby house. Towards evening, a police party and a military division surrounded the house. In the ensuing battle, all three were killed, along with a European soldier. The bodies of the rebels was thereafter publicly exhibited, hung from an iron bar, and then burnt publicly on 8 October 1855 and their ashes buried inside the prison to forestall local veneration and worship. As a result of government enquiry, twenty-four cases were filed and 164 people, including fourteen women and a boy, were examined. Of the 164, thirty-six were unconditionally released. The rest were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment and exile. The colonial government also imposed mass fines on 719 people belonging to nine villages, thereby severely impoverishing them and fermenting resentment.

The colonial understanding of this most shocking and brutal murder identifies two main reasons for it. The first is that it was the result of anger against Conolly's

order to imprison them. The second is that he was instrumental in the exile of Mambram Syed Fazl Thangal on 19 March 1852. The authors of the biographies of the Mambram Thangals (or *Tangal*, equivalent to *Sayyid*) do not give credence to the first, as they aver that instead of calming the populace, the exile created suspicion and unrest. In order to understand such a reaction, we have focus on the life of these two Mambram Thangals.

Mambram Syed Alawi Thangal (1750–1844) migrated from South Yemen and settled down at Mambram in Malabar in 1768. Well-versed in religious texts and understood to be the Prophet's descendant, he soon became a respected figure known as Mambram Thangal. Apart from establishing mosques, which also became centres of education and community development (on this point, see, also Arshad Alam), he is reputed to have been a soft-spoken person who endeared himself to people of all religious. He advocated purity of religious life and opposed caste-practices. One of his biographers notes that his was a "politics of dissidence" (Sathar, 44) in that he refused to bow down to power and always urged people to oppose impositions of any nature. Religion was not a "vehicle of expressing his political antipathy. Rather, his politics originated from his religious fervour" (Sathar, 46). For example, an incident celebrated through "Cherur Padappattu" ("Ballad of the Cherur Battle," written in Arabi-Malayalam) recounts how three men and three women, influenced by a *fatwa* issued by the Thangal against inhuman treatment of the lower castes, had embraced Islam to gain self-respect. But when one of the converts, a maid-servant of the village Adhikari (official) appeared before him wearing a blouse, he tore it off in anger, as lower castes were not allowed to, which is supposed to have led to the Cherur Revolt of 1843 in which 125 accused were deported to Andaman. Syed Alawi Thangal, as is customary, was against all manifestations of authority and power and is said to have given his sanction and blessing to many revolts, especially those in 1817 and 1842. The British contemplated his arrest and deportation on many occasions, but desisted not only because there was no direct evidence and he was also in his sixties and nineties during these revolts, but also because they feared a general uprising of the people. On his demise in 1844 at the age of ninety-four, his only son, Syed Fazal, became the next Mambram Thangal.

Mambram Syed Fazal Thangal, also endearingly known as Pookoya Thangal, followed in the footsteps of his illustrious father and was outspoken in his views against colonial occupation and mistreatment of Indians, particularly Malabar Muslims. Since his arrest or deportation would create a huge uproar, it is understood that Conolly asked him to either publicly disavow his anti-landlord and -overlord attitude or leave India. Syed Fazal's offer to correct any misunderstandings among people about his views was rejected by Conolly and a deportation order was issued on 12 February 1852. However, it is reported that Conolly wanted people to believe that Syed Fazal was voluntarily espousing exile. Syed Fazal's desire to avoid the arrest and death of many more of his followers played into Conolly's hand as the Mambram Thangal, along with fifty-seven followers, decided to temporarily leave for Saudi Arabia in secret. Still, the news leaked, thousands of people gathered in front of his house, and a crowd of 8,000 is

reported to have followed him (Malayamma and Panangangara, 437–438). By and by, the news of how Syed Fazal was forced into exile by Conolly slowly leaked out, causing widespread anger and outrage and leading to Conolly's murder. It is quite possible that news of how Pookoya Thangal's numerous requests for permission to return to Malabar were thwarted by the colonial administration may have also fuelled the hatred towards Conolly. Mambram Syed Fazal Pookoya Thangal died in Istanbul and was buried near the grave of Sultan Muhammad Khan (Sathar, 128–129). His family members never returned to India. In fact, when one of his descendants landed at Calicut to seek permission in person on 12 February 1934, he was threatened with arrest and asked to leave immediately.

Mambram Syed Alawi Thangal, who migrated from Yemen and spent the last seventy-seven years of his life in Malabar, and his son Mambram Syed Fazal Pookoya Thangal, who was deported from Malabar at the age of twenty-eight and spent the last forty-eight years of his exile in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey, yearning to return to Malabar, are counter-examples of pan-Islamism being a hotbed of separatism and fanaticism. "Terms like *jihad*, *dar ul-harb* and *dar ul-Islam* are not . . . parts of a transhistorical worldview; they belong to an elaborate political-theological vocabulary in which jurists, men of religious learning, and modernist reformers debated and polemicized in response to varying circumstances" (Asad, 2008, 12). It is significant that Makhdum connects his call for *jihad* with an ancient custom of Kerala (Makhdum, 39), namely, the *chavettu pada* or *chaver pada* (suicide squad) associated with the historic Mamangam festival, a massive 28-day fare conducted every 12 years (the last was supposedly in 1755) and culminating in a suicidal bid by a group of Nair warriors of a rival King to assassinate a well-guarded Zamorin (see, Hamza's footnote 1 to chapter 3, 117). It is even more significant that the Mambram Thangals' initiatives were kept alive in Malabar, as in the examples of Syed Sanaullah Makthi Thangal (1847–1912), who advocated women's education and urged Malabar Muslims to adopt Malayalam as their language, as well as Vaikkom Abdul Kader Maulavi (1873–1932; see, Lakshmi). Such educational initiatives were later continued by community leaders through socio-cultural movements, and the success of connecting the lives of Malabar Muslims to contemporary realities can be gauged by a near one hundred per cent literacy of the state by 1991, with Kerala Muslim women-men achieving 85 and 89 percent, respectively. Hence, one wonders whether

> The problem in India is the modernization of the majority, the Hindus, who will ultimately determine whether India is going to be a modern State or a State governed by medieval Hindu values. Indian Muslims can accelerate the process of modernization, if they accept the suggestion that the values of secular democracy are more in tune with a higher ethical ideal than futile attempts to recapture past politico-legal traditions which are neither in tune with modern times nor can be shared by their contemporaries belonging to different faiths. Indian society can only be modernized on the basis of a value system which can be shared by all its members and such a value system can emanate from the humanist tradition of the contemporary world alone.
>
> (Khundmiri, 61–62)

At a time when modern nations, developed as well as developing, are resorting to more and more undemocratic and totalitarian practices in the name of democracy, we need to rethink categories sanctioned by our secular-modern in order to investigate if not validate actually lived communitarian formations that were delegitimized by Indian secularism, which, as Pandian suggested, needs to make three moves, that of "recognising the language of religion as valid, the community as a legitimate site of politics and looking for new strategies of representations" in a play of "contextual inconsistency, a perennial critique of and mobilisation against forms of power" (2005). I end this chapter with questions raised by Agamben. Why was it that Hannah Arendt could not establish any connection between her later work on *The Human Condition*, where, with a biopolitical perspective, she "attributes the transformation and decadence of the political realm in modern societies to [the] very primacy of natural life over political action" (1998, 3–4) and her earlier work on *The Origins of Totalitarianism*? Similarly, why, asks Agamben, is it that Foucault "never dwelt on the exemplary places of modern biopolitics: the concentration camp and the structure of the great totalitarian states of the twentieth century" (4)? Needless to say, Foucault's work on biopolitics does not acknowledge Arendt's work, which happened twenty years earlier. Where Agamben is leading us is to the possibility of "an inner solidarity between democracy and totalitarianism" (10) in the sense that the "modern Western state has integrated techniques of subjective individualization with procedures of objective totalization" (5) so much that bare life becomes "the one place for both the organization of State power and the emancipation from it" (9). Developing on the paradox of the sacred human, who cannot be sacrificed but can be killed, Agamben draws our attention to the "foundational event of modernity," the entry of bare life into the sphere of social organization, or "the politicization of bare life as such," which "signals a radical transformation of the political-philosophical categories of classical thought" (4). Agamben's paradox of bare life, which is included by virtue of exclusion within the polis, reaches the point where he notes:

> The "enigmas" . . . that our century has proposed to historical reason and that remain with us (Nazism is only the most disquieting among them) will be solved only on the terrain – biopolitics – on which they were formed. Only within a biopolitical horizon will it be possible to decide whether the categories whose opposition founded modern politics (right/left, private/public, absolutism/democracy, etc.) – and which have been steadily dissolving, to the point of entering today into a real zone of indistinction – will have to be abandoned or will, instead, eventually regain the meaning they lost in that very horizon. (4)

Notes

1 More recent is the Council for Social Development's study by Zoya Hasan and Mushirul Hasan (2013).

2 Some people gave their religion as Mussulman Hindus or Hindu Mussulmans, and others could not "name" the language they spoke; for the role of Muslims in the official colonial analysis of Indian society see Lelyveld, 9–34. However, Sugata Bose and

Ayesha Jalal point out that the "powerful revisionist school of South Asian historiography" goes overboard in their suggestion that Indian social tradition was largely a nineteenth-century British colonial invention. The Muslims were not "an artifact of British colonial imagination," rather "Muslim social identities in different parts of the subcontinent were being formed by patterns of social and economic relations linked to the fact of British colonial rule without being wholly shaped by it" (1999, 167).

3 Mushirul Hasan, perceiving nation as pre-given, rather than a result of actual processes, argues that such a move "backfired – in so far as it aided the cause of 'Muslim nationalism'" (1995, 2997).

4 Nehru's following statement brings out the contradictory pulls of such a position: "The collapse and elimination of Nationalist Muslims as a group – as individuals they are, of course, still important leaders of the Congress – forms a pitiful story. It took many years, and the last chapter has only been written this year (1934). In 1923 and subsequent years they were a strong group, and they took up an aggressive attitude against the Muslim communalists. Indeed, on several occasions, Gandhiji was prepared to agree to some of the latter's demands, much as he disliked them, but his own colleagues, the Muslim Nationalist leaders, prevented this and were bitter in their opposition" (139).

5 Taking a fresh look at his often contradictory roles of saint and politician, G. Aloysius writes: "Gandhi himself seems to carry [the] seed of contradiction within his person: his seeming poverty was built on Birla's plenty, his life of Brahmacharya was based on obsessive sex experiments. His project of the recovery of the human body from medical tyranny was conducted while he was under continuous care of allopathic physicians; his posture of humility was coupled with the claim for exclusive access to truth; he preached a politics of powerlessness and non-possession that did not brook rivals in leadership. His sensitivity to the spiritual equality of all men was coupled with an insistence on Varnashrama Dharma as the social ideal" (176). He cites Sarojini Naidu's comment: "If only Bapu knew how much it cost, to keep him simple" (from Spear, 302).

6 Aloysius draws on Keer, 1964, 111 & 1962, 197 as well as M.S.A. Rao, 43.

7 It must be remembered that it was the mass mobilization campaign of this time that pulled the masses in an unprecedented manner towards redefining themselves within the Hindu and Muslim Indian frame.

8 Since my focus is entirely different from traditional scholars, I will not be engaging with works, like Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* or Aziz Ahmad's *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* and *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857–1964*.

9 For an interesting study on the debates between these two educational institutions, the Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama and the Ahl-e Sunnat Jamaat, see, Usha Sanyal. Though there were plenty of smaller organizations, like the Majlis Muid ul Islam, which was constituted in 1921, I will only report on the Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama and the Jamia Millia Islamia.

The Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulama founded in 1898 articulated a middle position, defining itself against the radical Aligarh, spouting western ideas, and the more conservative Deoband. For details of this institution, see, Jamal Malik.

The Jamia Millia Islamia came into existence in 1920 and was a breakaway group of the Aligarh University caused by the decision of some of the Muslim political leaders during the Non-cooperation movement not to receive any government aid. As Mohamed Ali, a founder-member, remarked: "I never conceived of the Jamia's growth and permanence at all. . . . Our real objective is Aligarh which some day we shall conquer," cited by Mushirul Hasan (1999, note 84, 31, from Noorani, 25). See, also, Mohammad Talib.

10 See, Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims, 1871–1906: A Quest for Identity*, Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1885–1930*,

Bimal Prasad, *The Foundation of Muslim Nationalism* and Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860–1923*.

11 Peter Hardy notes that "the mutineers at Meerut, Muslim and Hindu alike, rode to Delhi, as if by instinct, to restore Bahadur Shah to the empire of India," in *The Muslims of British India*, 34. Such a joint anti-imperialist move was to happen once again, during the Khilafat movement.

12 Pierre Bourdieu has classified the "three fundamental guises" of capital in the social world: economic capital – which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; cultural capital – which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and social capital – made up of social obligations ("connections"), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility (47). Of these, cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state – "in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body"; in the objectified state – "in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.) which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc."; and in the institutionalized state – "a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as . . . in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee" (47).

13 The school that was transformed into the college was started in 1875.

14 Barbara Metcalf places the Deoband movement within other Islamic initiatives which defy our pigeonholes. Her attempt is to consider such movements in their own terms and to identify some of the patterns, such as a real belief in Islam. Among the features, she identifies one as that the participants who are "troubled by the world they live in and seeking explanations for their situation, invariably interpret problems as religious, for Islam is a religion that takes all life in its purview" (1982, 5). She attributes this to the suddenness of a political vacuum, like the disappearance of the Mughal empire and the weakening of the Ottoman empire (1982, 3–7).

15 Earlier, she had used Clifford Geertz's term "oppositional Muslims" since "[t]heir religion was not traditional in the sense of being accepted without question" (1982, 12). Francis Robinson has also noted the importance of print media in Islamic movements (2000).

16 Though written in the late 60s, in the height of Nehruvian ideals, Khundmiri's essays are perceptive in that he juxtaposes existentialism, Marxism, and Islam in India in order to evolve a critique of their shortcomings.

17 Elsewhere, he remarks that the "neat division of human life into the religious and the secular involves a contradiction" (297).

18 See Kothari for a discussion of Gandhi's predicament and failure in the socio-economic front as against his political move and the urgent need for scrutinizing the Gandhian model in the light of contemporary Indian reality.

19 Khundmiri's dependence on the Nehruvian model comes out when he reads Gandhi as an ethical rather than a spiritual person (234–235) who strived to make the secular process irreversible in Indian life, symbolized by the *charkha* which was closer to Nehru's machine (236). He adds that the significance accorded to the presence of religious elements in Gandhi's thought should be moderated and that the *charkha* has to be read as a spinning wheel which inaugurated a desacralization process (234), while in the same breath he agrees that Nehru had a better appreciation of the logic of secularism than Gandhi (235). Also, see, for instance, Shahid Amin (1984) and Aloysius. The multiple resonances of the Gandhian image are best captured by the image of a Gandhi with his bald head and cap being feared as a Mappila by some Hindus who were frightened by rumours (of 600 breasts cut off from 300 Hindu women and amassed as coconut

shells and of 800 noses cut off from Hindu men by the Mappilas) during the 1921 Malabar rebellion (Uroob, 37–38).

20 Though in a different context, Derrida (1995) notes the spectral space and Freud's relation to it: "He takes it into account so as to account for it, and he intends to account for it or prove it right only while reducing it to something other than himself, that is to say, to something other than the other" (94) and that, nevertheless, it "resists and *returns*," "*returns* [because] it belongs" (87), thus ["haunting implies places, a habitation, and always a haunted house" (86)] "its iterability, that is to say, its immanent divisibility, the possibility of its fission, haunted it from the origin. The faithful memory of such a singularity can only be given over to the specter" (100).

21 Written in Gujarati as *Hind Swarajya* in 1909, Gandhi changed the title to *Hind Swaraj* in 1910; in the same year it was translated into English as *Indian Home Rule* (Gandhi, 1997).

22 In this regard, as Gopal Guru has pointed out, "as far as the Dalits are concerned, the communitarian logic would not operate for the simple reason that the Dalits do not have any nostalgia that represents the loss of a sense of domination and power which a particular community may have enjoyed in the past. The Dalits do not have any such memory of the past. What they remember is only the history of humiliation and exploitation" (131).

23 In this connection, Ronit Ricci has shown "that Arabic was being influenced by the various vernaculars as it was in turn transforming them, not only in their own lands but also in Islam's historical heartland" (18).

24 Da Gama was supposed to have been unhappy that, though the Zamorin came to receive him, there was no immediate assurance of trade relations. He was further upset that the merchandises could not be disposed of. He seems to have concluded that it was the Malabar Muslims who were responsible. The Portuguese vehemence and violence seemed to increase during their subsequent trips, so much so that Stephen da Gama, who joined in the second visit of Vasco da Gama, asked the Zamorin to evict Muslims from the city. When Zamorin refused, it is said that he attacked the city and "plundered the 24 ships which had arrived at Calicut laden with rice and threw overboard the 800 mariners on it after chopping off their limbs" (Makhdum, footnotes 3 and 7, 120–121.

25 John Biddulph's *The Pirates of Malabar and An English Woman in India Two Hundred Years Ago* chronicles the piracy and rivalry along the Malabar coast from 1630–1760. C. Hamza adds that once the Portuguese became "the superpower of the world with the most modern weapons then" (Makhdum, footnote 1 to chapter 3, 124), they attempted many times to murder as well as enter into treaties with the Zamorin. Around this time, the Kunhali Marakkar family also moved to Malabar and became "the leaders of the Zamorin's naval forces," and "dreaded nightmares for the Portuguese all over Asia. Their arrival made a turning point in the Malabar people's resistance to the invading Portuguese. The western historian, however, represent them as pirates . . ." (footnote 12 to chapter four, 125). Kunhali IV "surrendered voluntarily to the Zamorin on 16 March 1600 on condition that they will not jeopardise their lives. . . . Eventually, the Portuguese . . . took Kunhali . . . and his followers to Gao and beheaded them there. They hacked Kunhali's corpse into four and exhibited it on the beach and sent his head, salted and dried in the sun, to Kannur. . . . Not more than four years after the murder of Kunhali, the Zamorin had a treaty with the Dutch to evict the Portuguese not only from his territory but from India altogether" (footnote 9 to chapter 14, 134).

26 "Malabar's links with Hadhramaut in South Yemen is suspected to have begun as early as the first century AD," notes L.R.S. Lakshmi (2).

27 Makhdum's Arabic text was first published from Lisbon. A copy of it is available at the library of Al-Azhar University, Cairo. Several sections of the text appeared in translations in Portuguese, Latin, French, German, Spanish, Persian, English, Czech, etc. It has also been translated into Malayalam, Urdu, Gujarati, Kannada, Tamil, and other Indian languages. One of first English translations was by Lieutenant M. J. Rowlandson,

Persian interpreter to the Headquarters of the army in Madras, in 1833. An Arabic edition was prepared by Hakim Shamsullah Qadiri in 1931 from Hyderabad. In 1942, S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar's English translation, based on Qadiri's edition, was published by the University of Madras. It was translated into Malayalam by Velayudhan Panikkasseri (with a modified title) in 1963 and by C. Hamza in 1995. K. Mossankutty Moulavi brought out an Arabi-Malayalam translation. I have used the new edition of Nainar's 1942 English translation (which incorporates C. Hamza's extensive notes) published by Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, in 2006.

28 The Mambram Thangals, as we will see, are an example of the latter, while Muzaffar Alam's *The Language of Political Islam; 1200–1800* provides examples of the former.

29 This statement was made by Sultan Salauddin Owaisi, MP of the MIM (Majlis-e Itte had-ul Muslimeen), Hyderabad, on 14 May 2003; see report about Shiv Sena's protests in *Saamana*, a Marathi daily, on 17 May 2003; www.hvk.org/articles/0603/72.html.

30 Apart from Logan (1989a), I have primarily used K. K. Muhammed Abdul Sathar, *Mappila Leader in Exile: A Political Biography of Syed Fazal Pookoya Tangal* and Moyin Hudawi Malayamma and Mahmood Hudawi Panangangara, *Mambram Tangal: Jeevitam, Atmeeyata Porattam* [*Mambram Thangal: Life, Spirituality, Struggle*]. In this context, see also, Seema Alavi.

3 Questions of community

> The religious bigot considers me an infidel
> And the infidel deems me to be a Muslim.
>
> (Mohammad Iqbal)[1]

The so-called reappearance or re-turn of/to religion in most modern liberal societies has compelled discussions which can be viewed as post-secular in nature. An important site of such debates is "community," which can no longer be considered as the ruins upon which modern society rests. Rather, in Jean-Luc Nancy's words, "community, far from being what society has crushed or lost is *what happens to us* – question, waiting, event, imperative – *in the wake of* society" (1991, 11). Nancy's characterization of community as "resistance itself" (1991, 35) against all forms of immanent power, against immanence itself, opens the possibility of reading Islam, with its inseparability of public and private spheres, of politics and religion, and its deep-rooted connection between individual and community, in a different way. But for Nancy, "[t]here is no return of the religious: there are the contortions and turgescence of its exhaustion" (1991, 136) and "Islam is the pure proclamation of God to the point where it becomes an empty clamor" (1991, 128). Hence, my engagement with this discourse on "community" will be necessarily reductive.

The "inoperative" (Nancy) or "unavowable" (Blanchot) or the "negative . . . community of those who do not have a community" (Bataille, cited in Blanchot, 24) is an attempt to engage with "Being Singular Plural" (in Nancy's admirable phrase, 2000). Such a "non-religious quest for an ecstatic experience" (Blanchot, 7), ex-static as well, has "as the principle of community . . . the unfinishedness or incompleteness of existence" or the "infiniteness of abandonment" (Blanchot, 20, 25). If "what founds community" (9) is birth/death, it does not mean that it "ensures a kind of non-mortality" (10) of a higher, immortal or transmortal life. Moreover, "community is not the restricted form of a society, no more than it tends towards a communitarian fusion" (11) and "community is not the place of Sovereignty. It is what exposes by exposing itself. It includes the exteriority of being that excludes it" (Blanchot, 12). In Esposito's gloss:

> Finite subjects, cut by a limit that cannot be interiorized because it constitutes precisely their "outside"; the exteriority that they overlook and that enters into

> them in their common non-belonging. Therefore the community cannot be thought of as a body, as a corporation (*corporazione*) in which individuals are founded in a larger individual. Neither is community to be interpreted as a mutual, intersubjective "recognition" in which individuals are reflected in each other so as to confirm their initial identity; as a collective bond that comes at a certain point to connect individuals that before were separate.
>
> (7)

Though Esposito distances his reading from all forms of neo-communitarianism (2), he etymologically traces the root of community to the noun *communitas* and its corresponding adjective *communis* as what is "common," that which belongs to more than one, to many or to everyone or what is not proper to one alone (3). Another layer of meaning lies in the original word *munus* or the common, which "oscillates in turn among three meanings that aren't at all the same" (4), namely, *onus* (obligation), *officium* (office), and *donum* (gift). Thus, "*communis* had to be 'he who shares an office . . . a burden . . . a task. . . . From here it emerges that *communitas* is the totality of persons united not by a 'property' but precisely by an obligation or a debt. . . . (6). Hence, the sense of "public" is in opposition to *immunitas*, one who is immune and does not perform any office or is "private." In this sense, "the *munus* that *communitas* shares isn't a property or a possession. . . . It isn't having, but on the contrary, is a debt, a pledge, a gift that is to be given, and that therefore will establish a lack. The subjects of community are united by an "obligation," in the sense that we say that 'I owe *you* something,' but not 'you owe *me* something" (6). Let me skip over Augustine's inscription of a "community of guilt" (11), and repeat Esposito's exposition of his work as a reconstruction of a line of thought that "reintroduces the question of community that modernity seemed to have completely closed off" (15). Esposito ends his book by an engagement with Bataille's notion of experience. For Bataille, "experience is what carries the subject outside of itself and for which reason therefore there cannot be *a* subject of experience. The only subject is experience but it is the experience of the lack . . . of every subjectivity" (117). Thus, "experience for Bataille coincides with community insofar as it is the unpresentability of the subject to itself" (119), and "community is our existence's excessive and painful extension over the abyss of death. It is death and not life that holds us within the horizon of the common" (121). "This is the reason that the gift par excellence, that which has no motivation or demands another gift in return, emerges in the Bataillian community as that of life, of the abandoning of every identity not to a common identity but to a common absence of identity" (125). Such a perspective finds an echo in our search for a post-human human, or for "pure singularities [that] communicate only in the empty space of the example, without being tied by any common property, by any identity. They are expropriated of all identity, so as to appropriate belonging itself. . . . Tricksters or fakes, assistants or 'toons, they are the exemplars of the coming community" (Agamben, 2009, 10–11).

Impressive as the array of philosophers engaging with the immunization of community in the secular-modern contexts are, one could posit the Arabic terms

for community, like *qaum* and *ummah*. One could ask, echoing Esposito's title, whether no other origin and destiny is possible for community. Are there no other re-sources except what Derrida termed our *Globalatinization* (2002, 67)? Or, one could lay stress on the public obligation or pledge or debt that the original word connoted and denoted. Or, one could ask whether the supposedly sovereign and secular-modern subject is the inevitable destination or common destiny of all and sundry. However, it may be more fruitful to re-turn to Bataille. In Nancy's words, "What community reveals to me, in presenting to me my birth and death, is my existence outside myself. Which does not mean my existence reinvested in or by community, as if community were another subject that would sublate me, in a dialectical or communal mode. *Community does not sublate the finitude it exposes. Community itself, in turn, is nothing but this exposition*" (26). But still Bataille was in constant search of/for communities to belong to and found community in friends and lovers, only to declare that no one is at leisure not to belong to his absence of community. Hence, it would be revealing to look at Bataille's observations on Islam. He wondered: "How does one grasp the meaning of an institution that has outlived its reason for being? Islam is a discipline applied to a methodical effort of conquest. The completed enterprise is an empty framework" (vol. 1, 84). Nevertheless, he notes:

> Christianity dates from the individual birth of a redeeming god; Islam, from the birth of a community, of a new kind of state, which did not have its basis in either blood or place. Islam differs from Christianity and Buddhism in that it became, after the Hegira, something different from a teaching propagated in a framework of a society already formed (a local or blood community). It was the establishment of a society based on the new teaching.
>
> (vol. 1, 88)

Bataille notes that "In avoiding the moral weakness of Christian and Buddhist communities . . . Islam fell into a greater weakness, the consequence of a complete subordination of religious life to military necessity. . . . For Islam is defined not by consumption but, like capitalism, by an accumulation of available forces" (89). Further, "Islam is in a sense, in its unity, a synthesis of religious and military forms; it has curtailed sacrifices, limiting religion to morality, alms-giving and prayer observance" (90).

Bataille's "general economy" which has expenditure or the consumption of wealth, rather than production, as the primary object (9) was first published in French in 1967. However, as we have seen in the case of the Malabar Thangals, Syed Ahmad Khan, and Maulana Mohamed Ali, pan-Islamism continued to be an important aspect of their lives, enabling them to belong to a world-community and at the same time grapple with issues besetting their local communities. Maybe it can be argued that the very prayer words "no god but God" inscribe a negation and an affirmation whereby Islam becomes both a traditional and an elective community (Blanchot, 46) at the same time. In what follows, I will examine notions of belonging to a community in the contexts of secular enchantment.

I

Javeed Alam[2] approaches the issue of Islam not from within but from across the larger problematic of modernity, and the "failure" of the Left is one of his central concerns. According to Alam, modernity can be refashioned, though he would term the process as recovery. The issue of Islam in India, Alam acknowledges, cannot be separated from the singular form/logic of Indian nationalism which in turn is tied in with the singular logic of western modernity. Therefore, he proposes that we ought to disengage from the dominant version of modernity in the West, which, as the blurb puts it, is only "a hand-maiden of capitalist global drives," and has also pre-determined the non-European experience of (post)colonial modernity. From such a perspective, he identifies three forms of reaction to modernity within the social sciences in contemporary India. The first is a *sharp attack on modernity as an unacceptable phenomenon imposed on the Third World countries*. According to him, this form has two variants: one views colonialism as concomitant with modernity and theorizes both as historically inseparable (1999a, 3)[3]; the other variant is a more general attack on modernity located in the critique developed by post-structuralist or post-modernist writers. However, the two variants often collapse into each other in the context of the Third World. The second form consists of an *attack on some of the values central to the post-Enlightenment thought*. This set of critics attack specific doctrines such as secularism or rights discourse as well as general philosophical beliefs such as universalism or truth claims of various kinds. This, according to Alam, is an anomaly, since if secularism is rejected as alien, notions of democracy or equality also should be set aside. The third form of attack may be labelled a *rejection of the inherent conceptions of modernity*, like the idea of progress. Alam states that entrenched modernity, the historically embodied form of Enlightenment, is only one of the possible paths modernity could have traversed and hence there is no necessary relation between the features of modernity as it exists and entrenched modernity.

In each of these forms of attack, the other is constituted "by reactions to Modernity and the role of the West as the harbinger of Modernity, the other face of which is colonialism" (1999a, 6). Alam argues: "Modernity, as constituted in its initial phases, is historically not realizable without some notion of the Other," understood as the "non-modern," though "not necessarily another country or society" (7). Modernity's task, then, is to globally become one with what is not itself, the latter being "integral to the project called Modernity in its *original* form." This "what is not [yet] itself" (7), or "the Other entailed in the Enlightenment" (8), he calls the *philosophic other*. Capitalism's affiliation to modernity makes it "overcome and assimilat[e], by force if need be," "[a]ll the different, non-capitalist economic systems" into its fold. Such non-capitalist systems, or "the other entailed in the logic of capital" (9), he calls the *economic other*. As against the non-volitional mode of swallowing other non-capitalist systems, a phase of extended reproduction, capital's onward march makes it *will* "consciously now to capture, penetrate and establish political rule over other societies" (9). Alam argues that though colonialism is not possible without capitalism, the latter need not have led to

colonialism. "The mode of colonial constitution of the Other is, therefore, detachable from Modernity even if it came in the baggage of colonialism to our societies" (11). This other, forcibly imposed by colonialism, and not via the power of reason, he calls the *sociological or colonial other*.

Alam seems to be positioned in a non-self-reflexive position outside or above the archive of knowledge he theorizes about. His claim that "[w]hat became essential and strategic for colonialism was not entailed in the logic of Enlightenment" (11) does not stand even the colonial other's scrutiny. The colonial other has to be read not merely as a corollary of but as the necessary pre-condition for capitalism's development, and the Enlightenment in fact can be productively read as setting up a thematic elaboration of its logic.[4] From such a perspective, the contention that in order "[t]o move forward, the Third World has to move backwards and laterally to seek the sources of the new potentialities with which the modern can be created" (1999a, 42) seems to be an impossible and even unnecessary option, because modernity is framed as an elusive goal on the horizon towards which the Third World has to progress. The very title of Alam's book, *Living with Modernity*, as if it was something outside itself, gives an idea of how he perceives India and modernity. In such a frame, modernity will continue to be an overarching concept that sets the terms of the debate while remaining above the debate.

The parallel Alam draws between universalizability and proselytization reveals the underbelly of his argument. He writes: "Universalizability is for modernity what proselytization is for many religions" (1999a, 7). For him, the "universal" is still a viable concept and sooner or later all "others" will be translated into it. All that is required is for the "western intellectual establishment, rather than merely ranting against Modernity, [to] open up to ideas emanating from the rest of the world which seek to compete for universality" (49). Such debates, according to Alam, will somehow lead to a truer universality if they take place outside the realm of power. However, it is difficult to see why, even if such intellectual exchanges could take place in a shared language of our times, they need result in a universal endorsement of universalities. As Talal Asad has pointed out:

> The idea that cultural borrowing must lead to total homogeneity and to loss of authenticity is clearly absurd. . . . As with translations of a text, one does not simply get a reproduction of identity. The acquisition of new forms of language from the modern West – whether by forcible imposition, insidious insertion, or voluntary borrowing – is part of what makes for new possibilities of action in non-Western societies. Yet, although the outcome of these possibilities is never fully predictable, the language in which the possibilities are formulated is increasingly shared by Western and non-Western societies. And so, too, the specific forms of power and subjection.
>
> (1993, 13)

Alam's metanarrative of "identity in difference" does not examine how entrenched modernity has predetermined, to use Althusser's term, the ideological apparatuses and their operations. Such pre-determination has resulted in a state

where difference is viewed as anathema. Alam does not take into account the "uncoevalness" of cultural translations (see, Fabian).

This becomes evident when we consider Islamic encounter with modernity. The attempts of Syed Ahmad Khan, Ameer Ali (1849–1928), the Ali brothers, Chaudhari Rahmat Ali (1897–1951), and Iqbal were to modernize socio-cultural institutions across rather than away from religion. What thwarted this process was the singular manner in which nationalist aspirations were enunciated. I would agree with Alam that the imagined nation was not coterminous with the civil society, but would stop short of his statement that the "absence of the conditions but the presence of terms of the debate based on them, left us with unbounded confusion and seeds of chauvinism" (1999a, 112). Alam's latter statement is from a perspective that thinks of Indian history as marking a failure to live up to the expectations of the secular-modern. Rather, I would argue that the Indian experience brings out the inherent contradictions within modernity. From such a perspective, Alam's argument that "Islam became within India what the non-West was to entrenched Modernity" (117) does not sufficiently account for the Muslim issue. This becomes clear when we examine Alam's explanation for the reason for Islam becoming the national other:

> The language in which Islam speaks (that of Semitic religions in general) is not spontaneously comprehensible to those immersed in the Hindu tradition, and vice-versa. Earlier, prior to the encounter with the modern, these traditions co-existed side by side and had little to say to each other except at the local level. When religion, in the context of deepening Modernity, becomes central to the public sphere this would have damaging consequences.
>
> (111)

From Alam's own analysis, we can infer that the problem is much more deep-rooted than Alam conceded, for what is at stake is the question of religion in the rational ethos of the modern nation, which is part and parcel of secular-modernity.

Against the Foucauldian "empty notion of resistance," Alam places the "anti-modernist" Gandhian project, which is backed by "an elaborate theory, almost a science, of resistance," as "a viable platform and not a barren recipe" (1999a, 41). Alam attempts to substantiate this claim by offering an analysis of the Muslim response to modernity through a study of Indian nationalism and the cultural foundations of the Indian nation. He notes that there is a discrepancy between the claims of early nationalist writings and their inner thrust. Necessary as it was to counter the colonial falsification of the past of a whole people, the theme of the foreigner, Alam rightly notes, applied to the British and later extended to Muslims, runs through the writings of Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833) and H.L.V. Derozio (1809–1831), and in a more strident and loaded form in the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838–1894) and Vivekananda (1863–1902). However, with these writers, as with the elite Muslim writers like Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) and Iqbal, according to Alam, the move from cultural assertion to political platform

of nationalism was a dangerous one.[5] Hence, he argues that the "forms of Hindu and Muslim struggle were not dissimilar but their trajectory and target were quite different," in that the Muslims showed "a pronounced disinclination to combine with others, especially when that entailed nationalist action against the British" (90). Though he ignores the earlier initiatives of Islamic thinkers like Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1562–1624) and Shah Waliullah (1703–1762), Alam is able to see the structural similarity between the early leaders of the Hindu renaissance, from Ram Mohan Roy to Derozio, who depended upon the colonial government for support for many of their reform initiatives (91) and "the Muslim elite [which was] only beginning to take shape and [was] trying to find a foothold in society at large and within their own communities" (86).[6] He recognizes that Muslims sought "equality not *vis-à-vis* the British rulers but mainly with the Hindus, and the internal logic of the situation dictated that they then stay on the side of the British, who as arbiters in the situation, could tilt the flow of concessions in their favour" (90). As a consequence, the political position that the Muslims took was not, by and large, anti-colonial. On the one hand, he points out that M. J. Akbar's categorical assertion (in *Times of India*, Sunday Magazine, 1992) that this created the seeds of later separatism leading to Pakistan will remain an unsettled question (1999a, 90). On the other hand, he concedes that by the time of the formation of modern elite from among the Muslims, nationalist and/or proto-nationalist tendencies were clearly consolidating into an anti-colonial critique and a politics was emerging with "disastrous consequences; the distance between Muslims and Hindus turned into a separatist politics among the Muslims since the formation of the Muslim League in 1906" (95). The only difference between Akbar and Alam in this regard seems to be the latter's claim that "there is no causal link between this and the demand for sovereign Pakistan in 1940" (95).

Retooling the secular-modern is an essential aspect of Alam's Marxist perspective. Though he is stringent in his critique of the Indian communist movement for its blindness to the existence of other "religio-cultural streams" within nationalism (1999a, 119) as it uncritically followed the state-propounded version of nationalism, his conceptual apparatus is still that of the Marxism of the Indian Left of which he is a part (120). His argument, hidden in a footnote, is that the Left should re-open its "undeclared moratorium," which came into effect after the vigorous debates of 1942 to 1974, and pay more attention to the other strands that are part of our nationalist legacy (fn. 23, 166). The immediate task for us, then, seems to be to free ourselves from the communalism that has been encouraged by the state and which has led to a "withdrawal of the people into their respective communities" (161). As a result, argues Alam, we are witnessing the constant fusion of the communal into the national, or "the collapse of the national into the communal . . . in [a] manner which . . . fills the public space" (161). What Alam seems to be moving towards is a position where one acknowledges various religio-cultural streams of which our nationalism is composed of only to work towards their obliteration.

Given the conceptual tools of his engagement, which do not re-cognize religion, it is not surprising to find Alam shifting away from engaging with the Christian ethos (Foucault, 1982) and telos, which underwrite modernity, entrenched or

otherwise. The Enlightenment project and its formulation of a philosophical other is hardly separate from the economical or sociological/colonial other. Rather, one might argue that it was encounters with anthropological others that were constitutive of modernity and, further, of the public/private domains. Though he agrees that "[t]he problem with entrenched Modernity, backed by the power of capitalism, has been its myopic incapacity to see anything other than its own Self" (1999a, 34), Alam seems to think that contemporary modern consciousness has

> . . . through philosophical reflections and reflexive social interactions slowly developed a capacity to absorb the features which inhere in what was the unfamiliar Other. It is this continuing absorption of the traits of other cultures which now allows for the absolute opposition between Self and Other to be overcome. We are now in a situation where the Other is becoming constitutive of the Self.
>
> (34)

What Alam is setting up is a single narrative of global capitalism in the modern world and, as the title of his third chapter, "Rendering Modernity Communicable," reveals, he draws on "a Habermasian story of the progressively liberating aspects of secular, bourgeois society" (Asad, 1993, 202). That is why, following a Marxist teleology, he deplores "the ghastly role of religion acting as sole spokesman [sic] of the nation" (1999a, 45). The secular agenda of the western instance neatly separates religion from the public sphere, but nevertheless the former continues to influence and inform the latter. There have been plenty of insightful studies investigating the promise and failure of Indian secularism.[7] By positing a secular state and a secular subject, which has to be fashioned from the material of a subcontinent now narrativized and read as a nation in retrospect, and by eliding the notion of difference, Indian secularism actually breeds communalism. In other words, the problem inherent in any deployment of the logic of the supplement (Derrida, 1976) or supplementary logic is at work here and communalism can be read as the necessary supplement of the logic of a secular state. By refusing to accept any responsibility for the "sin" of sundering the "mother country," the secular state "treats" communalism as aberrance, an irrational outburst, and a disease, which it must control if not cure. And belying its professed secularism, the practices of the secular state and its policing of communalism actually engenders communalism. Alam's neat compartmentalization of religion and politics and the underlying Marxist notion of the nation as a necessary evil in the onward march of a Hegelian history lead him into difficulties when he addresses the problems of Muslims in contemporary India. After analysing the different trends within Muslim communities within India, he makes the suggestion that "[i]t will be good if the Muslims get drawn into the struggle against [subservience to International Finance Capital] and in the process *shed the Muslim label in the act of making political choices*" (2000, 149; emphasis added).[8] While ready to acknowledge and address the economic disadvantage and cultural alienation faced by Muslim minority in India, he can only envisage a future for the Muslims of India if they willingly shed whatever

makes them what they are. But contrary to Alam's formulation, it is possible to perceive a fabrication of Islam as the other of western modernity and the other of nationalist thought in postcolonial India. Islam in India is in the position of being the other's other in the sense that national itself is the other of European modernity. In terms of religion and community, Muslims in India symbolize the inverse of enlightened western rationality as well as the difference within the nation.

Alam's refusal to acknowledge modernity as a historic-specific phenomenon disables him from politically engaging with Indian, let alone Muslim, modernity. Hence, his critique is that of an India "living with" modernity in order to establish a truly secular state. In this schema the choices made by Muslims as Muslims are not political choices, for religion has been displaced from state to the civil society, the domain of "independent *individuals* . . . who are related by *law* just as men in the estates and guilds were related by *privilege*" and where "man, as member of civil society, inevitability appears as *unpolitical* man, as *natural* man" (Marx, 233). Given Marx's perspective that religion is the "spirit of *civil society*. . . . It is no longer the essence of *community* but the essence of *difference*. It has become the expression of the *separation* of man from his *community*, from himself and from other men, which is what it was *originally*. It is now only the abstract confession of an individual oddity, of a *private whim*, a caprice" (221); a complete human emancipation also implies emancipation from religion. The concluding lines of Marx's analysis of the Jewish question emphatically point out:

> Since the real essence of the Jew is universally realized and secularized in civil society, civil society could not convince the Jew of the *unreality* of his *religious* essence, which is nothing more than the ideal expression of his practical need. Therefore . . . in present-day society we find the essence of the modern Jew not in an abstract but in a supremely empirical form, not only as the narrowness of the Jew but as the Jewish narrowness of society.
>
> As soon as society succeeds in abolishing the empirical essence of Judaism – the market and the conditions which give rise to it – the Jew will have become *impossible*, for his consciousness will no longer have an object, the subjective basis of Judaism – practical need – will have become humanized and the conflict between man's individual sensuous existence and his species-existence will have been superseded.
>
> The *social* emancipation of the Jew is the *emancipation of society from Judaism*.
>
> (241)

In keeping with the liberal-Marxist orientation, Alam's work also seems to move towards making the Muslim impossible. This becomes evident when he does not have to choose between Gandhi and Nehru. Rather, Alam credits Gandhi with successfully bridging the gap "between the middle classes and other elite on the one hand, and the toiling masses on the other" (1999a, 119–120). Moreover, Gandhi's "complex notion of *Swaraj*," which involved the everyday life of ordinary

people,[9] "allowed the secularized and somewhat radical version of nationalism and national consciousness, as represented by Nehru, to grow and crystallize with the contending forces of that time" (120). Governed by his concern for the peasantry and the masses, Alam's frame makes Islam into that which has to be modernized through an awareness of the other re-sources of modernity.

