

**Dialogues and Dialectics:
The Intersection of Space, Memory, and Identity in
Select Malayalam Fiction**

Thesis submitted to the
University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled **“Dialogues and Dialectics: The Intersection of Space, Memory, and Identity in Select Malayalam Fiction”** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy in English is a record of bona fide research carried out by **Gayathri Varma U.** under my supervision and guidance. No part of this thesis had been submitted earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, title, or recognition.

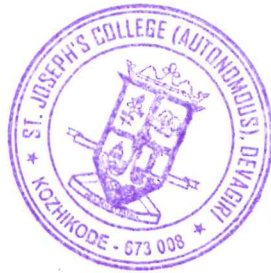
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This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Dialogues and Dialectics: The Intersection of Space, Memory, and Identity in Select Malayalam Fiction**” submitted by **Ms. Gayathri Varma U.** to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English**, is a *bona fide* record of research work done by her in the department. This work has not previously formed the basis for any award of degree or diploma.

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DECLARATION

I, Gayathri Varma U., hereby declare that this thesis titled **“Dialogues and Dialectics: The Intersection of Space, Memory, and Identity in Select Malayalam Fiction”** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of the Doctor of Philosophy in English is a bona fide record of research carried out by me, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any other degree, diploma, fellowship, or any other similar titles. The contents of the thesis have undergone plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C. H. M. K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found is within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated contents.

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Abstract

Space and memory are key factors that determine, validate, and vindicate one's existence. The idea of self that one possesses is a carefully constructed one, a product of selective memory and forgetting, which is usually bound by a certain sense of temporality and spatiality. The thesis examines three texts from Malayalam literature – M. Mukundan's *Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil* (1974) translated as *On the banks of the Mayyazhi* by Gita Krishnankutty (1999), N. S. Madhavan's *Lanhanbatheriyile Luthiniyakal* (2003) translated as *Litanies of Dutch Battery* (2010) by Rajesh Rajamohan, and Subhash Chandran's *Manushyanu Oru Aamukham* (2010) translated as *A Preface to Man* (2016) by Fathima E.V. – to study the interface and interconnection between memory, space, and identity of the protagonists and/or narrators, primarily centring on the humanistic, individualistic or existential aspects. Employing a triadic theoretical framework using insights from Spatial Literary Studies, Memory Studies, and the identity-theory developed by Neil Leach, the thesis argues that the protagonists and/or narrators construct their identities as interstitial and dynamic through a dialectics of attachment with and detachment from the spaces of interaction facilitated by memories and memory metaphors that arise on various occasions during their journey across their inhabiting spaces. This peculiar ongoing construction of the self facilitated by memories of varying nature – they vary from text to text - and the state of liminality (Victor Turner's concept) that the characters arrive at towards the end of the texts - where they emerge as powerless, fragile victims, and tragic personas - grant them agency or a possibility of agency, which challenges and subverts their widely accepted images that the texts and their secondary readings have hitherto provided by offering the reader an opportunity to think beyond the same.