Alam's central concern is around the question: "Can a right to a way of life be claimed on behalf of a community when the exercise of the same is denied to the individual?" (1999b, 327). Or, in other words, does a community that does not grant the "right to exit" have the right to exist? Alam's considered answer that communities cannot continue to act as "collective personalities," and that what is required is a "framework of assumptions to build justifications of what is permissible within the claims of the community" (1999b, 344) falls under the purview of the liberal multiculturalist perspective.[10] As Chatterjee comments, the limit of liberal-rationalist theory is reached when it is pointed out that "what is asserted in a collective cultural right is in fact *the right not to offer a reason for being different*" (1998, 371). But Alam, as late as 2010, continues to desire an abnegation of one's religio-political and communitarian identity unless it slowly erodes and merges with the secular-national modern, as when he states that "region-specific formations have been political parties of a communal nature. Most prominent among these are the Muslim League in Kerala and the Majlis-e-Ittahadul Muslimeen in Hyderabad . . ." (2010, 208). It is indeed a deep irony that quite a lot of Muslims, particularly in Malabar, do not find any contradiction in belonging to the communist and Islamic communities at the same time!

II

Working within a secular-modern framework, Akeel Bilgrami formulates the problem in these terms:

> It is because their commitment to Islam today is to a large extent governed by a highly defensive function that moderate Muslims find it particularly difficult to make a substantial and sustained criticism of Islamic doctrine; and this . . . leaves them open to be exploited by the political efforts of absolutist movements, which exploit the doctrine for their own ends. Their defensiveness inhibits them with the fear that such criticisms would amount to a surrender to the forces of the West, which have so long shown a domineering colonial and postcolonial contempt for their culture. Thus it is that the historically determined function of their commitment, the source of their very self-identity, loops back reflexively on Muslims to paralyze their capacities for self-criticism.
>
> (1992, 835)

However, Bilgrami's category of a "moderate" or "ordinary"[11] Muslim, occupying the interstitial space between what he calls the first person, the orthodox believer, and the third person, the purely secular, seems problematic to me because

a Muslim in India would anyway be pulled apart by the socio-political tensions so much that s/he would have little option but to align with the secular or translate back onto the first-person defensive, even fundamentalist, position. In addition, the Muslim who could hold to the third-person secular position would be, even if for the moment we set aside the issue of religious affiliation, marked by gender, class, even caste, in such a manner that the internal critique from this position would be counterproductive. One has only to remember the controversial *Satanic Verses* episode[12] here to understand the complexity of the problem. Bilgrami's formulation of a "moderate" or "ordinary" Muslim, mapping it onto a modernist problematic, marks the (immoderate/extraordinary) Muslim as always-already fanatical and fundamentalist, and burdens Muslims with guilt that has to be purged through self-criticism.

Bilgrami, in his analysis of the cultural identity of the Muslim minority in India, adopts the "customary aggressive secular stance of those with communist leanings." He hears the *defiant* words "I am a Muslim" from his lips in a hostile neighbourhood with a predominantly lower-middle-class Hindu population in India (1992, 822). In a revealing footnote, he comments that there is "no interesting common thread running along through [the] different contexts" in which a person with "antitheological views" would identify him/herself as a Muslim. Some other occasions that he documents are those of *shame* at the action of other Muslims, as in the case of Muslim response to Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, and that of *concern*, as about the future of Muslims in some hostile area, like in parts of India or England. Going against Bilgrami's prescription, I would identify a common thread through all such variegated contexts, one of negative relation to a world-community of Islam. Though Bilgrami's examples are not exhaustive, it would be interesting to juxtapose the three contexts outlined by Bilgrami. The first one is in a local context where the individual acknowledges the socio-cultural aspect of his/her identity and moves (though the defiance may be more defensive than aggressive) towards the communitarian, and is one of affirmation and affiliation. The second is in a global context where the individual tends to disavow such a communitarian identity and effect a withdrawal into him/herself and therefore is one of differentiation and distancing. The third is in the context of contiguity, where the act is one of moving from a community to another similar one and is one of affinity (though not yet an alliance) and association. It should be noted that *defiance* is against something, *shame* is for something that one/another individual/community has done, and may be empathic, and *concern* is sympathy for others like oneself who are less fortunate. If the first is assertive of one's communitarian identity, the third one is apprehensive and anxious of itself, and others like itself, while the second one is ashamed of itself in that others like itself are doing what they are doing. All three acts are tied to the notion of a community by negative strands, and even within this framework there is a possibility that it is the local defiance that is causing such anxiety in the global context, as is the case with the Rushdie affair.[13] Moreover, the individual, marked by *defiance*, *shame*, and *concern*, in the above contexts is working with a modern secular world-outlook and a non-political definition of his/her identity/community. Such a perspective only

lends to a negative marking of the community and produces a negative relation to it, the final result of which is a bemoaning of the vulnerability, if not the absence, of secularism in Islamic communities and state-formations that has given rise to Islamic revivalism and fundamentalism. I suggest that it might be useful to adopt different strategies and return to the modern-secular state and civil society formation from the vantage of Islamic revivalism, whereby the latter can be better engaged with and understood as also a response to the crisis within the modern-secular frame. A case in point is that of Iran.[14] The question that Foucault, while welcoming the Iranian revolution and its Islamic spirit, asked: "What is it about what happened in Iran that a whole lot of people, on the left and on the right, find somewhat irritating?" points to the fact that religion may very well be the "spectre . . . haunting"[15] modernity at large,[16] being the "spirit of a world without a spirit" (Marx, cited in Foucault, 1988a, 218). Foucault adds: "Many here and some in Iran are waiting for the moment when secularization will at last come back to the fore and reveal the good, old type of revolution we have always known. I wonder how far they will be taken along this strange, unique road, in which they seek, against the stubbornness of their destiny, against everything they have been for centuries, 'something quite different'" (1988a, 224).

Bilgrami's "moderate" or "ordinary" Muslim is very much in keeping with his overall theoretical position that sees Islam, especially Islamic personal law, in urgent need of reform.[17] His project has been to "provide internal arguments appealing to the substantive values of historically situated Muslim populations to convince them to conclude in favour of internal reform" (1999, 186). Bilgrami's answer to the question why Muslims have to be convinced would be that secularism in India has remained a statist invention and an imposition from above that did not become a part of Hinduism or Islam as a substantive contested political commitment to be negotiated, one with the other (1994). However, unlike Ashis Nandy – for whom the Gandhian version of secularism was connected to Indian reality, while the Nehruvian version remained a modern intrusion into an essentially traditionalist religious population – Bilgrami argues for a future for the Nehruvian vision. The flaw in Nehru's vision, according to Bilgrami, was not that it was a modern intrusion; rather, Nehru's fault was an "unwillingness to acknowledge that there are religious communitarian voices in politics" (1998, 393). This unwillingness stemmed from "a prima facie understandable fear that to acknowledge them would be to encourage and entrench them." Pointing to the dangers of a valorization of Gandhian "way of life" that contained Brahminical elements, Bilgrami argues that the failure of secularism is methodological, rather than conceptual. That is, the flaw was not in the vision but in the particular manner in which it was implemented by the state, for "separation of religion from politics has to be *earned*, *not assumed* at the outset" (1998, 393).

In this context, one wonders why it has to be either Gandhi or Nehru. As I have argued in the first chapter, Nehru, as evidenced by his interactions with Mohamed Ali and the episode of his "secular" and "sacred" baths, was deeply aware of and uneasy about his professed secularism. Savarkar, Jinnah, and Ambedkar, oddly clubbed together by Nandy as "believers in public but . . . not . . . in private" (329)

embody the conflicts involved in any such separation. As against Bilgrami's notion of "internal arguments" to convince Muslims to conclude in favour of internal reforms, I would contend that, though the communities of Islam in India have different orientations, they are all already marked by a particular experience of modernity, secularism, and nationalism. In Bilgrami's frame, the notion of "reform" is clearly a product of secular-modernity, whereas I believe that any theorization would have to be counterpointed with studies of the modern framework in terms other than those set by itself, that is, from the perspective of Islam and *its* experience of the secular modern nationhood. It is not as if there is only a single trajectory towards a singular predestination. In the first chapter I examined the figure of Mohamed Ali in terms of his autobiographical pursuit as well as his notion of identity within the various educational/reform initiatives of the community and the nationalist movement. My discussion attempted to thematize attempts by various Muslims, individually as well as collectively, to modernize Islamic thought in the context of the subcontinent. I drew attention to the complexity of these moves because of the complication involved in belonging to two circles of equal size. Though this process may also have had revivalist elements, what I argue is that Islam's sense of its world history energized itself not in terms of a separatist aspiration. Rather, what was imagined was a federation of the Indian states, rather than a repetition of the "singular" European-modern nation form. This implied also a critique of the modern-secular and its separation of religion and politics. Whereas Hindu communal aspirations in their attempt to define themselves in new terms generated an Islamic other, Muslim aspirations drew on Islamic notions of superiority and strength. Whether these revivalist movements by themselves would have resulted in irresoluble antagonism between these communities is a moot question. What was more important was that the modern secular frame of nationalist aspiration meant a repetition of the European moment and the relegation of a religion to the private sphere. The confused and contradictory nature of the nationalist project is best personified in Gandhi, who imagined a *modern* political and *secular* national community that would also be a *Ram Rajya*. Caught between the communal aspirations of the Hindu and Muslim communities, the Congress was forced to aspire to an India in which the Hindu and the Indian circles coincided. Maybe, as suggested by William Connolly, "[r]efashioning secularism might help to temper or disperse religious intolerance while honouring the desire of a variety of believers and non-believers to represent their faiths in public life," thereby being more responsive to the "politics of becoming" (5).

As Partha Chatterjee has argued using Lenin, Gandhi's thought can be seen to be "based on a false, indeed reactionary, theory of the world-historical process," and "refuses to acknowledge a theory of history at all. In either case, it would be variant of [what Lenin called 'economic romanticism']" (1996, 98). However, Gandhi's critique of modernity and civil society "is one which arises from an epistemic standpoint situated *outside* the thematic of post-Enlightenment thought" (1996, 100). Hence, it is difficult to see how one can succeed in combining Gandhian thought with the other routes of Enlightenment modernity. For, Gandhism maintained "a fundamental ambiguity [in] its relation to nationalist thought, in the way

in which it challenged the basic premises on which the latter was built and yet sought at the same time to insert itself into the process of a nationalist politics" (1996, 100). The contradictory outcome is symbolized by the Khilafat movement, which triggered off a decade of widespread communal riots all over India, surpassed only by those accompanying the partition of the Indian subcontinent. In this framework, Gandhian moves emerge, not as a simple laudatory attempt to involve the masses in the anti-colonial struggle, but as a conscious attempt to establish an ideological means for bringing people en masse in order to pave the way for "the political appropriation of the subaltern classes by a bourgeoisie aspiring for hegemony in the new nation-state" (1996, 100). The fallout of such a strategy is evident in the nationalist engagement with the Malabar Mappila revolts/rebellions.

Notes

1 Cited by Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1859* (2000), from Khalifa Abdul Hakim, *Fiqr-i-Iqbal* (Lahore: Bazm-i-Iqbal) 121.
2 Javeed Alam, *India: Living with Modernity* (1999a).
3 All writings influenced by Edward Said (for Alam, Partha Chatterjee exemplifies this mode) and also those that are products of indigenism (Ashis Nandy, in his view, is an example) come under the first variant.
4 Thematic, as defined by Partha Chatterjee, are the justificatory structures; the "nature of the evidence it presents . . . the rules of inference it relies on . . . the set of epistemological principles it uses to demonstrate the existence of its claims as historical possibilities, and finally, the set of ethical principles it appeals to in order to assert that those claims are morally justified" (1996, 38).
5 Elsewhere, Alam notes that though the common feature of interventions by various Islamic leaders was a move away from theological arguments towards more democratic, a "'healthier' version of Islam," it also had "far-reaching disastrous consequences" (1999a, 181).
6 Alam notes: "This unequal ascendance of the elite based on their religious affiliations in the long run had far-reaching repercussions on relations between the Hindus and the Muslims, and between the Indian people in general and the British colonialists. It also set a pattern of politicking out of which we as a people have not yet fully emerged" (1999a, 86).
7 See, Gyanendra Pandey (1990 & 1994), Amartya Sen's "Secularism and Its Discontents" in *The Argumentative Indian* (2005), Needham and Rajan, eds. (2007) and T.N. Srinivasan, ed. (2007).
8 The verb used "shed" echoes Marx: "Once Jew and Christian recognize their respective religions as nothing more than *different stages in the development of the human spirit*, as snake-skins cast off by *history*, and *man* as the snake which wore them, they will no longer be in religious opposition, but in a purely critical and *scientific*, a human relationship" (Marx, 213).
9 Alam goes on to add that Gandhi's notion of *swaraj* "allowed *the removal of untouchability and Hindu-Muslim friendship as one composite blend* within the nationalist platform" (120; emphasis added). The semantic ambiguity here, probably a printer's devil, is instructive.
10 As Partha Chatterjee notes, even within the multiculturalist debate in the West, Will Kymlicka, in *Liberalism, Community and Culture* has argued for "differential" rights to be allocated on the basis of culture (1998, 368).

11 The essay "What is a Muslim? Fundamental Commitment and Cultural Identity" was first published in *Critical Inquiry* 18.4 (Summer 1992) and was republished in his *Secularism, Identity and Enchantment* in "moderately expanded" (2014, 385) form. Though I am using the first version, it should be noted that the "moderate" is replaced by the "somewhat self-conscious use of the word 'ordinary'" in the 2014 version because "the effect of the rhetoric is undeniably one of condescension" (footnote 5, 368). As Bilgrami acknowledges, "'ordinary,' though better, is not ideal, but it will have to do to mark some sort of contrast with Muslims who have been described as 'fundamentalist' and are perhaps better described as 'absolutist' . . . so it is just as well that the contrasting term 'ordinary' does not aspire to precision either and is capacious enough to denote the far larger class of Muslims in all parts of the world" (368). My reasons in sticking to the earlier version is that the substitution does not seem to have changed the debate in any significant manner.

12 The Rushdie episode has a curious footnote: when Rushdie's predicament had prompted a playwright, Brian Clark, to write a play about it, Rushdie rushed towards legal remedies, apart from personally expressing his anger and resentment to the playwright. Rushdie's response to Brian Clark's play is thus a telling comment not only on Rushdie himself but also on what are regarded as genuine grievances and the ways they might be re-(ad)dressed. See, for more details, Talal Asad (1993, chapter 8, footnote 9, 283–284).

13 See, Talal Asad, "Polemics" (1996, 239–306) and Aamir R. Mufti (1994, 307–339). For a discussion of al-Azhar's (Cairo) rejection of the *fatwa* issued by Khomeni and the politics of Sunni and Shia politics, see, S. Hafez (117–141).

14 See, Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* for a study of Islam's engagement with modernity in the Iranian context.

15 Opening line of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) in *The Communist Manifesto* (8).

16 I echo the title of Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

17 Elsewhere, he notes that the "secular stance had been quite blind to the need to democratize *Muslims*, so that they did not get hijacked into the narrow and elitist communal direction that Jinnah's politics was aiming to direct them" (1998, 416).

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Part II

Malabar contra memory

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4 Re-figuring the fanatic

Malabar, 1836–1922

> On the outbreak of the [1921] rebellion he became King, celebrated his accession by the murder of Khan Bahadur Chekkutty, a Moplah retired Police Inspector. He styled himself as the Raja of the Hindu, Amir of the Mohammedans and Colonel of the Khilafat Army. He wore a fez cap, wore the Khilafat uniform and badge and had a sword in his hand. He enjoyed absolute Swaraj in his kingdom of Ernad and Walluvanad. He announced that he was aware that the inhabitants have suffered greatly from robbing and looting, that he would impose no taxation on them this year save in the way of donations to the [war] fund and that next year the taxes must be forthcoming. He ordered . . . agricultural labourers to reap and bring in the paddy raised in the ["upper" caste] Thirumulpad's lands, the harvesters being paid in cash and the grain set apart to feed [his] forces. He issued passports to persons wishing to go outside his Kingdom and the cost of the pass was a negligible figure, according to the capacity of the individual concerned. He was captured on the 6th January and shot on 20th January 1922.[1]

While the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 13 April 1919 (in which 379 people, as per official sources, were killed) and the Chauri Chaura incident of 5 February 1922 (in which 23 policemen were burnt alive by angry peasants) find their place in the history of the Indian nationalist struggle for independence, the 1921 Malabar rebellion is often reduced to a mere footnote.[2] The final toll of the 1921 rebellion, according to official sources, was 2,337 rebels killed, 1,652 wounded, 45,404 imprisoned – unofficial sources put the figures at about 10,000 dead, 50,000 imprisoned, 20,000 exiled and 10,000 missing. These figures and the fact that the Mappila rebels had virtual control of, in fact "governed"[3] for about six months, an area in which four hundred thousand "Hindus" resided and is now distributed among at least four districts, gives an idea of its magnitude. The national imaginary, however, seems to be captivated with the (Arya Samajist) figures of 600 "Hindus" killed and 2,500 forcibly converted.

The 1921 rebellion has been customarily situated in the context of "uprisings" in this area from 1836 to 1919. These "uprisings" (referred to as "outbreaks" or "outrages")[4] by the Mappilas of Malabar were directed against both the Hindu landlords and colonial overlords.[5] Of the 352 Mappila peasants who actively participated in these twenty-nine "uprisings" only twenty-four (twelve of them in one

instance) were captured alive. As against these Mappila casualties, one British District Magistrate (H.V. Conolly) and eighty-two Hindus were killed, of which sixty-three were members of the "high" castes, presumably Namboodiris. These "outbreaks" came to be ascribed to the "fanatical" character of the Mappila community and the logic of "fanatic" causation was invoked during the 1921 rebellion as well.

The "fanatic" is commonly defined, "normed," as a person excessively, abnormally, religious; s/he needs to be controlled. The "fanatic" looks backward to the "heathen," or the "pagan," one who believes in a different and "primitive" religion; s/he was to have been educated. The figure of the "fanatic" also looks forward to the "fundamentalist" or the "terrorist"; s/he can only be confined or killed. The "fanatic," the "fundamentalist," and the "terrorist" constantly appear in contemporary discourses representing attitudes that have to be condemned outright. However, the slow dissolve of the "heathen" and the "pagan" brings into relief the image of a refurbished "terrorist," pointing to a metonymic displacement within the metaphoric. Metaphors for the non-modern "other" seems to have undergone a substitution whereby it has acquired an exclusive "Islamic" tenor. Examining the figure of the "fanatic," as it evolved through colonial procedures and continues to "live" in various nationalist discourses is, hence, a necessity of our "secular-modern" times. As part of such an endeavour, in the first section I focus on Logan's monumental project of endowing Malabar with a history which is also an intrusion of History into Malabar, an ethno-history that also produces the excessive figure of the "fanatic." The second section will attempt a contrasted reading of two narratives of the "uprising" of November 1841. The colonial records pertaining to this event are read against the grain as well as in juxtaposition to a pamphlet written by the insurgent-martyrs. The third section will analyse nationalist phrasings of the 1921 rebellion in order to examine the afterlives of the "fanatic."

I

The Mappilas[6] are geographically located in Malabar, the northern part of present day Kerala. Their ancestry is often traced to the Arab traders/settlers and converts to Islam from among the native population of Malabar. Arab trade dates back to the fourth century AD, and most records accept that Islam was a significant presence in Malabar at least by the ninth century, if not earlier.[7] Islam thus came to present-day Kerala, unlike its "history" in north-western India, through traders and pilgrims, and its place in the region was firmly established by the last of the all-"Kerala" Kings, Cheraman Perumal. It was believed that the Perumal, entrusting his land to various chiefs, secretly left for Mecca and met the Prophet.[8] Reaching the Arabian coast, he changed his name to Abdul Rahman Samiri – a name that appears on a tomb in Shahr or Zuphar on the Arabian coast. Legend has it that his plan of returning to his kingdom was interrupted by ill health, so he implored his companions to return to Malabar on his behalf and gave them undertakings in Malayalam for various princes/chiefs. According to certain sources, these companions were permitted by local princes/chiefs to build mosques at Kodungallur,

Kollam, Chirackal, Srikandapuram, Darmapattanam, Pantalayini-Koolam in Kurumbranad, and, lastly, Chaliyam in Ernad. Other traditions maintain that the King returned and was called the Zamorin (*as-Samuri*, "mariner").

William Logan,[9] pioneering the history of the "Malayali race" (v), comments: "There is good reason to believe that [the] account of the introduction of Muhammadanism into Malabar is reliable" (195). Logan, the Collector of Malabar and, later, the District Magistrate of Malabar, also takes note of the impact of trade rivalry among Portuguese, Dutch, French and British powers in Malabar: "If *foreign* peoples and *foreign* interventions had not intervened it might, with almost literal truth, have been said of the Malayalis that happy is the people who have no history" (vi). Logan elaborates:

> A people who throughout a thousand and more years have been looking longingly back to an event like the departure of Cheraman Perumal for Mecca, and whose rulers even now assume the sword or sceptre on the understanding that they merely hold it "until the Uncle who has gone to Mecca returns," must be a people whose history presents few landmarks or stepping stones, so to speak, – *a people whose history was almost completed on the day when that wonderful civil constitution was organized which endured unimpaired through so many centuries*. The Malayali race has produced no historians simply because there was little or no history in one sense to record.
>
> (vii; emphasis added)

Logan's orientalist formulation of "a people whose history was almost completed" around the eight century without any historians is in sharp contrast to the teleology that he has the fortune to inaugurate. Logan nostalgically wishes that a history existed, written by some other hand, and is almost apologetic that he is entrusted with the responsibility and burden of writing a history. He would rather wander along "some of the *many fascinating vistas of knowledge which have been disclosed in the course of its preparation*" (v; emphasis added).

Logan is called upon to render an account of Malabar, to insert Malabar into History, and his narrative is marked by the violent resistance of the militant Mappilas and Nairs during the Portuguese period (1498–1663), during the Dutch period which was marked by extreme rivalry for trade supremacy between European powers (1663–1766), during the Mysorean conquest (1766–1792), and during the British supremacy (1792 onwards). The 700-odd pages of the history he compiles from diverse sources in the first volume and the 400-odd pages of appendices in the second volume underline the fact that historical resources, in fact, histories, did exist. What Logan laments, then, is the lack of a usable/readable past, where a specific consciousness amasses information and orders it into readily accessible data, a past that would lend itself to the processes of colonization/modernization. The intervention of the colonizer playing the role of modernizing agency is significantly linked to the insertion of "traditional" societies into History. The ethnographic task structuring William Logan's *Malabar* is brought out by his division of the first volume into four sections, entitled "The District," "The People," "History," and "The Land."

Such ethnographic undertakings clearly point to the political imperatives behind institutionalizing History. Logan's project is driven by the colonial context, indeed deriving its meaning and function from the administrative exigencies of a colonial setup. Logan acknowledges as much in his analysis of the English Company's decision to dispatch several officials to Malabar in 1663 to look after its investments: "It would be difficult to over-estimate the benefits of the experience thus obtained . . . for the factors had perforce to study native character and to adapt themselves to it; and in so doing this they were unconsciously fitting themselves to become the future rulers of the empire" (339).

What emerges out of Logan's "account" is the picture of a heterogeneous region with different religions and races, and with vibrant interaction between peoples of various countries on account of Malabar's importance to trade routes of the time. It is against such a backdrop that Malabar becomes a battleground among European powers for trade monopoly and Logan makes a distinction between the policies and practices of other powers and those of the British:

> The Portuguese [did not] content themselves with suppressing Mohammadan trade; they tried to convert the Moslems to Christianity and it is related that, in 1562, they seized a large number of Moorish merchants at Goa and forcibly converted them. Of course these converts reverted to their religion at the first convenient opportunity.
>
> (331)

Logan's ability to perceive the manner in which trade and religion were enmeshed in the above episode does not, however, inform his account of British interventions in the region. For example, when the Company "factors," as per instruction, tried to stop Mappilas from trading in pepper:

> In retaliation . . . Mappilas took to committing outrages. In March 1764 two of them entered a church on Darmapattanam Island, where a priest was saying mass, and murdered one man and severely wounded several. They were shot by the garrison "and spitted." A few days afterwards another Mappila came behind two *Europeans* while walking along one of the narrow lanes leading to Fort Mailan and cut one of them through the neck and half way through the body with one stroke of his sword. The other was mangled in such a way that his life was despaired of. After this the Mappila picked a quarrel with a [Nair] and was subsequently shot by the ["lower" caste Thiyya[10]] guard. His body was "spitted" along with those of the others, and then thrown into the sea, to prevent their *caste* men from worshipping them as saints for killing Christians.
>
> (403; emphases added)

Logan's objective description of events is structured around the race/religious/caste denominations of the actors, despite his acknowledgement that these "outrages" were the result of English Company's attempts to delimit Mappila pepper trade.

It is in this context of the "history" of Mappila "outrages" that it would be useful to locate Logan's characterization of the inhabitants. Logan observes that the learned Arab settlers, who are described as "Malayali Arabs" (191) belong to an order different, indeed superior, from the other inhabitants of the region:

> Genuine Arabs, of whom many families of pure blood are settled on the coast, despise the learning . . . imparted [by the 600-years' old Muhammadan college in Ponnani where Makhdum studied/taught] and are themselves highly educated in the Arab sense. Their knowledge of their own books of science and of history is very profound, and to a sympathetic listener who knows Malayalam they love to discourse on such subjects. They have a great regard for truth, and in their finer feelings they approach nearer to the standard of English gentlemen than any other class of persons in Malabar.
>
> (108)

The few Christians in the area, Logan notes, are divided among themselves into the four main sects of Syrians, Romo-Syrians, Roman Catholics, and Protestants of all denominations (199–214). Since, according to him, they seem to have played no significant role in local affairs, Logan does not discuss them in any detail; all he does is to provide an inventory of the number of churches and priests in each parish. Of Hindus, "[o]f the strange medley of cults and religions which goes by the name of Hinduism, it is very difficult to give any adequate idea . . ." (179). Examining caste and occupations among them, Logan notes that "Brahmans had a monopoly of learning for many centuries, and doubtless this was one of the ways in which they managed to secure such commanding influence in the country" (108). Logan traces their eminence to the preservation of their Aryan heritage: "There can hardly be a doubt that the high degree of civilization to which the country had advanced at a comparatively early period was due to Aryan immigrants from the North."[11] A significant part of this enduring "wonderful civic constitution" (vii) is caste, a concept, word, and practice alien, Logan acknowledges, to the inhabitants but which was "readily adopted by the alien peoples" (112) and enabled "easy and rapid development" and "accounts for the advanced state of the people in early times" (113). Consequently, "custom" became paramount and caste norms became rigid and ceased to be a cohesive force, so much that it has now reached a point of stasis, and seems to call for *another* such intervention. The evil ways of caste will, according to Logan, continue to multiply "till British freedom evokes, as it is sure to do in good time, a national sentiment, and forms a nation out of the confusing congeries of tribal guilds at present composing it" (113).

In contrast to the divided Hindu community are the Mappilas, the "indigenous Muhammadan[s]" (108) who "as a class pull well together" so much so that "he is a daring Hindu indeed who dares now-a-days to trample on their class prejudices or feelings" (198). They are "frugal and thrifty as well as industrious," "serviceable on ordinary occasions, and the most reliable in emergencies." They become attached to those who treat them "with kindness and consideration," but must be controlled with a firm hand since "leniency is an unknown word, and is interpreted

as weakness, of which advantage [will] be taken at the earliest possible moment". They are also "illiterate," and "as a class, being thus ignorant, are very easily misled by designing persons, and they are of course as bigoted as they are ignorant." From the promise held out during his survey of the people, "[o]f their fanaticism and courage in meeting death enough will be said further on" (198), it seems clear that the Mappilas are firmly fixed in the frame of a religion of which they are largely ignorant.

The "mixed race" of Mappilas, in whom "the Arab element . . . is now very small indeed," and their "fanaticism" are even more worrisome as their "race is rapidly progressing in numbers" (197). Logan observes that the "country would no doubt have soon been converted to Islam either by force or by conviction, but [for] the nations of Europe" (294). Duarte Barbosa, who was in Malabar during 1500–1516, had estimated the "evil generation" of Mappilas to be 20% and growing, and noted, in Dale's phrasing, that "they were so influential in trade and navigation that Kerala would have had a 'Moorish King' if the Portuguese had not discovered India" (Barbosa, vol. 2, 75; Dale, 24). Logan explains Islam's influence as an effect of the Calicut Zamorin Raja's policy enjoining "Hindu" fishermen families to bring up at least one of their sons as Muslims so that the Raja would have skilled persons ready to risk their lives and man his navy. Logan also acknowledges that the spread of Islam in Malabar was significantly due to voluntary conversions from "lower" castes. A case in point was the Cheruma caste. Citing the Presidency Census (1881 Report, paragraph 151), Logan notes that this caste, characterized by their degraded position and humiliating disabilities, numbered 99,009 in Malabar at the census of 1871, but only 64,725 in 1881. This is a loss of 34.63%, opposed to the gain of 5.71% observed generally in the district. Logan wryly observes that the District Officer of that time attributes this to "some disturbing cause" which "is very well known to the District Officer to be conversion to Muhammadanism" (197). The District Officer notes that the "honour of Islam" enabled "lower" caste Hindus to move, at one spring, several places higher socially, a fact corroborated by what has been actually observed in the district. Figures show that nearly 50,000 Cherumas and other Hindus availed themselves of the opening (197). Logan, in a footnote, adds that since the Cherumas numbered 187,758 in 1856, "the decrease in 25 years has been over 65 percent" and that the District Officer's comments were "written before *Mappilla* outrages exalted this community so greatly in the district" (197). He also takes note of the fact that the "Hindu is very strict about such matters now" (198) than when the District Officer was writing; there have been more conflicts between Nairs and Mappilas, particularly "in consequence of the complete subversion of the ancient friendly relations" (478) by the introduction of new colonial policies. Leaving aside, for now, the question whether this bigotry is narratively construed as an attribute of Islam, I merely point out that other categories through which the Mappila might be identified – peasant, working class, and "lower" caste – are overwritten by an emphasis on religion.

Over a period of seventy years, from 1851 to 1921, the Mappila population increased by 8% in spite of a high (especially infant) mortality rate. Though, according to the 1921 census, Mappilas composed only 33% of the population of

Malabar, with 66% being Hindus, the concentration of Mappilas in the three taluks (Ernad, Walluvanad, and Ponnani) of Malabar was as high as 60%. These taluks were delineated in administrative records as the heart of the "fanatical zone." An overwhelming majority of Mappilas were poor and middling peasants (cultivating tenants, landless labourers, petty traders, and fishermen) while the landlords were mostly Namboodiri Brahmins or Nairs (Panikkar, 1989, 50–53). The British land reforms, aimed at righting the "wrongs" done by Tippu Sultan,[12] made it all the more easy for the better equipped Hindu landlords to resort to evictions, and the Mappila peasantry was soon reduced to penury.[13]

A significant change in the pattern of Mappila "uprisings" occurs at around the turn of the century. Logan was appointed as Special Commissioner on 5 February 1881 because of the increasing number of anonymous petitions received by the British. Logan himself received about 2,200 petitions from 4,021 individuals, of whom 2,734 (over 67%) were Mappilas complaining about unjust evictions. The evictions were a consequence of a new system of fixing a standard rent, instead of the customary practice of sharing each year's produce as per a fixed ratio. In effect, the new system replaced the traditional relationship between "landlord" and "tenant" with that of ownership, instituting thereby the landlord's "right" to evict tenants (Dhanagare, 67).[14] Logan notes that the "British authorities mistook [the landlord's] real position and invested him erroneously with the Roman *dominium* of the *soil*" (582).[15] It is possible to read, as Conrad Wood does, the pattern of Mappila "uprisings" at the turn of the century as a gradual falling off, consequential to Logan's reforms. However, it would perhaps be more productive to read the shift in the nature of later "uprisings" – from the heavy casualty in 1896, the surrender of all insurgents in 1898, the targeting (after the 1855 murder of Conolly) of a British Magistrate in 1915 and the equal ratio of insurgents and targets in 1919[16] – as not so much as due to the success of Logan's reforms as the result of the emergence of a "modern" consciousness, a consciousness that took stock of the futility of waging war against a better-armed adversary and was attuned to the wider significance of the anti-imperialist struggle in the context of a nascent nationalist aspiration. Read in this manner, the seventeen-year hiatus that Wood attributes to Logan's reform initiatives could equally be attributed to the decimation or perhaps reconstitution of existing Mappila leadership. The resurgence of Mappila resistance should also be viewed in the light of the colonial government's sluggishness in implementing Logan's suggestions for reform. Logan's "primitive socialist"[17] ideas were not implemented because the colonial authorities feared the landed class turning against them (Wood, 26, 34–39). The obverse of such British inertia would be that, overall, the landed classes were content with colonization, were in fact its collaborators and supporters, and, hence, could not have been convinced of any anti-imperialist or nationalist manoeuvres, peaceful or otherwise.

According to Logan, from 1834 onwards, "the administration [in Malabar] entered upon a period of disturbance, which unhappily continues down to the present time. The origin and causes of this are of so much importance" that Logan proposes to treat the subject "with a view not only to exhibit the

difficulties with which the District Officers had to deal, but to elucidate the causes from which such difficulties have sprung" (554). After about forty pages summarizing various "outbreaks," Logan marks his disagreement with earlier repressive measures adopted by the administration which were also "a departure from the policy of wise and just neutrality in all matters of religion" (572). Logan advocates measures by which fanaticism can be administered out of existence. "Fanaticism . . . flourishes only upon sterile soil. When the people are poor and discontented, it flourishes apace like other crimes of violence" (594). With increased security by means of settled homelands and an assured income, Logan foretells, "fanaticism would die a natural death." Logan underlines the importance of measures to ameliorate the economic condition of the peasants by stating that he disagrees with others who advocate education as the primary strategy. Logan astutely observes that "starving people are not easily taught, and, if taught, it would only lead to their adopting more effectual measures to obtain for themselves that security and comfort in their homesteads which it would be much wiser to grant at once" (594). What emerges from Logan's formulation of "fanaticism" is an understanding of the economic hardships of Mappilas that remains a stumbling block in the progress of colonization and accumulation of capital.

With characteristic objectivity, Logan cites himself:

> Mr. Logan finally formed the opinion that Mappila outrages were designed "to counteract the overwhelming influence, when backed by the British courts, of the *janmis* in the exercise of the novel powers of ouster and of rent raising conferred upon them. A *janmi* who, through courts, evicted, whether fraudulently or otherwise, a substantial tenant, was deemed to have merited death, and it was considered a religious virtue, not a fault, to have killed such a man, and to have afterwards died in arms fighting against an infidel Government which sanctioned such injustice."
>
> (584)

Logan's imperatives are clearly laid out. His concern is with laying the foundations for "civilizing" procedures. It is almost as if "fanaticism," exemplified in the "outbreaks," has become generic. The repetition of "outbreaks" and the religious sanction accorded to them calls for a nomenclature with which "to order the manifold" (Derrida, 1980, 61). What constitutes a genre is the repetition and reiteration of a distinctive trait with itself and the figure of the "fanatic," as if in accordance, emerges in Logan's teleological ordering of history. Fanaticism is the only "identifiable recurrence of a common trait" (Derrida, 1980, 63) in "outbreaks" as diverse as those caused by economic hardships, mere criminality, and madness.[18] It is as if the "fanatic" born at the moment of History exceeds its norm, and becomes its remainder. Fanaticism in Logan's history of Malabar is also an instance of the excess of genre in relation to itself, in that at the moment of ordering, "lodged within the heart of the law itself [is] a law of impurity or a principle of contamination" (Derrida, 1980, 57). It is at such moments that the law of the genre (and the genre

of law) becomes problematic in Logan's text, and its sources are those moments when the categories of "race" and "caste" become unviable.

One of the crucial nodes in Logan's text is his confusion as to whether the Mappilas are a race or a caste. At times referred to as a race and at other times as a caste, this "mixed race" seems to combine the worst of Islam and India. While Logan understands and respects "Arab" settlers and Hindu inhabitants, the mix of races and castes as embodied by Mappilas presents a methodological problem which arises because community formations do regroup, as is evident in the spate of conversions of the time. The Mappila as a sub-genre seem to exceed the law of genre itself. Faced with the incessant, insistent, and inexplicable acts of rebellion that threaten his norms and terms of reference, Logan nonchalantly ignores all that opens, inside-out, his ideas of civilization and progress. His proposals to the colonial authorities underline the need to provide material conditions in order to facilitate the processes of humanizing Mappilas, so that they can be assigned their appropriate role in the procedure of Progress. As against earlier repressive measures, Logan recognizes that Mappilas have to be reconstituted as colonial subjects, so that they can be ruled by History.

The "fanatic" was enforced, administrated, into existence. A construct first deployed by the colonial administrator for the political control of a people, the label puts together a particular kind of "individual," an anthropological object, and in doing so conceals the machinery of control exerted on the Mappila peasant body. The violence involved is erased; colonialism and the processes of counter-insurgency come to be represented as the impartial rule of the "enlightened" over a "primitive" people. The designation "fanatic" is of immense use to the colonialist since it institutes "disciplinary control and the creation of docile bodies [both] unquestionably connected to the rise of capitalism" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 134). This kind of tag is designed to control the insurgent Mappila body and at the same time excuse the resort to counter-violence. What is required would be an endeavour to extricate the Mappila peasant "from the state and from the type of individuation which is linked to the state" (Foucault, 1982, 216). After all, who is a fanatic? A fanatic is among other things "a dangerous individual," that is, inversely, an individual dangerous to the nation-state. In fact, the metaphors commonly employed, like that of "outbreak," "outrage," "fanatical eruptions," "madness" (the latter two from Gandhi[19]), conjure up the picture of an uncontrollable violence and an extreme irrationality on the part of the individual. Insofar as these metaphors are employed in order to master the people, they also testify to the lack of control on the part of the state over the peasant body. This is brought out by the fact that the Mappila community not only celebrated the insurgents through songs, but can also be said to have sanctioned such "madness." Such "madness" is dangerous in that it is directed against the social body symbolized by the colony and later the nation-state.

Working against the idea of the natural stupidity of a peasant, I would interpret "martyrdom" as a religio-political strategy. It was, after all, not an easy task to risk an insurrection against a well-armed adversary. Having everything to lose[20] yet confronted with the sheer impossibility of continuing as before, the

peasant-insurgents had to be aware of the implications of their deed. Once the peasants' decision to become "martyrs" is reconfigured as a political choice, it is possible to see how such a decision is a strategic choice, taken after careful consideration of available options. In 1507, when the Portuguese withdrew into their fortress and teased the might of the Zamorin and his Muslim troops, "[n]umbers of Moors took oath to die as [martyrs]" (Logan, 314). "Fanaticism" is not invoked here; trade interests visibly structure Muslim action and Logan and his sources commend the courage and determination of the Arabs. Though Logan, in contrast to less sensitive analyses, acknowledges that the Mappilas were driven to rebellion due to economic and cultural oppression, it is fanaticism which eventually provides him with a frame with which to understand the peasant-subaltern. The inadequacy of "fanaticism" as an explanatory category is amplified by the fact that the members of the "lower" caste communities either voluntarily espoused Islam or resorted to banditry.[21] That caste (and gender) was always just beneath the surface of the various revolts is particularly evident in the documentation of the 19 October 1843 "uprising." H.V. Conolly, the Magistrate, records that some Mappilas had complained against the village headman dishonouring Islam "by forcing a hindoo woman of one of the lower castes [Thiyya] to apostatize from the mussulman faith to which she had lately converted, probably, tho' I am not certain of the fact, by the zeal of the *Hal Yerikum*[22] party" (Panikkar, 1990,114). This merits a footnote in which Conolly notes:

> The woman, a bold and disrespectable looking person, had taken advantage of her new position to be insolent to her master, as the [Thiyya] of the day before she only approached within 12 paces of him and called him by the peaceful title of Lord or Master as the mussulmans. On the next day she came close to him and called him by his proper and familiar name, a peculiar insult in this country, from an inferior to a superior. The *adigharee* [authority] was naturally very angry, and ordered her with abusive language to take off the dress which had led to her change of behaviour. She was cowed and did so but on going abroad reported what had taken place.
>
> (114)

This conflict[23] is temporarily resolved, impartially, by replacing the headman, though when a Mappila "refused to pay the tax demanded of him and was insolent in his demeanour, *refusing to take off his slippers*" (115; emphasis added), it "flares up" again.

II

Broadly, it is possible to discern two distinct perspectives in the writings on the Mappila insurgencies: the colonial and the nationalist/Marxist. T. L. Strange, the Special Commissioner appointed by the Madras government on 17 February 1852, exemplifies a colonialist mode of analysis and explanation that found renewal in wave after wave of administrative and political commentary. His conclusion was that "'the Mappila outrages have been one and all marked by the most decided

fanaticism' fostered by a 'selfish, ignorant and vicious priesthood,' in the minds of the illiterate Mappilas who were 'grasping, treacherous and vindictive' in character" (cited in Panikkar, 1989, 95). The Mappilas are depicted by the British not only as ignorant and bigoted, but as "rabid animals . . . possessing no spark of reason" (Panikkar, 1990, 110). The most liberal colonial voices under this category, like that of Logan, acknowledge economic hardship as a contributory factor, though in the final analysis "fanatic" causation has remained the *raison d'être*. However, it is possible to examine the logic of the colonialist construction of these "outrages" from the perspective of the insurgents. There is not much written material left behind by the rebels; "evidence" of Mappila voices are mostly typescripts of police interrogations of captured rebels. Hence, I will venture to illustrate my counter-arguments by examining a pamphlet found in a mosque and written by Mappila insurgents. This pamphlet relates to the "uprising" that occurred during 13 and 14 November 1841 at Koduvayur in Ernad taluk. Hence, I focus first on administrative records (Judicial Consultations, December 1841, No. 15, From H.V. Conolly, Magistrate to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, 22nd November 1841; Panikkar, 1990, 94–105; also, Logan, 556) of this "uprising." This year indicates a definite increase in the number of insurgents as well as insurgencies,[24] and it is through the "reports" of this event that we can perceive a significant shift in the colonial perception.