Keywords: space, place, memory, identity, topophilia, topophobia



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സംഗ്രഹം

ഒരാളുടെ സ്വത്വത്തെ നിർണ്ണയിക്കുന്നതിലും പ്രബലമാക്കുന്നതിലും സ്ഥലവും/ഇടവും ഓർമ്മകളും പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട ഘടകങ്ങളാണ്. ഒരാളുടെ 'ഞാൻ' എന്ന സങ്കല്പം അയാളുടെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ഓർമ്മയിലൂടെയും മറവിയിലൂടെയും അതിവശ്രദ്ധയോടെ രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന ഒന്നാണ്. ഇത് പ്രത്യേകമായ കാലാനുഭവത്തോടും പ്രാദേശികതയോടും ബന്ധപ്പെട്ടു കിടക്കുന്നു. ഈ ഗവേഷണത്തിൽ മലയാള സാഹിത്യത്തിലെ മൂന്നു കൃതികൾ - *On the banks of the Mayyazhi* (1999) എന്ന പേരിൽ ഗീത കൃഷ്ണൻകുട്ടി വിവർത്തനം ചെയ്ത എം. മുക്തന്റെ *മയ്യഴിപ്പുഴയുടെ തീരങ്ങളിൽ* (1974), *Litanies of Dutch Battery* (2010) എന്ന പേരിൽ രാജേഷ് രാജമോഹൻ വിവർത്തനം ചെയ്ത എൻ. എസ്. മാധവന്റെ *ലത്തൻബത്തേരിയിലെ ലുത്തിനിയകൾ* (2003), *A Preface to Man* (2016) എന്ന പേരിൽ ഫാത്തിമ ഇ.വി. വിവർത്തനം ചെയ്ത സുഭാഷ് ചന്ദ്രന്റെ *മനുഷ്യൻ ഒരു ആമുഖം* (2010) എന്നിവ - മനുഷ്യകേന്ദ്രിതമായ, വ്യക്തിഗതമായ, അല്ലെങ്കിൽ അസ്തിത്വപരമായ പ്രതലത്തിലൂടെ, പ്രധാന കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളുടെ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ ആഖ്യാതാക്കളുടെ ഓർമ്മകളും അവർ ഇടപഴകുന്ന ഇടങ്ങളും അവരുടെ സ്വത്വവും തമ്മിലുള്ള അന്തർബന്ധത്തെ കണ്ടെത്താനായി, അവലോകനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. സ്പേഷ്യൽ ലിറ്റററി സ്റ്റഡീസ്, മെമ്മറി സ്റ്റഡീസ് എന്നീ സിദ്ധാന്തങ്ങളും നീൽ ലീച്ച് എന്ന ബ്രിട്ടീഷ് സൈദ്ധാന്തികന്റെ സ്വത്വസിദ്ധാന്തവും ഉപയോഗിച്ചു നിർമ്മിച്ചെടുത്ത ത്രികോണമാനമായ ഒരു ചട്ടക്കൂടിന്റെ സഹായത്താൽ ആണ് ഈ പഠനം. പല തരത്തിലുള്ള ഓർമ്മകളുടെ സഹായത്തോടെ തങ്ങൾ ഇടപഴകുന്ന ഇടങ്ങളോട് മാനസികമായ അടുപ്പം കാണിച്ചും അകന്നു നിന്നും നോവലുകളിലെ പ്രധാന കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ തങ്ങളുടെ സ്വത്വം ഇടനിലമായ (interstitial) ഒന്നായി രൂപപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു എന്നതാണ് ഇതിലെ വാദം. ഇത്തരത്തിൽ നടക്കുന്ന സ്വയം-നിർമ്മാണ പ്രക്രിയയും നോവലുകളിലെ അവസാനഭാഗത്തു കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾ എത്തിച്ചേരുന്ന വികൃത ടേണർ വികസിപ്പിച്ചെടുത്ത 'ലിമിനാലിറ്റി' എന്ന അവസ്ഥയും തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത കഥാപാത്രങ്ങൾക്ക് അധികാരം (agency) അല്ലെങ്കിൽ അധികാരത്തിന്റെ സാധ്യത നൽകുന്നു. ഈ വീക്ഷണകോൺ നോവലുകൾ പ്രത്യക്ഷത്തിൽ സമ്മാനിക്കുന്നതും സഹപഠനങ്ങൾ ഉറപ്പിക്കുന്നതുമായ കഥാപാത്രങ്ങളുടെ ദുഃഖാത്മകമായ, നശ്വരമായ, ശക്തിയറ്റ ചിത്രതത്ത്വനിർമ്മാണം മറ്റൊരു ചിന്താഗതിക്ക് വഴിയൊരുക്കുന്നു.

താക്കോൽ വാക്കുകൾ: ഇടം, സ്ഥലം, ഓർമ്മ, സ്വത്വം, ടോപോഫിലിയ, ടോപോഫോബിയ



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Chapter One

Introduction

Spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice.

—bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness”

Memory is knowledge with an identity-index, it is knowledge about oneself, that is one’s own diachronic identity, be it as an individual or as a member of a family, a generation, a community, a nation, or a cultural and religious tradition.

—Jan Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory”

Literature connects places, time, and people in diverse forms and frames employing realistic, imaginary, real-imaginary, mythical, surrealistic, and other diverse modes of narration, and regional literatures carry the local, indigenous tone and tenor in their representations in this regard. In Malayalam literature, the novel form began to appear around the nineteenth century in association with the Christian missionary activities initiated by the colonial powers who aimed at enlightenment and awakening new wisdom in their colonised subjects under the dictates of Christianity. Mrs. Collins’s *Khathakavadham* (1878) and Arch Deacon Koshy’s *Pulleli Kunju* (1882) are examples of early novels in this tradition. The much-celebrated novels that are often cited as marking the beginning of novel-writing in Malayalam, *Kunthalatha* (1887) by Appu Nedungadi and *Indulekha* (1889) by O. Chandu Menon, were crafted in the mould of colonial modernity following the European narrative style and thematic structure, and they also aligned with the

prevalent concepts of nation and nationality. This was followed by the era of historical novels of C. V. Raman Pillai (*Marthandavarma* of 1891 is a classic example), Kappana Krishnan Menon, Pallath Raman, and many others, along with which emerged various writings for social reformation and detective novels. N. K. Krishnapilla, Appan Thampuran, Moorkoth Kumaran, and Karatt Achutha Menon are some names worth mentioning during this period. Realism, which emerged in the 1940s carrying the spirit of the Renaissance, was a conscious attempt to disconnect or sever from these existing traditions and conservatism, and to throw light on the stark realities of social life during the period. Thakazhi Sivasankarapilla (*Kayar, Randidangazhi*), P. Kesavadev (*Odayil Ninnu, Bhrandalayam*), Vaikom Muhammed Basheer (*Balyakaalasakhi, Mathilukal*), Uroob (*Ummachu*), and S. K. Pottekkat (*Vishakanyaka, Oru Theruvinte Kadha*) are the prominent figures in this tradition. The travel writings of Pottekkat also contributed to the lustre of Malayalam novels during this period.

Malayalam critics K. Ayyappa Paniker in *Ayyappa Panikerude Lekhanangal* (1985), P. K. Rajashekharan in “Aadhunikatha/Utharadhunikatha: Randu Samvaadangal”, and A. J. Thomas in “Malayalam Short Story After Modernism” identify the period from the 1950s and 1960s to the late 1980s and early 1990s as featuring modernism in Malayalam literature for showcasing a renewed thought in both content and form by breaking apart from the realistic tradition that had existed until then, for delving deep into the internality or internal consciousness of mankind by severing from the focus on externalities or materialities, and for redefining the relation between the larger society and human existence (140-144; 40; 74-75). They view the phase of modernism in Malayalam literature as aligning with and adapting

to - and not a pure imitation of - the sensibilities and characteristics of Modernism that emerged in the West during the initial half of the twentieth century prominently expressed in the works of writers like Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and others, and also manifested through movements like Cubism, Expressionism, Dadaism, Futurism, and Surrealism. Thomas significantly points out the sense of scepticism that the modernist writers bred during the period and records that they “grew genuinely anxious about the strange nature of this universe, as time-honoured values, beliefs, institutions and social structures eroded, turned empty or lost relevance, in the particular social situations in Kerala” which led them to combat “meaningless values and social structures” (177).

Rajashekharan, in “Aadhunikatha/Utharadhunikatha: Randu Samvaadangaal”, records that even though the circumstances like rapid industrialisation, mechanisation, technological development, and the world wars that sowed the seeds for modernism in the West cannot be traced in the Kerala context, there has been a spike in educational opportunities, wide reading, and mobility to the Gulf and larger cities of India from Kerala that led to the resonances of the modernist sensibilities similar to the West in the writings of this period. He observes that despite the absence of such direct experiences of war and capitalist upsurge in the land of Kerala similar to the West, the sense of alienation and existential issues crossed the boundaries to profoundly influence the intellect and emotional faculty of the writers from Kerala (39-40). According to him, the modernist trend can be traced in the fiction of M. T. Vasudevan Nair, T. Padmanabhan, M. Mukundan, and O. V. Vijayan which stretches to that of Anand, Paul Zacharia, and N. S. Madhavan, in poetry ranging from Ayyappa Paniker, N. N. Kakkad, Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan,

and Satchidanandan to Balachandran Chullikkad and A. Ayyappan, and in criticism starting from Appan and Ashamenon until the contributions of Balachandran Vadakkedath and M. K. Harikumar (“Aadhunikatha/Utharadhunikatha” 40). More conveniently, Rajashekharan divides the writers of fiction who emerged after the 1950s into three groups: the first consists of writers such as M. T., N. P. Muhammed, Kovilan, U. A. Khader, Malayattoor Ramakrishnan, C. Radhakrishnan, V. K. N., Valsala, and Lalithambika Antharjanam who brought in subjective-oriented or self-oriented experiences through the representation of conflicts between an individual and society, and represented the early beginning of modernism (“Novel-Randu” 823); the second group who wrote between 1969 and 1989 is identified as modernist and it comprises Kakkanadan (works such as *Ushnamekhala*, *Parankimala*), Vijayan (*Khasakkinte Ithihasam*, *Dharmapuram*), Anand (*Aalkkootam*, *Abhayaarthikal*), Mukundan (*Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil*, *Aavilayile Sooryodayam*), Sethu (*Thaliyola*, *Pandavapuram*), Punathil Kunjabdulla (*Smaarakasilakal*), and others who discarded the notions of ‘reality’ and meaning’, linearity of narration, objectivity, and totality of vision projected by realism in favour of problematising man’s identity by addressing the complexity of living (826-827); and the third group consists of specific works that emerged in the 1980s as a result of the changed socio-political and cultural context of insecurity and uncertainty brought in by the Emergency of 1975 in India such as Anand’s *Utharaayanam* (1982) and *Abhayaarthikal* (1989), C. V. Balakrishnan’s *Aayussinte Pusthakam* (1984), and Vijayan’s *Dharmapuram* (1985), to name a few (828-830). According to the critic, the last group possesses the characteristics of modernism but also showcases a difference in theme, approach, and tone compared

to the novels until then owing to their political inclination and historical affinity, and therefore, initiates a postmodernist trend in Malayalam literature (“Novel-Randu” 831-832).