The Magistrate, H.V. Conolly, in his report dated 22 November 1841, traces the origin of the event that has disrupted his government. He characterizes the 14 November 1841 "outbreak" as one in a larger series: "a similar outbreak, attended with similar results" had occurred earlier in a different place in which "nine mopla criminals met their death" (94). In the present instance, an "upper" caste landlord had complained that Mappila peasants had encroached upon his land and built a mosque. The *tahsildar* sent a peon to summon the peasants concerned. The peasants killed the peon and the landlord who had accompanied the peon. Subsequently, the peasants, along with some associates, took refuge in a small mosque. Conolly's account stops here; the rest of the "story" unfolds in an enclosure, a report written by the official I.L. Platel, who had rushed to the spot (Enclosure C, 100–104). Platel, apart from emphasizing the fact that they had to travel from 10 pm to 3 am and had little rest since they reached the mosque where the insurgents had taken refuge at about 6 am, also tells us that the insurgents were seen walking around the mosque. "People" were sent to induce the insurgents to surrender, though Platel does not specify who these "people" were. The "infatuated" Mappilas are then reported to have "shouted back taunting answers, such as 'you are not enough to capture us – not one of you shall return alive, we have been waiting for you these three days, give us [50 minutes'] time so that we may take our [gruel], and then we will come down and meet you, but we will not lay down our arms,' or words to this effect." The last message calling for surrender meets with the following response: "If you are men, come up here, we are ready for you. We will not surrender ourselves, the sirkar [government] will hang us. We wish to kill and die that we may become *syeds* [martyrs]" (100). Platel remarks that the peasant rebels must have been bent on forfeiting their lives since they had sufficient time to escape capture, "for a time," before the troops arrived.

About 200 to 300 villagers are reported to have remained near the mosque throughout the time. The *tahsildar* is helpless because the villagers are no longer on his side, and the officials decide to use the peons to flush out the insurgents. Platel writes: "Great was indeed the difficulty experienced in prevailing upon the peons and villagers to do this, at length after much persuasion and promise and instant support on the part of the military, they resolved to go." Seeing the advancing party the Mappila peasant insurgents prayed loudly, and then "rushed out like *mad men* with their knives, shields and spears" (101; emphasis added). Two or three of the insurgents were immediately shot down, and Platel adds as an afterthought in a footnote, almost as if to underscore the "irrationality" of the rebels, that even now the rest of them could have escaped through the jungle lying to the south-west of the mosque. But they did not. Within minutes all the eleven insurgents were killed. On the official side only two or three were wounded, though not severely. Platel then ensures that the relatives of the deceased did not take the bodies away. Though the authorities "would have liked to have made an example of the rebels by burying their bodies with a dog or some other unclean animal and by escheating their property" (Panikkar, 1989, 70), they were unceremoniously buried.[25]

An interesting detail emerges when the narrative lets slip that "[a]mong the villagers assembled there was not a single mopla nor could the presence of the [chiefs] of that caste [sic] be procured" (103). This surely suggests that the assembled non-Mappila villagers, irrespective of religious and caste affiliations, supported the insurgents and refused to cooperate with the colonial administration. Platel also notes that the only musket which the insurgents had between them was recovered from the road leading from the mosque, and that a boy was seen carrying away the musket while the insurgents were rushing out so as to prevent "the discovery of its owner." Such forethought demonstrates that Platel's narrative clearly runs counter to his characterization of the peasants as "mad" and "infatuated." Rather, the whole episode can be read as a carefully planned operation on the part of the Mappilas. Conolly's report also stresses that the *tahsildar* was right in requesting reinforcements since the "criminals" would "meet with sympathy and assistance from the surrounding mopla populations" (94). The desperation of the Mappilas, concludes the Magistrate,

> is explainable only by the unhappy feeling prevalent among the ignorant and bigoted mussulman population of Malabar, that revenge is no crime, and that they are secure in paradise if they die fighting against an infidel power, whatever be the reason that has caused the use of their arms.
>
> (95)

What punctuates this representation by both the officials is their desperate need to explain to the higher authority, in this case the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, why they were not able to comply with the instructions to capture the peasants alive. On the peasants' side, it does not require much imagination to figure out why they dreaded being taken prisoners.

The *warola* or pamphlet was written on 14 November 1841 by Pathyl Valia Kunholan, one of the "martyrs" and was found at the gate of the mosque where the eleven insurgents met their death. This short pamphlet, reproduced, obviously in translation, as Enclosure A of Conolly's report (Panikkar, 1990, 99–100), frames the event in terms quite different from the colonial account. It narrates how the disputed land had been leased by one Mappila, enumerates the improvements made by him on the land, and stresses that the rights over this land were purchased from the landlord.[26] Thereafter, a mosque, and later a mud wall around it, was constructed. The landlord, this narrative continues, "went and made a false representation" (99) to the court, and the *tahsildar* "without any consideration of the state of things" dispatched a peon to summon the accused. Accompanied by four or five people, the peon "with directions to seize and drag the nine of us" reached the mosque "before sunset of the 28th day of our fast" and "abused and called us out." When the peasants "told him that we would go with him after we shall have broken our fast", the peon and the others abused and "laid hold of the right hand" of one of them, the "owner of . . . [another] mosque," dragged him to a nearby well and began to tie him up. Then the "eight of us, with the weapon . . . kept ready" for the landlord when he returned, had done "what has been done" (99). The *warola* concludes by noting that they have been trying "to get hold of the useless" *tahsildar* and another person who was "the instigator of the complaint" (100).

Similar "records" left by Mappila peasants, few as they are, are not often part of the archive. Athan Gurukkal – whose ancestors reportedly rebelled against Tippu Sultan in 1784–1785 and the British in 1800–1802 (Panikkar, 1989, 71–72) and who was the leader of the "uprising" on 25 August 1849 in which sixty-four Mappilas were killed and one captured – left behind, in the temple where the rebels made their last stand, a very illuminating record addressed to the Collector. Pointing out the colonial government's ignorance of the real state of affairs, Gurukkal writes that the collusion between the landlords and the Hindu public servants have resulted in their

> preferring false and vexatious complaints in the *adalat* [court] and police, against several wealthy Mussalman who held land on mortgage . . . which were the means they had of supporting themselves and family, which complaint, the *sirkar* without knowing the real merits of the case, decreed against them, upon the arguments (false pleas) brought forward in support of them, and afterwards thus passed, were enforced . . . . the consequence of all these has been, that many Mussalman have been reduced to a state of beggary, so much so, that they find themselves unable to represent, and prove to the *sirkar*, the real state of matters, with the view of putting a stop to such practices. Hence, the cause of the events which took place before this, in this part of the country, when some of the landed proprietors and their adherents were cut down and put to death, the perpetrators of which, after setting the public authority at defiance, were punished by Government.[27]

K.N. Panikkar delineates the reasons behind Gurukkal's action in the following manner: he was "neither influenced by the desire for martyrdom nor by the lure of

the pleasures of paradise . . . [since Gurukkal had] emphatically asserted that 'nobody will throw away their life, unless forced to it by unendurable grievance and dishonour'" (1989, 72–73). However, such a distinction only lends to reinforce the "fanaticism" of other Mappilas. Moreover, it is doubtful in this context whether we can refer to personal insult and dishonour, the supposed motives behind Gurukkal's desperate attempt, as "secular" concerns, since the personal and the public worlds were deeply intermeshed.

None of the similar pamphlets and petitions, however, deterred the colonial authorities, who insisted on framing the Mappila "uprisings" as "fanatical," so much so that by 25 September 1852, T.L. Strange, after analysing thirty-one separate instances, could nonchalantly conclude: "It is apparent thus that in no instance can any outbreak or threat of outbreak that has arisen be attributed to the oppression of tenants by landlords."[28] Among the numerous such petitions and representations found among the colonial administrative records, one very chilling anonymous document is the "Petition Purporting to be Addressed by Certain Mussulmans, [Nairs], [Thiyyas] and Men of Other Castes."[29] Submitted on 14 October 1880, this petition points to the reason why it was mostly Mappilas who resorted to violence:[30] "That the mussulmans are the people committing riots; all the hindu officials and landlords impress this fact upon the European officers of the district; that there are no mussulmans holding high offices or acquainted with English; that this accounts for the mussulmans being declared the principal offenders" (Panikkar, 1990, 186). The petition delineates the complicity of the Travancore native state in securing land for "upper" caste Hindus returning and also newly migrating to Malabar, and goes on to add:

> That the people having, therefore, conspired to create a disturbance are advised by some wise men to wait until a representation of the popular grievances has been made to government and orders received thereupon.
>
> That whatever enactments may be passed, before all such suits have been decided and all such decrees executed, disturbances and bloodshed of a kind unknown in Malabar will take place; and that this should not be construed into a vain threat held out to deceive. By the Almighty God who has created all, petitioners swear that this will be a fact.
>
> (Panikkar, 1990, 187)

Though this petition could possibly be the work of a single individual in the name of a collective, a number of anonymous petitions were continually made, alongside other overt and physical means of resistance even if it led to death.[31] The anxiety caused by these "outbreaks" is exemplified by the studied parallel drawn by the colonial authorities between Malabar and Ireland, whereby they try to "understand" the Mappila "outbreaks" as caused by "a real grievance" (Panikkar, 1990, 189).

The manner in which the Magistrate's report on the 14 November 1841 "uprising" commences, frames the event as "a similar outbreak, attended with similar results" where "nine mopla criminals met their death" by killing two landlords

(Panikkar, 1990, 94). Though he frames the event of 14 November as similar to the earlier "uprising" of 5 April, he himself acknowledges in the report made at that time that the two Brahmins who were murdered had acted with "great duplicity" towards a Mappila who, with eight others, attempted to redress the "great injustice" done to him (Panikkar, 1990, 92–93). The earlier "outbreak" is re-characterized, re-interpreted as "fanatical" despite prior recognition of non-religious causes for it. The earlier "uprising," devoid of details, now has a new function; it determines the new event, and in the process is itself rewritten as "fanatical." And the next "uprising" on 27 December 1841 is unhesitatingly represented as "*another* outbreak among the moplahs, of a *more outrageous and extraordinary character*" (Panikkar, 1990, 106; emphases added). So much that in this new event, unlike the earlier two events, which "had some intelligible cause," "the sole wish of the insurgents seems to have been to kill some one and then die themselves. Their conduct indeed was more like that of rabid animals" (Panikkar, 1990, 110).

In the earlier 30 April 1841 report we see the Magistrate hesitating between "criminality" and "fanaticism": the Mappilas of the region have "dangerous habits" and they have been "gang robbers" and "general disturbers of the district" (Panikkar, 1990, 92). The switch from "crime" to the "criminal" is part of the shift from the "act" to the "individual" which, Foucault (1988b) has shown, occurred in the West during this period. If crime and insanity can coincide, that is, if insanity manifests itself in a crime, is the criminal legally responsible and hence punishable for the crime? In attempting to resolve this problem, judicial and medical (psychiatric) institutions shifted the focus from the event to the individual. Confronted with people whose lives could not be contained within the accepted definitions of individuation, the colonial administration re-invented native communities (the Thugees are an obvious example) in whom "fanaticism" aided and abetted an inherent "criminality" allied to insanity. Consequently, it also changed its stance from the "sympathetic and conciliatory" attitude of attributing the "'Mappila turbulence' to the 'political misfortunes of the country,'" that is, the oppression by the Hindu landlords, to the "inherent aggressive character and lack of civilization among the Mappilas" (cited in Panikkar, 1989, 56–57). Mappila "acts" of rebellion were then determined as more than criminal since the individuals volunteered their lives in accordance with the needs of a "fanatical" community. As a measure to cure this "mad" community, the Moplah Outrages Acts (1854) were enforced to curb "fanaticism" among its members and police them into individuality. In the report about the April 1841 "uprising" the Magistrate had complacently written: "I can see no reasonable fear of a similar excess occurring, especially, as this one has been so summarily repressed" (Panikkar, 1990, 92). Though one "uprising" by the native peasant population has been "summarily repressed," the Mappilas were not completely crushed; in fact, they came back with greater dedication and better organization. Unable to perform its "civilizing mission," its very foundation under threat, the British administration invented a new category, the "fanatic": the cause of the local resistances to the "imperial" government would henceforth be organized around this new appellation. Answers to problematic questions (such as: how could the victimized Mappila get associates with such ease? Why were they ready to sacrifice their lives when

they were offered possibilities of escape?) could now be confidently sought in "fanaticism."

"The Mappilas of the interior Malabar have always been a troublesome and dubious description of subjects" (Panikkar, 1990, 92) wrote H.V. Conolly to the Chief Secretary to the British Government on 30 April 1841. The subject-hood of the Mappila is indeed a dubious one. Colonial representations of the "fanatic" involve a two-fold reduction: a reduction to religion as well as a reduction of religion. Most of the records emphasize their religious fervour and excitability, especially at the time of the yearly fasts, their desire for death and martyrdom, their ignorance, criminality, blind faith in rumours and rituals, their inability to comprehend the virtues of non-violence and the politics of the national movement, their lack of patriotism, their hatred of Hindus, their proneness to believe what their religious priests "wrongly" interpret for them, their readiness to murder or attack another without any provocation or cause, the ease with which they can be incited and often made tools in the local power struggles of which they have no inkling – all these make up the Mappila "fanatic." It is not that all these contribute and determine a "fanatic"; rather, the concept "fanatic" determines the attributes. A well-fed Mappila, in Logan's later formulation, would be a more amenable subject and perhaps processes of subjectification would replace "fanaticism," which denotes a pre-political[32] "communal" mode of subaltern consciousness. But the severe repressive measures adopted during the 1921 rebellion show that direct control or suppression almost always displaces ideological control. The very term "subject" is understood to have two meanings: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his/her own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Foucault reminds us that "[b]oth meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (1982, 212)." The notion of "subject" is linked to a particular norm of the individual. Hence, the very epithet "fanatic" denotes that it has its logic and life as resistance to the colonial-modern. More importantly, the making of the Mappila "fanatic" is also a marking of the Muslim body so as to locate the rupture outside the liberal ideology that sustains colonialism/nationalism. The sweep of this appellative "covers" the stark contradictions within the colonialist project of being the ideal civilizing force in the expansion of world capital. Guha states that

> in a pre-capitalist culture, prior to the emergence of any clear distinction between the sacred and the secular in the affairs of the state, politics, one would have thought, was so thoroughly mingled with religion as to permit of no categorical separation between the two.
>
> (1989, 302)[33]

Hence, unable to accept or understand or grasping only too well, the idiom of the subaltern who revolts at an immediate as well as at a symbolic level, the colonialist is left with no choice, and has to "name" the act "fanaticism" in order to explain away the act as well as to disavow any responsibility for it. The British policy of neutrality in matters of religion ties in with an ethno-historiography that

produces the Mappila as the outside of History who has to be controlled, coerced, confined, or killed.

III

The "fanatic" also has an after-life in nationalist discourses, diverse as they are, in which the insurgent Mappila seems to be produced as a not-yet, not full-fledged, citizen-subject. This is underscored by the spate and intensity of efforts to *sanitize* (clean as well as cure) the "fanatical zone" by *shuddhi* or purification initiatives.[34] In this section and the next chapter, I read various sources, some of them written during the aftermath of the 1921 rebellion and others (re)written after the 1947 incidence of independences in the subcontinent. I will not, however, be examining in detail the 1921 rebellion in terms of a chronology of events. Rather, my interest is limited to its narrative construction.

Malabar in the 1920s was politically vibrant, with triangular anti-colonial initiatives. The Mappilas seemed to have, by now, reconfigured their strategies as a result of a growing awareness about the larger scale of the anti-imperial struggle. The Tenancy[35] and Khilafat movements[36] provided a public platform to address their problems. It was in this context that Congress launched a campaign for Non-cooperation in September 1920. These triangular initiatives and the Congress' mass mobilization drive energized nationalist aspirations. The whole of Malabar, literally, responded to the nationalist call, unlike the princely states. The tension between diverse movements with different agendas was accentuated by the grievances of Mappilas, which were often sidelined amidst larger concerns, and a volatile situation prevailed. In order to diffuse the situation, the concerned authorities decided to arrest Ali Musaliyar[37] and searched, unsuccessfully, the Mambram mosque on 20 August 1921. A rumour that he was arrested and the shrine destroyed drew people from various places towards the town, and their anger was further exacerbated when British forces engaged a crowd, reportedly, of 3,000 Mappilas, killing seven and arresting several. In another instance, Mappilas, by now pouring into the town, killed two British officers. Consequently, various leaders (according to one report, Ali Musaliyar and his followers also emerged from hiding) tried to reach a compromise. Led by a local Mappila leader, a large number of Mappilas approached the British camp to negotiate the release of prisoners. "They were ordered to sit on the ground, and, after obeying, were fired upon by soldiers" (Miller, 1992, 137). After this incident, Mappilas in groups dispersed to different locations, leading to attacks on *janmis* and guerrilla-type skirmishes with the police and the military.

The impact of the rebellion on the struggle for independence at the national level is sidelined by nationalist histories. Gandhi had set the trend when he examined the rebellion as the primary cause of Hindu-Muslim tension, only to dismiss it since though the "Malabar happenings undoubtedly disquieted the Hindu mind. What the truth is no one knows . . . . it is impossible to arrive at the exact truth and it is unnecessary for the purpose of regulating our future conduct" (*CWMG*, 1976, vol. 24, 137–138). Examining the series of "riots" which followed, year after year,

with thirty-nine different instances documented between 1921 and 1931, Gandhi acknowledged that it certainly is possible that a "vital connection" exists between them, since "a peaceful Tehsil at the foot of the Himalayas will be affected by a violent hamlet situated near the Cape Comorin" (*CWMG*, 1976, vol. 23, 2–3). At the same time, Gandhi tried to distance the Congress from the Malabar rebellion, not allowing it "to affect any of our plans." Gail Minault, taking note of the distorted form in which the Khilafat movement reached the Mappilas, argued that Hindu-Muslim understanding had been irrevocably violated by the Malabar rebellion. She comments that the newspaper *Independent* testified precisely to such a sentiment on 27 October 1921: "The Muslim lion and the Hindu lamb will lie down together, but the lamb will be inside the lion" (148). However, it was not so much the rebellion itself as the representations generated by the Congress nationalist perception and persuasion of the causes of the Mappila "uprisings" and the character of the Mappilas that affected this change. Accounts by Congress leaders in Kerala were significant in disseminating these ideas, as we will see in the next chapter.

Gandhi, at the helm of Congress when news of the rebellion first reached him, wrote: "our Moplah brethren," "undisciplined . . . all these years," have now "*gone mad*" (*CWMG*, 1976, vol. 21, 120; emphasis added). Gandhi, "reflecting in his own speech the discourse of public order," can only exclaim: "All that [the Mappilas] know is fighting. They are our ignorant brethren. The Government of course has done nothing to reform them but neither have we done anything" (*CWMG*, 1976, vol. 21, 204; Pandey, 1994, 202–203). Gandhi's rhetoric re-lives the stereotypical character-construct of the Muslim:

> The Moplahs are Muslims. They have Arab blood in their veins. It is said that their forefathers came from Arabia many years ago and settled in Malabar. They are of a fiery temperament, and are said to be easily excitable. They are enraged and resort to violence in a matter of seconds. They have been responsible for many murders. . . . They always set out for fighting with a pledge not to return defeated. . . . It is not clear as yet what led to their present outburst.
>
> (*CWMG*, 1976, vol. 21, 47–48)

"The Moplahs are Muslims" sounds more like an indictment than information. The adjectives and statements which follow, "fiery," "excitable," "enraged," "resort to violence in a matter of seconds," "responsible for many murders," "fighting with a pledge not to return," merely reiterate and reinforce those of the colonial administration. Gandhi, who had been to Malabar in August 1920 as part of his mobilization drive for Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements, had pressed the Mappilas to oppose the British Government over the Turkish question. The speech by this "semi-lunatic" (as Gandhi was described by the police, cited in Panikkar, 1989, 125) was attended by about 20,000 people, of whom a large number were Mappilas. Shaukat Ali, who had accompanied Gandhi, exhorted his Malabar audience:

> If you are strong and capable then it is your bounden duty, so long as one Musalman breathes, to fight the unjust king, the unjust government that proved to be an enemy to your faith and to your God. If you are weak and could not cope physically with your opponents then it is incumbent for you to go, migrate, to another country and leave that unjust kingdom and that unjust tyrant and king.
>
> (cited in Panikkar, 1989, 125)

Though there are isolated voices that speak of police repression or of the dream of a Khilafat Raj as principle causes for the massive outbreak, nationalists at that time tended to view the "uprising" as nationalism driven into the communal channel. Gandhi's remark, "It is not clear yet what led to their present outburst," underlines the essentialized "communality" thrust on the Mappila peasantry. What could be more symptomatic and disturbing than the readiness to judge the Mappilas without even bothering to find out "what led to their present outburst"! Gandhi, much like Conolly, frames the "present outbreak" as another event in a series, and "Muslimness" seems to be sufficient explanation for their action. Gandhi interprets the Malabar rebellion as a blow against nationalist aspirations:

> Thus, for the time being progress has been arrested in Malabar and the Government has had its way. It is well versed in the art of suppressing such revolts. Many innocent men must have been, and more will be, killed. Who will come forward to blame the Government? And even if anyone does, what is the chance of the Government paying attention to him?
>
> That is a Government which prevents or stops violence. . . . A Government to be worthy of its name should be able to get the people under control.
>
> (*CWMG*, 1976, vol. 21, 48)

Yakub Hasan wrote to Gandhi from Malabar to inform him that:

> Moplahs as a class have always been poor. . . . The oppression of the [*janmis*] is a matter of notoriety and a long-standing grievance of the Moplahs that has never been redressed by means of legislation. . . . Something has to be done and immediately if the Moplah community is to be saved from moral, even physical, destruction. In spite of all his faults and shortcomings, the Moplah is a fine man. He has the bravery, the pluck and the grit of his Arab father, and the gentleness and the industry of his Nair mother. His religious zeal is more misunderstood than appreciated. He is as a rule peaceful, but he brooks no affront to his honour or religion. Unfortunate circumstances, the causes of which I need not enter into on this occasion, forced him into the position of a rebel. He has done what anyone, Hindu, Muslim or Christian, under the same circumstances and in the same emergency, would have done in self-defence and self-interest. He has suffered the consequence of his deeds. Should the society also visit his sins on his wife and children?
>
> (*CWMG*, 1976, vol. 23, 512–513)

Yakub Hasan's letter and Gandhi's response were published in *Young India* (1 May 1924), where Gandhi pointedly picks on Yakub Hasan's "sweeping assertion" that anybody else would have done the same and comments that "We may not remember against posterity the sins of its forefathers. The Moplahs sinned against God and have suffered grievously for it. Let the Hindus also remember that they have not allowed the opportunity of revenge to pass by" (*CWMG*, 1976, vol. 23, 524). Writing to Congressman U. Gopala Menon, in the context of a report in *Naveena Keralam*, Gandhi comments: "How to reach the Moplahs as also the class of Hindus whom you would want to reach through your newspaper is more than I can say, but I know that Hindus should cease to be cowardly. The Moplahs should cease to be cruel. In other words, each party should become truly religious" (*CWMG*, 1976, vol. 23, 81–82). Elsewhere, he notes:

> A verbal disapproval by the Mussulmans of Moplah madness is no test of Mussulman friendship. The Mussulman must *naturally feel the shame and humiliation* of the Moplah conduct about forcible conversions and looting, and they must work away *so silently and effectively* that such things might become impossible even on the part of the most fanatical among them.
>
> (*CWMG*, 1976, vol. 21, 321; my emphasis)

The thrust of Gandhi's argument, unlike mainstream nationalism, seems not to be directed against "fanaticism" as such, but against a "loud" (ineffectual, even inhuman) manifestation of it. What was unforgivable for Gandhi was they "sinned against God," which poses questions about Mappila understandings of the sacred/secular. Apart from the ease of his own position of being secular by being truly religious, a position unviable for the Muslim, Gandhi is also completely taken over by the notion of a non-violent, even sacred, struggle for independence, eliding the fact that non-violence is only a strategy worked out for a particular purpose. He condemns violence in absolute pietistic terms. There is an outright ruling out of any other alternative mode of struggle, and, later, this approach ensures a categorical writing out of local struggles that do not fit into this devised Indian history.

If nationalist/Marxist[38] thought failed to understand peasant insurgency, it could not even begin to comprehend the religious aspect of the subaltern Mappila. In the nationalist discourse, the "fanatic" produced as the other of the secular modern, served to define the boundaries of belonging. Islam presents a different picture. From the position of Islam, one could argue that the communal mode of consciousness exists in postcolonial worlds alongside a bourgeois mode of power. In fact, it could be that the communal mode is a critique, especially so with Islam, which does not seem to brook a private/public division of the bourgeois secular-modern. It is this sense of community that, perhaps, enabled the Mappila insurgents to see connections between their local situation and the national, even global context.

The Mappila insurgents were not, could not be, reclaimed and renamed as martyrs of the independence struggle. Gandhi, in a letter dated 3 March 1922, to Konda Venkatappayya, expresses his late realization:

> I can still distinguish between Malabar and Gorakhpur [Chauri Chaura]. The Moplahs themselves had not been touched by the non-co-operation spirit. *They are not like the other Indians nor even like the other Mussulmans*. . . . The Moplah revolt was so different in kind that it did not affect other parts of India, whereas Gorakhpur was typical, and therefore, if we had not taken energetic steps, the *infection might easily have spread to other parts of India*.
> (*CWMG*, vol. 23, 3; emphases added)

While the peasant violence at Chauri Chaura is redeemable, the 1921 Malabar rebellion cannot be. What is the difference evoked by Gandhi here, if not the difference of Islam? The casual conjunction of "other Indians" and "other Mussulmans" in Gandhi's comment underlines this point: Indians and Muslims are separate, if not contradictory, categories. Ironically, what Gandhi had hoped to achieve by his alliance with Muslims was "a three-fold end – to obtain justice in the face of odds with the method of satyagraha . . . to secure Mahomedan friendship for the Hindus and thereby internal peace also, and last but not least to transform ill-will into affection for the British and their constitution" (Brown, 194; cited in Dale, 183). What was achieved was the determination of Islam as a common denominator that symbolized an irreducible difference, an indivisible remainder outside the destiny of the Indian nation. And thus the inverse of Chatterjee's postulation (1996) of moments of departure (Bankim), manoeuvre (Gandhi), and arrival (Nehru) of the Indian nation, would be the Muslim response to post-Enlightenment thought which then would involve a moment of arrival (an arrival at modernity, viz. Syed Ahmad Khan), a moment of manoeuvre (mobilization; Ali brothers), and a moment of departure (out of the Indian nation; Iqbal and Jinnah).

Notes

1 The rebel leader Variamkunnath Kunhamed Haji, a bullock-cart driver by profession, as described in *The Moplah Rebellion, 1921* by C. Gopalan Nair (76–77), a retired Deputy Collector; cited, with modification, from E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Kerala Society and Politics* (1984, 116).

2 History textbooks, if at all, invariably highlight the Wagon Tragedy of 20 November 1921 in which sixty-seven Mappila and three Hindu prisoners died due to suffocation, the rest were mutilated and barely alive, while being transported by rail from Tanur to Coimbatore in a wagon without ventilation.

3 See, for instance, Variamkunnath Kunhamed Haji's letter of 7 October 1921 from Pandalam (Pandalur) Hill hideout and published in *The Hindu* 18 October 1921 (reproduced from Panikkar, 1990, 417; a compilation of various archival sources):

> Honoured Editor,
> I request you to publish the following facts in your paper.

> According to the press reports from Malabar hindu-muslim unity in Malabar has thoroughly ceased to exist. It appears that the report that hindus are forcibly converted (by my men) is entirely untrue. Such conversions were done by government party and reserve policemen in mufti mingling themselves with the rebels (masquerading as rebels).
>
> Moreover, because some hindu brethren, aiding the military, handed over to the military innocent moplahs who were hiding themselves from the military, a few hindus have been put to some trouble. Besides, that Nambudiri, who is the cause of this rising, has also similarly suffered. Now, the chief military commander is causing the hindus to evacuate from these taluks. Innocent women and children of Islam who have done nothing and possess nothing, are not permitted to leave the place.
>
> The hindus are compulsorily recruited for military service. Therefore several hindus seek protection in my hill. Several moplahs too have sought my protection.
>
> For the last one month and a half, except for the seizure and punishment of the innocent, no purpose has been achieved.
>
> Let all people in the world know. Let Mahatma Gandhi and the Maulana know it. If this letter is not seen published, I will ask for your explanation at one time.

4 For a detailed list, see, Stephen Dale (appendix 227–232) and Conrad Wood (11–14). Apart from the twenty-nine actual rebellions, there were also twelve putative outbreaks, with a total participation of seventy, in which the insurgents were not, reportedly, inclined towards martyrdom. There was also as an incident when a Mappila, due to a dispute over family property, attacked his own relatives (see, Wood, appendix 2, 246–247). The number of Mappila participants in the twenty-nine "uprisings" varied from one to twenty; three "uprisings," however, of 1849, 1894, and 1896, had sixty-five, thirty-four, and ninety-nine participants, respectively. Also, there is some justification in labeling an event involving a single Mappila as insurgency since he had the full backing of the community and often underwent rituals similar to those before a pilgrimage.

5 Isolated rebellions have been traced as far back as 1796–1800, and even earlier; see, especially entry under serial no. 429 in records stored by Herman Gundert, *Tuebingen University Library Malayalam Manuscript Series 1994–1996* (Skariah, 245 F & G, 114).

6 Variously spelled as Mappilla, Mapilla, Maplah, Moplah, Mopla, Moplar, and Moplaymar. Etymologically it has been glossed as a contraction of *Maha-pilla* ("big child," a title of honour conferred on immigrants) or as *ma-pilla* ("mother's child") implying a foreign, if not unknown, paternity, or as *mappila* meaning "bridegroom" or "son-in-law."

7 Andre Wink stresses the "brahmanization" of the social order in Malabar around the eight century which, apart from contributing to the effacement of Buddhism, seems to have "adversely affected the still relatively open maritime orientation of Malabar" (Vol. 1, 72). "It is no coincidence," notes Wink, "that the implantation of Muslim communities becomes better visible the more caste prohibitions against trans-oceanic travel and trade seem to obtain a hold on the Hindu population and turns it to agrarian pursuits and production, away from trade and maritime transport." Thus, Jews and Muslims came to monopolize the market; the latter settled down in Malabar and contracted marriages with women of "low" fishing and mariner castes. Their offspring, the Mappilas, became "the privileged intermediaries of trade with the Islamic world" (Vol. 1, 72). In the words of Ibn Battuta, the fourteenth century traveler, "the Muslims are the people who are most respected in this country, but the *natives* do not eat with them and don't allow them to enter their houses" (cited by Wink, vol. 1, 74 from Batoutah, vol. 4, 75; my emphasis). In contrast to the Hindus, marked by "stereotype ritual isolation and the unusually rigid caste barriers and concepts of pollution" (Vol. 1, 72), the Mappilas, "assimilating converted Hindus from early on, became ethnically quite diverse. They spoke

Malayalam and dressed like the [Nairs], from whom they often took over the matrilineal kinship organization as well" (Vol. 1, 75).

8 M.Q. Ferishta (1560–1620) notes that "all the materials of the history of the Mahommedans of the Malabar coast that I have been able to collect are derived from the *Tuhafat-ul-Mujahideen*" (Vol. 4, 531; cited from Miller, 1992, 48). See, also, Buchanan (1762–1829).

9 William Logan, *Malabar* (2 vols., 1989a). Known as the *Malabar Manual*, it was first published in 1887 and had reprints in 1906 and 1951. Unless otherwise mentioned, all references are to the first volume.

10 Thiyya or Tiya is a caste in Malabar that is usually counted as equivalent to the Ezhava caste.

11 The parallel between the good old Aryans and the timely British intrusion need not be belaboured. Interestingly, Logan refers to the natives as "aliens" and the Aryans as "immigrants [who] came not as conquerors, but as peaceful citizens" (1989a, 112). Elsewhere, he refers to the Mysorean conquest of Malabar in 1766 as the "Muhammadan invasion" and colonization as "British occupation" (109).

12 The period of Mysorean invasion 1766–1792 is one of rivalry and alliances between European and native powers. Tippu (or Tipu) Sultan ascended the throne of Mysore in 1782 on the death of his father, Hyder Ali. The latter had invaded Malabar, with varying degrees of success, many times over ten years, the first in 1766. He also had designs on Travancore princely state, but was defeated by the British in 1780. However, in 1784, as per a British treaty, Malabar was returned to Tippu Sultan, only to taken back in 1792.

13 Wood traces the problem to the return of Hindu landlords from their exodus to Travancore during Tippu's reign: "In 1792, in the wake of victorious British arms, the hindu [*janmis*] returned to Malabar from exile eager to reclaim their rights in their ancient landed estates" (100). The British who had drawn on Hindu support to defeat Tippu favoured the landlords and decreed that all usurpations after 11 September 1787 were illegal. Further, legal and police persecution of Mappilas continued, thereby lending conviction to the theory of Hindu-British collusion (106).

14 For a discussion of the background of the colonial assessment of native ownership of land, see Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (1982).

15 The failure of the administration to redress Mappila grievances can be deduced from the following: "Whereas the Mappilas of the village of Cundooty have represented to us that they have heretofore been greatly oppressed by the Nairs in so much that they were obliged to take up arms in their own defence. We hereby warn all persons whatever from molesting them in any shape in future, and the said Mappilas are hereby required to apply themselves to their former occupations and if they meet any oppressions from the Nairs they must come to Calicut and represent the same to us, when speedy redress shall be given them, Given under our hands and the seal of the Honourable Company in Calicut, this 26th day of June 1792, Sd/- W.G. Farmer and Alexander Dow" (Logan, 1989b, 152).

16 The "uprising" on 25 February 1896 in which ninety-nine Mappila insurgents were involved (ninety-four were killed, five were captured alive) had the highest toll ever. The next "uprising" – barring the one on 1 April 1898 in which all the twelve participants who killed a *janmi* surrendered because they were urged by other Mappilas to do so – was on 28 February 1915 (Dale puts it on 2 November 1915) and targeted the District Magistrate, C.A. Innes. However, in the "uprising" of 6 February 1919, Mappila martyrs were seven, as were the number of "upper" caste Hindu victims. It is also significant that no putative "uprisings" are recorded between 1894 and 1915.

17 An offhand remark of J.C. Griffiths on 16 April 1976. As M. Gangadhara Menon pointed out to Dale, Logan was more a capitalist influenced by utilitarianism than a socialist; see, Dale, 170 and footnote no. 48, 255. See, also Gangadhara Menon.

18 The slippage between "outbreaks" with and without any justification is brought out when Logan in his own voice notes: "While Pulikkal Raman was cleaning his teeth . . .

on 31st October 1883, Asaritodi Moidin Kutti . . . attacked him from behind with a sword. . . . Raman fled pursued by Moidin Kutti, who held the sword in one hand and a book in the other" (584). Moidin Kutti used "unintelligible expressions as he ran. After dancing about on a rock for sometime, brandishing his sword and striking the back of his neck with it . . . on the intervention of [other Mappilas, he] threw the sword and book down and surrendered. He was afterwards tried and acquitted on the grounds of insanity" (585). Another instance: "A Hindu . . . [K. Raman] who had several years previously embraced and subsequently renounced Islam . . . was waylaid and attacked in a most savage manner by two Mappillas. . . . [He managed to escape and later] denounced . . . the men [responsible]. These men had intended to run the usual fanatical course, but their courage failed them at the last moment and they were in due course arrested, brought to trial [and transported for life]. Three other persons were also deported in connection with this case. . . . The Acting District Magistrate . . . proposed to fine [the village to the tune] of Rs. 15,000 [later reduced to Rs. 5,000 because of the poverty of Mappilas] of which he proposed to assign a sum of Rs. 1,000 to K. Raman as compensation for his wounds" (585). The award of money to the apostate "rankled in the minds of the Mappilas generally [since] they held the perverted view that an apostate should suffer death" (586).

19 M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (1976, vol. 21, 321; hereafter, *CWMG*).

20 The move from everything-to-lose to nothing-to-lose is the first step in insurgency. Frantz Fanon writes: "In the colonial countries peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms; colonization and decolonization are simply a question of relative strength" (1971, 47).

21 During the 1790s, that is before the period of "outbreaks," when the breach between Nairs and Mappilas was very wide, "on the outskirts of this lawless country there dwelt a tribe of what were in those days called 'jungle' Mappillas, who were banded together under chiefs and who subsisted on the depredations committed on their neighbours" (Logan, 485). Logan's *history* is littered with "fanaticism," which occurs as many as six times on a given page (588).

22 H.V. Conolly, in January 1844, noted: "About 5 months ago I received intimation from Shernaad tahsildar, that a sect of enthusiasts had sprung up among the lower orders of moplahs in his talook who professed an intention of living in a manner more suited (as they declared) to the spirituality of their religion. . . . They met together in small bodies for the purpose of devotion many times a day, and pressed on all around them the desirableness of joining them in this practice and of becoming parties to what was called the *Hal Yerikum*. . . . I send for an Arab priest . . . [who] assured me that it was the work of a few insignificant men . . . [and] priests of note in Shernaad [would do] their best to discourage it and make it die away quietly" (Panikkar, 1990, 112–113). Many such sects with short lives seem to have sprouted in many places.

23 Not much evidence is available about the extent and nature of participation by women in the "uprisings," though R.H. Hitchcock's report (first published in 1925 as *A History of the Malabar Rebellion, 1921*) mentions the active participation of women in the "uprising" of 25 February 1896. Hitchcock also notes that it was women who incited the men in Pukkotur and he takes note of the participation by women during the 1921 rebellion, especially of the "fanatical cruelty" of one Chetali Biyumma; see, section B, "Part Taken by Women and Children in the Rebellion" (150–152).

24 In the three separate "uprisings" in April, November, and December of 1841, the rebel/victim ratio was 9:3, 11:2 and 8:2. The first recorded "uprising" on 26 November 1836 and next one on 15 April 1837 had a ratio of 1:1. While the next on 5 April 1839 had a ratio of 2:1, the one in the same place on the very next day had a ratio of 1:1. The only other "uprising" before 1841 was on 19 April 1840 with a 1:1 ratio; Wood, 11; Logan, 554–555.

25 Logan adds: "On the 17th of the same month a large band of Mappillas, estimated at 2,000, set at defiance a police party on guard over the spot where the . . . criminals had been buried, and forcibly carried off their bodies and interred them with honours at a mosque. Twelve of these were convicted and punished" (556).

26 This was also a period of competition among the agrarian farmers and peasants for procuring land on lease for cultivation; a result was that landlords kept hiking up the rent every year and evicting those who could not pay the revised rent. The colonial government made a policy decision that in cases of eviction the landlord must pay for any improvements on the land. However, this only resulted in more and more litigation because, with the help of lawyers, the landlords argued that they had to pay only the actual cost of the improvements and not their considerably higher market value.

27 Cited by Panikkar (1989, 73) from *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages in Malabar* (Vol. 1, 52).

28 Report of T. L. Strange, Special Commissioner, to T. Pycroft, Secretary to Government, Judicial Department, Fort St. George, *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages* (Vol. 1, 399–477; Panikkar, 1990, 175).

29 Though unsigned, it was purportedly written by E. Thompson, the Malayalam translator to the government. See, Judicial Department, G.O. no. 281, dated 5 February 1881 (Panikkar, 1990, 185–188).

30 Stating that "demolition of mosques, religious persecution, cruel oppression and ejectment of mussulmans by landlords are the causes that have led to moplah outbreaks," the petition even tries to placate the authorities by blaming earlier Mappila rebels: "That the assassination of Collector Conolly was committed by some moplahs of bad character whose continued imprisonment made them despair of being liberated from jail" (Panikkar, 1990, 187).

31 I reproduce another anonymous petition, Judicial Department, G.O. no. 884, dated 19 May 1896 (Panikkar, 1990, 245–247), to strengthen the possibility of reading these "uprisings" in terms of the counter-narratives:

> To, The Honourable Governor-in-Council, Madras.
>
> We, numbering not less than 363 rioters belonging to an area extending from Calicut eastwards up to Palghat, and from Cochin northwards up to Wynad, who have held ourselves in readiness, with the help of god, for an outbreak in the month of ramzan to government as follows:
>
> After the close of the enquiries, which were made by the commissioner Mr. Logan, under the pretense of securing redress of the grievances of the tenants oppressed by the *janmis*, the tenants have been all the more ground down by the *janmis* and reduced to indigent poverty, destitute of any means of obtaining a livelihood. . . .
>
> Owing to the present levy of punitive fines it has been rendered absolutely impossible for us to live in the country with our children weeping on account of intolerable hunger.
>
> In the recent outbreak at Pandikad, mothers and sisters, after being stripped of their clothes, were severely tortured by painful pressure being applied to their breasts, and by introducing into their eyes, nostrils and anal and urinary orifices, thorny sticks . . . smeared over with ground chilly, sulphate of copper and similar terrible materials. By inflicting such terrorising cruelties in the manner described, head constables Kumaran Nair, Krishnan Nair, and others extorted and amassed large fortunes and reduced us and our sorrow-stricken family and children to poverty. As these miseries were too hard for us to bear any longer, we have been forced to make preparations and to hold ourselves in readiness for an outbreak.
>
> So long as the *janmis* continue to oust their tenants and so long as the government refuse to institute any enquiries whatever into the grievances of these mussalmans

> such as we are, we, the petitioners, are prepared to fight until the whole lot of us perish in the struggle.