Modernism appeared as anti-romanticist and philosophical, projecting the notions of will and individual freedom, employing fantasy, allegory, mythification, ironic vision, black humour, abstract and dense language, and foregrounding a complex vision of life. Kallada Ramachandran, the Malayalam critic, notes that it is the chaos, perplexity, and sense of unrest found in the works of Kafka, Camus, and Sartre, above the philosophical propositions of Kierkegaard and Heidegger, that invited the writers from Malayalam to dwell on the profound existential problems of man (17). John K. J., another native critic, examines various definitions of modernism that are prevalent in the current theoretical discourse - such as V. C. Sreejan’s take on the term that it is a branch of literature that denies tradition, acknowledges the futility of life, and discards the external nature - and precisely records the following characteristics of the movement reflected in the literary works of the time: existential search, alienation, a sense of futility, nothingness or emptiness of human existence, a state of melancholy or a mentality of grief, an attitude of denial, loneliness and orphanhood, a feeling of detachment towards life and death, and atheism (61).

Highly inspired by the revolutionary literature from Europe and South America, and by the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, Mukundan deals with the themes of “anomie and captivity” in his modernist novels of the 1960s (Introduction 2). In his study on Mukundan, A. V. Pavithran records the words of the writer who proclaims that he has penned stories that are fundamentally

existentialist in nature (43). S. Krishna Kumar, the Malayalam critic, observes that writers like Mukundan and Vijayan articulate both modernist and postmodernist trends in their works of fiction according to the temporal and temperamental shifts and alterations that emerged in the course of their writing careers. While the early novels of Mukundan and Vijayan - written during the sixties and the seventies - capture the innate and intrinsic psychic states of characters drawn by severe mental agony, angst, and existential dilemma, the works emerged after the eighties focus more on material history and various cultural and socio-political conflicts of the time, and also follow an unconventional pattern of narration (157). Kumar, referring to Mukundan's *Aakasathinu Chuvattil* (1969), *Haridwaril Manikal Muzhangunnu* (1972), and *Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil* (1974), states, "Mukundan's early novels were centered on antiheroes who were victims of existential fear and metaphysical vexation", and contrasts and compares them with *Daivathinte Vikruthikal* (1992) and *Aadithyanum Radhayum* (1993) that brilliantly sketch a broader vision, moving beyond the individual to a larger society, in a postmodernist style of writing (158).

Postmodernism emerged both as a continuation and a radical revision or redefinition of the modernist form, content, and sensibility, and in Malayalam literature, it was inaugurated by the set of modernist writers such as Mukundan, Vijayan, Anand, and others during their later period of writing. According to Kumar, "Postmodernism can be looked upon as the movement away from modernist abstraction to concreteness, from its metaphysics to material reality, from its language of rhetoric to the language of reality, from its homogeneous, determinate vision to heterogeneous, indeterminate vision" (157). The new political atmosphere

formed after the fall of Communism and globalisation, and the emergence of novel media culture and new social movements have influenced the growth of the postmodernist sensibility in the post-1980 writings of Malayalam literature, especially in short stories. Rajashekharan sees the shift of focus – from the plane of individualism, existentialism, and the question of subjective dilemma that modernism had emphasised to a profound evaluation of the contemporary political condition and a renewed awareness of history – emerged after the 1980s, which concretised in the 1990s, as marking a postmodernist trend in Malayalam literature (“Utharadhunika Malayala Novel” 76-77). Vijayan’s *Madhuram Gayathi* (1990), Mukundan’s *Aadithyanum Radhayum Mattu Chilarum* (1993) and *Kesavante Vilapangal* (1999), K. J. Baby’s *Maveli Mantam* (1991), T. V. Kochubava’s *Vridhdhasadanam* (1991), Anand’s *Govardhante Yathrakal* (1995), N. Prabhakaran’s *Thiyyur Rekhakal* (1999), Sarah Joseph’s *Aalahayude Penmakkal* (2001), N. S. Madhavan’s *Lanthanbatheriyile Luthiniyakal* (2003), T. D. Ramakrishnan’s *Francis Ittikora* (2009), and Subhash Chandran’s *Manushyanu Oru Aamukham* (2010) are prominent examples in this vein. These works showcase a renewed historical consciousness and a broader vision of life, language, humanhood, and history in comparison with the earlier period of writing.

According to Rajashekharan, even though modernists denied the objectivity of meaning and questioned the ‘given’ reality by projecting the possibility of an alternate ‘reality’, they envisioned the novel as a medium to carry their strong authorial, philosophical visions, which is discarded by postmodernists (“Utharadhunika Malayala Novel” 74). Postmodernism has its focus on contemporary politics and history, where subaltern, marginalised narratives contest

and question mainstream representations, narratives, and manipulations. In this sense, Prasannarajan, another Malayalam critic, envisions the movement as a “cultural condition”, “a new vision”, and “an aesthetic sensibility” that adopted a novel thematic approach, which is that of cultural politics. According to him, the politics that the postmodernists exhibit primarily consists of “the experiences of freedom in the modern world” (my trans.; 14). The postmodernist works capture the intense, intrinsic human experiences of the complex world characterised by history, politics, and power through chaos and fragmentation, but in a more festive or celebratory tone compared to that of modernism. By employing literary devices such as self-reflexivity, multiple narrative voices, fragmentation, metafiction, non-linear narration, intertextuality, open-endedness, ambiguous/multiple endings, fantasies, parodies, and pastiches, the texts in this tradition render identities as performative and as engaged in an endless ‘play’, as the poststructuralists postulate.

Madhavan and Chandran emerge as two remarkable litterateurs of the postmodernist period. Madhavan imbibes strength from modernism and crafts a new style altogether by keenly exposing the diabolic face of political power-centres, the horror that the chaotic present times create in the minds of modern men, and the disintegration of relationships. His writings take on a non-linear, rhythmic, lyricist, and sometimes self-reflexive narration, most often blurring the boundaries between poetry, fiction, epistles, journal, and history through a crafty combination of such varied genres, and carry a severe criticism of the existing social and political system that metes out injustices and inequality, and that which casts man into a dungeon of despair, monotony, and mental agitation. His most-acclaimed short stories “Higuita” and “Thiruthu”, and short-story collections such as *Choolaimedile Shavangal* (1981)

and *Paryaya Kadhakal* (2000) testify to this. Chandran is another celebrated literary figure of the contemporary period who experiments with the mechanics of writing and takes a critical and visionary approach to life. Interdigitating identity politics, history, and parody, and adopting cues from myth, epics, and folklore, the writer addresses the intricacies and nuances of the contemporary human condition. Novelty of language, intertextuality, and amalgamation of varied genres make his writings a unique and fascinating read. *Manushyanu Oru Aamukham* (2010), *Ghatikaranga Nilakkunna Samayam* (2000), *Parudeesa Nashtam* (2002), and *Samudrasila* (2019) are unparalleled contributions in this regard.

Identity, the sense of self cultivated by an individual, has long been a subject of discussion in the discourses of philosophy, psychology, sociology, and cultural studies, and all disciplines unanimously agree that identity is not an autonomous, insular, or independent entity. Psychologist John Shotter, in his "Social Accountability and the Social Construction of 'You.'", and Social Identity theorist Ian Burkitt, in his work *Social Selves*, have postulated that an individual's subjectivity or identity is the product of interactions and interpersonal communications that take place within a community or society, and they underscore the significance of dialogues and conversations in the development of a relational self (137-138; 39-42). Scholars like Erik H. Erikson, Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, and Louis Breger have also widely discussed the formation of identity through a process of active interaction with others, where an individual configures and shapes his/her idea of self by pruning their ideologies and interests, and also by gaining insights from the existing social structure (19-20; 15-16; 194-196).

Space/place and memory are two integral factors that immensely contribute to crafting one's existence and assisting one in navigating the world of living, and they fundamentally determine and delineate identity or selfhood for a person. The meaning-production and the formation of reality for one, manifested through the interrelationship with others and a keen and profound discernment of the world, are primarily driven or actuated by one's remembrances and the sense of space/place that one cultivates. Spatial Literary Studies is a branch of study, a discourse, that emerged during the second half of the twentieth century and it primarily deals with the notions of space and place in a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary framework. It engages with the interconnections and intersections of space/place with time, power, identity, society, and culture. Regarding the significance of place to humans, Edward Relph, the Canadian geographer, famously writes in his classic work *Place and Placelessness* (1976) that, to be human "is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and know your place" (1), and he emphasises the notion of identity constituted by "the emotional and psychological ties" that humans cultivate from it (141). The inevitability of places in one's life is also recorded by Edward S. Casey, the American philosopher, through the statement: "We are surrounded by places. We walk over and through them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them" ("Disappearing Places" ix). Spatiality and spatial consciousness thus lie central to an individual's existence.