After suggesting eight immediate measures that the government can carry out, the petition continues:

> Instead of protecting the subjects by these means, if the sovereign should abandon true justice . . . we the rioters do hereby particularly announce that we are determined to die in the struggle, rather than give government any respite.
>
> Should government . . . still proceed on to levy punitive fines, we are determined to become *syeds* (martyrs) of our cause; and have also arranged with certain hindu friends of ours to chop off the heads of such of those and others as so found with the accounts to levy the said punitive fines.
>
> Believing that these particulars will receive special attention we, the rioters, proceed to assume the role of *syeds* (martyrs).
>
> In vain, have many representations been, on several occasions, made to subordinate officials; but on the present occasion we believe that similar negligence and indifference will not be shown.
>
> In conclusion, remember well that a due reply to this will be demanded of you. . . .

32 Eric J. Hobsbawm defines the pre-political people as those "who have not yet found, or only begun to find, a specific language in which to express their aspirations about the world," and "their movements are thus in many respects blind and groping, by the standards of modern times" (1959, 2); see also Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (1969).

33 For an elaborate treatment of peasant consciousness, see Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (1983).

34 Gail Minault notes that the "new Shuddhi effort . . . was directly inspired by the Mappilla rebellion and renewed communal tensions, and the Muslims – especially the ulama – were alarmed," leading to the Tabligh initiative (193).

35 Grievances of the tenants were the central theme of the debates in Malabar so much so that tenancy reform became a debate unavoidable even in the District Congress conferences. Though "the Congress avoided taking a clear-cut stand on the issue in deference to the wishes of the *janmis*" (Panikkar, 1989, 120), by 1916 there had evolved a Tenancy Movement that focused on unjust evictions, over-leasing and illegal rent collections.

36 The first Khilafat conference, chaired by Gandhi, was held in November 1919 in Delhi, and resulted in the formation, in February 1920, of a Central Khilafat Committee at Bombay.

37 Ali Musaliyar, a venerated priestly figure among the Mappilas, had tried to follow the Gandhian path, but finally lost patience when the police repression intensified and the Congress leaders were nowhere to be seen. Moreover, as we will see in the next chapter, following the untimely (if not ill-) advice of the Secretary of Kerala Congress Committee, K.P. Keshava Menon, Ali Musaliyar surrendered in August 1921 and was hanged to death in February 1922, though the rebellion continued, with a strategic resort to guerilla warfare, for more than four months after Ali Musaliyar's surrender.

38 The case of Marxist historiography has not been, in the larger context, very different. Put schematically, instead of a theory of "fanatic" causation, the Marxist version assumes that the economic grievances are *the* major determining factor. It was E.M.S. Namboodiripad who took note of the wider participation, even leadership, of "Hindus," at least during the early stage of the rebellion. He argued for the re-designation of the 1921 Mappila rebellion as Malabar rebellion or Malabar freedom struggle (1952, 121). He also observes that "*spontaneous* peasant actions . . . started developing in Malabar" (1984, 90) but the national bourgeois leadership "abandoned the vanguard to the tender

mercies of the British troops. Had it not been for this disgraceful betrayal by the leadership at the crucial moment, the history of the glorious rebellion of 1921 would have been different" (1984, 114). Nonetheless,

> at a subsequent stage of the movement, i.e., at the stage when British troops had started their depredations and when British rulers and their Hindu stooges had spread the canard of Muslim fanaticism being the source of the militancy of the peasants, the movement acquired a communal colour.
>
> (1984, 114)

The Marxist explanation draws on the notion of the "pre-political peasant rebel" in order to analyze peasant insurgencies which were to a great extent influenced/informed by religion.

5 Memoirs of the Malabar rebellion

> The way of the life of the dominant majority is as decadent as the ways of the so-called minorities.
>
> (Syed Alam Khundmiri, 280)

This chapter will engage with some of the memoirs[1] of the 1921 Malabar Rebellion serialized and later published in Malayalam in conjunction and paradoxical juxtaposition with the report of the colonial District Superintendent of Police, in order to provide a multilayered account.

Working within a nationalist framework, yet closely associated with events of the time, these writings – K. Madhavan Nair's *Malabar Kalapam* and M.B. Namboodiripad's *Khilaphathu Smaranakal* – reflect the tensions structuring the nationalist position in/on the rebellion. Although there is a fairly extensive corpus of writing on the Malabar rebellion from a nationalist perspective, these memoirs straddle between autobiography and history.

Though my focus is as not such on the chronology and details of various events of the 1921 Malabar-Mappila rebellion, I reproduce K. Madhavan Nair's summary of the events of the rebellion. Madhavan Nair – the first secretary of the local Congress Committee, established in 1921, and the first managing director of *Mathrubhumi* newspaper – divides the rebellion into five phases:

> First phase: 20–08–1921 to 31–08–1921; military lay siege to the Tirurangadi mosque to arrest Ali Musaliyar; encounter between Mappilas and the military; District Collector flees; a major battle at Pukkotur; Mappilas spread the message of rebellion; groups travel to Nilambur and the Eastern region; treasuries and some Hindu homes plundered; Ali Musaliyar surrenders.
>
> (5)

> Second phase: 01–09–1921 to 20–09–1921; no *lahalakal* (outbreaks)[2] at all; further repression by military; Hindus attack Mappilas – leading to later rapes, proselytism and murder; major leaders: Variamkunnath Kunhamed Haji, Chembrasseri

> Thangal and Lavakutty and Kunjalavi (Ali Musaliyar's disciples) still active in different parts though their followers had almost deserted them; the *lahala* almost over, so the people thought, but the stupidity of the authorities made it flare up again.
>
> (6)

> Third phase: 20–09–1921 to the end of 1921; cruel human behaviour, worse than animals; encounters between the military and the rebels, and Mappilas' evil deeds – terrible murders, proselytism and looting.
>
> (6)

> Fourth phase: the end of 1921 to the first week of January 1922; arrest of more Mappilas; even those not involved in the *lahala* are arrested, fined/punished; the military, police and Hindus turn on the Mappilas; surrender of the major rebel leaders, Variamkunnath Kunhamed Haji and Chembrasseri Thangal; other leaders killed, end of *lahala.*
>
> (6–7)

> Fifth phase: January 1922 onwards; famine-relief measures; court cases; the misdeeds of police; fights between the Hindu and Muslim Khilafat workers.
>
> (7)

K. Madhavan Nair's *Malabar Kalapam*, written and serialized in *Mathrubhumi* immediately after the 1921 rebellion, was first published in 1971. K. Kalyaniamma, his wife, takes note of the historical, hence authentic,[3] nature of the personal account when she writes:

> As a Congress leader entrusted with the job of controlling the Khilafat movement, Madhavan Nair had many opportunities to be involved in the *kalapam* and interact face to face with its leaders. Hence, it can be said that the depiction of the event in this book is almost a live commentary. At the same time, it also includes an objective and impartial criticism of the *kalapam*. In the description of the *kalapam*, Madhavan Nair's sympathy for the grievances of the Mappilas of Ernad is evident. He was impressed by their courage and simplicity; but, at the same time, he does not hide their fanaticism, rashness and intolerance at all.
>
> (KMN, v)

But contrary to Kelappan's assertion in the foreword that "a historian's objectivity is reflected/displayed throughout the text" (vi), Madhavan Nair himself writes that

> It is almost impossible to write a complete history of the events during the time of the *kalapam*. It is not very difficult to get detailed information about the happenings in important places during the first phase of the *kalapam*. But

> it is indeed difficult to get information about matters/events during the middle and the last phase of the *kalapam*. Apart from the military and the *kalapakar* [rebels], there are very few who know about them. Because the government has not published anything regarding the movements/activities of the military, and because those involved in the *kalapam* are either dead or imprisoned, it is not possible to get detailed information from either of these two. Hence, I plan to record in this history the matters as have been gathered from newspapers, from enquiries, and from those who had fled the place of the *lahala*.
>
> (KMN, 5)

The collapse of the registers is by now complete and his memoir is touted as a history though most of the "facts" were "gathered from newspapers, from enquiries, and [ironically] from those who fled the place of the *lahala*."

Similar ambivalence and contradictions are present in *Khilaphathu Smaranakal*, a memoir written in Malayalam by M.B. Namboodiripad,[4] which describes the events that "culminated" in the Malabar rebellion of 1921. As a participant of the rebellion, M.B. Namboodiripad had vainly endeavoured to contain the rebellion and suffered "police torture more than a Muslim" (MBN, 8), but the latter half of the text, which was separately published in 1930 in *Unni Nambudhiri*, a newspaper run by radical youth, including E.M.S. Namboodiripad, is devoted to his own post-rebellion experiences. Despite advice from friends to publish it immediately in book form, M.B. Namboodiripad delayed its publication because he wanted it to be a book that presented the history behind his own experiences (8). The resultant memoir, the personal account being refurbished with the historical context, was finally published in July 1965, a year after M.B. Namboodiripad died at the age of sixty-eight. The gap between the historical account (probably written around 1960, if not later) and the personal account (written during late 1920s) is significant. When the memoir was republished, twenty-eight years later, in 1993, K.M. Tharakan, the-then president of Kerala Sahitya Akademi, notes that the book has an important place as literature since it is a heart-rending autobiography, though he goes on to add: "Even though it is an autobiography, it is at the same time the story of a place/nation, a historical story, and a political history" (5). Tharakan praises the author for depicting truth, without any adulteration, as he had experienced it. K.P. Kesava Menon, a prominent personality and erstwhile Congress President of Kerala, in his introduction to the 1965 edition, wrote:

> This book contains a description of the *lahala* which took place in Malabar in 1921 during the non-cooperation movement. It is now 44 years since the *lahala*. The memories of it have begun to fade. As of now, there have been only three or four books published on the Malabar *lahala*. Besides, it cannot be said that those books have been of much use as far as informing us of the many facts about the *lahala*. There are only a very few who can objectively describe historical events – even if they know the facts. Given all this, there is no doubt that this book written by Sri Brahmadathan Namboodiripad is a welcome contribution to the writings on Malabar *lahala*.

> In describing the events that led to the *lahala*, the author has depended mainly on his own experiences. He has not ventured to depict things which he has not known or which cannot be believed. Indeed, Sri Namboodiripad's experiences are extremely appalling and extraordinary. He has described them without resorting to hyperbole.
>
> (6)

It is interesting that K.P. Keshava Menon refers to the rebellion as, not a *kalapam* or a *viplavam* (revolt/rebellion), but a *lahala*, echoing in effect Madhavan Nair's confusion. The terms in which we are to read M.B. Namboodiripad's memoir are clearly laid down. What is posited as a sincere, unmediated, unadulterated, and true description of the *lahala* is at the same time more than an autobiography since it also depicts "the story of a place/nation, a historical story, and a political history." These claims raise a number of questions about autobiography, literary/historical narratives, and representation. More than K. Madhavan Nair's *Malabar Kalapam*, it is M.B. Namboodiripad's memoir that is classed as an autobiographical narrative. Apart from forcing us to rethink the narrative mode of representation and the ideological underpinnings of narrative (re)constructions of reality, this text, placed as a wedge, in its liminal existence, unsettles the distinction between the literary and the historical. The issue of narrativity, so to speak, becomes all the more problematic in a text like that of M.B. Namboodiripad's. In fact, Tharakan's comment, that though an autobiography, it is also the story of a place/nation, seems to make a distinction between the story of a self that is literary, and the story of a place/nation that is historical. But M.B. Namboodiripad's text is literary and historical at once, because here the personal and the social, the self and nation, are seemingly made to coincide. In this coincidence of the individual and the social, the particular and the general, the private and the public, M.B. Namboodiripad's text is different from other autobiographies, for it sublimates the ordinary generic distinctions, thus dissolving the distinction between the historical and the literary. However, the historical text is also a cultural artefact underwritten by ideology in its form, as well as in the narrative reconstruction of reality; that is to say, ideology determines what can be remembered and recounted. Hence, with a text like M.B. Namboodiripad's, what is required is an unravelling of the ideological formation which structures it and which it reworks (making it work, so to speak), while paying attention to the fact that the narrative convention interpellates a subject by the very ruse of endowing a self-identity.

The title of Madhavan Nair's text refers to the 1921 rebellion as *kalapam*, but throughout the text we find the word *lahala* employed to denote the pre- and post-1921 uprisings, turning *kalapam* into a generic term for the many *lahala*s that took place during 1921–1922. Madhavan Nair's ambivalence regarding the events around 1921 is all the more ironical, as he intends his account to be a corrective to District Superintendent of Police R.H. Hitchcock's narrative: "Mr. Hitchcock was more capable of creating history than writing history" (1). Further, Madhavan Nair describes Malabar as if it were a Hindu deity (8–9). Nonetheless, he criticizes the casteism prevalent among Hindus and their resultant disunity (10). They are

contrasted to the Mappilas, who are presented as physically strong, ignorant, and fanatical. Though Madhavan Nair acknowledges that the cause of the *lahala*s is partly the *janmi*s, to "the increase in the number of the *lahala*s and in their cruelty definitely fanaticism has contributed" (11). He regrets the fact that the industriousness of the Mappilas, which would have made them equal to any other community in India, comes to nothing since they were neither educated nor properly taught their religion; for example, they believe the Maulavis' decree that by killing *kaffir*s one can achieve paradise.[5] "As soon as they hear something related to their religion, without even bothering to find out whether it is true or not, they go berserk and behaving like mad people immediately start *lahala*s. They are not at all afraid to die" (11). The people as well as the government are to blame for this because both "have not done anything in civilizing them" (12). Equating education with civilization and self-control, he notes that the presence of the railway would also have helped to remove some of the Mappila madness (11–12). Moreover,

> when deep-rooted malevolence breaks out as a wound in the form of a *lahala*, the government has only tried out some severe but superficial salves in order to curb them without bothering to find out a permanent cure. If even a part of the money spent to contain *lahala*s as and when they happen was used for education, the Mappila *lahala*s would have disappeared from Ernad a long back.
>
> (12)

Quite clearly, such a characterization of the Mappilas as well as the uprisings of the previous century draws on the figure of the "fanatic" which was constituted and circulated in and through administrative reports of the colonial government.

Madhavan Nair notes that the rebellion – reportedly triggered by the government's move to arrest the venerated Mappila priest/leader Ali Musaliyar and the rumour of the demolition of the famous Mambram mosque – did not initially target Hindus. According to him, it was the foolhardy and severe counter-insurgency measures adopted by the military and police that triggered further uprisings and attacks on the military as well as on Hindus. But, tracing the history of an antagonism, Madhavan Nair comments that when the two communities, like two eyes of mother Kerala, were living in unity and trust, Tippu's invasion and injustices turned Malabar upside down (13). In Madhavan Nair's version, "[n]ot only did Tippu cause great danger to the Hindus here, he also became the guru for the Mappila *lahalas* that caused danger to the Hindus" (15)[6] because he "nurtured many misunderstandings about the real religion in the minds of the ignorant and fanatic Mappilas here" (15–16). Moreover, K. Madhavan Nair's resort to the myth of Tippu fostering communal tension goes against the grain of most early histories, which record instances where Mappilas rebelled against Tippu as well. Paradoxically, Madhavan Nair's history echoes Hitchcock's version: "Hyder Ali entered Malabar from the North in 1766, and it would appear to be the events in the next 25 years connected with the invasions of Hyder Ali and Tippu which resulted in the Ernad taluk and its immediate surroundings becoming the home of fanaticism

and lawlessness" (5). Hitchcock, however, is aware that the Mappilas also caused havoc for Tippu, for he cites Colonel Dow's statement from a minute of 1796: "The Mappillas hold all regular government in aversion, and never appear to have been thoroughly subjugated by Tippu. This habitual dislike to subordination is not to be removed by methods of severity, which are likely to excite resistance" (cited in Hitchcock, 14, 178). Madhavan Nair notes that after the defeat of Tippu and the takeover by the British, there had been about fifty Mappila *lahala*s, and these *lahala*s had broken/affected the love and trust between the two communities, as a result of which the "Hindus don't *believe* the Mappilas, the Mappilas don't *love* the Hindus" (17; emphases added). Hence, "[i]t is not surprising if the weak Hindus, with only tradition and superstition remaining and who have lost their energy, manliness, arms and skill as a result of 150 years of British rule, ran away from fear of the armed and ready-to-die *lahalakkar* (rebels)" (20).

However, his narrative is unsettled on two counts. Firstly, Madhavan Nair comments that it is not very difficult to identify the huts of the Mappilas and the "lower" caste Thiyyas and Cherumas (*Mappilakudi*, *Tiyyapura*, *Cherumachala*, respectively) because they "all are the habitations of the goddess of poverty. Though they, especially the Mappilas, are very wealthy in the matter of offspring" (18). His acknowledgement of the socio-economic condition of the Mappilas undercuts his *reliance* on the fanatic causation theory even as it suggests tacit alliances among Mappilas and "lower" caste Hindus. Secondly, Madhavan Nair illustrates with an example how the Mappilas have always spared those whom they love and respect (21) as well as how the Mappilas always spared even "upper" caste Hindus when their identity was doubtful, especially if the Hindus were from another place (223). Such economic, rational, strategic, and humane acts by Mappilas whittle away the narrative's certitude regarding Mappila "madness." Though Mappila uprisings have always been inserted into a register of "fanaticism" caused by *their* ignorant misunderstanding of *their* religion – "poverty, fanaticism and the blind belief in the pleasures of paradise – all entice him to give up his life" (18) – a close examination of most narratives reveals that most nationalist *satyagrahis* have consistently framed and phrased the Mappila uprisings from their own fanatically nationalist registers.

The nationalist framing of the rebellion seems to emerge most clearly when on 24 August 1921, during the first phase when there was no violence against Hindus, Madhavan Nair met Variamkunnath Kunhamed Haji, a prominent rebel leader.[7] The latter sent a messenger to Madhavan Nair requesting a meeting in the context of panic among Mappilas because of rumours that the military was about to land, much to the joy of Hindus. Madhavan Nair discredits reports in English newspapers and in "Divanbahadur C. Gopalan Nair's *Mappilalahala*" (168) that Kunhamed Haji was a Khilafat worker since the Congress-Khilafat workers of Kozhikode [Calicut] were not aware of this,[8] though he believes that like all other Mappilas, or maybe more than the others, he might also have been enthused about the Khilafat movement. "My younger brother, Keshavan Nair, told me on 24 August that he remembered [Kunhamed Haji] buying/taking some Congress-Khilafat leaflets" (168). Moreover, "though he did not participate in the movement,

since he was a member of a family traditionally famous for their fanaticism, there is no wonder that he was ready to die for the Khilafat cause" (168). Recognizing Kunhamed Haji to be "one of the first to fight the British for the Khilafat and . . . one of the foremost leaders of the *lahala*" (168–169), Madhavan Nair goes on:

> At the beginning of the *lahala*, [Kunhamed Haji] rescued Hindus from attacks by robbers and punished the Mappilas involved in looting. He also punished and killed those Mappilas who abetted the British. He was, in those days, against conversion.
>
> But, later, things changed drastically. Maybe he felt that the Hindus were his enemies in his fight against the British and he started to harm, kill and convert Hindus. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that he helped/saved Hindus during the initial stage of the *lahala*.
>
> (KMN, 169)

Accompanied by his younger brother, Madhavan Nair went to meet Kunhamed Haji, then around sixty years old. Though Madhavan Nair does not recall what Kunhamed Haji, who was accompanied by other rebels, some of them armed, wore on his head, he remembers the determination on his face. Madhavan Nair recounts that "Kunhamed Haji, holding on to my hands, asked me in a requesting manner: 'What should we do next, please do advise us'" (170). Madhavan Nair felt the question to be very sincere and wondered at the trepidation he had felt before the meeting, for he was not sure, though they were not enemies, whether Kunhamed Haji would receive him like a friend. Now, he was thoroughly nonplussed by the question since he believed that the Mappilas who had resorted to *lahala* in spite of his advice to the contrary would never listen to him. However, Madhavan Nair, for whom non-violence was a vow, had no difficulty in answering:

> Everything has gone wrong. The whole country has been despoiled/destroyed. Now what can I tell you. But, nonetheless if you are even now ready to take my advice, I will tell you, "Throw away all your weapons and go home, stop your attacks and advice others to remain calm. You may not like my words, but that's the only advice I have for you." I thought my words would anger Haji, but in a calm voice Haji said: "There is no use in saying that now, I started out like this, and have already done some things; there is no way I can withdraw now. Moreover, Ali Musaliyar is in danger. I have to help him. What other advice have you to offer?" After thinking awhile, I replied: "I have nothing else to say. But did you see the outrages committed by Mappilas? Is there any Hindu home which has not been robbed? What injustice is this? Is this what your religion professes? If you have strength and willingness, you should stop this robbery."
>
> Immediately Haji rolled his eyes and told me: "I came here with that purpose in mind. I have already publicly declared the same at the Manjeri crossroads. I will cut the right hand off any Mappila who dares to steal. Let there

be no doubt about that. I came here now because I heard there was some robbery afoot here."

(KMN, 170-171)

In Madhavan Nair's own phasing of the rebellion, there were no serious attacks on Hindus in the first phase (20–08–1921 to 31–08–1921), yet we find him asking Kunhamed Haji on 26 August 1921 about the horrors committed by the Mappilas, forcing one to review the anger felt by the Mappilas towards the Congress leaders for blowing isolated incidents of forced conversions and looting way out of proportion (see, also, MPSM, 194).

Their conversation continues:

"Cutting off a hand is too much, don't do that. But it's imperative that the robbery is stopped somehow," I replied.

Haji whispered in my ear: "They will be frightened only if I say things like that."

When I was about to start back after the conversation, Haji asked me: "When will we meet again?" I replied: "We will never meet again. Our paths are different and there is nothing to be gained by our meeting," and returned home.

(KMN, 170–171)

Thereafter, Kunhamed Haji went on to destroy bridges and cut trees to block roads in order to stop the military from advancing (171), and to stop Mappilas from robbing a bank by arranging a guard from among his followers and to oversee the returning, which went on till the afternoon of the next day, of the ornaments deposited in the bank to their rightful Hindu and Mappila owners before he was called away to the Pukkotur front (173–174).

Apart from the obvious disjuncture between the Congress Khilafat movement and the Mappila peasant response, what becomes evident in this account of the meeting is the reluctance of the Congress leaders to associate with the Mappila insurgents. Yet other events, which Madhavan Nair himself acknowledges, show that at some points the paths of the nationalists and the rebels were not so different. Madhavan Nair recounts that on 15 February 1921, the local Congress leaders had met with Yakub Hasan and had decided to conduct a meeting, thereby disobeying the government order. This was despite a perceptive Madhavan Nair pointing out that once a noble leader like Yakub Hasan has disobeyed the government it may not be thereafter possible to restrain the "ignorant people" from following suit (73). The very next day, most of the Congress Khilafat leaders, including Madhavan Nair, were arrested. Madhavan Nair was released on 17 August 1921, a few days before the Tirurangadi incident, which triggered the militant resistance, and, hence, may not have been cognizant of the various events and preparations taking place all over Malabar. Moreover, Madhavan Nair acknowledges that the imprisoning of the Congress leaders "suddenly awakened a hitherto sleeping Malabar" (77). The government notices as per section 144, bail cases, and punishments

shook the whole of Kerala: "The *khaddar* dress spread over the land; the drunkards were surprised; liquor/toddy shops started to scream; officials panicked" (78). He writes of the Congress Khilafat cadre swelling up and of many Khilafat meetings; one in which over 20,000 people participated was the first sign of things going wrong. In that meeting, Mappilas who attended from distant places were armed and they attacked, but failed to provoke, a police force that was, strangely, very patient (81). Madhavan Nair was critical of the Congress Khilafat workers for forming about 200 Congress committees with around 20,000 members without properly finding out whether the leaders thus selected were imbued with the non-violent spirit (82). Madhavan Nair rationalizes that though evictions may have played a part, albeit minor, in the earlier Mappila uprisings, the true reason behind them is that: "In the competition between the desire to live and the bitterness at poverty, fanaticism supports the bitterness and uproots the fear of death" (15). He presents a picture in which the Tenancy movement and the Khilafat movement gradually elude the control of Congress. He writes that prior to the repressive measures and arrests as per section 144, it was possible to restrain Mappilas by convincing them that they could have recourse to legal measures; he talks of many cases where the Mappilas repented their revolt against the *janmi*s. However, the arrest of the leaders and the prohibition of public meetings resulted in depressing the Mappilas so much that they lost faith in the non-violent method (92).

The growing alliance between the Mappilas and the Khilafat worried the perceptive local Congress leader M.P. Narayana Menon. He was afraid of the consequences of such alliances and had warned Gandhi, during his visit to Malabar in August 1920, about the danger of disseminating the Khilafat cause among the Mappilas who, traditionally, were known to war against all injustices, even to the extent of embracing a heroic death. But "big leaders like K.P. Keshava Menon, K. Madhavan Nair and C. Rajagopalacari were against [restraint]. Gandhi accepted their suggestion" and probably thought that Mappilas would listen to the Muslim scholars and the Ali brothers (MPSM, 40, 56). Though almost all sources suggest[9] that the repressive measures initiated by the District Magistrate, Thomas, the infamous Dyer of Malabar,[10] and Hitchcock, the District Superintendent of Police, were so severe as to brook no negotiation or withdrawal of the rebellion, it is clear that the Congress was significantly implicated in the mobilization of Mappila peasants.

Hitchcock, the architect of the colonial government's response to the rebellion, details the specific linkages between the Congress and the Mappila rebels. Contrary to K. Madhavan Nair's disowning of any Congress-Khilafat association with Kunhamed Haji, Hitchcock states that in May 1920 Kunhamed Haji was appointed to collect subscriptions, though he lost interest and ceased to do so immediately (Hitchcock, 55). Hitchcock also asserts that "Variamkunnath [Kunhamed Haji] and Chembrasseri Thangal had started out with the idea of obtaining in the only practical way what the supporters of Non-cooperation and *Khilafat* had promised would be obtained on a fixed date by prayer and spinning" (79). Kunhamed Haji's participation in the Congress-Khilafat movement is further underlined by Chembrasseri Thangal's statement to the police that he was inducted by Kunhamed Haji into

the Khilafat (100). Moreover, Karat Moideen Kutti Haji, a twenty-eight-year-old rebel more literate than the leaders, who could write in Arabic as well as English, when captured "by chance" on 27 January 1922, stated that he was persuaded to join the Khilafat by Madhavan Nair himself (112; statement on 190–191). Although his statements were issued to the police under duress – for example, he describes Ali Musaliyar, with whom he had gone on Haj when he was eighteen years old, as "a religious fanatic [who] had the hope of obtaining *Khilafat* Government" (Hitchcock, 112, 190) – the detailed information provided about various political meetings that he had attended supports the perception that Madhavan Nair indeed played an active role in mobilizing the Mappilas. Hitchcock adds this comment about Moideen Kutti Haji's statements: "There is no reason to disbelieve it, it shows however sincere the agitators might be in preaching non-violence yet how inevitable it was that their teaching should have had the result it did and that without it, there would have been no rebellion" (112). Hitchcock also stresses the influence of outside events on the rebellion:

> Three times it had seemed that matters would right themselves but each time it was something outside the district, over which the District officers had no control which upset the hope – in February 1921 the Nagpur Conference, followed by Yaqub Hasan's visit to Calicut – in April 1921 Muhammad Ali's speech in Madras and at the end of July 1921 the Karachi *Khilafat* Conference resolutions. Both these last were printed in Malayalam and circulated. There was no other organization. By August 1921 the result was inevitable and it was merely a question of the amount of force which might be required.
>
> (164)

These events had specific effects in Malabar, Hitchcock argued: "A speech in Calicut would rouse the local Mappila audience to such a pitch that they would offer their clothes to be burnt: the same speech in Ernad would send the audience away quietly to the making of swords" (178). Apart from the famous inflammatory speech by Gandhi – at the Khilafat meeting in Bombay on 19 March 1920 (MPSM, 43) – in which he stressed the particular duty of all Muslims to rebel against the British government in the light of the Khilafat issue and pointed out that all Muslims were enjoined by their religion to follow their religious scholars in the ways they chose and to wipe away the shame facing Islam, several similar speeches were directed at the Muslims from various local Congress-Khilafat platforms (Panikkar, 1989, 127). Therefore it is not difficult to believe that Ali Musaliyar ardently believed in the Khilafat, as reported in Moideen Kutti Haji's police statement. Hitchcock attests to the influence and hope that the Congress-Khilafat held out to the Mappilas, when he writes: "Refugees, Hindu and Mappila, who escaped after being kept with gangs for some days at this time, reported from different places that the rebels were holding out in the expectation of the whole of India rising as a result of the Ali brothers' trial which was fixed for the 18th October 1921" (71).

Hitchcock's report also provides a glimpse into the careful manner in which the rebellion was organized by the Mappilas: looting to boost key supplies, and using

terror as in the murder of the Mappila policeman Khan Bahadur K.V. Chekkuti in August 1921 (63), to prevent police from acquiring informants, thus "making it impossible to get messengers and informants anywhere beyond Manjeri" (66). Belying the idea of "fanaticism" and a grandiose dream of a Khilafat Kingdom, Kunhamed Haji (in his statement where he narrates how Ali Musaliyar and his followers were collecting money and issuing notices while he, being under warning for his former involvements, stayed away) remarks in a remarkably matter-of-fact manner: "They were collecting money for 'Swayabharanam' [self-rule]. There is no *Khilafat* here. *Khilafat* is a Turkey matter" (186).

Meetings between rebel and Congress leaders were consistently played out in the same mode. Secretary of the Kerala Congress Committee K.P. Keshava Menon's meeting with Ali Musaliyar largely follows the pattern of Madhavan Nair's meeting with Variamkunnath Kunhamed Haji. Keshava Menon writes that messengers were sent to him on 20 August 1921 to inform him of the events in Malabar. Apart from reporting about the military attack, the messengers – who believed that the rebels had also killed the colonial administrators, Thomas and Hitchcock – finally asked Keshava Menon's advice. He, typically, suggested that they go home peacefully (KPKM, 97). The next day, on 21 August 1921, Keshava Menon went to Malabar in order to review the situation and, though he wanted to meet Ali Musaliyar, decided against it because it was too late that day and returned to his anxious family. It was only on 26 August 1921 that he ventured into Malabar again; this time he went to meet Ali Musaliyar at the Mambram mosque. He was welcomed by two boats packed with Mappilas waving the Congress and the Khilafat flags (106). When he asked the sixty-five-year-old Ali Musaliyar what he intended to do thereafter, Ali Musaliyar posed the same question back to him. Keshava Menon advised him to surrender to the military. Ali Musaliyar agreed to do so, though some of his followers would not have that, reasoning that Ali Musaliyar's presence at the mosque would deflect the attacking military bullets (108). The Congress leaders' incomprehension of the causes and nature of the rebellion is apparent when Keshava Menon advises Ali Musaliyar, the most significant leader who could perhaps have single-handedly changed the course of the rebellion, to turn himself in.[11] Ali Musaliyar surrendered on 30 August, was sentenced on 5 November 1921, and was hanged to death on 7 February 1922. The rebels' resolve is further indicated by the fact that the struggle continued for more than four months after he surrendered. The significant point here is that neither the national leaders nor the local leaders protested or worked towards influencing the government decision to deal summarily with the rebels; rather, the colonial government and nationalist leaders worked hand in hand at different levels, and in different ways, to quell the rebellion. No nationalist support accrued even to M.P. Narayana Menon, though he was a Congress leader of no mean stature. Arrested in September 1921 for waging war against the King, he was transported for life. He was offered conditional freedom if he pleaded guilty, asked for mercy, and agreed not to set foot in Malabar for a couple of years (MPSM, 175). His refusal to do so perplexed Congress; Gandhi conveyed his helplessness to Narayana Menon's wife because her husband was not ready to apologize, and in fact Gandhi

requested her to convince him to do so (MPSM, 188). The fact that Narayana Menon continued to languish in prison angered the Mappilas and, further, influenced them to turn away from and against other local leaders of the Congress. When, after fourteen years, Narayana Menon was released, it is reported that he was warmly welcomed as one among them by Mappilas all over Malabar (MPSM, 125).

Unlike other Congress leaders, who sought to distance themselves from the rebellion and downplay the effect of the Khilafat movement on the Mappila peasants, Narayana Menon openly allied with the rebel leaders. This was despite the fact that he had sought to prevent the violence he had predicted if the Khilafat was brought to Malabar. Ironically, he was arrested by the native police officer whose life he had saved from Kunhamed Haji on 29 August 1921 (Hitchcock, 217–243) and made to walk thirty miles before being transported with military escort for fear that the Mappilas would try to free him (MPSM, footnote 1, 152). This denotes a clear difference in the attitude of the Mappilas towards him when compared with their attitude to other Congress leaders, like K. Madhavan Nair and K.P. Keshava Menon, who feared the Mappilas (MPSM, 63, 193–194). The desire to disassociate themselves and the Congress from what was in their eyes a Mappila *kalapam*/*lahala* may have underwritten the objection by most Congress leaders, especially by Keshava Menon, to the Commission – appointed by the Indian National Congress and headed by Dr. Ansari and Vittalbhai Patel – coming to Malabar immediately (MPSM, 172). While, following Gandhi's lead, most other Congressmen were set to put the whole blame on the Mappilas – K. Madhavan Nair is reported to have met Thomas and Hitchcock to ensure his personal safety – M.P. Narayana Menon was critical of the Congress position as well as that of the colonial government. Although Keshava Menon as a lawyer was scheduled to represent Narayana Menon, he failed to turn up (MPSM, 161) and another advocate had to argue the defence; K. Madhavan Nair, also a pleader of Manjeri court, was the chief witness. The judge ran through the evidence collected by the prosecution to prove that the Malabar rebellion was definitely the result of the Congress-Khilafat initiative and ridiculed Madhavan Nair and Keshava Menon for their pretension that they and other Congress leaders were totally unaware that the Mappilas were amassing arms, particularly in the context when Narayana Menon readily confessed to the knowledge. The judge ridiculed Madhavan Nair for his ambivalent attitude, whereby he sought help from the government for personal protection while professing to be a freedom fighter against the colonial government. Madhavan Nair's attempt to disown the rebels in his memoirs is caught in a tangle because of his statement that when he met Kunhamed Haji, the latter was accompanied by thirty men with guns, of whom some were in uniform and bore the Khilafat flag. "8 [i.e., K. Madhavan Nair, Defence Witness no. 8] makes desperate and useless efforts to explain away the words 'Uniform and Khilafat flag' but it is clear that they were Khilafat uniforms and Khilafat flags" (Hitchcock, 223).

> It is instructive to note that there is no evidence of D.W. 8 who had before both social and political influence with the rebel Mappillas, being turned to

> for any protection after his interview with [Kunhamed Haji]. I do not say that he had the courage to personally defy him, but he seems to have been lukewarm enough not to be called on for assistance. I can hardly credit his statement that he had no previous acquaintance with [Kunhamed Haji] in the face of the District Magistrate's order Exhibit Z prohibiting their joint work but he was probably far less deeply involved with the Mappillas than accused. . . . He had not apparently ever gone to the lengths of dining with Mappillas or wearing their dress[12] and therefore it was easier for him to extricate himself than it was for [the] accused, assuming that the latter wished at all to do so.
>
> (Hitchcock, 236)

Madhavan Nair's attempt to provide an alibi for Narayana Menon during the time of a meeting when the latter reportedly spoke against the King is exposed by the judge, because he is "as a witness entirely unworthy of belief" (228). The judge notes: "When . . . this witness swears to accused's alibi or anything else 'before God and man,' as he puts it, he does not greatly impress me" (228). Madhavan Nair's attempt to argue that they were "elsewhere" – symbolical of the Congress position regarding the rebellion – during the "inflammatory" speech at the meeting collapses in the face of Narayana Menon's own admission that he participated in Kunhamed Haji's stopping of a bank robbery and arranging for the return of ornaments stolen from the bank to their rightful owners. As the judge saw it, this "return of jewels therefore was an official act done to inaugurate the reign of the Khilafat Kingdom in Manjeri" (Hitchcock, 235). The judge expresses his own view of

> . . . the position in which the accused, and as I think also D.W. 8 to a lesser degree, found themselves. When the rebellion broke out I think they were both in a most difficult situation with regard to the Mappillas whom they had incited. It was no wonder that D.W. 8's alleged attempts to pacify the people at Pukkotur failed in the face of the speech he had delivered three days before with a full knowledge of the position there. What wonder also if his advice not to believe all the rumours they heard about the Tirurangadi mosque being destroyed by Government failed when he himself had implicitly believed anything to the discredit of Government and the Police on far less evidence?
>
> (Hitchcock, 233–234)

Indeed, the judge is reported to have remarked later that if a person had friends like Madhavan Nair and Keshava Menon, there would be no further need to have any enemies (MPSM, 171).

Like Madhavan Nair's memoir (KMN, 23–28) as well as most accounts of the rebellion of 1921, M.B. Namboodiripad's memoir also posits a history of previous "outbreaks" before 1921 (during 1836–1919). An examination of these "outbreaks," as available through administrative records of the colonial government, shows how the attribute "fanaticism," a description that became an explanation, was the ruse of a colonial government to control the insurgent Mappila community. Transfigured from economic hardship that was compounded with oppression

by "upper" caste landlords to inborn irrationality and religious fervour, "fanaticism" was picked up and enshrined in nationalist history. Moreover, the reference to a "fanatical" pre-history is pertinent because the first line of the Preface by M.B. Namboodiripad asserts: "It is wrong to call the uprising of 1921 in Malabar Mappila *lahala* or Malabar *lahala*. It would be more appropriate to call it a *Mappila revolution* or a *Khilafat revolution*" (13, emphasis added). But despite this, throughout the text Namboodiripad keeps on referring to the event as a *lahala*, revealing how well-established was the notion of a "fanatical zone" and a "fanatic" community/people. In nationalist historiography, without investigation and introspection, these "outrages" become a metaphor for the violence of the Mappila peasantry in Malabar: a metaphor of the past configured as memory which becomes the "truth" of present and future events. Hence, "all subsequent accounts [have become] parasitic on a prior memory" or representation (Shahid Amin, 1994, 10). Later, the new event of 1921, by now a *lahala*, figures in rend(er)ing the nation and becomes a trope for the irrationality and violence of Muslims in general: "As a result of this *lahala* India's history was re-written. It paved the way for rending the nation into two . . . " (MBN, 16). However, a point of contrast between K. Madhavan Nair and M.B. Namboodiripad is that, whereas for the former the past, traced back to Tippu, is the explanation for the 1836–1919 uprisings and thereby of the 1921 rebellion, for the latter, the 1836–1919 and the 1921 uprisings are read in terms of their future as embodied in the 1947 partition of the subcontinent.

Most accounts place the beginning of the rebellion on 20 August 1921, when police attempted to capture Ali Musaliyar from the mosque while a massive crowd gathered around forcing the surprised police to resort to firing in order to ward off an attack from them. Curiously enough, M.B. Namboodiripad argues that the rebellion started with the conflict between the Christians and the Hindus of Thrissur (also Trichur) on 16 February 1921. Neither K.P. Kesava Menon nor K. Madhavan Nair in their memoirs, nor M.P.S. Menon in his biographical work on M.P. Narayana Menon, mention this incident; nor do recent historiographies refer to this event. However, there is a brief reference to this event in Hitchcock.[13] The significance of this event does not so much lie in its possible status as the "real" origin of the Malabar rebellion; rather, its significance can be located in terms of its function in M.B. Namboodiripad's narrative. According to M.B. Namboodiripad, some Christians loyal to the colonial government disrupted the reception arranged on 16 February 1921 for K. Madhavan Nair, Yakub Hasan, and U. Gopala Menon, in honour of their refusal to obey the order of the colonial government and courting arrest. The Christians, with police escort, took out a "loyalty procession." Muslims blocked this loud procession when it reached a mosque, resulting in a clash. That night the situation was so tense that "about 600 people, Hindus and Muslims combined, guarded the Hindu homes. The Christians guarded their side" (22). The situation worsened the next morning, with reciprocal stone throwing, and subsequently, on 18 February 1921, Christians attacked Hindus to wreck their shops, causing damage to the tune of about a lakh rupees (23). Therefore, Hindu leaders decided to send for the Mappilas of Malabar, who enthusiastically responded to the call,

pouring in from 19 February 1921 onwards. Namboodiripad describes these Mappilas, whose number exceeded 1800:

> They waited *impatiently* for *their masters' command* to *destroy* Thrissur town. They had come prepared to *destruct* Lanka. A report in *Yogakshemam* (book 11, number 23) wonders whether those *who have come prepared to die* will have any interest in food or sleep. . . .
>
> (24; emphases added)[14]

After negotiations conducted by the Resident and the Diwan the tension was defused, and the Mappilas, after a victorious procession, left.