Memory is a phenomenon and instinct which renders humans a sense of the present through the preservation of the past. Episodic memory, autobiographical memory, collective memory, communicative memory, and cultural memory are some of the widely employed concepts under the discipline of Memory Studies, an

interdisciplinary branch that concretised during the late twentieth century and that profoundly indulges in varied aspects of memory on individual, collective, and cultural levels. It explores the intersections of memory with identity, history, society, and culture, transcending borders and boundaries. The consciousness of the past determines, shapes, and constitutes the consciousness of the present for a person, and it pivotally assists one in navigating the world. The integral interrelationship between memory and identity, the role of memory in building a sense of selfhood, has been an area of concern for various scholars. For John Locke, “personal identity” is a product of the retrieval of the past itself. He states, “As far as. . . consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person” (449). Kirsten Jacobson articulates that memory, “like a home, provides us with a dynamic pivot for our past and future; it is the living, breathing landscape of identity” (30).

Taking into account these three notions, the thesis attempts to study three texts from Malayalam literature: M. Mukundan’s *Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil* (1974) translated as *On the banks of the Mayyazhi* (hereafter *On the banks*) by Gita Krishnankutty in 1999, N. S. Madhavan’s *Lanthanbatheriyile Luthiniyakal* (2003) translated as *Litanies of Dutch Battery* (hereafter *Litanies*) by Rajesh Rajamohan in 2010, and Subhash Chandran’s *Manushyanu Oru Aamukham* (2010) translated as *A Preface to Man* (hereafter *Preface*) by Fathima E. V. in 2016. Real-imaginary places and people form the crux of these novels, where the protagonists and/or narrators interact with and confront various kinds of spatial entities and evoke memories on diverse planes during their course of action. The texts foreground specific places with unique socio-cultural, political, and historical contexts through a personal

narrative, where an individual, born and bred in that particular place carves her/his identity by growing attached to its entities and later creating ruptures or fissures in the dominant societal structure or the establishment through the adoption of an unconventional, rebellious action or a stance in the course of their revolting journey against power-structures, orthodoxy, and authoritarianism. The major characters journey across the micro-spaces within the larger places, recall and revisit the past on various occasions, experience crises of differing intensity, and are cast in alienated, peripheral, and passive states in relation to the macro-structures for being anti-establishmentarian and anti-structural as the novels come to a close.

The study places its focus on the construction of the identity of the protagonists and/or narrators through their dialogues with various spaces - addressing the socio-cultural specificities of each but rooting more in the existential, humanistic aspects - and the evocation of memories. Employing the triadic framework of memory, space, and identity theories to examine the interrelationship between the recollections, the spaces of transactions, and the identity of the protagonists, the thesis looks into how the characters construct their identities as interstitial and dynamic through a dialectic interplay of attachment with and detachment from various spaces, and also mould themselves as potential agents. In this way, the study explores the possibility of reading beyond the explicit, direct meanings of the texts that cast the protagonists and/or narrators as tragic, passive, and powerless victims devoid of agency of any kind, and it also contests and reassesses the established or widely accepted notions of their identities in the prevalent readings to create opportunities for novel contributions to the discourse. It argues that memory, through its transactions with spaces/places, becomes the

provider of agency, resilience, solace, and spirit of resistance for the protagonists and/or narrators, and that both memory and space play a pivotal role in meaning-production for them.

On the banks has been extensively subjected to colonial, postcolonial, political, historical, and philosophical readings ever since its publication, and Dasan, its protagonist, has been variedly identified as an existentialist, a philosopher, or thinker, apart from being an advocate of postcolonialism. Thematic readings centring on the land of Mayyazhi – such as the colonial-postcolonial interface, the historicity of the place, the dialogue between the text and history – and on the protagonist Dasan - Dasan’s identity as a postcolonial and hybrid subject - have been a prominent area of concern for the reading community. A. M. Unnikrishnan’s *Mukundante Kala: Asthithwathinte Arthaantharangal* (1993) and K. Augustine Joseph’s *Aadhunikatha Malayala Novelil* (1997) examine *On the banks*, among other Mukundan’s works, in the context of modernism. K. P. Malathi’s *Adhiniveshavum Charithravum M. Mukundante Novelukalil* (2013) is a thematic exploration of the colonial and historical aspects in Mukundan’s works of which *On the banks* forms a major part, and A. V. Pavithran’s *M. Mukundan: Kathayum Jeevithavum* (2015) constitutes interviews and conversations with the writer and analysis of the general themes in his works.

Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil: Patanangal (2017), edited by Prathapan Thayat, is a compilation of criticisms, articles, reviews, and speeches on the novel. Some of the studies in it are examined here. K. N. Panikkar’s article, “Novel Bhavanaathmakacharithram Enna Nilayil”, delves into the