M.B. Namboodiripad admits that he was not at all involved in this incident nor was he present anywhere near the location. Then what could possibly be the reasons in positing the Thrissur "riots" as marking the beginning of the 1921 rebellion in a narrative that purports to be his autobiography? While the debates about the cause of the rebellion have been concentrated on the violent religiosity inherent in the Mappilas, or on the agrarian question – the cruelty of the *janmi*s and the hardships of the peasantry – or on the pre-mature or insufficient politicization of the Mappilas, here we have a singular voice positing a totally different explanation. Clearly, reasons would have to be sought in the complex situation of that time. In the 1920s, Malabar was volatile because of the triangular contest between the Tenancy movement, the Khilafat movement, and the Non-cooperation of the Congress. The prejudices of the Congress leaders only served to underscore their distance from the Mappilas, with the exception of M.P. Narayana Menon, who was scoffed at for his Mappila dress. Mappilas were not allowed to enter Keshava Menon's house, and Congress leaders who came visiting from Madras and the North preferred to stay there rather than at Narayana Menon's house (MPSM, 28, 38, 45). The Congress leaders Madhavan Nair and Keshava Menon, both lawyers who had stopped their practice in response to Gandhi's call for "*swaraj* within a year," were actually afraid of the Mappilas, and also, especially in the latter phase of the rebellion, of the military (MPSM, 45, 63, 87, 111, 113).[15] Slowly, the Khilafat cause, with the support of the Congress, took over the Tenancy movement. The people involved in these movements were disparate, a source of great friction.[16] The lack of influence, and the resulting bewilderment, on the part of Congress leaders in guiding the "masses"[17] at this time was palpable. The leader of the movement, Ali Musaliyar was advised to surrender, though it was he who the peasantry trusted and obeyed (MPSM, 122). Sandwiched between the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the Chauri Chaura incident, the Malabar uprising put the Congress high command in a quandary. Despite being warned by M.P. Narayana Menon, Gandhi and the other local leaders of Congress, though they could not fully comprehend what was happening, had decided to go ahead with the Khilafat agitation. But when the rebellion took off, the Congress leaders, local as well as national, disowned and distanced themselves from it. When the police began repressive measures[18] the Congress leaders were spared, not least because they had gone out of their way to give assurances to the government. However, the situation had

changed by the time M.B. Namboodiripad was writing his history/memoir, as is evidenced by the fact that in 1955 a Marxist government was voted into power in Kerala. One significant outcome of the rising Marxist influence and the dwindling Congress power was the particular blend of religion and Marxism characteristic of Malabar. The Congress started to evoke a negative response, even suspicion, because of its role in and attitude towards the rebellion of 1921 that it had initially helped promote.

It is in this context that it is useful to read M.B. Namboodiripad's narrativization of the Thrissur "riots" as the event that inaugurated the 1921 Malabar rebellion. The stress in his narrative on Hindu-Muslim unity is very significant, for it goes against the Congress view that the rebellion was at best a misdirected independence struggle because of the inherent fanaticism of the Mappilas. What Namboodiripad is formulating is a picture of the rebellion as it might have been, how it could have been effectively conducted, that is, controlled/contained, by the Hindu leaders, if only the Congress had played its proper role. The betrayal by the Congress, particularly by the local Congress leaders, of the people of Malabar and particularly of M.B. Namboodiripad when he was arrested, is what underwrites his narrative. It may be recalled that, in contrast to M.P. Narayana Menon, M.B. Namboodiripad was released after he sought pardon. Although M.B. Namboodiripad traces the Malabar rebellion to the Thrissur "riots," he continues to argue that

> . . . the root cause of this *lahala* is not inter-communitarian conflict. It has its origin in political punishments. Police repression is the reason for this nuisance. This *lahala* is only a part of the independence struggle. This tragic event is the bad effect of police assault, which made a section of the people lose their discipline at a time when the independence struggle had intensified. Because they had lost discipline others also suffered. They too became the targets of police attack.
>
> (7)

Nonetheless, he writes in the Preface:

> But truth is truth. When an intense liberatory agitation was energetically going on, the religious sentiments of its heroic soldiers were stirred, and it is as evident as daylight that this was the reason for the *lahala*.
>
> (16)

The torsion in the text, pulling in many directions, distorts the narrative; this is especially evident when M.B. Namboodiripad details the events of this incident. My contention is that this results from the tension between Namboodiripad's attempt to objectively highlight the failures of local Congress leadership and his subjective consciousness of his own inability to disavow his class-caste affiliations. M.B. Namboodiripad was the Congress Mandal President of his native place; moreover, he too was an "upper" caste Hindu, and it is this which not only conditions/constrains his narrative, but in fact generates it.[19]

I will cite one more example to demonstrate the way in which the text is fraught with contradictions. Towards the end of the first part, the one dealing with the rebellion, M.B. Namboodiripad attempts to answer, according to him very important and pertinent, questions: was not this *lahala* avoidable? Was it unavoidable? He asserts that it was not inevitable, and that the District administrators were wholly responsible for the event. Here the narrative presents a perspective so seemingly natural/normal to us. The District administration is guilty on two counts: first, that they should have heeded the advice from their superiors and not ventured to arrest Ali Musaliyar, or if they were intent on forcibly entering the mosque and arresting him they should have been more heavily armed; and second, that since Ali Musaliyar had a following ten times larger than that of the earlier community leader/priest (Mambram Thangal, who, as we saw in the second chapter, was tactfully exiled by H. V. Conolly), the District Magistrate, Thomas, should have used the same strategy, that of persuading him to exile himself to Mecca (MBN, 54). This is definitely not the stance of a person sympathetic, despite his rhetoric to that effect, to the Mappila cause.

M.B. Namboodiripad's narrative of the conspiracy that led to his arrest (he was accused of three "crimes": waging war against the King, destroying a bridge to obstruct the army, and convening a meeting against law; MBN, 120), also raises certain doubts. According to him, the sub-inspector of the place, Moideen, plotted against him in order to save his own family members, who were the actual leaders of the *lahala* there. This Moideen was missing for some days, and his father, spreading the rumour that the rebels had killed his son, decided to deflect the responsibility of the rebellion onto M.B. Namboodiripad, the local Congress President. This story is, significantly, repeated at least twice in the memoir (81, 86). M.B. Namboodiripad claims that the witnesses against him were coaxed and coached by the sub-inspector (87). He attributes his arrest to a fabricated case and coached witnesses. If we juxtapose his account with that of M.P. Narayana Menon, a different picture emerges. In Narayana Menon's version, M.B. Namboodiripad had asked about the nature of punishment for waging war against the King and Narayana Menon, who was qualified as an advocate, had summarily answered that the penalty would be death. To a frightened M.B. Namboodiripad, M.P. Narayana Menon queried: "Who asked you, born in a good family, to join Khilafat? Before joining you should have thought of the consequences. Now it is better that you gather enough courage to die as a patriot. Don't cry and go begging for pardon" (MPSM, 154). And, indeed, beg for pardon was precisely what M.B. Namboodiripad did. Even more significant is the fact that, being excommunicated by the Namboodiri community after his release for co-habiting with Mappilas, he did the required penance/purification to become a Brahmin again (cited in MPSM, 154; E.M.S. Namboodiripad, 1987, 19–20). This fact is omitted from M.B. Namboodiripad's memoir; in fact, the memoir represents him as ready to "leave behind the sour-smelling brahminhood and start living as a free citizen" (MBN, 151). M.B. Namboodiripad's narrative manoeuvers to unfold the events of the rebellion and his own life/self. But the narrativization of the self is intertwined with that of the nation. The nation as an imagined community not only endows him with

subjectivity and narrative capability, but it also authorizes his narrative, making it legitimate. This may be a pointer to the absence of rebellion narratives by the Mappilas themselves, either by those who survived it or by those related to the insurgents. The Mappila community at large was held solely responsible for this rebellion, and the disavowal by the Congress leaders and exaggerated reports about Mappila violence fixed them as "fanatics." The Mappilas, burdened with a miserable socio-economic situation, imaged as guilty of fomenting strife before the people of India, indeed of rending the nation apart, their notion of community collapsed into communality and viewed with suspicion, were hardly in a position to speak/narrate. There was no other logic which would vindicate them, especially during the Nehruvian period of national reconstruction. Indeed, the Mappilas could not, and perhaps even now cannot, render their lives without endangering a unified nation. They, therefore, can be described as minus-subjects, to be translated into "normal" citizens, originarily aberrant and, hence, never original/ordinary Indians.

What I have been trying to argue through the examination of M.B. Namboodiripad's text is the narrative resolution of real conflicts. In the case of the Thrissur "riots," the heavy stress on Hindu-Muslim unity is a blind to the stark exploitation of the Mappila peasantry and the marked imbalance in the agrarian structure. Police repression, postulated as the real reason for the 1921 Malabar rebellion, is neutralized throughout the text: by insisting that the Khilafat workers were mainly disbanded soldiers of the first world war, reliving their lost glory (19–20) – they are even referred to as an "army" (26) – and by subtly insisting on the communal colour of the *lahala* (52). In fact, he asserts that the "Malabar *lahala*, in short, sowed the seed for the future riots in India" (59). Another narrative resolution involves the Congress betrayal of a movement it helped foster. The Congress is accused of adopting a step-motherly attitude to the insurgents (58), of "let-the-person-who-ate-salt-drink-water kind of approach" and not "raising even a small finger against the atrocities" (68). This is counter-balanced by M.B. Namboodiripad's sincere, but futile, attempts to contain the rebellion (69–78), the plot to trap him, and the sufferings he underwent in the prisons (85–115; 129–139). The betrayal of M.B. Namboodiripad by a Mappila (a policeman whose family was, according to M.B. Namboodiripad, the real instigators of the *lahala*) is symbolically equated with the betrayal of the mass movement by the Congress.

Examining the 1921 memoirs reveals that the commonsensical view that prevailed about the Malabar Mappila revolts and rebellion was underwritten by a narrative construction of an innate religiosity. Such historical and personal narratives and memories, influenced by past events as well as the partition of the subcontinent, left an indelible imprint that is clearly visible in some of the key Malayalam literary texts.

Notes

1 K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam* (Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi, 1993; serialized during early 1920s and first published 1971; hereafter abbreviated as KMN); M.B. Namboodiripad, *Khilaphathu Smaranakal* [*Khilafat Memories*] (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya

Akademi, 1993; short version published in 1930, full version in 1965; hereafter MBN); K.P. Keshava Menon, *Kazhinja Kalam* [*Past Time*] (Calicut: Mathrubhumi, 1986; first published in 1957 and won the Kendriya Sahitya Akademi award in 1958; hereafter KPKM); M.P.S. Menon's biographical *Malabar Samaram: M.P. Narayana Menonum Sahapravarthakarum* [*Malabar Rebellion: M.P. Narayana Menon and Co-workers*] (Malappuram: M.P. Narayana Menon Memorial Committee, 1992; hereafter abbreviated as MPSM) and R.H. Hitchcock, *Peasant Revolt in Malabar: A History of the Malabar Rebellion, 1921, by R.H. Hitchcock*, intro., Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr. (New Delhi: Usha Publications, 1983; first published in 1925 as *A History of the Malabar Rebellion, 1921*).

2 Though the title of his book refers to the rebellion as *kalapam*, throughout the text he uses the phrase *lahala*. *Kalapam* actually has the revolt, rebellion, or uprising, but Madhavan Nair seems to be using it as synonymous with *lahala* (outbreak).

3 K. Kelappan's statement, which precedes the text, also focuses on this frame: "History of a place/nation should be objective. . . . Some have benefited by describing Malabar *kalapam* as a *communal lahala* that seriously affected not only the ordinary life of Kerala but also of India. Others connected it with the independence struggle. Still others described it as a community's heroic and adventurous act. Rather than attempt an evaluation of all of them, a better task would be to correctly grasp the atmosphere, the directions and misdirections of events of that time, in order to make a decision. We should attach more value to past experiences than to present opinions/evaluations. Considering this, *Malabar Kalapam* is a collection in book form of the notes of an objective person who was very much involved in those *kalapams*" (ix; emphases added).

4 Mozhikunnath Brahmadathan Namboodiripad, lesser known than K. Madhavan Nair, K.P. Keshava Menon, or M.P. Narayana Menon, was born in 1897. He became well versed in Sanskrit literature and the Vedas and the Upanishads at a young age. Inspired by Gandhi's entry into politics, he accepted Gandhi as his guru, and practiced the Gandhian path. In 1918 he started his political career, and soon became the Cherpulassery (his native place) Mandal President of the Congress party, which was cooperating with the Khilafat movement. When the rebellion started, he was one among the prominent Congress members who tried to stop and, failing which, to contain the rebellion. But, charged with the crime of inciting the rebellion, he was arrested and sentenced, following which he was excommunicated by his caste.

5 K. Kelappan in his foreword puts forward this analysis: while Hindus of Malabar are uneducated because they are a minority, Muslims are uneducated because they are ignorant and superstitious with a blind belief in martyrdom (xi-xii).

6 Later on, Madhavan Nair is more explicit: the Mappilas "follow not Prophet Mohamed, but Tippu Sultan" (19).

7 A bullock-cart driver by profession and a neighbour of Ali Musaliyar, Kunhamed Haji had recently returned from Mecca after being deported along with his father by the British for his participation in earlier uprisings. C. Gopalan Nair, "a retired Deputy Collector and a natural champion of the official view," writes: "*Variamkunnath Kunhamed Haji*, of a family of outbreak tradition, as a lad was transported with his father for complicity in a previous outbreak; on his return six or seven years ago he was not allowed to settle down in his native village but after a time he went up to his village and started life as a cartman. On the introduction of the Khilafat Movement, he joined it and became one of its chief workers, organized Sabhas and became the guiding spirit of the Khilafat in Ernad," cited by E.M.S. Namboodiripad (1984, 115–116) from Goplan Nair (76–77).

8 Interestingly, Chembrasseri Thangal, another prominent rebel leader, had given evidence that he was forced into the Khilafat agitation by Kunhamed Haji (Hitchcock, 100).

9 K. Madhavan Nair, M.P. Narayana Menon (MPSM, 44, 66), M.B. Namboodiripad, and K.P. Keshava Menon (KPKM, 90) agree on this. M.P.S. Menon also adds that K.P. Keshava Menon admired Hitchcock and was greatly influenced by him (MPSM, 63).

10 Who, according to *The Muslim* (of 8 September 1921), in "official arrogance and in most exasperating provocation" "'out-Dyered' the much hated Dyer of Punjab" (cited from Panikkar, 1989, 186–187).

11 The judgement of Ali Musaliyar and thirty-seven other rebels categorically states that though "[i]n the past [murderous outrages by the Mappila community] may have been due to fanaticism" (Hitchcock, 245), the 1921 rebellion was the result of the Congress-Khilafat initiative and that "*Khilafat* volunteers must, we should think, be unpaid soldiers, who are meant to fight, when occasion arises, in support of the cause for which they are enrolled. This would be the ordinary interpretation of the word 'volunteers.' Such volunteers have certainly been enrolled in large numbers in this district and have in due course fought exceedingly" (246).

12 These were crimes that M.P. Narayana Menon confessed to, pointing out that such dress was common in Kerala, Burma, and Ceylon and that he did not eat or co-habit according to the dictates of caste or religion but those of friendship alone; cited in MPSM, 163. In contrast we have Gandhi's response to M.P. Narayana Menon: "To the questions whether he would bless his own daughter if she wanted to marry a Muslim, and whether he would sit beside a Muslim and eat the food prepared by a Muslim, Gandhi's answer is interesting: 'if daughter desires to marry a Muslim I will advise her against it. But if she remained firm in her decision, she would have no place in my house. Eating food prepared by a Muslim alongside a Muslim doesn't occur at all. Because, my eating habit is my own personal matter,'" from M.P.S. Menon's interview with M.P. Narayana Menon on 10.10.1962 (MPSM, 38).

13 "Early in March another incident helped to keep alive the unrest; a contest arose between Christians and Nayars [Nairs] at Trichur in Cochin State, the former opposing, the latter favouring the non-co-operation activities. The Nayars called in Mappillas to their assistance. Walluvanad Hindus were responsible for this and appealed to the Mappillas by false stories of danger to mosques at the hands of the Christians. No fighting occurred but several Mappillas responded to the call and some did not return without much booty by which their friends the Nayars suffered equally with others" (Hitchcock, 21).

14 Ironically, the same report seems to maintain that for one meal for those who had gathered there 50 to 60 *para* [a measure] rice was used! (24).

15 The Kerala Congress was described by Conrad Wood as a Congress of Nair Advocates (cited in MPSM, 12). The fact that as lawyers most of them had argued for the landlords in cases of eviction only deepened this antagonism (MPSM, 63). During the rebellion, K. Madhavan Nair and K.P. Kesava Menon were only interested in escaping from the rebel zone, remarks M.P. Narayana Menon (MPSM, 87, 111, 113).

16 As Richard Tottenham, Commander of Feroke (near Calicut or Kozhikode) wrote: "Non-cooperation is just a farce. . . . But the Khilafat is quite a serious, sincere and dangerous movement. Gandhi and *ahimsa* are not important to [the Mappilas]. [They] think of the Congress as a blind which will allow them to amass arms. Congress will always obey Gandhi, the government and the laws. Khilafat people will oppose" (my translation from MPSM, 64; G.R.F. Tottenham, 17–18).

17 Hitchcock writes that during an encounter between the masses and the police at the Calicut beach, "[t]he local Hindu and Mappila leaders proved their sincerity in the non-violence part of their creed by hiding" (21).

18 In order to contain the Khilafat movement, police violently came down on the Khilafat agitators and their kin (MPSM, 44). Some of the cases charged against them out of desperation are really trivial; stealing an official's pen was one among the petty, and often false, charges (MPSM, 60).

19 He narrates the very touching story of how he had to go without food and water for a long time after his arrest because he refused to eat "impure" (that is, cooked by a "lower" caste Hindu or a Muslim) food (MBN, 87–88). When a Railway police sub-inspector, also a Brahmin, witnessing his discomfort to eat the food brought by a Muslim woman, told him not to eat the food, he answers: "It is happier to starve than to eat this food" (92). Also revealing is the "fun" in which the Hindu prisoners, Namboodiripad included, indulged in: an example is the "purification ceremony," where they reconverted their co-prisoner Abdulla back to Parangodan, his "lower" caste name before he espoused Islam (106).

Part III

Literary nationalism in Malayalam

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6 "Higuita" and the politics of representation

The partition of the Indian subcontinent leading to the formation of two nation-states is even now essentially remembered and recounted in India as betrayal and loss, as a violent sundering of the motherland by communalities within it. To cite a relatively mild example, "our Independence too was peculiar: it came together with the Partition of our country, the biggest and possibly the most miserable migration in human history, the worst bloodbath in the memory of the subcontinent: the gigantic fratricide conducted by Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communalists" (Aijaz Ahmad, 118). Shifting the focus from such narratives, I have tried to trace the history of such a memory and the memory of such a history through an examination of the colonial period and the contradictions that structure the logic which counterposes the Hindu and Muslim communal with secular-modern frames within the nationalist discourse. In the preceding chapters, I have pointed out that the 1921 Malabar rebellion against both the British overlords and the Hindu landlords was a watershed in the history of the subcontinent. I have argued that this rebellion, being an immediate effect of the Congress mass mobilization campaign and the Khilafat movement, forever determined the future form of freedoms in the Indian subcontinent by ricocheting a by-now-redoubled image of the communality of the Muslim peoples. The negotiations between nationalist leaders and Muslim leaders were at a crucial stage in the wake of the mass mobilization and Khilafat movements. The representations of the Malabar rebellion in popular press, which cued in with nationalist discourse, seem to have given a fillip to ideas and images already in circulation. The establishment of a "Moplastan," as many newspapers dubbed it, in Malabar, which went against the policy of surrender urged by the Congress, underlined the possibility of Islam being a constant threat to the notion of a unified nation. The spate of *shuddhi* and *sangathan* undertaken in Malabar in 1922, and thereafter, in order to purify the converts points to the possibility that Malabar figured as a region that had to be "sanitized," cleansed as well as brought back to sanity.

In this chapter I try to trace the phrase "Malabar," the earlier denomination for a region and a time, in literary narratives. "Malabar" as re(li)gion metaphorically denotes the regional and religious aspirations of a community purportedly prone to irrational and separatist demands. "Malabar" also works metonymically in that other Islamic communities in other regions can replace the Mappila community of Malabar.

Thus, in more ways than one, Malabar continues to embody the dangers threatening our nation from inside as well as outside. In this chapter, I have chosen to read dominant texts because other "Muslim" texts, with the exception of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, hardly figure in the configurations of mainstream literary taste. Almost all texts by Muslims from Malabar (Basheer, though he settled in Malabar, hails from south Kerala) are bracketed off under the category of *Mappila Sahityam* [Mappila Literature]. Most of the texts I engage with have already been translated into English and are also prescribed in various literature courses. Apart from that, there is also an urgent need for the discipline of English Studies to engage with literary texts in the regional languages of India since they are probably richer (narrative) instances for a reading of the cultural politics of our contemporary existence. My attempt is to look at some of the literary representations of the proper noun "Malabar," as a shorthand notation for Muslim communality.[1] In this chapter, I examine a contemporary literary representation of Malabar in a much-acclaimed Malayalam short story, N. S. Madhavan's "Higuita" (1990).

My readings of these texts are structured via the question of representation. "Representation" is a crucial concept in literature, since the latter may be said to involve a narrative ordering of the real, and I will draw on Jacques Derrida's discussion of its role in the European modern to show the complexity of this seemingly simple concept. In "Sending: On Representation," Derrida examines the imminent closure of representation, in order to open the fields or folds of the theory of representation as translation in its textual (literary as well as cultural) form. Formulating what the word "representation" means, Derrida comments that this word appears already inscribed in an idiom. The word has connotations of "the delegation of presence, of reiteration rendering present once again, in substituting a presentation for another *in absentia* and so on" (1982, 303). Language is seen as a system of representation that would re-present a content ("a meaning, a thing, and so on") anterior and exterior to it. This reign/regime of representation "programs and precedes us" and our concepts of language; translation and history are "essentially marked by structure and the closure of representation" (304). The mark of modernity is, in Heidegger's words, "[t]hat what-is should become what-is in representation" (cited, 307). What-is exists only in "being-represented," and the bringing-to-being of representation coincides with the bringing-to-being of the subject. In the (post-)Cartesian period "representation" was determined not as a "bringing-to-presence" *before* a subject (bringing in front of a subject what already exists anterior to it), a re-constitution, but as an originary constitution in the mental space of the subject. The human subject, thus, became the determining field, "the domain and the measure of objects as representations, its own representations" (307). Heidegger, again in Derrida's words, places the Latin *praesentatio* and *repraesentatio* alongside the German *Darstellung* and *Vorstellung*.

> *Praesentatio* signifies the fact of presenting and *re-praesentatio* that of *rendering* present, of a summoning as a power-of-bringing-back-to-presence. And this power-of-bringing-back, in a repetitive way, is marked simultaneously by the re- of representation *and* in this positionally, this power-of-placing,

> disposing, putting, that is to be read in *Stellen* and which at the same time refers back to the self, that is to the power of a subject who can bring back to presence and make present, make something present to itself, indeed just make itself present.
>
> (307–308)

The Cartesian-Hegelian notion of "representation," Heidegger reads as being contemporary with the epoch of the "subject," and Derrida adds:

> The value "pre-," "being-before," was certainly already present in "present": it is only the rendering available of the human subject that makes representation happen, and this rendering available is exactly that which constitutes the subject as subject. The subject is what can or believes it can offer itself representations, disposing them and disposing of them.
>
> (309)

But "representation" is not a recent phenomenon characteristic of the modern period. What is characteristic of this epoch of "subjectness" is rather the authority of representation, "the interpretation of the essence of what is as an object of representation" (310). For, though "[s]tructured by representation, the represented subject is also a representing subject" (315).

Derrida notes that there was no equivalent word in Greek for "representation," and, according to Heidegger, the Greeks before Plato did not inhabit a world inhibited/dominated by representation. Nonetheless, the Platonic determination of the being of *what is* as *eidos* (form, aspect, look, visible figure) would be "the distant condition, the presupposition, the secret mediation which would one day permit the world to become representation" (312). And the "world of Platonism would thus have given the *send-off* for the reign of representation" (313; emphasis added). So, the human subject, represented and representing, becomes the stage, the scene, "on which what-is must from now on re-present itself, present itself" (317). The human subject, thus, is *pre-sent* to itself, and to others: sends itself objects, sends itself to itself, sends objects and itself to others, is sent by and is *before* something; reveals, exhibits, itself as subject/object. This implies a unity, a security, of some semantic centre, which would stop the flow of signifiers, "which would give order to a whole multiplicity of modifications and derivations" (320).

Re-pre-sentations are authorized and also authorize subjects as subjects. Turning to literary representations, we find that it was not that far back that the "literary" was valorized as an object existing in an ethereal realm, moulded by and moulding the cultural, with an umbilical connection to the social, but somehow untainted by it. The "literary" is authorized by an empiricist epistemology which draws on the notion of representation as self-evident and true for, so goes the argument, it is, after all, an imitation of the real. But the "literary" is an object made visible and viable by a discursive formation, and it depends on a particular notion of the "real" to legitimize it. If the Kantian notion of *Vorstellung*, representation as a universal faculty, naturalized a particular historical category of "individual," likewise, the

"literary" normalizes a particular "real."[2] Moreover, the pre-constituted, given reality, as the essential, original source of mimesis, determines the mode of representation. "Literature" is thus viewed as a form of reflection, of revelation and re-cognition. This was the result of collusion between historicism, imputing a linear and temporal progression, teleology, and "specular" realism, with its conventions of character and narration. The "conscious separation of the literary from other discourses, this act of exclusion is in itself ideological in its claims to neutrality and innocence," notes Homi Bhabha (1984, 101). If the literary text is a cultural artefact underwritten by ideology, we have to examine the notion of ideology itself in order to understand the socio-political effects of the "literary."[3]

In Stuart Hall's paraphrase of Althusser, ideologies are systems of representations in which men and women live their imaginary relations to the real conditions of existence (102). In this model the function of ideology is to reproduce, through ideological state apparatuses such as school and church, the social relations of production, thereby assuring the system of a labour force competent as well as compliant. However, this formulation of an absolute domination rules out the possibility of the social as the site of struggle. As Antonio Gramsci has crucially argued, "culture" is not a closed structure of stasis, nor is "hegemony" unchallenged. The cultural is the site of interventions and interruptions by conflicting ideologies, and it is in this scheme that the "literary" plays an important role. A "proper" literary-critical approach, which valorizes the aesthetic, "invisibilizes" the ideological undercurrents and ruses in/of a text as much as it erases its own ideological function. What is far more productive is a thematization of the critical activity itself in order to engage with the ideology that is endorsed, if not set up, by/through the text, to understand the politics of the textual representation.

I

I begin my reading of N.S. Madhavan's "Higuita" with three citations, the first written about seventy years before the demolition on 6 December 1992 of the Babri Masjid, the second roughly thirty-six years before and the third about two years prior to the demolition. The first, which sets the scene for my reading of "Higuita," is from Kumaran Asan (1873–1924), a major modern revolutionary poet of Kerala.

> The [Mappila] Rebellion, which started in South Malabar [in August 1921] has added a bloody chapter to the history of Kerala. Fortunately, that blizzard, which, with horrible and blood-curdling incidents that defeat even the wildest imagination, had rocked not only Kerala, but the whole of India in one way or other, has almost subsided now. It is a great truth, approved alike by religion and history, that there is no greater teacher than calamity. It is also a great truth that the Hindu society, which has just come out mutilated after fully tasting the roughness of the Rebellion's tongue and the harshness of its canines, is one that represents a very ancient civilization.
>
> (xxxiii)

It is at this juncture of outliving a "calamity" that he exhorts "Hindu society" to revamp its existing structure. The preface (cited, like the poem, from Gangadharan's translation) to *Duravastha* (*Tragic Plight*; 1922), his only major work that has Kerala as background, is in fact a warning against the evils of caste-system. The Mappila insurgents are characterized in *Duravastha* as "cruel Mohamedans" who had spilled Hindu blood and crimsoned the Kerala soil (1). This "riotous mob / Of wicked, cruel and monstrous Moplahs," described as having "terrible forms with monstrous faces" (12), kick dead bodies, "shout obscene words / In unrefined barbaric Malayalam," and dash "with ravishing strides / Into the inner apartments of the women" and "molest the innocent, noble ladies" (13). They are "possessed" like "rogue elephants" (13) and brutal like "wild cats . . . mauling / Sweet doves in a cage" (14).

The second quotation offers an oblique entry into my theme. It is from Uroob (1915–1979)'s *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* [*The Beautiful and the Handsome*], which won the Kendriya Sahitya Akademi award in 1960. Towards the middle of the novel, in what is one of the most touching scenes in Malayalam literature, Sulaiman confesses to his wife that the new person who has come into their village is actually his son. Sulaiman had actually been Govindan Nair back in 1921. At the time of the rebellion he was trapped in a deserted house with Kunjukutti, his kinswoman, for eleven days. On the eleventh day he dares to venture out to see whether peace has been restored, and falls into the hands of a Mappila band who forcibly proselytize him and make him accompany them on their rampage. Thus he was not able to return to Kunjukutti, who was by then his beloved. He then settles in another region, marries, and lives peacefully and happily enough as Sulaiman, though a strange, tense and, for others, uneasy silence is characteristic of his disposition. Now he informs his wife that this new person is actually his son and is reproached by her: "Weren't you doing something terrible by abandoning that child?" (213). And Sulaiman, for the only time in the novel, bursts out in anger, frustration and sadness:

> I did something terrible, didn't I? . . . . I who have not harmed even an ant. I did not become like this because I desired it. I was turned into this. Now I am not sad about it. . . . Even when I said I would come back with that woman who had nothing, had nobody, I was not believed. I would become a betrayer, it seemed. I was among barbarians. At that time everybody was mad. Mad! Some were murdered, harmed. I was also harmed. Because I spoke about my pain and anxiety I was made to carry corpses. I was beaten up. Each one turned me into another person. What can you say to the insane? Did it stop with that? I suffered all these. But when the trials began I became the criminal. . . . Hundreds of times I was hit with the butt of the rifle. For what? For doing nothing at all! When I became unconscious from the blows, I was given water to make me regain consciousness, so that they could beat me again. Not just on one day. On many days. . . . When I came out after everything was over, everybody said that I was no longer I. Had I undergone any change at all? I did not feel so.
>
> (213–214)

This outburst of an innocent man caught in the crossfire is a very touching one. But at whose expense is this poignancy achieved? The choice of dealing with such a theme, depicting the growth of a child conceived during the rebellion, and labelled by the community as the *lahala*'s ("outbreak") son, cannot have been determined by aesthetic fidelity or chance, but by cultural politics. These are "determined" narratives that sustain, and subsist on, prevailing prejudices against the Muslim body. As Foucault has remarked: "People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does" (cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 187). The Mappila community is held responsible for the "outrage" committed by a Nair, since, ironically, it is Govindan Nair, and not Sulaiman, who fathers the illegitimate child. Indeed, the situation presents an uncanny parallel to the manner in which the unjust acts of the "upper" caste communities disappear from "history" and "memory," only to reappear as the action of the Mappilas of Kerala.

The third citation is from N. S. Madhavan's "Higuita":[4]

> Jabbar opened the door at the knock. He stood five and a half feet tall, with curly hair and knit brows. His scanty moustache had not yet darkened, but his hair was already beginning to grey. It was difficult to guess his age. Jabbar asked, "You've come?"
>
> His soft, low voice surprised Father, especially when he noticed the thick bull neck, taut with muscles.
>
> "Come in," Jabbar said, his voice becoming softer.
>
> "No." Father Geevarghese answered, but Jabbar was looking only at Lucy. His eyes refused to acknowledge Father.
>
> "Aren't you coming in?"
>
> "No," repeated Father.
>
> Jabbar still didn't look at him. In an expressionless tone he whispered to Lucy – "Isn't it better for all of us that he leaves?"[5]

This climatic scene, where Father Geevarghese, the protagonist of Madhavan's story, accompanied by Lucy, confronts Jabbar, will be taken up in due course. Suffice it for now to remark that the third person narrative is not objective, that the description is not sympathetic or even neutral, and at this moment the points of view of the author and Father Geevarghese are indistinguishable.

The fact that N. S. Madhavan's much acclaimed "Higuita" won the Padmarajan award in 1994 and was named by *Malayala Manorama* as one of the best ten short stories in Malayalam over the past 100 years is not only because of its aesthetic merit, but also because of how masterfully Madhavan captures the mood of the time, impacting the manner in which certain political representations are redeployed.[6] In what follows, I will attempt to read, or "misread," this very powerful masterpiece, and will try to address and thematize the question of "re(pre)senting" Islam. It is my hope that this "reading" of Madhavan's story will resonate with other fields and thus enable us to rethink our habitus, our representations. I try to analyse how "literary" representations of Islam draw on other prior representations

which, in turn, determine the "literary," or what constitutes the structure and effect of what is celebrated as the "literary." A literary work has to be viewed not only as a structure structured by other fields, but also as a text involved in structuring other fields, as involved in reaffirming and refuting certain perspectives, putting in circulation old, modified, or new representations.

The protagonist of Madhavan's story is a parish priest named Geevarghese, an erstwhile forward in the school football team, now in charge of a small congregation of a "few Malayalees and some tribal girls from Bihar" (136), in South Delhi. His Italian friend, Father Capriatti, had talked, the narrator insists, "once, maybe twice" [9] to him about a German novel (by Peter Handke) entitled *The Loneliness of a Goalkeeper Waiting for the Penalty Kick*. "When he heard the novel's name, Father Geevarghese felt as if he had read the novel – not once, but many times" [9]. Here we have a character in a short story drawing the impetus for his life from a literary representation. Interestingly, Father Geevarghese does not want to read the novel, because it would put an end to the "lifecycles of the goalie which he had been constructing in his mind" [9] and bring about "a sudden end to the Nativity plays of the goalkeeper" (136). He does not even have to read the representation; the very possibility of representation triggers other representations that need not be "factually" tied to the "fictive," representations over which his mind can have absolute control. "Betrayed by all. . . . At first . . . the goalkeeper was our Lord. A little later, the goalie became Goliath. Day by day, possibilities of this man of many roles multiplies" (136). In this connection, Father Geevarghese's interest in Higuita, the Columbian goalkeeper, who captures his imagination, calls for special attention. Higuita, with his penchant for advancing with the ball, is an exception among the goalkeepers of the world. Higuita is described thus: "His *long curly hair* spread out like *the locks of Siva* before his *tandava*; his face, dark granite; a thin moustache" (140; emphasis added). The representations of the goalkeeper, the impressions "cultured" in Geevarghese's mind, are approximated to a real image, or so it seems. But the Higuita thus created is not the real Higuita. It can be elucidated, and here I echo Laclau and Mouffe: an earthquake or a brick falling is an event that certainly exists, but whether we think of them as "natural phenomena" or "expressions of the wrath of God" depends upon the structure of a discursive field (108). Higuita, thus, is a real goalkeeper, as well as an object existing, coming to life, in a discourse. The "real" Higuita is knowable only to the extent that he is representable. The parallel to Siva clinches this. When Higuita loses out to an opponent his representation walks back in Geevarghese's mind "smiling quietly to himself, musing on his role even at such a turn of events" perfectly in accordance with the Hindu notion of "profitless action" (141). The attributes of the goalkeeper are transformed: once a person tied to destiny, silently suffering for the faults of others, sacrificing himself, his Goliath stature mocked by a football slung at him, he now becomes a participant. In the "*crescent*-shaped stadium" (140, emphasis added), the recluse ventures out, playing the part of a forward. Higuita represents, in the Father's mind as well as in the text, the welcome transformation effected in the form and function of a goalkeeper; he is no longer a Christian Lord, no longer a martyr (meaning "witness" in early usage). Now he has a different

dharma; he has become Lord Siva. The incident where the Muslim "villain," torturing a tribal girl who had converted to Christianity, is made to mimic the Hindu ritual of marriage by "appl[ying] sindoor to the parting of her hair with a burning cigarette" (137) further emphasizes this transition, for this act is effective as desecration only if it is aimed at insulting, not a Christian, but a Hindu God. Higuita, while facing a penalty kick, waves his arm around like a conductor, "[he] creates inaudible beats of an impossible crescendo for the audience" (140). Jabbar, the "villain," is described as standing "five and a half feet tall, with curly hair and knit brows. His scanty moustache had not yet darkened, but his hair was already beginning to grey. It was difficult to guess his age" (141). The author-protagonist is right, for he is ageless, unreal! Jabbar had a "soft, low voice [which] surprised Father, especially when he noticed the thick bull neck, taut with muscles" (142). Such is the power of description, which purporting to represent the real goes unnoticed, un(re)marked.

The tribal girl is named Lucy Marandi, and she is described as having "thick negroid lips" (137). She stops after the mass to talk to the Father. She talks about Jabbar, a middleman who trafficked in rough cotton, fowls, and *mahua*, buying them from the tribals and selling them to outsiders. In lean months he used to "*entice* [tribal girls] with promises of jobs in big cities" (137; emphasis added), and that is how Lucy happened to reach Delhi. There is no comment about his immediate gains, noteworthy because of the (unspecified) months that elapsed before he tries to trick Lucy. The next sentence reads thus: "Jabbar kept his word and found Lucy a job with a family" (137). The narrative expects Jabbar to break his promise, toys with such an expectation in the reader, for that is the kind of person he is, since he belongs to a particular class/caste/community. Further, while Lucy was working, Jabbar used to come and meet her every month with a gift. We do not know how many months exactly passed, and when once Jabbar invites her out, "Lucy walked out with him without hesitation" (137), and he buys her a colourful *salwar kameez*. We also do not know the exact nature of their relationship. When she tries to run away from him, she finds herself locked in Jabbar's house. There is a strange amnesia on the part of the protagonist/narrator at this point: "Father couldn't remember how Lucy escaped . . ." (137). The narrator does not prompt the protagonist, the statement suggests that the narrator knows but is powerless/prohibited from revealing it for fear of its effect on the narrative. What kind of a villain is it who could not control/keep in custody a defenceless girl, and what about the girl who managed to escape from the clutches of this "villain"? Then occurs the absurd incident referred to earlier: Jabbar, a Muslim, applying the burning cigarette to the parting of a (Christian-convert) Lucy's hair, "tickling the soles of her feet with the same glowing butt" and "talking like some sleazy villain in a Hindi movie" (137). The torture is described as if the narrator actually sees it taking place, but when we come to the section about "talking like some sleazy villain in a Hindi movie" the statement is attributed to Lucy (137). In the Malayalam original, this statement is set all by itself as a separate paragraph [11]. Jabbar seemed as unreal as a film villain to Lucy, but for the narrator-protagonist Jabbar is very real; so alarmingly hyper-real that Jabbar

comes through to the reader as unreal. There are prior representations that endow him with reality for the author-narrator which are withheld from us, and which Lucy may not share. The narrator-protagonist does not give us any inkling of the representations that for him make Jabbar "real" for he expects, rightly, that a "normal" reader would already be party to them by the simple virtue of living in our times, if not through familiarity with and participation in literary and other representations. Moreover, like the German novel that Geevarghese did not want to read, for fear it might rein in his imagination, the representations which commission and authorize this representation have to be shielded from the reader. Rendering them will render the representation opaque. Representation, or the possibility of representation, is enough, for it functions in a particular way, skilfully safeguarding its machinations. The logic of representation demands that that which will rupture the representation be elided over. The effect of this is to make the character unreal, he is unreal to the reader, for how can one believe in a villain so vividly described as being beaten to pulp by a priest whose only physical activity seems to have been playing football, and that too in his schooldays?

I detailed all this in order to come to Father Geevarghese's past. His father was the physical training (PT) teacher in the school where he also was educated. Geevarghese was selected, and proved worthy of his position in the football team. When his renown spread, people from Malabar came in search of him. They wanted him to play "sevens," a version of football played by teams of seven on a smaller ground, usually empty paddy fields. He is lured by the idea of playing "sevens" because it is also more lucrative. However, his father is dead against the idea of playing "sevens" and remarks, "Son, football is my faith, but sevens is [its] antichrist" [12] (139). "But Geevarghese just couldn't stop himself from playing sevens" (139). The father and the son soon stop discussing football and the intimate bond that existed between them is broken. Then, the narrative, all in a rush now, points out:

> The year Geevarghese failed his B.A. was the year Appan [father] passed away. Geevarghese stopped playing sevens, as a reparation to his father.
>
> Before long he received the Call.
>
> (139)

Of course, it is possible to read "its antichrist" (which is there in the Malayalam version) as referring to football, that is, "sevens" is the antichrist of football because it is a distortion of the normal game. However, it must be recalled that "sevens" is a game played predominantly, if not only, in Malabar, hence the significance of the evocation of Malabar with its lure in terms of excitement and remuneration. Malabar also figures powerfully in the Kerala imaginary as the site of Mappila "outrages" against colonial overlords and feudal (Hindu) lords. My analysis stresses this reference to Malabar in the story, reading it as a figural in the text, disrupting the rule of representation.[7] Within the narrative, this reference figures as an aporetic moment when the groundedness, the taken-for-grantedness of the narrative is disturbed. Hence, playing in Malabar, in an "infidel" region, in

the mind of Geevarghese's father, possibly resonating with instilled memories of the Crusades, is equated with the negation of Christian values. Islam, and the "distorted" football played in Malabar, is the antichrist of Christian faith, of "normal" football. In fact, the narratival ellipsis implies that it is as a result of this apostasy that Geevarghese loses his father and his degree. Geevarghese, now contrite, stops playing "sevens." And "[B]efore long he received the Call." This is a traumatic event in Geevarghese's memory and the Call could be analysed as resulting from a neurosis. The past torments him, but the figure of Higuita provides him succour, release from his guilt, and hope for potency, action without responsibility for the consequences. Finally, he changes into civilian clothes, reverting back to a forward from being a goalie, or a goalie assuming the role of a forward, and takes Lucy to Jabbar's house for a showdown. This is the scene I evoked earlier, where Jabbar refuses to acknowledge Geevarghese and expressionlessly asks Lucy whether it would not be better for all if Geevarghese left. When Lucy answers negatively, "in the same instant, Jabbar raised his hand, Lucy took a step back and the people who gathered to watch the 'sevens' match in a field near Tellichery bellowed 'Geevareethe,' 'Geevareethe'" [15].[8] And Geevarghese, playing the forward now, manhandles Jabbar, who, strangely, if we consider the preceding narrative, offers no resistance, being as passive as a football. Or rather, not so strangely, for it was only in the mind of Geevarghese that Jabbar had assumed Goliath proportions. Like Milton's Satan, Jabbar has dwindled and diminished in stature and St. George, known among Kerala Christians as the Saint Geevarghese, slays a puny and pathetic dragon. However, this refusal of Jabbar to acknowledge Geevarghese is highly revealing. The narrator-protagonist is not a party to the representations that circulate in Jabbar's world.

It would be of interest to examine the strategy of the short story in the relations between the narrator and the protagonist. At times they are collapsed, at other times they form separate entities. The author-narrator skilfully intervenes in moments of crisis, containing and controlling the story, but again, at times, refuses to help out the protagonist. And also, in the narrative logic, a character can experience the "unreal," but the "unreal" cannot acknowledge the "real." The "unreal" Jabbar functions as a big cut-out which makes Geevarghese's antics meaningful; the moment life is granted to Jabbar, Geevarghese is bound to collapse as a character, his existential predicament losing its mooring and meaning. Like the surrealistic narration, making temporal shifts with ease, Jabbar the "unreal" constantly undermines the realism of the story. Jabbar cannot see Geevarghese, for Jabbar is only a devised object, a football, having life only in the imaginary field of the narrator-protagonist. Jabbar and Geevarghese, in the narrative, inhabit two different worlds, inhibiting each other. They cannot meet in Madhavan's discursive-real without engendering what is in effect a *differend*. Lyotard's coinage denotes a point of incommensurability, of difference, between two parties who use heterogeneous languages. To resolve such disputes by taking recourse to a master code would be an unjust act, since the representational framework, the criteria of judgement, will necessarily favour the dominant party and repress or reduce the other party's discourse. In the story Jabbar cannot acknowledge Geevarghese, nor can Geevarghese

talk to Jabbar and be heard without rupturing the regime of representation. To acknowledge the *differend* is to dismantle the existing framework, hence, it is repressed.

This repression in/of the text returns in other guises within the text itself, endangering the text's transparency. What I have been trying to bring out are the repercussions, those reverberations that disrupt the narrative unity. Apart from the reference to Malabar and the "sevens," there are other motifs scattered throughout the text. I will mention some of them. The bewilderment of Lucy, after the repeated biblical allusions, that Jabbar "even knows the time when nobody is at home where she is employed. Otherwise how can he telephone me at exactly that time?" [13] could allude to Satan's strategy of singling out Eve when Adam was not around. Another is the description of the stadium as "crescent-shaped." When most stadiums are round or oval in shape, why is Higuita made to battle, like Siva whose long curls are adorned by a crescent moon, a spherical object in a stadium curved like a crescent? Though the crescent-shape is from the perspective of one on the football field, how is it that Higuita's long curls, the dark granite of his face and his thin moustache add to his beauty, while the short curled hair of Jabbar with his five and a half feet stature and his moustache not yet black but his hair a little bit greyed, his knit brows and his thick bull neck, summon a monstrous image?[9]

To return to the story, before Geevarghese tackles Jabbar he catches a glimpse of the physical training teacher, in memory, as yellowed as an old photograph, leaning against an arecanut palm. The shift from father to physical training teacher is significant. Earlier, after another victorious match, the father had coaxed the son: "Don't be afraid. I'm not your father now, I'm your PT master" (139). Only the PT master, the one dedicated to the game, can see the game Geevarghese is playing. Geevarghese's father, who could not properly integrate the roles of a father and PT master, now appears as the PT master who should condone, inspire, and applaud Geevarghese since he is only going about his father's business and playing football. But such neat and clear-cut boundaries, such as those between fatherhood and profession, do not exist. Later, Geevarghese seems to have managed it, but his role as a football player, of goalie-as-forward, only exists in the imagination; it is unreal compared to his role as a priest. His appointed role of a Father is made real by his imagined role of a goalie-forward, and if so, similarly Jabbar the "unreal" should have a role, a reality, elsewhere. In not depicting this "reality," in not acknowledging this fact, the author-narrator is assuming the role of an arbiter who is sent to us, who repeats messages for us, who re-pre-sents our resentment for us, who sends us.

To elaborate the above point, I revisit Asan's *Duravastha*. After the description of the in-grained violence of Mappilas, the female character addresses with heart-rending agony a caged Mynah: "Is there no sense of justice and morality / In what these beasts profess as religion?" (14). But she is reminded by the poet:

> Dear Lady, you have forgotten something;
> Most of these men were once Hindus,
> Belonging to the communities of Nayars
> And still lower; but driven beyond

> The normal limits of tolerance
> By preclusion, prohibition, excommunication
> And other inhumanities of untouchability,
> They left the Hindu fold, or Brahmanism,
> Which had petrified into a swarm of castes.
> (15)

The poet goes on: "In Kerala there are but few Muslims / Who had come from western shores" (15). Asan, so very perceptive of the inhumanity of caste, could not perceive the sufferings of Muslims. This is not surprising, given his preoccupations on the one hand and his understanding that real Muslims are those who came from outside on the other. Asan regards Mappilas as lower-caste brothers who have been degraded by the alien religion they espoused. The year 1922 is crucial, for, as is well known, "the 1920s made for a new conjuncture in the world of Indian politics" because of the entry of the masses into "the organized national movement on an unprecedented scale" (Pandey, 1994, 233). The coming together of the crescent and the cow, of Khilafat and the Non-cooperation movements, and the resultant Malabar rebellion, determined the course of the history of the Indian subcontinent.

Occupying a "structurally contradictory position"[10] because of his authorial function, Madhavan, too, is called upon and delegated, to present to us messages about ourselves, to present us with solutions to the problems besetting us, to make them present for us, to make ourselves present. Moreover, he also, in re-presenting (for) us, calls upon us, assigns us duties, and "sends" us. "Making-present" has two senses embedded in it: of "bring to presence, into presence, cause or allow to come in presenting," and of "the possibility of causing or allowing to return," for "to render present, like all 'rendering,' all restitution, would be to repeat, to be able to repeat." Hence, "the idea of repetition and return which resides in the very meaning of representation" (Derrida, 1982, 308). A part of this operation is the petitioning and sending to/of citizens, assigning tasks and duties to each citizen. And the need to send off people who are, or who should be, "properly" designated refugees, refuse in our habitat, is part of the rapturous ascertaining of a national be-longing. In fact, we seem to be caught up in a circular logic, whereby our thought of a unified nation rules/represses certain peoples as outsiders in order to hold ourselves together while the same peoples return as figures in our narratives to rupture the imaginary.

But where is Madhavan sending us off? Jabbar asks Lucy: "Isn't it better for all of us that [the Father] leaves." In a tragic, if ironic, reversal, after reading the story, we concur and conclude: yes, definitely it is better for all of us, we can live in harmony and peace as Indians, if people like Jabbar are made to leave. As if to underline this reversal, towards the end, Father Geevarghese issues an ultimatum to Jabbar: "If the sun rises tomorrow you are not to be seen in Delhi," which seems like an unequivocal decree and a call for a pogrom. The authority that the narrator presumes and the author subscribes to and prescribes for us, is linked to, if not constituted by, the concept of the nation. After all, it is only by being summoned before and by the nation that a citizen is constituted, and this constitution involves also a

co-opting, for our subjectivities have other layers that are often in conflict with this paring. An instance from the story itself is Father Geevarghese's childhood in Kerala and his incursions into Malabar, which has a Mappila majority. It is definitely a remainder of his past that he carries over to the capital, where it finds correspondences. Further, read from Father Geevarghese's critical perspective, since his identity is postulated and posited on the imagined life of a goalkeeper, he is bound to fail as a mediator between a Tribal woman and a Muslim because his identity is overburdened with real/imagined representations, masking his own vulnerability in the face of the naturalized national subject endowed with an excess universalism. The severity of his ultimatum in sending off Jabbar, hence, reverberates with an unconscious knowledge of the potentiality and the very real possibility of occupying the same position as Jabbar, thereby making the narrative fold on itself into a burlesque that would unfold the impossibility of being Christian or Muslim.

Coming after "Higuita" and the post-Babri Masjid riots, "Mumbai"[11] presents a very different scenario. Here, Madhavan renders the Muslim in a sympathetic light. The protagonist of "Mumbai," Aziz, works as a stockbroker in a firm; the employees are interested in politics only so far as it affects the Sensex, the stock market index. Though a new government is in power, Aziz decides, "after some serious reflection, that nothing was going to change" (19). In fact, the new government has had a beneficial effect on the Sensex: it has revived. What is more, Aziz understands and supports the new government's statement that all foreigners will be driven out. Meanwhile, his firm is sending Aziz to an industrial exhibition in Frankfurt, for which he has to procure a passport. Now, that is no easy job, as he has to have a ration card in order to prove that he exists. Getting a ration card proves to be a more difficult task for Aziz; even a *Gandhi* (as the bribe of a hundred rupee note was called), cannot solve his problem. For verification, the supply officer visits Aziz on a Sunday at his house with one Ramu Dada, a vote hustler for the ruling party, and asks Aziz to meet Pramila Gokhale at the supply office. When Aziz reaches the supply office, Madam Gokhale, as delicate in appearance as a white mouse, is reading the *Dynaneshwari*, a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. The interrogation starts; the object is to establish whether Aziz is an Indian. Aziz's angry query – "Suppose you were woken up from sleep one night and asked to prove that you were an Indian, what would you do, sister?" – gets a soft-spoken reply from the Madam:

> "I will just tell them my name. That's all. My name is both my history and geography. Pramila Gokhale. Maharashtrian. Hindu. Chitpavan Brahmin. Do you understand?" Even as she said all this, her voice remained like the whisper of a beloved. The softness of her voice filled Aziz with fear.
>
> (22)[1]

The interrogation continues through the next few days and pages. Since Paang, the village where Aziz was born, does not have any meaning, since even Aziz cannot locate it on a map of India (he is not even sure whether he can do it on a map of Kerala), since there "can't be a village with a name like that in India" (23),

and since Aziz was not in India in 1970 (because he was not born yet) and was in India in 1971 (he was born that year) when the "infiltration" from Bangladesh began, the conclusion is that Aziz is not an Indian. When he reaches home, Aziz sees two policemen standing guard outside the building. He goes into his room and closes the door. As he is about to pull back the curtains and open the window, he feels that the other side will be stacked with innumerable human faces with loveless eyes, as on a peacock's tail. Gripped by an uncontrollable fear, Aziz creeps under the bed and, with his face pressed to the floor, lies motionless, like a stillborn child.

In "Mumbai," as in some of his other stories,[13] Madhavan certainly engages with the situation of a minority that slips ever so easily into the label "foreigner." The secular-modern position upheld by the author clearly puts the blame on Hindu communalism, and if not for the Hindutva forces out there, everything would be fine here. It is because of such a perspective that "Mumbai" ends with the final picture of pure victim-hood: a Muslim assuming a foetal position in the face of the Hindutva upsurge. It is clear that an aesthetic such as this is governed by a politics that makes Muslims into either villains or victims. However, within the story itself such pure victim-hood is counterpointed by the total absence of any memory of oppression and fear, though "[m]emories from childhood helped Aziz to understand the world" (18). One needs to ask how Aziz could plausibly not have any memories that mark out his minority position and so enable him to live in and understand the world.

Notes

1 Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land* and Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh,* which are two other works evocative of Malabar. However, since their themes are not specifically limited to India, they remain outside my purview.

2 "The mere temporality of the aesthetic judgement becomes prescriptive for the narrative of representation through which this actualization of common sense in the modern public sphere is to be realized," notes David Lloyd in "Race Under Representation" (65–66). And as Terry Eagleton has remarked, "there is a sense in which . . . the aesthetic might more accurately be described as an anaesthetic," in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (196).

3 Against the Marxist perspective that power is located in the state and is made effective by the ideological state apparatuses, Foucault, as Deleuze elucidates, has maintained that the state only "appears as the overall effect or result of a series of interacting wheels or structures which are located at a completely different level, and which constitute a 'micropolitics of power'" (25). Hence, what has to be addressed is not so much "ideology" – for Foucault ideology does not constitute "the struggle between forces," but "only the dust thrown up by such a contest" (29) – but power, since it is a relation between forces and as such passes through the dominated and the dominating.

4 This Malayalam story was first published in *Mathrubhoomi Weekly* (23–29 December, 1990); subsequently it appeared as the title story in Madhavan's short story collection, *Higuita* (Kottayam: DC Books, 1993) 9–15. The story takes its name from the Colombian goalkeeper, who used to leave the penalty area and advance with the ball. Once, during the Mexican World Cup, 1986, an opponent seized the ball from him and scored a goal, thus defeating Colombia, hastening the team's exit from the tournament. It is significant that "Higuita" is one of the first stories written by N.S. Madhavan after a

long, self-imposed literary silence (his last work *Choolaimedile Savangal* [*The Corpses of Choolaimedu*; Kottayam: DC Books, 1995] was first published [by Nila Publishers] in 1981 and contained stories mostly written from 1970–1973). The translations that I have made have the Malayalam *Higuita* collection as source and the page numbers are given within square brackets so as to differentiate them from Sujatha Devi's translation.

5 N. S. Madhavan, "Higuita," translated by Sujatha Devi, *Katha: Prize Stories*, vol. 2, ed., Geeta Dharmarajan (New Delhi: Katha, 1992) 136–142. All citations from this translation are incorporated in parentheses throughout the chapter.

6 Madhavan's own analysis of the economic structure of O. V. Vijayan's *Khasakinte Ithihasam* (Kottayam: DC Books, 1969) – wherein he examines the reasons for the novel's ideological embodiment of a colonialist intellectual position and its historical content being far away from reality – concludes by raising the following questions: even if *The Legends of Khasak* is only a novel and hence not an elaboration of ideology, why is it that certain elements were accepted in the aesthetic process and optimization of effect by Vijayan and how can the sacrifice of other elements be explained? (in *Kalavimarsam: Marxist Manadandom* [*Art Criticism: Marxist Paradigm*], ed., T. K. Raveendran [Kottayam: Nila Publishers, 1983] 198).

7 "Figural" is a term coined by Jean-Francois Lyotard to denote the other at work within and against discourse itself, tracing an opening in the textual space. Bill Readings notes: "The figural . . . becomes a quasi-symptom of a 'political unconscious,' opening onto a space of social desires and possibilities that are as yet unimaginable within political representation. Figure and discourse are necessarily and impossibly co-present, as constitutive and disruptive of representation" (7).

8 "Geevareethe" is the Malayali colloquial vocative form of Geevarghese.

9 The words "OKLAHOMA emblazon[ing]" (142) on Jabbar's T-shirt can also be construed as a veiled reference to the supposedly America-sponsored terrorism of Pakistan. Oklahoma, literally "red man," also denotes a territory of conflict. Another layer evoked for later readers is the April 1995 bombing in Oklahoma, of which vivid pictures were circulated through the media, frenziedly suggesting the handiwork of terrorists. This was later refuted by the arrest of a white American male, leading also to a collective sigh of relief over possible fallouts averted.

10 Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out that writers/artists "occupy a dominated position in the dominant class, they are owners of a dominated form of power at the interior of the sphere of power. This structurally contradictory position is absolutely crucial for understanding the position taken by writers and artists, notably in struggles in the social world" (1993, 164).

11 N. S. Madhavan, "Mumbai," trans., Sharada Nair, in Geeta Dharmarajan and Meenakshi Sharma, eds., *Katha: Prize Stories*, vol. 6 (New Delhi: Katha, 1997) 17–25; the Malayalam story was first published in the weekly *Malayala Manorama*, annual issue (Kottayam, 1995); the story was later published in the Malayalam short story collection *Thiruthu* [*Correction*] (Kottayam: DC Books, 1997).

12 I juxtapose here N. S. Madhavan's response about Jabbar being the villain: "Name will always be a problem for Ansari. It's psychological. . . . Because Ansari does not have a name. Who will be named Nair, Suryani, Christian or Ezhava? Ansari is a name like that. It's the caste name of the Momin (weaver) Muslims in North India. I will not further destroy/deconstruct an individual who has been denied even a name" (my translation from the interview with N. S. Madhavan [by Sudhakaran] in *Madhyamam* 33 [9 October 1998]: 14–16). While dropping the caste suffix from his own name may be commendable, reducing "Ansari," a name common across Islamic cosmopolis, to a North-Indian caste-name probably was not. Thirteen years later, in an interview conducted in 2011 by A. K. Abdul Hakeem, Madhavan adds: "The villain Jabbar's is a Muslim only for those who over-read. . . . It is lack of self-respect that creates such evil thoughts. . . . Ansari never said that the story had an anti-Muslim content. . . . He was

dealing with the issues of representation. But it implied that only such representations can be expected from Hindus, which was even more dangerous. . . . In an earlier interview, I pointed out contextually that Ansari was a north-Indian caste name. But it is true that there was a hint that it was someone without even a name that was creating an issue of Jabbar's name" (my translation from N. S. Madhavan, 2014, 188; also available at www.mathrubhumi.com/books/article/interview/2975/#storycontent, posted on 5 August and accessed on 19 September 2014).

13 See, especially, "Thiruthu" (in *Thiruthu*, 7–13), wherein the journalist Suhara refers to Babri Masjid as the "disputed structure" but the chief editor corrects it back to "Babri Masjid." Of interest would also "Nilavili" ["The Cry"] (in *Nilavili*), the story of Qutubuddin Ansari, who became the face of the victims of 2002 Gujarat pogrom.

7 An-other

Indulekha and *The Jewel of Malabar*

In this chapter, I analyse the definitive novel, O. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha* (1889) as a significant instance of representing the Muslim in Malayalam literature, and Donald Sinderby's *The Jewel of Malabar* (1921), a popular English novel, which has the 1921 Malabar rebellion as its background, in a contrapuntal reading that brings out other ways of reading/representing the Muslim.

I

A nation is, to use Benedict Anderson's well-worn phrase, an imagined community that involves constant assertion of one's affiliation, and the other is most often the ruse in this process of nation-translation. The collusion between a nation and narration, their enclosure, so to speak, and "the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of 'the people' or 'the nation' and make them the immanent subjects and objects of a range of social and literary narratives" has been widely studied (Bhabha, 1990, 292). It is within such a frame that I propose to examine *Indulekha*, although my focus is on the role reserved for the other that stalks narratives of national definition and self-determination. In *Indulekha*, first published a century before "Higuita," we find a more complicated representation of the Muslim as the other. The narrative of the novel seeks to resolve into a proto-national shared cultural belonging, forcing one to think of "representation" and our social/textual affiliation as involving a cultural translation by which "our" culture evolves as against "an-other" culture.

O. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha*,[1] first published in 1889 and translated into English by W. Dumergue in 1890,[2] is considered to be the first narrative in Malayalam that can rightfully claim to have most of the characteristics of a novel. The genealogy of the novel itself is interesting. Pestered by his wife and friends to share his solitary/secret pleasure and compelled to recount stories/plots of English novels, Chandu Menon started translating *Henrietta Temple* (1837) by Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881), but soon abandoned the project in favour of transplanting the novel form itself by writing a Malayalam *novel book*, as he called it, with a local Malabar setting. The 300-odd pages of the novel were briskly written over a period of sixty-seven days; it would have been finished within a month but for the delay in getting

hold of some English books for reference. In the preface, Chandu Menon (1847–1899) professes that "whatever be the merits of the book I have written, you will readily recognize that in writing it I was actuated solely by a desire to improve the status and position of my country women generally" (1890, xxv). The authorial voice intones on the "advantages which would accrue if the women of India were given the same privileges of education that are enjoyed by the men." The voice bewails the manner in which "Kalliani Kutty was seized and given to the Nambudiripad by Panchu Menon just as if she had been a kitten about the house." Thereafter, there is a direct address and appeal:

> My fellow country-women, are you not ashamed of this? Some of you have studied Sanskrit, and some music, but these attainments are not enough. If you wish to really enlighten your minds, you must learn English, whereby alone you can learn many things which you ought to know in these days and by such knowledge alone can you grasp the truth that you are as free agents as men, that women are not the slaves of men.
>
> (1890, 368–369)

Apart from advocating social reform for women, he also makes a case for realism and hopes that his readers will take to the new pleasures offered by it. In the preface to the second Malayalam edition of 1890, he states that "if stories composed of incidents true to natural life, and attractively and gracefully written, are once introduced, then by degrees that old order of books, filled with the impossible and the supernatural, will change, yielding place to the new" (1890, xiv). The English translation contains a couple of pages that are absent in the Malayalam edition, where, as part of the novel, the authorial voice assures us that "[a]ll the characters mentioned in this book are still alive" (1890, 368).[3] At the same time, in his letter to Dumergue, he admits that though his

> . . . object is to write a novel after the English fashion, and it is evident that no ordinary Malayalee lady can fill the role of the heroine of such a story. My Indulekha is not, therefore, an ordinary Malayalee lady. . . . Some of my readers may object that it would be impossible to find a young Nair lady of Indulekha's intellectual attainments in Malabar. To this objection my answer is that those who make it are not acquainted with the educated women now existing in Malabar. . . . The only thing which my readers might reasonably take exception to is Indulekha's knowledge of English; but as one of my objects in writing this book is to illustrate how a young Malayalee woman, possessing, in addition to her natural personal charms and intellectual culture, a knowledge of the English language would conduct herself in matters of supreme interest to her, such as the choosing of a partner in life, I have thought it necessary that my Indulekha should be conversant with the richest language of the world.
>
> (1890, xx)

He also declares that he had shown the circumstances under which Indulekha happened to acquire knowledge of the English language and "shall leave it to my readers to decide whether there is any probability suggesting itself in the narrative in connection with her education" (1890, xx-xxi). I have delineated all this in order to underline the fact that Indulekha is a dream of a character, masterfully crafted, and represents, as in a dream, reality as it ought to be, and unwittingly goes against the grain of Chandu Menon's professed realism.

What would be the nature and effect of the transactions/translations taking place in and around *Indulekha*? Chandu Menon was a civil servant and subordinate of Dumergue, and Dumergue, the translator, was the Acting Collector of Malabar. On the one hand, Chandu Menon construes a "lack" in our literature/pleasure and sets out to supplement it by translating/transplanting a novel form from English to Malayalam (Devasia and Tharu, 57). His novel pleasure caught on wildly and in turn his novel became the model for the Malayalam novel. At the same time, he was also translating/transforming the Malayali woman, recasting her as she should be. The aim of the author, who had absolute faith in the redeeming qualities of an English education (though, paradoxically, "Sheer Ali Khan" is beyond redemption despite being at home also in English), was also to mould a woman who could become an apt and able helpmeet for the emerging bourgeois Nair male. However, it is during this transfiguration that we also encounter another translation, that of a villain into a Muslim – underlying the common grounds between its reversal after a century when the Muslim becomes a villain in "Higuita."

The hero of *Indulekha*, Madhavan, is an educated, extremely intelligent and handsome young man.

> His body had the colour of gold. Due to the daily ritual of physical exercises, in all its youth, his body was most attractive. His hands, chest, and legs were not more heavy or thin than necessary and appeared as if they have been cast in gold. He was sufficiently tall. And, it would have been very easy to measure his body with his beautiful sacred hair (*kuduma*) that reached down to his knees. The sheen and maleness of his face, the individual beauty of each one of his parts as well as their proportionate harmony, and the brightness of his face and figure were amazing. All the Europeans that he was acquainted with were very fascinated by him and became his close friends.
>
> (my translation, 1998, 30)

Such a Madhavan and Indulekha (in a kind of inversion her lover is the only one who addresses her as Madhavi, her "real" name) are in love with each other and are married as per the *gandharva* ritual. However, Madhavan, who has passed the Civil Service examination, opposes the patriarch of the family with the result that the patriarch vows he will never agree to Madhavan marrying Indulekha. Because of a misunderstanding, Madhavan too comes to think that his Madhavi, aka Indulekha, has forsaken him and, grief-stricken, decides to travel through the Indian subcontinent.

In the course of his wanderings, he happens to visit the Calcutta zoo and shoots a tiger that has escaped from a cage, thus rescuing some rich merchants, who

gratefully invite him to their house. Yielding to their pressure, he spends many days with them. However, after a while, he decides to continue his travel and takes leave of his friends, who heap valuable gifts on him. On this leg of his journey from Calcutta to Bombay, the train stops at a big station where he takes some refreshments. At the next station, a smaller one, a handsome and well-dressed young man steps into the compartment in which Madhavan is traveling and, looking towards him, asks in English whether he could share Madhavan's seat. None of the other passengers reply, maybe because they do not follow English. With Madhavan's permission, this handsome young man sits next to Madhavan as the train leaves the platform.

> He was exceedingly good-looking and his dress and demeanour were also very attractive. In religion (*jati*) he appeared to be a Muslim. He had long hair that was cut straight, a little above his shoulders. He had a handsome moustache; he also had what is known as side locks in English, which were neatly trimmed. His colour was that of a ripe orange fruit. Viewed altogether, his face was extremely beautiful. He wore a heavily embroidered cap with a gold thread that covered the top of his head. The cap, the black hair around it, the fair face and the moustache together made a very attractive picture. He wore a coat of glittering white velvet, one that reached four or five fingers below his knees. It was held in place by buttons woven in gold that were placed very close to each other from the neck down to the waist. On his feet he wore green silk socks and shining boots; on his breast hung a shining golden watch-chain. Such was his outfit. As he sat next to him, Madhavan felt an intense fragrance.
>
> (my translation; 1998, 206–207)

This amusing person tells Madhavan that he is a subordinate judge of Allahabad and that his name is Sheer Alikhan. Sheer Alikhan ventures to predict that Madhavan is a graduate as well as a Bachelor of Law. Having lived for the past many days with his very rich friends, Madhavan is easily taken in by the charms of this stranger. Soon the train stops at another big station. Holding on to Madhavan's hands, Sheer Alikhan gets down to the platform and shouts for a peon. To the "huge bearded Pathan wearing a coat, pagadi and sash" (1998, 208) who appears, Sheer Alikhan gives instructions to look after Madhavan's belongings. He pulls Madhavan with him into a refreshment room and, being informed that Madhavan has no objection in eating meat, orders for sherry, mutton chops, and other items. Then he takes leave of Madhavan, saying that he will be back in a short while with his young obstinate son, who is sitting in the first class compartment with his "mother" (*amma*), and disappears from the frame forever. After a long time, an impatient Madhavan runs to his compartment only to realize that the Pathan has taken all his belongings away, presumably to the first class compartment. A frantic Madhavan cannot locate either Sheer Alikhan or the peon anywhere. Left with nothing but small change and the clothes he is wearing, and unable to pay for the ordered food, our straightforward and simple Madhavan runs to the stationmaster, who calls in

the police. This incident takes place outside the limits of "our British Raj," and the head officer of the police is a "terrible looking" Turkish Muslim who tries to solve the theft by beating up the butler who has been after Madhavan for payment of the food "Sheer Alikhan" had ordered.

Towards the end of the novel, and after the lengthy eighteenth chapter, we are informed that, at about the same time and evening, around 6:30, Madhavi aka Indulekha has a dream in her palatial house. She wakes up suddenly, feverish, and cries out: "Ayyo! Ayyo! Did this Muslim stab my husband to death? Alas! My husband is dead. I don't want to live/continue any longer" (my translation; 1998, 269). The author-narrator immediately states that the readers should not presume that he subscribes to the theory that dreams are an index of the past, present, or future. However, he goes on, "I am not very surprised at Indulekha's dream" since he knows of two white men who had dream-premonitions of a serpent and a friend which turned out to be true. But if we look into the textual truth of Indulekha's dream, we find that her dream is a series of lies unsubstantiated by the fictive real. For, first of all, Madhavan is not the "real" (legal) husband of Madhavi aka Indulekha since they are not "properly" married. Secondly, "Sheer Alikhan" does not stab to death her "husband." Thirdly, "Indulekha's "husband" does not die. And finally, the handsome man who gave the *false* name of "Sheer Alikhan" is not a Muslim.

It is easy enough to agree to all the three statements above. However, the last one, that "Sheer Alikhan" is not a Muslim may need further elaboration. A close reading of the text reveals that apart from the instance when the author-narrator remarks that in religion he appeared to be a Muslim, there is no instance whereby we can construe that "Sheer Alikhan" is a Muslim. A comparison of the descriptions of Madhavan and "Sheer Alikhan" compels us to the conclusion that "Sheer Alikhan" is undeterminable in religion and nationality. As against a golden Madhavan who wears his tuft of long sacred hair, "Sheer Alikhan" wears, apart from green and golden threads, side locks and a cap. Shorn off the assumed name and the appropriate costume for his role, "Sheer Alikhan" cannot "appear" to be a Muslim. My argument is further substantiated by the fact that in what one can conceive of as a translation into Malayalam from English, the language in which the two characters converse, the author-narrator reports "Sheer Alikhan" as using the Hindu term (*amma*) for mother. Further, taking away from the counter-argument that all I am doing is nit-picking, the author-narrator is very clear about the real/other Muslims in the novel, for the accomplice who came as the peon is a Pathan and the police sub-inspector is Turkish, whereas "Sheer Alikhan" remains "a handsome young man." The Pathan and the Turk are outsiders, their racial, socio-cultural, and political – what I would term as the proto-national in this context – moorings are elsewhere. On the contrary, "*our* handsome young man" (emphasis added), to use one of the expressions repeated in the novel, is neither an outsider nor an insider. Towards the end of the novel, we read that, two or three years after the theft, one of the rich merchant friends writes a letter to Madhavan informing him that two or three of the thieves involved (we know of only two, unless the butler was also implicated) in robbing Madhavan were arrested by the police in connection with another theft which was accompanied by murder and

that among them "a handsome young thief" had confessed to the murder of seventeen people on different occasions. He further confessed that if he had been unable to trick Madhavan that day he would definitely have murdered him. The repeated use of the phrase "handsome young man" for somebody who has murdered seventeen people reveals the almost necrophilic fascination and repulsion the figure is supposed to evoke. Being neither inside nor outside, this character, without a "proper" name or a nation of his own, comes to embody the "other" in the novel. Here, I will loop back to the description of "Sheer Alikhan."[4] Whereas Madhavan's body is made of gold, only what "Sheer Alikhan" wears is golden, and his colour is that of a "ripe orange fruit." Since in Malayalam the words denoting "ripe" and "rotten" are differentiated by something like a diacritical mark, "rotten," which appears in some editions, could very well be a printer's devil. However, there is something devilish at work when most of the various editions re-inscribe and re-circulate "rotten" and, paradoxically, a reprint has "rotten" on the same place on the same page whereas the first edition had "ripe"! The transformation of "Sheer Alikhan" into a Muslim in Indulekha's dream opens the possibility to re-read the dream as prophetic: Madhavan will become her husband; if unable to fool Madhavan "Sheer Alikhan" would have killed her husband-to-be; then her "husband" would have died; and finally, the nameless clever and cruel cheat would be always-already the Muslim.

Dumergue, who evades the ripe/rotten terminology altogether, had known this all along and had already resolved this issue for us in an-other way. His translation – subtitled "A Novel from Malabar" came out in 1890, the same year as the second edition of the Malayalam novel – had the author's sanction, among other things. He remarks that the author had read through, and even helped him with, the translation. But in his translation, Dumergue amends Indulekha's dream or at least translates her cry as "Oh husband! Has that Pathan stabbed you? Ah, my husband is dead, would I were dead too!" (1890, 357). Burdened with the carryover cultural baggage of a colonial administrator and presuming the sudden intrusion of the Muslim into the narrative/dream to be the author's oversight, Dumergue takes a capital way out: he corrects the corrupt "original" native-narration. But if it was an oversight by Chandu Menon, it is only probable that the author would have been alert to Dumergue's alteration and followed it in the Malayalam second edition, especially since in its preface he undoubtedly proclaims his happiness and satisfaction in that his novel had the good fortune to find a translator who not only understood the deeper significations of his sentences but also could convey them in easy, enjoyable, and simple English. However, as regards Indulekha's dream, Chandu Menon did not follow Dumergue and did not correct himself/his text. Let us then assume that he must have known all along what he was doing, especially since modern translators, caught in the narrative flow of the text and located in our contemporary cultural politics, would not even discern any narrative flaw in the text, much less dare to correct the original. Dumergue, from his colonial/administrative perspective, sees only Pathans, Mappilas, Nairs, and the like, whereas Chandu Menon, and his hero Madhavan, is already on an outward voyage in search of a nation-translation. They are in search of an alliance, and are engaged in writing

the rightful heir from Kerala, the Nair bourgeoisie, into an emerging upper-caste Hindu, read Indian, fold. Let me reel out the names of the rich and true merchant friends of Madhavan: Govind Sen, Chitraprasad Sen, Keshavchandra Sen, and Gopinath Banerjee. They are all marked by caste, and what is involved in Madhavan's journey is an alignment with other upper-castes and a consolidation of the Nair hegemony. The other side of this nation-translation is to read/reduce Pathans, Turks, Mappilas, and the like into a monolithic "other," read "Muslim." For Chandu Menon, already envisaging a larger national culture, the Muslim is the generic term for the structural other. Defying the narrative logic which demands a Pathan in place, Chandu Menon posits a fascinating and repulsive "other" which, culturally, should have been a Mappila from Malabar, since he and Madhavan are located in the cultural geography of a Malabar already marked by a history of Mappila unrest from 1796, as per certain records, and definitely from 1836 onwards.

In their discussion of the novel, Devasia and Tharu (57–77) argue that, as the Nair afterlife of the novel form, Chandu Menon's venture – as against the novel in its European homeland where it "obscures" the process of "massive cultural (re-) organization" by "naturalizing it through claims to transparency and realism" – "acknowledges this initiative quite openly and in fact celebrates it" thereby making "a breach in the very apparatus of European realism" (69). They also argue that in its return journey in Dumergue's translation, it "encounters few of the grave problems faced by the passage out, indeed no problem that cannot be immediately attended to by good sense and executive efficiency" (73). In their words, Dumergue's "fluent and eminently readable translation" is

> . . . rewrit[ing] its original into the dominant (and therefore also transparent) discourse of the target-language, providing the target-language reader with the pleasure of recognizing his or her own culture in the foreign text and feeling at home in another history and another culture. Such translations obviously domesticate the foreign text, obscuring differences of history, politics, intertextuality, context, etc. Not always so evident is the imperial scope of this universalism.
>
> (74)

Though I would agree with them about the return journey, as is evident from Dumergue's easy amendment of Indulekha's dream, I would think that Chandu Menon's venture is only different in that our experiences of modernity have been different. This comes out clearly if we contrast Chandu Menon advocating Englishing ourselves while at the same time he writes a dissent note to protest "against the violence of . . . ethnocentricity" in colonial attempts at reform and "the blindness to cultural difference that marked colonial assessments of Nair women and Nair marriage," which would destroy Nair society (58). As we can read off from the above, the difference between the English and the Malayalam novel/modernity would be that the imperatives are different, as much as the heroes are. Likewise, Dumergue's assumption that his translation would become a "resource for colonial

ethnography" (57) and be "'useful to administrators and historians' [which] becomes both the basis of his translation practice and of the canonization of the original" (75) only brings out the native/colonial difference. And within these different practices, the Muslim seems to be "working" in not very dissimilar terms.

Devasia and Tharu have not paid attention to the translation of the villain into Muslim within the novel, for they observe that:

> For a novel set in Malabar, claiming to depict the real life and the true language of the region, the total absence of the Mappilas and the hazy presence of the "lower" castes is significant. It is interesting that the only Muslim featured in the novel is the well-dressed man from the North of India who befriends Madhavan on the train, only to cheat him.
>
> (footnote 12, 77)

However, as I have argued, "Sheer Alikhan" is not a Muslim, but becomes a Muslim.[5] The figure of "Sheer Alikhan" is a marker of the translations taking place within the novel. As against the cultural geography of the character, where a Mappila would have been appropriate, or the narrative logic, where a Pathan would have been appropriate, Indulekha is made to dream up a Muslim in order to set in the process of cultural translation and national belonging. Her dream, however, is also an aporetic moment in the text. It is a supplement which has the potential to supplant the text, and it also significantly subverts the text and its narrative resolution of a proto-national belonging. Let us once again return to Indulekha. Structurally her dream plays a significant part, since it is her fear and fever that helps to change the patriarch's heart in favour of a Madhavan-Madhavi (re-)marriage. Her dream also leaves the indelible impression that it was a Muslim who cheated Madhavan; her dream works within the text much the same way the text works in our literary/cultural imaginary. She dreams and cries out that a Muslim has murdered her husband. The author-narrator is structurally forbidden from revealing her dream; he does not tell us what her actual dream was, we know/read of it only in a translation/representation of an outcry. He does not tell us what she actually saw, and neither does he see what she is telling us – that her dream disrupts the text and its narrative, proto-national, enclosure. We have to be awake to her dream, and suspicious of the authorial translation of her foreboding in order to see the import of the supplement as lack and as excess. Maybe now we can wonder anew why a novel-narrative more concerned about the hero's intellectual, emotional, and proto-national interests is named *Indulekha* in the first place. Perhaps what we witness in the narrative is the congruence of the emerging bourgeois Indian male, who needs a new normal woman, a novel pleasure, and a national pastime, not necessarily in that order. This congruence of female-novel-nation is inadvertently brought out when one critic (M. K. Sanu in his *avatharika* to the 1998 edition, 21–22) reads the description of the heroine in the second chapter of *Indulekha* as a commentary on the requisites of the novel form itself.

Indulekha dreams up the Muslim, not a Pathan, as the other threat, to her marital as well as "our" national consummation. With an awareness of the alacrity of this

dream-effect, it would be instructive to examine the eighteenth chapter of the novel. Sandwiched between the theft and the dream, running about forty-four pages, this chapter has been criticized by the well-known critic M. P. Paul as "a stone blocking the unhampered progress of the plot" (cited in Panikkar, 1995, 143). However, reading the chapter as an integral part of the novel, I argue that this chapter is all about the ushering in of modernity or of our translation into modernity. The eighteenth chapter is basically "A Conversation" – taking place in Babu Keshavachandra Sen's moon-washed, palatial house in Bombay – between Madhavan's father, Govinda Panikkar, Madhavan, and his young relative, Govindankutty Menon. These three figures from different generations start by discussing God. As opposed to the atheist and radical Govindankutty Menon and the conservative Govinda Panikkar, Madhavan talks about a God divorced from the temple and the sandalwood paste, thereby freeing God for the emerging class from the Brahminical fold. Whereas Govindankutty Menon insists on the absolute urgency of social reforms before political liberation, Madhavan tries to establish a role for the Congress in the subcontinent. He holds out the hope that India will eventually step into modernity and argues that "[i]n such a large country like ours, unity and discord [has increased] due to the English language" and that "[m]ore wider English spreads, our unity will increase manifold" (my translation, 1997, 255). According to Madhavan, we will free ourselves from unjust kings and become more democratic if we follow certain dictates: 1) The Congress controlled by educated and noble Babus should rule India; 2) English education should be available to all, especially women; 3) revolts, like in 1857, should not happen; and 4) we have to advocate a policy of patience before we can eradicate the evil of caste.

I concentrate on the last of these dictates. Madhavan's comments on caste are prefaced by his depressed observation that Englishmen have failed in their attempt to free us from our religions. According to him, in order to free us from our religions, all Hindus and Muslims should be shown another special religion that attracts them away from their different rituals. However, since we are not yet in a position to become modern and live in a mono-religious culture, it would be counterproductive if we insist on engaging with caste. We can only hope that as our "knowledge" increases our caste-doctrines may slacken and eventually disappear (1997, 251–252). Until such a time, we are to be ruled by a Congress guided by the learned Babus. Thus, we see that Madhavan is cognizant of which religion and castes are the authors and rightful heirs of our modernity. From this perspective, Madhavan's journey into modernity, from the local to the national, is the novel version of the King/landlord surveying his kingdom/land and neighbours, thereby cementing relationships with other hegemonic castes in other regions and staking a claim in the future power-sharing. It is significant that, during this journey, he is brought face to face with "Sheer Alikhan" only to be duped. Surviving this mishap, he has now returned and enumerates his insights in the eighteenth chapter. He has learned that those people (British as well as upper-caste Congressmen) who taunt us for being cowards, who point out that we, the "talkative Babus and Aiyars . . . are not strong enough to oppose a Muslim" (1997, 256) do so in order to awaken our valour. Potent and virile, this newly awakened Indian is now ready to marry

an Indulekha who has been earmarked for him, saved from the vile desires of the decadent Namboodiris. However, the consummation of this marriage is not without impediments. While the national male has found himself and others like him, the woman has to be aptly reconfigured. It has been pointed out by various critics that the challenges faced by India's move towards modernity were usually mapped onto the woman in order to seek a resolution or sublimation. It has also been pointed out that such classic manoeuvres were often successfully accomplished by deploying the Muslim as a threat to national-modernity.[6]

The contradictions of the national-modern that Indulekha is made to bear come out clearly in her double naming. Whereas her real name is Madhavi, everyone except Madhavan calls her Indulekha, meaning "crescent." However, we hear Madhavan calling her Indulekha at very significant moments: "My Indulekha is my wife . . . otherwise there is no point to my existence" (1997, 27), he asserts earlier in the narrative. Later, when she tells him that she has already chosen him as her husband ("My husband, my life's Lord. . . . My body and soul are at your command," 1997, 48–49), in his six-sentence long response he addresses her twice as Indulekha. Madhavi, also known as Indulekha, who had spiritedly upheld equal freedom for women allowed by the Nair system of marriage against Madhavan's charge that it encouraged immorality and "enabled" women to be licentious by evoking western customs, is deeply hurt when Madhavan so easily believes the rumour that she had consented to marry a wealthy Namboodiripad. It is this enlightened Madhavi who is muted by the dream of a Muslim. A troubled Madhavi, worrying about her husband and angry at the realization that he had not understood the nature of her intelligence (1997, 262), goes to sleep. When a frightened Indulekha wakes up from her dream, Madhavi goes to sleep, as if forever, and only a *crescent* marks her disappearance.

II

One of the early characterizations of/by an Indian Muslim in English is *Confessions of a Thug* (first published in 1839).[7] It, as the opening line indicates, renders an "autobiographical" account of the life of the captive Ameer Ali, a notorious thug, transcribed by the author. Despite the fact that the debate around "thuggee" was woven around "Hindu" Kali worship as a root of criminality, the protagonist is a Muslim. This surely alerts one to a process which, as early as 1839, was consolidating the Muslim body as a depository of dangerous and irrational communalities and subjectivities. It is perhaps in this context that it could be productive to examine the strategic deployment of literary (autobiographical) narratives of individuals and its role in the manner in which colonial representations are produced and circulated.

In Donald Sinderby's *The Jewel of Malabar*,[8] this figure is found full-bodied as a Mappila fanatic, functioning in Malabar. In spite of the stereotypical elements in the novel, which draw on earlier versions in order to re-circulate such redoubled and modified representations, what is most striking about Sinderby's novel is its basic difference from a nationalist perception on the one hand, as in the stories and

novels in Malayalam and the western colonial/capitalist Christian secular modern perception of Islam on the other. As I have shown in the earlier sections, within the nationalist framework the Muslim is figured as a supplement, an excess, that nevertheless helps us constantly redefine the Indian; it is a *pharmakon* (Derrida, 1981), poison and cure at the same time, or a ghost that habitually haunts its once-familiar belonging. However, in Sinderby's frame, Islam figures as a double, an other which is also the same.