imagined history of Mayyazhi and its liberation as manifested in the novel, and “Samooam, Swathwam, Nattarivu: Mayyazhiyude Randu Chithrangal” by Mahesh Mangalat examines the dualistic colonial and postcolonial elements that the novel holds. The colonial and postcolonial themes manifested in the text, such as the formation of colonial subjectivities, hybrid subjectivities, and the tug of war between native and foreign traditions are identified by Dr. M. S. Paul in “Mayyazhi: Viplavam, Vimochanam”, P. S. Radhakrishnan in “Nashtashareeravum Bhrashtanaya Prajayum”, Umar Tharamel in “Adhiniveshathinte Puravrihangal”, K. P. Mohanan in “Mochanam Thedunna Aathmaavukal”, and S. Radhakrishnan in “Mayyazhiyude Vikrithikal”. “Kaalathinte Vilakkukaalukal” by K. S. Venkitaachalam takes a thematic approach to the novel analysing its socio-cultural context. Articles such as “Mayyazhi – Sthalapadangal” by Dr. Shaji Jacob and “Aparangalude Mayyazhi” by R. Sreelatha Varma are two articles that engage in a spatial analysis of the novel. Jacob identifies five spaces – language, race, religion, politics, and economy – that construct the cultural identity of Mayyazhi while Varma discusses the myths depicted in the novel in relation to the representation of the land of Mayyazhi. P. Pavithran’s “Kaamanaropangalude Colonial Prathisandhi” is a postcolonial analysis of the novel focusing on the aspect of different forms of desire manifested in it.

Samskara Sankalanam: M. Mukundanteyum O. V. Vijayanteyum

Novelukulil (2000) by Dr. Basheer Kutty, *Asthithwavaadathinte Swadheenam*

Malayalathile Adhunikalil: O. V. Vijayan, Kakkadan, Mukundan,

Anand Ennivre Aadharamakki Oru Patanam (2003) by Dr. Baby Sebastian,

Adhiniveshasamskaaram M. Mukundante Novelukalil (2006) Dr. P. Ajikumar,
*Tales of the Threshold: A Comparative Inquiry into the 'Postcolonial Domestic'
 in the Fictional Writings of Mario Vargas Llosa and M. Mukundan* (2016) by
 Minu Susan Koshy, *Colonyvaazhchayude Samskarika Prathisandhi:*

M.Mukundante Thiranjedutha Rachanakale Munnirthiyulla Patanam (2020) by

Sudha Maringat constitute some of the dissertations and theses on the novel.

Evidently, the available literature lacks an approach centred on the aspects of memory and space, and their influence on the identity-formation of Dasan.

The prevalent discourse on *Litanies*, which includes its criticism, analysis, and other studies, is primarily based on the historicity of the island called Lanthan Bathery depicted in the novel. Thematic studies on the historical and geographical attributes of the island, the development and design of the place conflating history, memory, and imagination, the historiographic construction and the exchange between history and fiction, the interplay between historicity and textuality, and the much-contested Anglo-Indian identity have emerged. The portrayal of the island and the waterbodies through the lens of Maritime literature or maritime studies and the spatiality associated with it, the aspects of nationality, regionality, and language, and ecological concerns such as the representation of nature have also been subjected to study by various scholars and researchers. M. R. Chandrasekharan's "Lanthanbatheriyile Luthiniyakal" (2007), "Sthalavum Samskaaravum Lanthanbatheriyile Luthiniyakalil" (2006) by Vasudevan Korombrom, P. P. Raveendran's "History as Textual Practice: Reading Contemporary Malayalam Fiction" (2011), "Lanthanbatheriyile Luthiniyakal: Charithramenna Jeevasthaanam" (2013) by Sunil P. Ilayidom, "The legibility of things: Objects and public histories

in N. S. Madhavan's *Litanies of Dutch Battery*" (2018) by U. Kumar, and "Lanthanbatheriyude Deshacharithram" (2018) by Dr. Ashrafa Nisa lay their focus on the representation of history and the depiction of the place called Lanthan Bathery in the text, but they do not showcase a sustained investigation into Jessica's identity. The articles "Shallows in the Doe Eyes: An Ecofeminist Reading of N. S. Madhavan's *Litanies of Dutch Battery*" (2021) by Sarithamol K. P. and "Challenging the Cosmopolitanism and Resilience of the Port City of Kochi through N. S. Madhavan's novel *Litanies of Dutch Battery*" (2021) by Maya Vinai approach the novel through the theoretical disciplines of Eco-criticism and Maritime studies respectively. Another article, "Provincializing Island Poetics: The Personal as the Spatial in N. S. Madhavan's *Litanies of Dutch Battery*" (2024), by Soni Wadhwa and Jintu Alias places the text within the framework of Island Studies and examines the islandic metaphors and images in the text. Dissertations and theses focusing on the spatiality of the novel mostly look into the depiction of various places/spaces in the text, their historicity and geographical veracity, and their association with the larger ideas of nation and nationality. *Novelum Sthalavum: M. Mukundan, Sarah Joseph, N. S. Madhavan Ennivarude Novelukal Aadharamakki Oru Patanam* (2015) by Sona P. R., *Sthalakalamudrakal N. S. Madhavante Krithikalil* (2017) by Deepa M. V., and *Novelile Desham: Kovilante Thattakam, Sarah Josephite Aalahayude Penmakal, N. S. Madhavante Lanthanbatheriyile Luthiniyakal, Subhash Chandrante Manushyanu Oru Aamukham Ennivaye Munnirthiyulla Patanam* (2018) by Archana M. are examples in this regard. *Kadaltheerajanathayude Samskaaram Malayala Novelil* (2011) by Sunil Markose P. is a thesis that studies the representation of coastal culture in the novel. Studies that are exclusively or