An analysis of Sinderby's last novel, *Mother-in-Law India*, first published in 1929, will perhaps amplify the significance attached by Sinderby to the Malabar Mappila uprisings and Islam in general to future (of the) Indian subcontinent. In this novel, in an almost prophetic vein, Sinderby foresees the division of the Indian subcontinent along the South-North axis. As the opening paragraph of the novel put it: "The British Raj in India was cracking up at last. Not so much because of any great effort on the part of Indian politicians as because an extreme Socialist Government in England had got itself into a hole. The Socialist party had promised independence to India and now that they were in power they were obliged to keep their promise" (chapter 1).[9] While the colonial government has been weakened by the gentlemanly obligation of the British politician to keep a promise, the British residents of India plot with various local kings. All the "leading Independence wallahs or Congress-men, as they were also called" (chapter 2) are rounded up, and the coup leads to the formation of the Southern Confederation, advised by resident Britishers, like Sir Charles Grimble, with the Maharajas of Mysore, Travancore, and Cochin ruling in tandem under His Supreme Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad. Within a couple of days, the North follows suit and establishes the Northern Confederation Government. The prime movers behind this idea of a South-North coup are a Muslim, Mohommed Ali Ashram, a retired police officer of Lahore, in the North, and a Brahmin, Iyenar Patela, a professor, in the South.

Apart from these, one of the main actors in the South is a Eurasian, George Da Sousa, the head of the secret service and the inventor of a sort of prototype of the atom bomb called the flying bomb. However, the North, preoccupied with the settlement of the North-West frontier, continues to look down on the South. The antagonism between them is intensified by the fact that while South continues to be governed by the sovereign authority of the Nizam, the North follows "a certain half-expressed regard for democratic principles" (chapter 3). The difference is further accentuated by the personal rivalry between Mohommed Ali and Da Sousa for Marietta Da Costa, a coquettish and scheming Eurasian woman. The political difference as also the lust of the main players in the North and South lead to showdowns, which, as the foreword has it, "are as bloodthirsty as real scenes which occurred at Partition," because of the deployment of the flying bomb. Despite being governed by the Nizam, or maybe because of it, the Mappilas of Malabar continue to rebel, and the Islamic rebellion spreads all over India under the guidance of the evil Mohommed Ali, until it is completely destroyed by the flying bomb of an even more evil Da Sousa. The end result: the American Marines step in and India is divided among the rival European powers, except the British, who "had forfeited their claim" (chapter 13). Although interesting and worthy of a serious

study by itself, I have outlined the plot of the novel to highlight the part played by Islam. It is against the backdrop of the reconfiguration of Islam in *Mother-in-Law* that I seek to situate my analysis of *The Jewel of Malabar*.

The simple enough plot of *The Jewel of Malabar* is a love triangle formed by the British subaltern, Sir John Bennville, a rich Baronet in the military service and an officer (Lieutenant) in the regiment of the Royal Musketeers, a native Nair woman, Kamayla, and the Mappila rebel leader Abdul Ahmed Hajee. The novel is structured around two "illegal" journeys undertaken by Bennville, the first to ensure Kamayla's safety in Malabar and the second to escape from his commanding officer with Kamayla to the safety of Madras. Nahran, Kamyala's betrothed, is the policeman who leads Bennville and his men through the jungles of Malabar to the Mappila hideout. Nahran saves Bennville when the Mappilas, who the British have been sent to quell, ambush the platoon. Out of gratitude to Nahran for saving his life, Bennville, against the explicit order of his superiors, sends military and police personnel to go after the Mappilas who have abducted Kamayla. Bennville and Nahran also accompany the troop into the tangled recesses of the wild forest that takes on the aspect of a green wall (50–51).[10] When they reach the Mappila hideout, situated in the Pandalur hill (52) – which comprised the centre of the fanatic zone according to British administrators[11] – the party separates, and in another bloody battle, in which Nahran dies, they rescue Kamayla and return. Nahran's death opens the way for John Bennville, now "the military governor of the district!" (103), to desperately fall in love with Kamayla, who is mourning Nahran. As Bennville tries to move a reluctant Kamayla and her willing mother into the telegraph office near the military outpost, the Mappilas keep after her and abduct her again. Chasing them, Bennville rescues her and in the process is severely wounded. Meanwhile, with the second rescue and the nursing of the feverish subaltern, Kamayla also falls in love with him, proclaiming: "thou art the light of my life, my lord and my hero" (127).[12] Caught between the honour of the Royal Musketeer,[13] the ridicule lavished on the officers who fall for native women, and his intense love for Kamayla, Bennville decides to resign his commission and live with Kamayla in Malabar, the "emerald gem of sad beauty" (5). When his superiors learn that he is contemplating such a decision, Bennville is posted elsewhere. However, he illegally procures a Harley-Davidson motorbike and drives in a roundabout way to Kamayla's village and arranges for her and her mother to stay at the telegraph office. When he is returning by a shorter route, he is captured by Mappilas and it is only the quick and decisive action taken by Kamayla that rescues him from the physical and moral danger represented by Abdul Ahmed Hajee. Taken back to the headquarters, Bennville is "under close arrest" for being away without leave. His commanding officer takes an interest in him and advises him to forget the native woman, because "[o]il and water won't mix!" (225). One day their camp is attacked, reportedly, by 6000 Mappilas: "The woods were alive with the fiercest fanatics in India" (228), but the superior British force is able to kill the Mappilas. In a "private battle," Bennville kills Abdul Ahmed Hajee. Bennville's heroic act of leading a charge to save firearms as well as his killing of the notorious rebel king earns him a recommendation, but, nonetheless, he is posted to a distant

place in the hope that he will free himself of his obsession with the native woman. Despite the atmosphere of dance, dinners, tennis, polo, bridge, theatre, and the attractive Alice Catesby-Jones (256–261), Bennville is unable to forget Kamayla. Meanwhile, his commanding officer tries, in vain, to bribe Kamayla to forget Bennville and arranges with the postmaster to intercept their letters. However, hearing the news of Kamayla's degradation, once again Bennville hires a bike and car illegally and, being on leave, goes to rescue her. The couple, thereafter, is chased by the commanding officer till they reach the safety of Madras. At Madras, racial and religious doubts surface. Kamayla resolves the situation by converting to Christianity as well as by forsaking marriage with Bennville.[14]

The novel clearly draws on the half-a-century-old format of weaving adventure-romances around fictional characters playing a minor role in major historical events of the time. My reading of the novel is focused on the contradictory pulls structuring the representation of the Malabar rebellion. On the one hand, Islam as embodied in the rebelling Mappilas is certainly the repository of fanaticism, religious bigotry, and primitive savagery. The way in which the soldiers discuss the Mappilas on their way to deal with the insurgency is illustrative. They recognize that the Mappilas are not all provided with firearms, but are

> . . . armed with carving-knives, pick-axes, anything; but the point is that they all want to die! Nahran says that they get worked up to a tremendous pitch of fanaticism and go to a mosque and take oath to die for their religion. Then they divorce their wives, pass their swords through the flame, and come out and charge about trying to find some one to kill them . . . [because] they think that if they die fighting the infidel they go straight to Paradise. And for every Englishman they kill they obtain three wives; but I believe the allowance for a Hindu is only one wife.
>
> (20)

However, Bennville, who has read about local customs and has a rudimentary knowledge of Malayalam, thinks that it must be because they are ignorant people. Nahran agrees that it must be so because "They don't know what they are doing! They follow their priests blindly!" (21). When their procession is, suddenly, ambushed by some Mappila rebels, "[a] wailing cry, ineffably mournful and weird, swelled up from the jungle. It was the dismal battle hymn of the Moplahs" (26) which is followed by the beating of drums. Using the jungle to their advantage, the Mappilas attack in incessant waves of martyrdom in the face of the superior firepower of the British military. "If any man had felt pity for the way in which the fanatics had been mowed down, that generous emotion died out in that man's heart now" (28). Further, Abdul Ahmed Hajee, the leader of the Mappilas, equally the signifier of Islam, is on various occasions "malicious" (7), "loathsome," "foul" (167), and "the Prince of Evildoers" (188).

Nevertheless, on other occasions Abdul Ahmed Hajee himself is described as "tall and graceful, with the Arab stamp on his aquiline, scornful features" (7) and as speaking perfect English (203), in contrast to the ceremonious English spoken

by Hindus like Nahran (47, 101). Also, at other moments, the Mappilas, in contrast to "their gentle, mild-mannered Hindu neighbours," are

> . . . shaven-headed men, some with queer shaped light grey caps. . . . Their faces were keen and acquiline; some were richly bearded. A few were of poor physique; these were not true Moplahs, but the descendants of low-caste Hindu converts made by the invading Arab pirates. The majority were of splendid proportions. . . . All had the appearance of men who never appreciated or understood humour or the lighter side of life; but who were wont to brood darkly over their wrongs, the vileness of their unbelieving neighbours and rulers, and the glory of the Paradise which rewards earthly asceticism and devotion.
>
> (35)

Their act of rebellion is also understood in political, rather than religious terms: "They were in the rebellion from political motives only. Yet even without fanaticism the Moplah is still a hard, brave man, and these exposed themselves recklessly to the fire of the British" (56).

The local and loyal policeman Nahran's explanation for the rebellion is that most of the Mappilas are poor because their religion enjoins them to divide a dead man's property among his relations and thus they become poorer. Hence, they become discontented, but blame their Hindu landlords instead of their religious custom by saying that it is because they are charged too much rent. Their hardship is aggravated by their ignorance; their religion is all in Arabic, which few of them understand and which makes them fanatical so that they blindly follow their religious leaders. Most of them had probably served in the Indian Army during the War and understood some of the methods of modern warfare. However, "Ghandi's agents have been down here for many months, preaching rebellion against the Government, and this has really caused the outbreak. Many of these Moplahs think that the British were defeated in the Great War" (42–43).

Although at one level the narrative attributes the rebellion to fanaticism, there are several key moments when its political underpinnings surface. These moments are all the more significant in the context of Sinderby's firsthand experience. He was a subaltern posted in Malabar during the rebellion and had narrowly escaped after "one of the Moplars fired point blank at him, and missed."[15] The reasons suggested by the narrative for the Mappila rebellions are: 1) insane fanaticism fostered by ignorance and obedience to religious leaders; 2) political reasons such as those of the disbanded soldiers. However, this opposition between fanaticism and politics collapses in the light of other evidence within the narrative. I will briefly track some of those moments when the political character of the rebellion asserts itself. We are informed that other peaceful Mappilas (147), like traders and priests, wish the rebellion to continue, so that their business may prosper (151–152), and/or spy for the rebels providing them with a network of information-dissemination (155, 174). We are also told that the beginning of the rebellion was marked by an attack on the building which, significantly enough, housed the local treasury and

Government offices and that the "compound in which it stood was still covered with legal documents of a century, scattered and torn by the rebels" (172). The terror caused by the "cruel marauders" (138), not least by "Krembassery Thangal, the Moplah 'king,' an abominable monster, who was in the habit of flaying Hindus alive before killing them" (201), is, however, belied by the fact that a Hindu, for fifty rupees, agrees to drive the motorbike over quite a distance (167). Again, another Hindu lends Bennville his Ford car as well as his driver (270–271), in spite of the caste rigidity among Hindus. Also we are informed that Bennville "knew of the case of a high-caste who divorced his wife simply because she helped a coolie to put his heavy burden in her house" (84). He also reports of Mappila converts from among Hindus as well as of an elaborate social network over which rumours and news travel "like lightning amongst the rebels" (191). We are also informed of the collusion of the women (62), priests, and merchants. Putting all the above observations within the narrative, one is forced to conclude that there is an awareness within the text of the possibility of a political interpretation of the rebellion. In fact, the parallels between the Mappilas and the British, in their political struggle, are brought out more forcefully when Bennville meditates on the honour and pride of his regiment ("Better to die than to hurt the name of the Regiment" [114]). What emerges is a battle between the conquering British and the resisting Mappilas for territorial domination, rather than any fanaticism; the British soldiers "looked more at home in the place than the natives themselves" (152).

The Mappila voice emerges despite narrative exigencies. One of the rare occasions when we hear Mappilas speaking among themselves occurs when Bennville is hiding, in "this impossible district" (182), from a British convoy, scheduled to pass a particular point at a particular time. Two rebels, Ali and Kunhee, reach the same place on stolen police bicycles with firearms tied to their machines and hide very near him. They see the marks of Bennville's motorbike tyres. One of them exclaims: "Surely, Kunhee, this must be one of those strange bicycles with engines that the *velakar* [white people] use? W'Allah! But do they go about by themselves on these marvelous things at this time?" (178). His companion asks him to use his "nimble brain" (179) and obey "[t]he Musaliar [who] told us to count how many men were in them" (178). After the convoy passes by, Bennville shoots them dead. "Sorry!" said Bennville to himself with a slight shudder, "[c]an't help it, though! It was their lives or mine!" (180). The deliberate matter-of-factness, slight shudder notwithstanding, with which Bennville shoots down two men whose guns were tied to their bicycles reveals how the "Pukka Sahib" (250) is after all an arm of the empire.

However, the most illustrative incident through which the rebellion is characterized comes at the point where Bennville is captured by the Mappilas when returning from his first journey. While traveling back in the dusk without headlights, pushing his bike, he hears the sound of someone chopping wood. While crossing a bridge, he hears a tree fall further ahead, and attempts to turn back only to be stopped by a "half-naked figure" (194). Soon he is surrounded and disarmed, "pinioned by many hands hardened with years of toil" (195). The Mappilas "gazed at him as if he were some strange animal" (195) and immediately recognize him as the murderer of Ali and Kunhee and also the rival in love of their great chief. One

of the Mappilas wants to kill the "son-of-Hell" but is stopped from attacking him by the voice of their leader, who commands them to take him away to their hideout. Some of the Mappilas, unable to push the Harley-Davidson, attempt to burn it. Bennville "helps" them by asking them to put the flame into the petrol tank, which they innocently follow. Upon which,

> "Oh, you bastard fools of many dogs!" cried the leader wrathfully. "It is ever thus that you allow the white man to deceive you! Do you not know that there will be no peace or justice in the country until you refuse to be duped by the cunning, lying words of the white-devils?"
>
> (197)

Even in his perilous condition he could not help but note "the almost boyish activity of the Moplahs who trotted beside him or leapt lightly from boulder to tummock" (197). Bennville also commends their physical stamina and nimbleness of feet, since even an expert at warfare like himself found it hard to keep up with them. He complains about the way he is being treated. To his remark that the British are more courteous to their "prisoners of war," the rebel leader bitterly retorts: "And sent off to the Andaman Islands to slave till their hearts are broken" (198).

At the hideout, Bennville notices several men and a few plain-looking women, and the "whole atmosphere was heavily charged with the distinctive odour of the inhabitants of Malabar" (199).[16] "All present showed signs of the hardship which the present rebellion had imposed upon them. A disinterested and humane observer would have found pity in his heart for these poor ignorant creatures led into death and sorrow in pursuit of the vain ideals of that dreamer Ghandi" (200). Though resigned to death, Bennville reflects: "the Moplahs, although bloody and ferocious in their waging of warfare, were not studiously cruel" (201). Meanwhile, Abdul Ahmed Hajee, "the Governor of Calipuram" (201), arrives and recognizes Bennville as his worthy adversary on the battlefield as well as in love. Abdul Ahmed Hajee tells him that "we are not the savages you think we are. We are just as reasonable and intelligent as you. We are rebelling against your Government because we are tired of the tyranny and oppression of the white man, and wish to rule ourselves" (203). Bennville once again reflects on how the ignorant natives were duped into sacrificing their lives and homes and criticizes the colonial government's policy of "immunity" to such "demagogues" that has led to "the present state of *political* unrest" (203–204; emphasis added). Thereafter, in a scene reminiscent of the Armageddon as well as the temptation narratives, Abdul Ahmed Hajee informs Bennville that "[y]ou may purchase your life on one condition" (204). A large brass cross is brought and placed in the middle of the semi-circle formed by the crowd, amidst the shadows and fading and flickering light and smoke from dying torches. Abdul Ahmed Hajee then tells Bennville that the cross is the symbol of that religion that "Englishmen disregard nowadays," and that "I will let you go free back to your friends if you will show the contempt which perhaps you feel for the religion of the unbeliever. Go and stamp and spit on that cross and you shall go from here to-night" (204). Though Bennville did not believe

that they would let him go even if he stamped and spat on the cross, he was tempted because "there might be an opportunity to get away!" and "[f]resh hope swept over him like a wave as he realized that there was still a chance for life, sweet, infinitely desirable life!" (205). While musing on love, happiness, sport, travel, home, and all that life meant to him, he sighed with anticipation, for he might "yet purchase his life!" (205).

> His eyes fell on the brass cross and the Moplahs staring eagerly. He was not a religious man, and the habit of thoughtful reflection had landed him in a sea of doubt and unbelief with regard to many of the universal questions. In fact, he had an entirely open mind on religion.
>
> Nevertheless, a great tide of some new and strange emotion swelled within him as he saw that simple cross lying there with the Moplahs regarding it.
>
> It seemed to him at that moment the emblem of all that is clean and civilized in the world. Something inside him seemed to say:
>
> "You stand here the ambassador of the British peoples. That cross is their sign as well as the badge of Christianity. Stamp on it and you drag the prestige of the white man in the mud."
>
> (205–206)

He asks Abdul Ahmed Hajee what will happen if he refuses and is informed that he will be beheaded the next morning. Then "[a]n idea occurred to him that a brass cross is a small thing to sacrifice life for. He reflected that a church meant little to him" (206). Nevertheless, he hesitated, much to the anger of the natives, who had heard a lot about the "unprincipled character of the Briton" who would do anything to save his skin (207).

> He saw Christ, the Man of unearthly gentleness and unearthly bravery, of sympathy and love, going about relieving suffering and explaining His religion of kindness and unselfishness. It was like a vision, sudden and uplifting. And then he realized that Christianity is the best religion in the world. . . . Reverently he picked [the cross] up, and some instinct prompted him to kiss it. Perhaps the spirit of his Crusader ancestors rose within him as he raised the symbol above his head and cried out clearly in Malayalum "Mohammed is dead, but Christ is the Son of the living God!"
>
> (207–208)

Amidst "howls of rage and fury," Bennville is condemned to death in the morrow, but

> Sir John was smiling with a strange happiness. He had been unable to pray before, but now he murmured "Thank God, thank God!" Then glancing at Abdul with exaltation in his eyes, he cried: "If I am to die, kill me now, – I am ready."
>
> (208)

What I have tried to draw out by my contrapuntal outline of the narrative is that there is an awareness within the narrative that the rebellion is not the product of Mappilas believing the rumour of the colonial government tottering to its fall. It is also not that they were duped into it ("I fought for freedom, this I know / For those who bade me fight / Have told me so," 155), considering the hardships they undergo in the jungle. This awareness doubles upon the narrative itself and makes Bennville's obsessive love an emblem of resistance to over-arching structures of domination. His love is said to be a "demon in thy veins" (128) only different in that it "respects neither creed nor race nor custom" (130) whereby "he was soon to become an outcast from his people" (138); thereby anything of spirit, like religion, is the other of the European modern. In the pursuit of love, in his first journey as much as in the second, he becomes a rebel, a fact brought out by the parallel between the Mappilas hiding in the forest and Bennville using the same as a cover against the well-meaning military. Just as the Mappilas always are represented as "a number of slinky animals or stealthy men . . . moving excitedly through the mass of tropical vegetation" (107), so in his pursuit of love does Bennville: when hiding in the forest, he pushes his way through thick undergrowth and people's gardens (271) in order to reach the house of his beloved. Once he reaches there, he causes "astonishment and fright, as if he were . . . a ghost" (272). This doubling, where Bennville becomes himself through encounter with his double is best thrown into relief by the condition offered to Bennville by Abdul Ahmed Hajee, which I referred to earlier. As one of the officers when he heard the details of Bennville's "fairy-tale get-away" pointed out: "'You've got no right to be alive'" (217). And he is alive because he braved beheading and beheld the absolute other and became himself. The condition was that he should spurn his spirit, his religion, which had been relegated to the private domain, almost a spectre, not accorded its rightful place in the modern scheme of life. As we gather, by beholding his double and becoming himself, Bennville now has the right to live as well as die.

In the previous as well as this chapter, I have tried to look at the question of Islam, its constituted otherness, as represented, primarily, in three texts. Whereas the Muslim figures as an other in N. S. Madhavan's short story and Chandu Menon's novel, both belonging to the "high" literature category, Sinderby's novel portrays the Muslim as more than a stereotype. The other as the self-same is a theme seldom encountered in literary narratives from India, whether in English or in regional languages. "Higuita," a story about a Malayali priest situated in South Delhi and who had at least a "few Malayalees and some tribal girls from Bihar" (136) in his congregation, is written so smoothly as if they all form one single and harmonious community, except for Jabbar, of course. The authorial voice elides over all such questions; Father Geevarghese, Lucy and Jabbar converse with each other without any problems of language and culture. This very elision points to a desire to assert a belongingness and that desire, that longing, points to the predicaments undermining such a vision. Such real problems cannot be resolved by dreaming/demanding more patriotism from everyone. The very force and ferocity of such a desire points to a lacuna, as if the chink in our armour can be hidden by more fervent deeds.

Indulekha's reconfiguration of the European form as well as of the heroes and heroines of the national-modern pivots on the nation-less and nameless figure of "Sheer Alikhan." The ambivalence surrounding this figure in the novel is further augmented if we follow Madhavan's dream of a united India brought about through English education. As per Madhavan's logic, by learning English we are to be automatically ushered into the modern. He is also considerate enough to stress that English education should be made available to women, and, maybe, by extension to other sections of society so that they can all be refashioned. However, the problematical idea of English as harbinger of modernity within the narrative runs into a quagmire when examined from "Sheer Alikhan's" perspective. Once divested of his disguise, "Sheer Alikhan" may belong to any region, religion or nation, but he could not have conversed fluently in English, like Abdul Ahmed Hajee, unless he had prior access to and had acquired English. In fact "Sheer Alikhan's" ease in/with English, which, however, did not "civilize" him, impressed Madhavan so much that our educated Madhavan actually believed him to be a subordinate judge!

N. S. Madhavan's refusal in "Higuita" to take into account the question of language, and Chandu Menon's insistence in *Indulekha* on the otherness of the other, foreclose the possibility of the other pervading the narratives. But in Sinderby's *The Jewel of Malabar*, its popular format allows for the other to be glimpsed as the structure of the self-same. Minor readings of major texts as well as minoritization of the genre of literature itself, whereby the aesthetic is nudged from the security of its self-valorization, might open up the urgent questions of class, caste, gender, and community in contemporary India.

Notes

1 O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha* (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Academy, 1998); M. K. Sanu's *avatharika*, 17–26. Another edition: *Indulekha* (Kottayam: DC Books, 1997; reprint 1999). I will use the years to distinguish between them.

2 O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha: A Novel from Malabar*, trans., W. Dumergue (Calicut: Mathrubhumi, 1890); foreword by T. C. Sankara Menon, i-vi; Dumergue's preface, vii-ix; Chandu Menon's preface to the first edition, x-xv; Chandu Menon's letter to Dumergue, xvi-xxv; hereafter cited by year.

3 According to a recent article by P. K. Rajashekaran and P. Venugopalan (*Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 13–19 [April 2014] 8–23), the widely circulated Malayalam version of the novel has been found to differ from an earlier copy available at the British Library in London. Apart from the substitution of more standard Malayalam in some instances in place of the author's use of Malabar dialect, the twentieth (last) chapter has also been found to be altered, presumably by later editors, to mute the author's advocacy of women's empowerment. However, this does not substantially affect my arguments.

4 Such fascination and repulsion is a hallmark of most descriptions. Meadows Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug*, first published in 1839 (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1988), also has "a good-looking man of middle age" (3) named Ismail, kind and cruel at heart, leader of a band of Thuggees who after killing Yoosuf Khan, the Pathan (3) and his wife shows filial love towards the boy and takes him into his protection and profession. The boy turns out to become the terrible Ameer Ali, who coldly "confesses" his "seven hundred murders" (178) to the white sahib-narrator, who is amazed at the lack of repentance on the part of the captured "thug."

5 Most studies also assume "Sheer Alikhan" to be a Muslim, see, *Indulekha: Vayanayute Disakal* [*Indulekha: Directions of Reading*], ed., E. P. Rajagopalan (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 2001).

6 In another context, Susie Tharu notes: "Women, for instance, are pivotal figures in . . . these texts. Yet as they take on what is proffered as a natural – and obviously also Indian – femininity, the effects of their community, caste and class identities, and the conflicts implicit in these subaltern experiences are neutralized. They are absorbed into the projects of the narrative and become emblematic of national spaces. More central, especially in the context of partition texts, is the question of the recalcitrant Islam that is regarded as having disrupted the enlightened project of Indian nationalism in both its territorial and humanistic dimensions. It is this recalcitrance and this disruption that underwrites and structures what is depicted as irrational violence or outrage against nature. *Narrative authorities must therefore carefully constitute, indeed constantly and obsessively re-constitute, themselves to address and contain such threats of disruption for which the Indian Muslim is set up here – and well into the 1990s – as alibi*" (Tharu, 79).

7 Meadows Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug*. The "autobiographical" account of Ameer Ali's life should be read in the context of the colonial initiative of eradicating Thuggee, or tribes and castes whose religion sanctioned criminality – prominently by Lord William Bentinck (British Governor-General of India, 1833–1835) and his chief agent, Captain William Sleeman – that coincided with the colonial policy of English education for the native population. From 1831 to 1837 no fewer than 3,266 Thuggees had been captured, of whom 412 were hanged, 483 gave evidence for the state, and the remainder were transported or imprisoned for life. In 1838 there were 36,893 cases, in 1844, 43,487 cases, and in 1845, 117,001 cases [cited from *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, part I, vol. 9 of *History and Culture of the India's People*, general editor, R. C. Majumdar (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963, 1970, 1988) 383. The fraternity presumably thereafter became extinct. For the debate it evoked in Britain, see, section 6, minute recorded on the unconstitutionality of the Thugi Acts as applicable to the Indian States, 21 July 1843 (in Desika Char, 290–291). Desika Char writes that the whole Thuggee debate was blown out of proportion and that there is "no evidence that the evil at any time reached such enormous proportions as it did in the nineteenth century AD and 'for centuries oppressed the people' as Sleeman says," footnote 128, 404.

8 Donald Sinderby, *The Jewel of Malabar: A Story of the Moplah Rebellion in India, 1921* (London: John Murry, 1927). Sinderby's daughter, Charmain Goldwyn, was in the process of reprinting the novels, publisher Limited Edition Press, Southport. They have already brought out *Dogsbody* (London: Limited Edition Press, 1996; London: Herbert Jenkins, 1928) and *The Vagrant Lover* (Southport: Limited Edition Press, 1999; London: Herbert Jenkins, 1929). Other novels of Sinderby, *Mother-in-Law India* (Southport: Small Print, 2001; London: Albert E. Marriott, 1929) and *The Jewel of Malabar* and *The Protagonists*, are on their schedule.

9 Since I worked with a scanned and emailed copy of the text, made for republication, instead of pagination, only details of the chapters are given.

10 The description of wild animals: stealthy tiger, majestic elephant, kingly cobra, and miming bunder, is counterpointed by the "wild pig – courageous king of fighters – snuffed and grunted and rooted as he led his hairy, black entourage through fastness seldom or never traversed by the foot of man" (51). The latter description points to an unconscious parallel to Abdul Ahmed Hajee and his guerilla warriors. Also, as they catch up with the Mappilas, Nahran starts talking to John Bennville about "our revenge" (52); he also shows his knowledge of Hindustani, thus accentuating the contrast with the alien Mappilas of Malabar.

11 Another factor inducing verisimilitude: "I have puzzled for twenty-five years why outbreaks occur within fifteen miles of Pandalur Hill and cannot profess to solve it," lamented H. M. Winterbotham ("Report of Winterbotham," 5 May 1896; cited in Wood, 20).

12 I will not be going into the intricacies of the role of Kamayla, but will only point out that at one point Bennville thinks of her as a second Gunga, the lovely maiden who gave life to things on earth until "she was carried off to heaven by the Gods on account of her surpassing beauty" (83), thus accentuating the parallel to Bennville's devoted Punjabi man-servant, who Kamayla later replaces, much to his irritation, to nurse a wounded Bennville.
13 This "keeping a native – in front of his men, too – beastly!" (161).
14 Charmain Goldwyn attributes Sinderby's reluctance to portray Nahran and Kamayla's marriage to the influence of his mother who was of strong Methodist persuasion.
15 Cited from Charmain Goldwyn's foreword to *Mother-in-Law India*.
16 Earlier, "[t]he air was heavy with that peculiar and distinctive, yet not unpleasant, odour which is always noticed in the presence of the inhabitants of Malabar" (152).

8 All too in-human

Chemmeen and *Naalukettu*

Walter Benjamin's notions of "pure language" and translation as "afterlife" (78) have also undergone further "translations." Notably, Derrida (1985) and Niranjana added layers to Benjamin, opening the door to the problematic of translation that authorizes and is authorized by certain classical notions of representation and reality. Derrida's central concern was to critique a metaphysics based on the notion of a "transcendental signified" that is formed "within the horizon of an absolutely pure, transparent, and unequivocal translatability" (1981, 20). Reading translation as supplement and substitution, the Deconstructionists argued that "the translation canonises, freezes, an original and shows in the original a mobility, an instability which at first one did not notice" (de Man, 82). Derrida interpreted, probably within a European milieu, Benjamin's notion of "pure language" as writing and the logic of difference, whereby all languages were reduced to a state of not-yet-ness. Derrida's interpretation of Benjamin's pure language as linguistic supplementarity whereby each translation is an attempt to reverberate a fragment of an original that is always-already fragmented was interrupted, however, by Niranjana, whose reading of Benjamin's historical-materialist/translator further emphasizes discontinuity and disrupts continuums.[1] She disrobes Benjamin's "pure language" as a necessary fiction that nonetheless allows one to explore the various embeddings and historical sedimentations within languages, with specific attention being paid to socio-political and cultural inequalities. Though she acknowledges that this problematic was opened up by the poststructuralist critique that makes translation always the "more," or the supplement, in Derrida's sense (Niranjana, 8), she disagrees with the poststructuralist readings of Benjamin by de Man and Derrida. In a critical move that can be described as motivated by a postcolonial hindsight, she critiques de Man and Derrida for "translating" history out of Benjamin. She regards the Judeo-theological or sacred metaphors, imagery and language used by Benjamin as actually directed towards a secular interpretation and a re-affirmation of history (Niranjana, 115). Benjamin's "afterlife" of a work is reconfigured by her as history, as "a consciousness of the present that shatters the continuum of history" (Benjamin, cited in Niranjana, 111). Translation, thereby, becomes as a transactive reading (Niranjana, 89). Rather than a deconstructionist reading of the phono/logo/phallocentrism of European thought from within, Niranjana advocates a contextual reading of "othering." Siting a parallel between the task of the historical materialist

and that of the translator, Niranjana, citing Benjamin, states that the translator should "approach configurations of past and present on recognizing 'a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past,'" because such translations enable a specific age to be "'blasted' out of the homogeneous continuum of history so that it can live *on*" (148), so that the arbitrariness and constructed nature of what is presented as natural is shown up (153). "Translation" thereby becomes more than just a carry-over, transference or transportation, or simple disruption. It devolves as positive transformation, even disfiguration or dislocation; as the site of imperialism and its resistance, as "rewriting." Thus the original is torn from what is assumed as its native or natural context and is put in quotation marks, re-cited and re-inscribed in the present context which reconfigures the oppressed past out of a presently felt historical need.[2]

I

These facts are well known: *Chemmeen*,[3] the novel by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai (1912–1999), became an instant classic in 1956, the year it was first published. It won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi award the same year and the Kendriya Sahitya Akademi award in 1957.[4] Apart from leaving a meteoric trail in Malayalam publishing, it was also widely translated into many Indian languages, as well as into English, Russian, German, Italian, and French. Its success was only rivalled by *Chemmeen,*[5] the film produced by Babu under the banner of Kanmani Films, directed by Ramu Kariat and first released in 1965. It was soon recognized as a technically and artistically brilliant cinema, incidentally one of the first Malayalam movies in colour. The film also became a popular classic and won the Indian President's Gold Medal for the Best Film in the very year of its release. It is to date widely appreciated by foreign audiences, even without subtitles.

Chemmeen, as novel and as film, may have to a great extent shaped, arguably, not only *what* Malayalam novel or film *is*, but also the industries therein involved. But one is also struck by the number and nature of "translations" involved in the production (writing/filming or reading/viewing) of these two texts, translations that are seemingly transparent or are never acknowledged as such by/in either of these texts! It is almost as if these two texts yield to further translations, are amenable to future quick translations because they "contain" translatability, close off any chance of contamination. But translatability, as we know, is an openness, always-already-ness, that leaves indelible traces of/as resistance. Hence, in reading these two texts under the rubric of translation, specifically inter-semiotic translation (see Jakobson), in that these two texts translate across sign-systems but within the same culture, even to the extent of producing a sense of such sameness, one could bring the insights of inter-lingual translation into play without the baggage of translation as cannibal celebration (with all its religious-racial overtones; see Nida and Taber), as decapitation or domestication, or as straddling between source and target languages/cultures. A re-examination of these two *Chemmeen*s from the perspective of translation as trope and/or trope as translation, of their trans-relations and trans-actions, of their textual remains, may very well prove instructive.

Chemmeen the novel was celebrated and promoted from 1956 onwards by the progressive Malayalee intelligentsia[6]; likewise *Chemmeen* the movie from 1965 onwards. They were both commercially successful (much like the crustacean!). In this connection, one is reminded of *Ramanan*, Changanpuzha Krishna Pillai (1914–1948)'s immensely popular romantic, dramatic elegy, written when he was a mere twenty-year-old, as well as its 1967 black-and-white celluloid avatar, directed by D. N. Pottakkadu.[7] *Chemmeen*, the novel, like *Ramannan*, was definitely popularized by various local dramatizations, *kathaprasangams* and the like. Even so, it is possible that when the movies, *Ramannan* as well as *Chemmeen*, were released, not many were actually familiar with the actual poem/novel. However, this gap has widened so much that, in a complete reversal, it is the movies that now determine the literary texts. The pastoral tragedy *Ramanan* and the novel *Chemmeen* are probably not widely read these days, except maybe by students of Malayalam literature. But even scholars find it difficult to have a first, "pure" reading of *Chemmeen*, the novel, primarily because Palani, Karutthamma, Pareekkutty, and Chembankunju are inevitably the actors Satyan, Sheela, Madhu, and Kottarakkara for us now.

Are these *Chemmeen*s an instance of inter-semiotic translation, or even of translation? Does the film version try and succeed, against odds, to recreate or repeat the success of the novel in another sign-system? If so, how do we understand the reverse process? Or does the inter-semiotic transfer help camouflage, if not cover up, their implied translatability? If so, what is the nature and scope of translatability that can be redeemed from these texts? In short, what ends are served by these texts-in-translations and what can be gained by focusing on the odds and ends of translation that litter these texts? These two texts of *Chemmeen*, which symbiotically borrowed from and bolstered each other, within a short span and within the same cultural space, without footnotes or subtitles, call for a review and reconsideration of the odds and ends of translation.

The storyline of *Chemmeen* is all too familiar to need recounting. Both the novel and the film open with love, laughter, and loss of sleep. Pareekkutty, the one-of-its-kind good-Muslim-character, runs a dry fish exporting business on the sea coast and is desperately in love with his childhood playmate Karutthamma (Sheela, the heroine). He wanders around the sea coast of Neerkunnathu singing songs full of sadness and love. It is interesting that the song is already a leitmotif within the novel, almost as if Thakazhi foresaw its translatability, full realization, and utilization in the movie. The song and Madhu the actor's face has coalesced in the Malayalee mind to such an extent that Pareekkutty has become Madhu. But how do we remember him? Is he hapless or helpless? A heroic-victim or an innocent villain? The very undecidability or indeterminateness of his character suggests that he is a character-in-translation, combining both the roles of the hero and the villain. The same applies also to Palani (played by Satyan and billed as the Hero), the fisherman who dawns late on the horizon one fine day (he first appears in the movie in the forty- ninth minute), impresses Karutthamma's father, and weds her on another not-so-fine day.

Chembankunju, Karutthamma's father, is fascinated by modernity and desperately tries to translate himself into its success. He would marry his daughter to a seemingly emancipated and hard-working "lower" caste Palani of unknown antecedents rather than to a seemingly rich and emaciated Muslim of known origins. Chembankunju is also a hard worker and dreams that one day he will lead an easy life, will emulate the "upper" caste landlord from whom he buys a boat. He dreams of owning boats of his own, owning a house of his own with servants, and transforming his wife Chakki into a plump and beautiful Pappikunju, the landlord's wife. To this end, he slaves and saves every paise he can in order to accumulate capital. Obsessed by this desire, he ends up becoming almost inhuman in his relations. Chakki fights with their good neighbours, the childless Acchankunju and Nallapennu. Acchankunju, in turn, is goaded by his wife to emulate Chembankunju, but he soon returns to the old pattern of life: fishing, drinking, playing cards, and beating his wife. This failure accentuates Chembankunju's effort and determination.

But even he cannot succeed. As a quick alternative, Chembankunju decides to borrow money from Pareekkutty. The other choice would be to borrow money from Ouseph, who is sure to leech everything out of them by way of interest. Pareekkutty willingly gives his stock of dry fish and money, many times, to help Chembankunju, though Chembankunju does not show any inclination of repaying the debt either in cash or in fish. An uncanny, if unintended, parallel to the manner in which the cultural capital of western modernity was built on an unacknowledged borrowing from various Islamic sources!

Chembankunju and, more so, Chakki are acutely aware that they are doing something against tradition, for it is not for the likes of them to aspire for upward mobility. If they go against established norms, so does Pareekkutty, who not only does not take any interest in work or commerce but also seems to work towards his own destruction. When Chakki and Karutthamma express their anguish at Chembankunju's behaviour, Pareekkutty says that none of them owe him money, let alone any interest, since he had given his stock and money because Karutthamma asked for it. It looks as if he didn't even mean to influence Chembankunju! A marriage between Karutthamma and Pareekkutty was never on the cards; it appears as if it was not even a remote possibility either for the author/director.

On borrowed capital, Chembankunju rises, buys boats, plans on employing Palani as head boatman and later as son-in-law. But at the marriage ceremony he is again thwarted by tradition. When the village headman notes that the groom's side does not have any women, an indication of Palani's orphanhood and net worth, and quotes a high amount for the marriage, Palani's companions walk away. The marriage is conducted on Chakki's insistence, even as she lies battling for her life, and Karutthamma is forced by Chakki to walk away with her husband. Chembankunju thereafter spurns Karutthamma. After Chakki's death, he marries Pappikunju, the landlord's widow with a grownup son. But soon the step-son and mother cheat Chembankunju of his money. Chembankunju, when he comes to know of this, goes berserk, literally, and seeks asylum in the other side of modern-rationality and wanders about the sea coast, very much like Pareekkutty.

What was the reason behind Chembankunju's opposition to the Karutthamma-Pareekkutty marriage? Unlike Karutthamma, who loves Pareekkutty as if forever, and Chakki who, even if it is for the sake of winning a heated argument, declares they will convert to Islam, Chembankunju has his own reasons. He exemplifies the upwardly mobile casteist nature of Indian modernity, which will foster orphans whose only capital is a work ethic. When Chakki and Chembankunju are discussing Palani, the prospective groom for their daughter, Chakki asks: what is his *jati*? and Chembankunju replies: he is a human being, a worker of the sea. Unlike a Pareekkutty, a trader and a Muslim!

Palani is an orphan and his darkish, muscular body is his sole asset. After the *chakara* catch, when chemmeen (prawn/shrimp) and various small fishes group together in large schools, and the marriage, he returns to his native place. If he used to sleep wherever night found him, now he starts dreaming of a hut of his own. But he is soon confronted with the ghostly presence of Pareekkutty. Sightings of Pareekkutty near Karutthamma's house are reported, and people laugh at Palani. The other fishermen soon refuse to take Palani on board for fishing because he seems to be beyond himself, brooding about the everyday taunts about his all-too-beautiful wife's fidelity and, finally, about an avaricious father-in-law. Palani seems to be still competing with Chembankunju, for, as if possessed, he tries to row beyond the horizon, endangering the boat. Since fisher-folk also believe that a fishermen's safe return is guaranteed by his wife's purity, they consider Palani a double risk. Caught between social strictures and his love for Karutthamma, he goes fishing alone on small stolen boats. When Pareekkutty, who had already sworn to a dying Chakki to be henceforth a real brother to Karutthamma, comes over again at night – this time without any apparent reason, for the very first time was also at night to inform of Chakki's demise – her love for him is rekindled. She walks out of her hut and life, leaving a child and a sister behind. Meanwhile, Palani, battling a lone shark, is dragged to his death. The last we hear of him is an anguished cry, for even as he is dragged into the whirlpool, he calls out "Karutthamma!" The body of the shark, and those of Karutthamma and Pareekkutty, are washed ashore the next day.

But not Palani's body. If Palani was ushered into modernity, he was not at all at home in it. If Pareekkutty represents the perpetual outside of secular modernity, Palani exemplifies its internal contradictions. It is significant that throughout this drama Palani and Pareekkutty never come face to face, as if each is the other's ghost. Pareekkutty sings and wanders about the two sea-shores and Palani over the sea. Incidentally, the central male protagonists make up a ghastly trio! For soon Chembankunju also wanders around Neerkunnathu coast, talking to himself. But whenever Pareekkutty sees Chembankunju coming in his direction, he slinks away. Maybe because of a lingering sense of guilt, for isn't he also guilty? If not, why does he continue to haunt the beaches? Why doesn't he go back to where he came from, since his business has absolutely collapsed? Why does he wander around and live off petty brokerages? But one day he is not able to evade Chembankunju, who comes up against him. This figure in front of him is "not the old Chembankunju; nor his ghost" (my translation, 1997, 247); probably neither was he a familiar figure for Chembankunju. Chembankunju has just sold his boat, and he

waves the money in Pareekkutty's face. The amount is not equal to what he owes Pareekkutty, even without the interest. Yet when Pareekkutty stands as if guilty as charged, Chembankunju shouts: "Do you realize the harm you have done? . . . You don't realize it. How would you realize it? You are the devil himself" (Narayana Menon's translation, 1998, 193). Even as Pareekkutty takes on the burden of guilt and acknowledges to himself that he did like a vile worm gnaw at the history of Chembankunju's family, Chembankunju continues: "I have only one more obligation in life. Your money. The money you gave me so as to ruin me and my daughter. Here it is" (1998, 194). Even as Pareekkutty, like a dog, accepts the money thrust at him that he thought was not his, and stands paralyzed, Chembankunju has sought solace under the boat which was once owned by him. His devilish laughter echoes, like his last words: "That is all I have. I don't remember how much it was. Only my Chakki knew. If it is less than what I owe you, what can I do now?" (1998, 194).

That indeed is a significant statement. The accounts are kept and settled by the women. Only Chakki and Karutthamma would know the accounts. The second wife also knew accounts, but her own. It is interesting to wonder whether Karutthamma would have betrayed her husband and left her child and walked away with her lover to her death if her father had not, even if partially, settled the account. The agency of Chembankunju, Pareekkutty, and Palani seems to be determined by material transactions whose logic defies them. But Karutthamma kept her accounts. After Chembankunju becomes insane, Karutthamma's sister starts living with Karutthamma. Her presence creates tension in the house. Karutthamma cannot ask about her father or Pareekkutty because she fears Palani. But her sister's presence reminds her of everything back home. Once, when Palani goes outside, they whisper to each other. Her sister briefs Karutthamma about the plight of their father, how their mother died, what people thought of Karutthamma, and more importantly about the destitute and partly mad Pareekkutty. Palani overhears the last part of the conversation as he returns. But Karutthamma, who earlier used to talk and convince Palani of her love and fidelity, this time tries to appeal merely to his intellect. Then Palani only asks: did you love him? Gathering a courage that she never had, she acknowledges, yes, I loved him. In the novel, both the question and the answer are in the past tense (1997, 261). Thereafter, Palani leaves for fishing and his death, even as Karutthamma yields to Pareekkutty. This is a moment which actually doesn't make sense in the novel/film. Karutthamma has just told her sister that they have only each other; moreover she has a small daughter and has just declared to Palani that she is going home to take care of her father. Yet she decides for the first time to embrace Pareekkutty in the dark, even if it would lead to their suicide. It is significant that the movie version tries to make Karutthamma's agentiveness more realistic. In the film, a Palani infuriated by continuing taunts about his wife and the parentage of his daughter confronts Karutthamma and demands whether she loves Pareekkutty; she answers affirmatively and in the present tense.

Such (tense) translations betwixt the novel and the film, being residual, also alert one to other "shifts" that are, maybe, more visible "through" the film version.[8] For example, one wonders why Pareekkutty is always pictured as wearing a bright

coloured and chequered scarf (neckerchief, more likely) around his neck in the film. In fact, during the innumerable appearances within the film, Madhu is seen without the neckerchief only about eight times. Even then, one gets the impression that it has either slipped into his shirt or fallen down during the shoot! This is a feature which is basically developed from a scene in the novel where there is a description of how Pareekkutty was introduced to the fisher community and the sea coast while he was still very young. A five-year-old Karutthamma saw Pareekkutty wearing "a yellow shirt, a silk scarf round his neck and a tasseled cap on his head" (1998, 6). Nowhere else in the novel is Pareekkutty's dress described. But in the movie it becomes a leitmotif, alongside the green, blue, pink, and yellow tee-shirts, to stereotype him as a Muslim. The other Muslims in the film, like Pareekkutty's father and another rich merchant, have beards and wear dhotis in what is regarded as a typically Muslim style.

If the scarf is used as a shorthand for symbolic objectification, very much like the mole on Karutthamma's lower abdomen, the first conversation between Chembankunju and Pareekkutty in the film helps to endow agency to Pareekkutty. If in the novel we are not privy to the conversation between them; in fact, Karutthamma implies a sinister side to her father's transaction. In the movie it is Pareekkutty who suggests that Chembankunju visit him at night to collect the dry fish stacks. More significantly, if Chakki in the novel shouts back that her whole family will espouse Islam if the people turn against them and Karutthamma seriously considers conversion, if to the extent of planning to discuss it with Pareekkutty, in the film Chakki only announces that she knows other ways of neutralizing the ill-feeling of the fisher-folk.

There is another discrepancy which relates to how modernity is imaged in the film. The once affluent "upper" caste person from whom Chembankunju buys the boat treats him like an equal, making him sit and take refreshments offered by his wife. Chembankunju is overtly submissive, as he was to Pareekkutty earlier, to the "upper" caste family, refusing to sit and requesting the wife to keep the glass of refreshments down so that he will not pollute them. Both the husband and wife treat him on equal terms. Obviously this is a progressive family, given to a carefree life – the son is easily allowed to go for a movie even though they are forced to sell the boat to make ends meet – but brought low because of their ease of life, the only goal that explains Chemabankunju's desire to become rich. While buying the boat amidst the economic ruin of a family that is modern, he is actually blessed by the landlord that at least he will come good and progress in life. Chembankunju still aspires for modernity. He himself seems to regard other humans as beyond caste and in purely economic terms, with the exception of Pareekkutty, of course. But once he marries the once-rich "upper" caste person's widow, we hear her asking him whether he married her so that she could be insulted by mere fisher-caste women. True to his nature, he doesn't seem to understand the caste status involved here. In fact, he had chosen Palani, disregarding his caste and his antecedents. To Chakki, who insists on returning Pareekutty's money and wonders aloud about a Palani who doesn't want dowry, Chembankunju shouts: if he doesn't want dowry, why should we bother with that?

If Chembankunju hollows himself out in pursuit of wealth and success, becomes inhuman, Pareekkutty seems to be in an eternal quest for humanity. It is as if his lovelorn songs, his roving eyes, the neckerchief which sits comfortably like a noose around his neck makes him embody an-other culture which passeth "human" understanding. One becomes hollow chasing capital, the other chases love to fill out an in-born, even non-human, hollowness. This becomes evident in the movie when they confront each other. The conversation in the film is subtly different and amplified. In the film, Chembankunju returns the capital, throws the money at Pareekkutty, who mechanically accepts it. Then Chembankunju blesses Pareekkutty, as the landlord had done for him, saying that let this serve Pareekkutty better than it has served him. With the crucial difference that, unlike the landlord who was only welcoming a new aspirant to modernity, Chembankunju, who believes that he was intentionally ruined by Pareekkutty, is blessing Pareekkutty with stark sarcasm. May Pareekkutty receive more of what he gave Chembankunju and family, is no blessing in disguise. It is as if Kerala modernity is declaring: it is either Chembankunju or Pareekkutty, but never the twain together! It is as if the author/director were telling/showing us that Pareekkutty, being all-too-human, was actually in-human! We wish he could have transacted like an ordinary human, translated himself into a man, with normal considerations of life in his dealings with the people around him, including his beloved, rather than embodying an absolute otherness which resists translation. We, of course, pity him and wish that he were human enough, but, alas! he is a Muslim!, even as Palani's dark body disappears into the dark, unclaimed by our colonial modernity.

II

The second novel that I will be examining was equally influential and helped determine the norms of a modern Malayalee aesthetic. Madathu Thekkepattu Vasudevan Nair, or M. T. Vasudevan Nair, or M.T., as he is popularly known, was born on 15 July 1933 at Kudallur, Palakkad in South Malabar. His contribution to Malayalam literature and film for the past fifty-five-odd years is widely acknowledged, but yet to be critically assessed. Maybe we should start with M. T.'s *Naalukettu*,[9] which, hopefully, will further nuance the issues under discussion. Let us also remember that this novel was never made into a film, so odd as to make one wonder why or what in it was not translatable into another medium.

It is important that we be present at this very significant opening scene of a novel published in Malayalam in 1958:

> He would grow up. Grow up and become a big man. His hands would become very strong. He would not have to fear anyone. He would be able to stand up and hold his head high. If someone asked, "Who's that there?" he would say unhesitatingly in a firm voice, "It's me, Kondunni Nair's son, Appunni."
>
> And then, the day would come – he would certainly meet Syedalikutty. He would have his revenge then. Twisting Syedalikutty's neck between his hands, he would say, "It's you, isn't it, it's you who. . . . "

> Whenever he thought of it, Appunni's eyes would fill with tears.
>
> The scene in which he confronted Syedalikutty was one he often imagined when he lay with his eyes closed. . . .
>
> Who was Syedalikutty? Appunni had never seen him. He used to pray that he would not come upon him, that he would see him very much later, after he grew up and became big and strong. He would go and find him then.
>
> When he started out for the shop that day at dusk, he had neither thought of Syedalikutty nor expected to meet him.
>
> (1)

But Appunni does meet Syedalikutty, before he is ready – in a way, it is Syedalikutty, being ready, as we shall soon see, who readies Appunni – at Yusuf's shop, "the biggest shop in the village. . . . [which] Appunni liked going to" (3). Syedalikutty, "a short, stout man in a white shirt with a small moustache flecked with grey" enters the shop-scene. To a jocular query "You're not dead yet?" he counters: "I'm ready. Maybe Israyel doesn't want me . . . " (5).

Appunni had *run* to the shop because "he was afraid to go down the lane where screwpine bushes grew thick on both sides" (2) and attracted poisonous snakes at dusk (4). The rush at the shop delays his return; his short stature doesn't help either. "Appunni made an attempt to push his way through. . . . It wouldn't matter if he touched the cherumi women and was polluted. He would have a bath anyway as soon as he got home. But when he drew closer to their dark bodies, the odour of mingled sweat and oil nauseated him. He drew back . . . " (4–5). Finally, the "Musaliyar,[10] with the long white beard that came down to his neck like a billy goat's who handed out things" (4), sees him. When asked "'What do you want?' For no reason, Appunni suddenly felt sad. He was afraid he would cry in a while. . . . . 'Who is this child?' the white-shirted man asked. . . . Our Kondunni Nair's son. Vadakkepattu . . . " (5–6).

> As he was about to go out, the white-shirted man asked, "You're going alone?"
>
> Appunni did not realize at first that the man was speaking to him.
>
> "It's dark outside, child."
>
> Appunni muttered something that no one could hear.
>
> (6)

Neither Appunni nor Syedalikutty had seen each other till then. Of course, Appunni still doesn't know that he had met Syedalikutty. On the way home from the shop, accompanied by an old Cherumi,[11] he asks: "Who was that. . . . That man in Yusuf's shop."

> "Don't you know? That was Syedalikutty Mapilla."
>
> "Which Syedalikutty?"
>
> "Of Mundathayam. He's been away for years now."
>
> Syedalikutty! Goosebumps burst all over him. The thick, short, rough hands, the hairy body, the round, bloodshot eyes – so that was Syedalikutty. The man who. . . .

> He suddenly remembered waking at dawn to a scene in Kathakali in the temple courtyard: Bhiman, seated on Dussasanan's chest, tearing open his stomach and pulling out the entrails. He, Appunni, would sit like that on Syedalikutty's chest and. . . .
>
> But he wasn't strong enough yet, or old enough.
>
> Appunni gasped for breath.
>
> If he were to give Syedalikutty a push while he walked by the edge of the quarry or in the narrow lane . . . or throw a stone at his head. . . .
>
> (6–7)

Naalukettu, first published in 1958, of which, as of 2008, 5 lakh copies have been sold (xii), has played a crucial role in setting the tone of middle-class/middle-caste Malayalee determination of life and literature for decades. It has already seen "twenty-three reprints and been translated into fourteen Indian languages" (xix). To know that this was M.T.'s first published novel, and that his latest novel, *Varanasi*, was published as recently as 2008, and that he has been associated with the film industry from the 1950s to the present, adds other layers to our appreciation of M.T. Vasudevan Nair.

Naalukettu seems to be a bildungsroman of sorts, which details the coming of age, heroically, of Appunni. But it is also about how Appunni upstages history and his being/becoming human. Issues regarding colonialism, nationalism, communism, and various class-caste-community conflicts seem to have been put on hold as the Travancore-Kochi-Malabar people witnessed the coming to age of the Nair individual/community, which seemed to have done a phoenix rite at a phenomenal cost. Of course, they have faced the test of a heroic time, contesting various Brahminical practices. But, as we will see, it was not enough that Appunni's father liberate himself and start a parallel family. The novel does underline the enterprising spirit of the Nairs, alongside that of the Muslims and the Christians. But since Appunni's father would rather remain outside of the ancestral Naalukettu, a traditional homestead, it is Appunni who is burdened with the task of taking the fight to the traditional Naalukettu.

Appunni's father, a lower-class Nair, married an upper-class Nair. They were happy to be ostracized. But, the coming to being of the modern "human" required Appunni to reclaim the Naalukettu, even if only to demolish it and build a seemingly new, democratic household, though between the welcome play of air and light, the shadowy ghosts continued to linger (x-xi). Given the nature of what was understood as education prevalent around the time, it is no wonder that this sensibility became celebrated as the quintessential Malayalee-ness. M.T. "witnessed the last stages of the crumbling of the matrilineal system of inheritance" (xx). But the failure of the coming of age of the Malayalee, as a middle-class/middle-caste norm, is equally well attested to by M.T.'s later works, for Appunni is the only successful Nair hero among all M.T.'s novels. Appunni's travails enable him to be transformed from "Appunni, son of Thazhethethil Kondunni Nair" (100) to "Vadakkeppattu Appunni Nair or V.A. Nair." In this context, remember that Syedalikutty is introduced as Syedalikutty Mapilla, so were the lower-caste and

other religious minorities within the novel. So, to anticipate, Appunni's father had to die – better if the suspicion falls on a Muslim, so that Appunni can become "human" within his own birth rights.

The plot of the novel is simple enough. Appunni's father died when he was around three years old. His father belonged to a poor Nair family and was reputed to be a man, in fact more than a man, a modern human being. He literally carries off Appunni's mother, who belonged to the Naalukettu, actually an Ettukettu before the initial partition. After the marriage, Appunni's mother was ostracized. His father also gave up his youthful ways, playing dice and that sort of thing, and entered into a prosperous agricultural venture with Syedalikutty. At the zenith of their success, Appunni's father is invited for dinner at Syedalikutty's house. The story is narrated to Appunni by Muthaachi, an older relative, and Appunni doubts: "Do we Nairs eat the rice that mapillas cook?" (14).[12] But Appunni's father was known to challenge established authority and break caste/religious strictures. When the "mutton tasted off," Syedalikutty explained: "It's because it's the flesh of an old goat." But on his way back home, Appunni's father vomits and collapses. Muthaachi, it can be gathered, is merely regurgitating the old village gossip, which most probably was started by Valia Valappu Chandu, who had come across Appuni's father, as the narrative asserts, in his dying moments and heard the mumbled declaration: "Syedalikutty played me dirty, Chandu" (14).

We have already seen Syedalikutty being solicitous of Appunni going home alone in the dark. When Appunni reported to his mother that he had seen Syedalikutty at the shop: "I – I saw Syedalikutty," she "didn't ask which Syedalikutty" (8). But his mother had never told him the story. At this stage in the narrative, there is no reason for either Appunni or the reader to doubt the truth of this reported event. Significantly, during the process of the narrative, Syedalikutty, the supposed murderer of his father, becomes a father-figure who guides Appunni's life.

The second time they meet, and we see Syedalikutty, is when Appunni had wheedled permission from his mother to visit the Naalukettu during the Serpent Thullal festival. Though his grandmother extends a warm welcome, the Naalukettu patriarch drives him away like a mangy dog and threatens to break his legs if he ever comes back (56). Humiliated, he runs to a desolate hill and cries his heart out, and is entertaining thoughts of death, of hiding in a deep pit or boarding a train and going away, when Syedalikutty appears on the scene. Syedalikutty endeavours to console Appunni, re-assuring him that he has "as much right to stay in that house [Naalukettu] as anyone there" (57), offers him tea and snacks from a Nair's shop, and accompanies Appunni back to his own house (58). It should also be noted that the "teashop-Nair" (58) was a bit surprised to see Syedalikutty and Appunni together.

Before Appunni meets Syedalikutty again, we see Syedalikutty one more time, at Esoop's shop, wherein we also glimpse a really bad Muslim, as distinct from ordinary good Muslims, like Assankutty, and our good-bad-ugly Syedalikutty. Appunni's mother had sought the help of Sankaran Nair, an earlier servant of the

Naalukettu and now also a co-servant at another house. This has led to gossip. When Ookkan Baputty comments that "Ammukutty's [Appunni's mother] a treasure even now" (92), Sankaran Nair slaps him.

> The talk and laughter died down suddenly. . . . The atmosphere froze. . . .
>
> Everyone looked at Baputty anxiously. There was fire in his eyes. He was the sort that stopped at nothing. He had been the accused in three criminal cases. He had been in jail only once, but was convinced that the Cannanore jail was meant for real men.
>
> He sprang up. The knife tucked into his waist was now in his hand. . . .
>
> (92)

> The hand that held the knife rose but a thick, strong, hairy hand suddenly shot out and gripped it.
>
> (93)

No marks for guessing! It is indeed Syedalikutty who intervenes and avoids an "ugly" scene. Syedalikutty's influence is such that when, later in the night, Baputty meets Sankaran Nair with Appunni, he restrains himself, giving "Sankaran Nair a look that seemed to say, 'I remember . . . '" and only quips: "Where to, father and son?" (100).

The third meeting between Appunni and Syedalikutty is under similar circumstances to the second one, but this time around, Appunni has ran away from home because of the gossip about his mother, and Syedalikutty promptly eggs him to go and stay at the Naalukettu. Appunni had walked away from home and is hiding on a deserted hill because he "didn't want to see anyone, be asked anything" (101). But he "had no idea where he was going" (102).

> He did not notice a black cloth umbrella moving towards him on the winding path or bother to look up as it came nearer. What did he care who it was? The man passed by him, then stopped and turned.
>
> "Nair-kutty?"
>
> It was Syedalikutty.
>
> (102)

During this meeting, we actually see Syedalikutty almost counselling Appunni. When Syedalikutty invites Appunni to his house:

> To Syedalikutty's house! He felt as if a heavy door that had lain closed was being pushed open. A meal of pathiris [kind of pancake] and mutton curry. The mutton would taste granular and he'd be told it was an old goat. It would be white poison. White.
>
> (103)

Syedalikutty then urges him again to go to the Naalukettu:

> "You have as much right there as anyone, don't you? Show some spirit now. If they tell you to get out, say you won't."
>
> "He said he would break my legs if he saw me in that compound."
>
> "Let's see if he will. What are the lawyers and courts in this country for then, child? This Syedalikutty has seen a bit of the world."
>
> (103)

Heartened, Appunni decides to go to the Naalukettu (104). For my purpose, the rest of the story can be quickly summarized: With the help of Syedalikutty, Appunni soon finds a job, earns money and buys the crumbling Naalukettu. Overcoming his mother's trepidation, he coaxes her to live in the Naalukettu, and decides to break down the Naalukettu and build a new house where air and light can enter. And, in an all-too-neat reversal, he also takes on the responsibility of looking after Syedalikutty's family when he falls ill (xxi).

Borrowing from the creative writer's bag of tricks, I dangle the following citations. M. T. has often dared to bare the intimate workings of a creative writer's mind, and speaking of the birth of his short story "In Your Memory," M. T. elaborates:

> I imagined that night, when a sudden conflict had torn the family. All I had to do was search for the images that lay buried deep in my memory and organize them suitably. . . . When I sat down to write, I suddenly thought . . . . There was already an accusation against me that I constantly wrote stories about the people in my family. . . . The next attempt was to try and write the story from some other standpoint. . . . But I gave up the idea, tore up what I had written and went to bed.
>
> I forgot about writing the story . . . . Troubled thoughts provoked me. I got up and sat down to write again. . . . I would say it all, hiding nothing. Let whoever wanted recognize the incident. I had the courage of my convictions. . . . I thought about those . . . characters. From whose viewpoint would I write? That was the most important question.
>
> A story-writer can narrate events directly situating himself in the world they happened in. This is the simplest technique to story-writing. It is convenient to use the third person narration in order to explain things when necessary or to lessen or heighten the speed of events. But that technique would not suit this story. What was important here was not the events themselves, but the internal conflicts of the people involved in them. I had to choose the viewpoint of the one who was the most important. . . .
>
> [So and so] would be a good character. She had visited innumerable temples. . . . [So and so], agonized . . . he would be a good character too.
>
> What if "I" became the chief character? The character that was "I" was a ten-year old boy. . . . Yes, I would present the story through my eyes. . . .[13]

We have closely followed the early parts of *Naalukettu* and gathered that the rumour that Syedalikutty murdered Appunni's father cannot be taken at face value, for there is no authorial or narratorial verification or validation of the rumour. If Syedalikutty's kindness can be read as springing from guilt, then he would be a repentant sinner. His statement about lawyers and court can be read as those of a successful criminal. That would make him a wily, in fact, an evil/ugly Muslim. But then there are no indications in the novel that Syedalikutty benefited, economically or emotionally, from the supposed crime. Rather, the effect of ugliness, of something not straight, is achieved by portraying him as good as well as bad, bad in the past and good in the present.

Gita Krishnankutty, the English translator of *Naalukettu*, has already provided us with a resolution in her introduction. She quotes from M. T.'s acceptance speech on the occasion of the Jnanpith Award: "Thanks to the complexities of the human condition, a person whose destiny it has always been to be called unmitigatedly [evil/ugly] can suddenly astonish us by revealing a gentle heart" (cited, xx). She goes on: "Perhaps, it is this facet of *human* behaviour that Syedalikutty demonstrates, for there is no logical explanation for why he befriends Appunni" (xx; my emphasis).

Let us see whether other extra-textual information can further clarify this issue. M. T. notes:

> Many people have asked me during interviews whether Appunni . . . was myself. No, he is not. All I have done is to use the village and the ambience of the old naalukettu in the novel. . . . Around the time I started writing short stories, I wrote a short novel. I dealt with the unhappy lot of the *cheruma* folk who worked as agricultural labourers. It was inspired by the well-known novel, *Randidangazhi*, that Thakazhi wrote about the revolt of the agricultural labourers in Kuttanad. When I read what I had written, I felt that it was not satisfactory at all, so I abandoned it. Later, in 1955, while making a living taking classes in a tutorial college in Palghat, I wrote another novel for a magazine they published there. This work, published in twelve instalments and entitled *Paathiraavum Pakalvelichavum* had a Hindu-Muslim theme. The readers of the magazine liked it. But I was dissatisfied. I thought I would write a novel set against the backdrop of the old matrilinear tharavad that I had heard my mother and others talk about. I mulled over this idea for many months, until the novel took a shape that satisfied me. Then I decided to call it *Naalukettu*. Readers still enjoy this novel.
>
> (xi)

So the first novel that M. T. attempted "dealt with the unhappy lot of the *cheruma* folk who worked as agricultural labourers. It was inspired by the well-known novel, *Randidangazhi* [by Thakazhi]." But when M.T. felt that what he had written was not satisfactory at all, he abandoned it and, later in 1955, he attempted another novel for a magazine, entitled *Paathiraavum Pakalvelichavum*, which was

published in twelve instalments and had a Hindu-Muslim theme. Though the readers of the magazine liked it, he was dissatisfied. One can only wonder at M.T.'s dissatisfaction with the twelve instalments of *Paathiraavum Pakalvelichavum* and their Hindu-Muslim theme. Since the readers seem to have liked it, the dissatisfaction may have been of a different order. An ardent lover of literature, M.T. – who must have already studied and internalized the middle-class/middle-caste Malayalee cultural aesthetic, which readers still continue to enjoy – with his acumen, might have already realized that he had to improve at the level of the aesthetic. But, more importantly, what M.T. is also saying is that he was also compelled to write a novel set against the backdrop of the old matrilineal tharavad that he had heard his mother and others talk about. After mulling over this idea for many months, the novel took a shape that satisfied him. Then he decided to call it *Naalukettu,* which readers still enjoy.

It was indeed a very significant moment of transition in Malayalam literature when M.T. decided not to repeat Thakazhi's progressive, if borrowed, thematic about "the unhappy lot of the *cheruma* folk who worked as agricultural labourers," and felt unsatisfied about his next venture with a Hindu-Muslim thematic, and decided that he should write a novel about the Naalukettu. In a way, M.T. was giving up on the so-called leftist progressive-revolutionary aesthetic, which had come back to haunt writers of Thakazhi's generation around that time. M.T. was also already abandoning the Nehruvian socialistic-nationalistic pretensions as well as any regional/minoritarian perspectives/possibilities. He was, either because of politico-aesthetic compulsions or because of the earnest desire to write a different kind of novel, already re-fashioning the emergent nationalistic heir from Kerala. Such an aesthetic has probably done more damage to the fabric of an inclusive yet conflict-ridden Kerala social life. In such a re-imagination of the "human," neither the Cherumas, whose cultural capital was not deemed good currency, nor the Muslims, who were anyway the demon-seeds,[14] stood much of a chance. Given such a problematic, M.T. chose his own community as the van-guard of a progressive-nationalist/politico-aesthetic operation that has shaped and continues to shape the political and cultural life of Keralites.

So far, M.T. seems to give a fillip to a re-doubled critical perception that it is actually the minorities who hold up an Indian/Hindu nation. Of course, we do not yet know why M.T. was dissatisfied with his endeavours to write a novel about the Cheruma folk, or the reasons why he was unhappy with his second venture. All that we gather is that he decided to write a new novel that focussed on the Naalukettu, very much like how Appunni was coerced to deal with the Naalukettu in order to become human.

But, hold on! *Paathiraavum Pakalvelichavum* is available in a later edition.[15] A quick look at this novel, most probably rewritten according to tastes and publication imperatives that M.T. himself circulated and cemented – apart from helping to standardize, if not hegemonize, the Valluvanadan dialect – may be worth our while. Going by the 2009 impression of the 2005 edition of a novel first published in 1977 and serialized in 1955, this novel is set between two home-comings, about twenty years apart, of Gopi, a graduate from a

middle-class Nair family. During his vacation from a college in Madras, he falls in love and enters into a relationship with Pathumma, a Muslim girl who belongs to the poor cultivating-tenant class. Later, faced with intense pressure from his well-to-do father, he forsakes Pathumma, urging her to resort to abortion, while himself agreeing to marry a bride from the city who turns out to be skeletal and bereft of any feminine grace (57). Soon, gossip about his previous affair reaches his wife's ears and their marital discord reaches a point of no return, wherein he abandons his pregnant wife and leads an aimless life. Meanwhile, a pregnant Pathumma has refused to marry and has brought up Moitheen by herself. The twenty-year-old boy has grown up with taunts of being a bastard and meets Gopi on his second return. The scene ends with Moitheen refusing to accept Gopi as his father or Gopi's share of ancestral wealth, even as Pathumma weeps from within the hut.

Paathiraavum Pakalvelichavum depicts the coming of age of Gopi and also of Moitheen. Gopi falls in love with Pathumma, and there is no doubt that their relationship is a sincere and intense kind of love. However, being educated and knowing the ways of the world, Gopi hesitates to elope because he is aware of the hardships of a life without money, especially in a city. Instead, he advocates abortion so that both Gopi and Pathumma can start their lives afresh. M. T. does draw an in-depth picture of the anguished life of a guilt-ridden Gopi, who procured a good job and a rich wife in the bargain but abandoned his human-ness. However, Moitheen's is a life in reverse. Growing up with inhuman treatment, he learns to be a human when questioned by his mother. After sending off his father, Moitheen is faced with this question from his mother: was he human? His acknowledgement of being human is to helplessly bend down and wet his mother's feet with his tears.

Being heroically human is central to the M. T.'s oeuvre and it is understandable that being "human" was/is mostly formatted by a middle-class/middle-caste ethos. However, what is probably not so easily comprehensible would be the mechanics of a liberal and modernist aesthetic mediation that determines individuals as good or bad, or necessarily ugly, especially in the case of M. T.[16] The central point here, in connection with *Naalukettu,* would be that while we are privy to the extreme agony of Gopi, and to some extent of Moitheen, the machinations of Syedalikutty's mind are not divulged to us, except for the statement that he committed a crime against god. Probably excusable within a short-story format, the choice not to render different perspectives within the wider canvas of a novel, especially with regard to the mainspring of the novel, seem all the more puzzling until we realize that a full confession would humanize Syedalikutty. Dangling Syedalikutty as good and bad at the same time, and thereby ugly, would reinforce the innate goodness of Appunni, for he became hu-man by forgiving Syedalikutty without even the benefit of a full confession.

At least at the level of aesthetic conception, M. T. explains that Appunni's father in the novel is modelled on one of his own uncles "who lived next door to us, in his wife's house. I used to see him very often when I was an elementary school

student. A rumour that his business partner gave him poison and killed him spread through the village" (xi). Elsewhere, M. T. writes:

> There is very little of the autobiographical element in [Appunni]. Experiences that any child could have gone through . . . Appunni could have been a child in my own family. And there is a happening in the novel culled from the stories in my village. One of my uncles started a business with Syedalikutty. One day, after he ate in Syedalikutty's house, my uncle threw up and died. The rumour that he had been poisoned spread through the village. I was told that the police investigated the case. But everyone said that nothing was proved.
>
> (cited, xix–xx)

The question to be raised then would not be whether M. T. was just being true to his sources – where there was a rumour and police investigation, but nothing was proved and there were no pending criminal/legal proceedings – but whether M. T. was more than aware of what he deliberately left dangling in the novel: the indeterminacy of Syedalikutty, the real as well as the fictional one. Whether Syedalikutty was a bad person who became a reformed good human being; whether he was a bad Muslim who became a good Muslim; whether he was always-already a modern Muslim citizen-subject who was unjustly accused of a crime but still extended his sympathy and support to the supposed victim of his purported crime; whether he was a modernizing agent who had to kill the father because he was not actively engaging with the Naalukettu so that the son Appunni could be guided to take the fight to the Naalukettu and hasten its dissolution. While these issues are under investigation, we may still venture to say that what M. T. achieves through his first novel is a clever use of the modernizing/demonizing potential of the always-already Muslim in order to effect an ascendency of the Nair as representing the middle-class/middle-caste cultural modernity of the Malayalee. Appunni becomes V. A. Nair; this is no insignificant feat and has a lot to do with the historical imaginings of a Malayalee (middle-class/middle-caste) modernity. A side effect of this modernization and ascendency of the heroic male and his liberation, not outside or parallel, but from within the traditional communitarian fold itself, was that the lower-caste and minority religious communities became catalysts, if not fodder, in the process, with only nominal cultural/political gains.

M. T. has more than earned the right to be hailed as one of the foremost literary and film/script artists in Kerala. And my intention was not to read his texts from a purely autobiographical angle. Put in another way, how Thekkepattu ("the South," as part of M. T.'s full name) becomes Vadakkeppattu ("the North," as part of Appunni's name in the novel) is least of my concerns for the moment. But, definitely, the question about the indeterminacy of the Muslim within M. T.'s cultural world has to be examined with more rigour.

I will end by raising another curious issue: why was the person who found Appunni's dying father named Valia Valappu Chandu? The resonances of Chandu, the quintessential cheat, within the given Malayalee cultural sphere is no less than that of Judas, despite M. T.'s attempt to exonerate him through his script for the blockbuster film *Oru*

Vadakkan Veeragatha (Directed by Hariharan, 1989). Isn't M. T. one of those rare creative geniuses who intuitively knew that it was better if Syedalikutty lived in indeterminacy; that, even if somebody continued to believe that Syedalikutty represents the "demon-seed," one could always turn the table around by asking how anyone can believe anything that Chandu says? The factor that Chandu would belong to the Thiyya community is still a question dangling in front of us. . . .

Admittedly, my choice of texts – "Higuita," *Indulekha*, *Chemmeen*, and *Naalukettu* – was predetermined and delimited by my focus on Malabar and Muslims as they appear in Malayalam popular-classics. That is not to claim that my list is exhaustive nor to deny the plurality of literary/film representations of the Muslim in Malayalam sources. What preoccupied me were the continuities and discontinuities of aesthetic themes and techniques over decades, nay, a century. From *Indulekha* (1889) which effects a dream transference whereby a villain becomes a Muslim, through *Chemmeen* (1957) wherein the Muslim, being all-too-human, becomes untranslatable to human, through *Naalukettu* (1958) wherein the villain's transition to a human is not acknowledged or affirmed, to "Higuita" (1990) which refurbishes the Muslim as vile and evil who has to be deported for the sake of a unified and homogenous state of belonging!

Notes

1 Niranjana's own "translation" of Benjamin is not simply its "afterlife," for she interrupts its afterlife, introduces a genealogical perspective and "illuminates" Benjamin's text; hence, perhaps, Niranjana's text is more of an "alterlife."
2 Kwame Anthony Appiah dubbed such activity as "'alteritism,' the construction and celebration of oneself as Other"; "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed., Padmini Mongia (London and New York: Arnold, 1996) 67.
3 Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai's *Chemmeen* was first published in March 1956 (Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd., 1956). It was reprinted three more times (May, July, and September) in 1956 itself and twice in 1957 and in 1956 itself and twice in 1957 and 1958, and again in 1959, 1960, 1961, 1963, 1966, 1973, 1979, 1981, 1985, 1986, 1991, and 1997, the last being the copy I am working with. It was also published by DC Books in 1995 and saw a ninth edition by 2007. An English translation was published, in arrangement with Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, as *Chemmeen*, trans., Narayana Menon, intro., Santha Rama Rau (Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 1962, 1988, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998). My translations from Malayalam are indicated by the year 1997 to distinguish from Naryana Menon (1998).
4 Thakazhi won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi award again in 1965 (for *Eenippadigal* (*Rungs of the Ladder*] (Kottayam: DC Books, 1964); he also won the Vayalar award in 1980 for *Kayar* [*Coir*] (Kottayam: DC Books, 2013 [1978]), the Padmabhushan in 1985 and the Jnanpith in 1985.
5 Screenplay by S. L. Puram Sadanandan, cinematography by Marcus Bartley, and editing by Hrishikesh Mukherjee. Songs were set to music by Salil Chowdhury, with lyrics by Vayalar Rama Varma, and featuring the voices of Manna Dey, K. J. Yesudas, and P. Leela. It was also a prominent instance of collaborative work involving technicians from Bollywood, such as Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Manna Dey, with those of South India.
6 In this regard, V. V. Velukkutty Arayan, in *Thakazhiyude Chemmeen: Oru Niroopanam* (Thiruvananthapuram: Kalakeralam Publications, 1956), observed that Thakazhi not

only attributes caste-distinctions and prejudices to the fisher community, but also successfully deflates all progressive ideas and elements in the novel.

7 Changanpuzha Krishna Pillai, *Ramanan* (Kottayam, DC Books, 2007); first published in 1936; Film *Ramanan* (1967), Director D.M. Pottekat.

8 "Cultural translation," as Homi K. Bhabha observed, "desacralizes the transparent assumptions of cultural supremacy, and in that very act, demands a contextual specificity, a historical differentiation *within* minority positions," in "How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern Space, Postcolonial Times and the Trials of Cultural Translation" (1994, 228).

9 M.T. Vasudevan Nair, *Naalukettu* (Thrissur: Current Books, 2009a). All citations are from the English translation, *Naalukettu: The Home around the Courtyard* (2008a); Author's Note: ix-xiii and Introduction: xv-xxviii.

10 A religious scholar/teacher.

11 A Dalit woman of the Cheruma caste.

12 Upper/lower case Nair/mapilla as in the translation.

13 Cited from "A Story is Born," from M.T. Vaudevan Nair, *Bear with me, Mother: Memoirs and Stories*, trans., Gita Krishnankutty (2011) 28–31; original Malayalam "Oru Katha Janikunnu," in M.T. Vasudevan Nair, *Kathikante Panippura* [*Storyteller's Workshop*] first published in 1963 (2009b) 31–33.

14 It is significant that Islam pre-figures as the ultimate, even absolute, outside, with its diverse regional/religious connotations, within the early writings of M.T. In *Asuravithu*, to quote from the blurb of the 1998 English translation, "a young unemployed Nair boy . . . [taken on as] the manager of [his wealthy brother-in-law's] property . . . dares to dream for the first time in his life [when a marriage is arranged for him by his brother-in-law]. He brings his bride home, eager to start life afresh, but discovers to his horror that she is already pregnant by another man. . . . Shattered by the knowledge that his family had connived to betray him, [he] goes berserk. Finally estranged from home and village, he converts to Islam in the ultimate gesture of defiance" (M.T. Vasudevan Nair, 1998).

15 M.T. Vasudevan Nair, *Pathiravum Pakalvelichavum* [*Midnight and Daylight*] (2005).

16 M.T. is of course credited with being more than Muslim-friendly and surely has innumerable friends and admirers, including me, from all walks of life.

Epilogue

Nationalist historiography, taking off from colonial Indologists, who valorized Aryan "migration" and found Hinduism at the heart of India, continues to "reaffirm" India as Hindu. Recall the Iron Man, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's, ultimatum to Muslims of free India: "I want to tell them frankly that mere declaration of loyalty to [the] Indian Union will not help them at this juncture. They must give proof of their declaration" (Shakir, 137; cited by Jalal, 1998, 96), which seems to be insistently relived in the everyday and "commonplace" demand for a disowning of Islam as a prerequisite to becoming a patriotic Indian. This has led to representations of Muslims as "foreigners," where "invaders" and Mughals continue to determine the parameters for the Muslim. Consequently, a monolithic construction of Islam is circulated across the national imaginary. Lack of an adequate theoretical framework and historical resources with which to address the questions raised by Islam in India adds to the feeling of being pushed into a corner. The plight of "secular" and well-to-do Muslims sans Islamic dress, demeanour, or deportment is best exemplified by the following excerpt from a seventh standard social science textbook of the NCERT.

> . . . an incident that took place in one of India's larger cities and is common practice in most parts of the country. It is a story about Mr. and Mrs. Ansari who were looking to rent an apartment in the city. They had the money and so paying the rent was no problem. They went to a property dealer for help to find a place. The dealer informed them that he knew about quite a few apartments that were available for rent. They visited the first apartment and the Ansaris liked it very much and decided to take it. However, when the landlady found out their names, she made an excuse about how she could not rent the house to someone who ate meat because the building did not have any non-vegetarian residents. Both the Ansaris and the property dealer were surprised to hear this because they could smell fish being cooked in the neighbour's house. The same excuse was repeated in the second and the third apartments. Finally, the property dealer told them that they might want to change their names and call themselves Mr. and Mrs. Kumar. The Ansaris were reluctant to do this and decided to look some more. In the end, it took a whole month

> of looking at apartments before they found a landlady who was willing to give them a place on rent.[1]

This is a familiar experience for many Muslims who are not economically backward and shows that while ardent secularists insist on, and nationalist Muslims plead for, toleration, Islam continues to be represented as inimical to the nation. Muslims in India, hence, are emblems of a lack within our secular nationalism as well as embodiments of an excess, due to their perceived extra-territorial affiliation to the community of Islam.

In sharp contrast, I have argued that pan-Islamism actually allows Muslims to live as minor subjects within various socio-cultural and political formations. Hence, I have tried to present Islam's engagement with Indian modernity. The archive I constructed enabled me to contrast Mohamed Ali's autobiographical fragment with better-known full-length autobiographies by Gandhi and Nehru. In order to examine the nuances of the question of Islam in a local setting, I then turned to the Malabar revolts/rebellions from 1836 to 1921. In order to show the afterlife of the "fanatic" causation in nationalist/Marxist perception, I read memoirs of the 1921 Malabar rebellion by local Congress leaders against their grain as well as against each other and, ironically, in juxtaposition with a report by R. H. Hitchcock, the District Superintendent of Police. Drawing on Derrida's critique of representation, I then examined in detail literary representations of the proper noun "Malabar," as a shorthand notation for the Muslim communality and criminality in Malayalam literature. I analysed literary texts to demonstrate how "literary" representations of Islam draw on other prior representations which, in turn, determine the "literary," or what constitutes the structure and effect of what is celebrated as the "literary." We saw that even as early as 1889, and even from a place so distant from the centre of national life, Chandu Menon already envisaged a larger national culture in which the Muslim was the generic term for the structural other.

"Higuita" does not foreground the dissonances of the relationship between a tribal girl converted to Christianity, a villain from Bihar, and a priest from Malabar. The narrative enfolds them and presents them as if they all belong to the same place and speaks the same language. In *Indulekha*, the protagonist Madhavan advocates English education as the only route to civilization while the narrative turns a blind eye to "Sheer Alikhan" who converses quite fluently in English while he thieves and commits as many as seventeen murders. Ironically, if "Sheer AliKhan" was a Muslim by disguise, contemporary Muslims in India are required to masquerade as "Kumars"! In contrast, the English protagonist in *The Jewel of Malabar* comes out alive when captured by the Mappilas (in fact, his Nair beloved rescues him) because he decides to die rather than shame his spirit by spurning his religion, very much like the "fanatic" Mappilas. He snubs their offer of life, braves beheading and becomes himself rather than become like them. I read Bennville's euphonic refusal as enabling him to behold the absolute other as a double; only when he becomes like them does he become himself so that he now has the right to live as well as die. If in *Indulekha* the

villain, without a nation and a name within the narrative, is transfigured into a Muslim, if in *Chemmeen* and *Naalukettu* the Muslim cannot be acknowledged as human in his inhumanity, and if in "Higuita" the Muslim was "turned out" as a villain, in *The Jewel of Malabar*, the Muslim figures as an other that structures the self-same.

Note

1 National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT] Social Science 2013–2014 textbook "Social and Political Life-II" for grade seven, unit one, chapter one, 8; http://ncert.nic.in/ncerts/textbook/textbook.htm?gess3=1–10)

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