comprehensively centred on the identity of its protagonist as related to both the inhabiting space/place and the aspect of memory are found to be absent in the existing literature. By placing the protagonist, Jessica, and her mobility across the macro and micro places of the land - personal/private and social/public – under the lens and exploring the intrinsic connection between the trio- memory, space/place, and identity – the research resorts to filling the gap in the discourse.

Studies on *Preface* have been conducted on the themes of casteism, humanism, existential crisis, degeneration of modern man, and the socio-cultural context of the text, and also on the form, such as the narrative style of postmodernism. Spatial and cultural studies of the novel evaluate how the text designs the place called Thachanakkara and its cultural and historical characteristics. Sabeena Banu's "Novelum Sthalavum: Thachanakkarayude Samskarika Bhoomishasthram" (2016) is a study in this regard. *Manushyanu Oru Aamukham: Patanangal* (2022) edited by Sethuparvathy S. is a collection of select critical readings on the novel that have been conducted ever since its publication. "Kudumbacharithravum Samoohyacharithravum" by N. Prabhakaran, "Deshavum Manushyarum Charithravum" by E. P. Rajagopalan, and "Entwined histories of caste and locale in 'A preface to the human'" by T. T. Sreekumar base their study on the socio-cultural context of the novel and the historical perspective it conveys. Broader perspectives focusing on the themes of the text such as the existential crisis of man, and the absurdity and hollowness of life are imbibed in writings such as "Noottanduneelathil Malayaliyude Vaikarikacharithram" by Prof. M. Leelavathi, "Jeevithathinu Oru Aamukham" by Indira Ashok, "Manushyamelam" by Dr. N. P. Vijayakrishnan, "Naagarikathakk Oru Aamukham" by Ajay P. Mangat,

“Ezhuthitheeratha Novelile Ezhuthitheernna Jeevitham” by Ravisankar S. Nair, and “Maranathinu Oru Aamukhamezhuthumbol” by Dr. V. Lissy Mathew. All of them re-assert the pessimistic tone of the text and applaud the novel as an exemplar of the contemporary state of man’s degeneration in all respects. Other articles such as “Manushyanu Oru Aamukham: Puthiya Novelezhuthinum” by T. D. Ramakrishnan, “*Manushyanu Oru Aamukham: Charithrarachanayude Sookshmaroopangal*” by Dr. M. S. Paul, and “Tharavattu Puranavum Manushyajeevithalakshyadharmangalum: Oru Vichinthanam” by Sr. Jesmi focus on the narrative style of postmodernism in the novel. “Athikadhanathinte Charithrapaatangal” by Manju K. is another article (that does not form a part of this collection) that examines the unique style of postmodernism that the text employs.

Thematic studies on space, spatiality, nation, nationality, regionalism, and their link with culture by focusing on the larger places depicted in the texts taken for the study have emerged; however, their central concern has been the intersections of space with the notions of nation, nationality, history, historicity, globalisation, imagination, and nationalist politics. The existing literature lacks studies that exclusively focus on the notion of memory and identity. Most significantly, critical approaches integrating space/place, memory, and identity of its protagonists and/or narrators in a triadic framework have not emerged so far, which the research seeks to delve into.

Having established the objectives, the research gap, and the focal areas of the study in the introduction, the second chapter titled “Space, Memory, and the Self” aims to delineate and explicate the various theoretical and methodological tools adopted from Spatial Literary Studies, Memory Studies, and place-identity theories

to analyse the select novels. The third chapter titled “From Victim to Victor: Tracing Dasan’s Journey Beyond” is an analytical reading of Mukundan’s novel *On the banks* intending to identify the intrinsic connectivity between the identity of its protagonist Dasan, the inhabiting space, and his recollections at various points, which is expected to revise and reassess the prevalent readings of the text. The fourth chapter, “I remember, therefore I am”, is based on Madhavan’s novel *Litanies*, and it attempts to examine the integral role of memory and narrative in devising a particular sense of self for the speaking subject of the text. It delineates the engagement of the protagonist with the surrounding micro-spaces – in the form of assenting and dissenting encounters – and seeks to ascertain the construction of selfhood that opens a possibility to reconsider and reconfigure the explicit meanings the text offers. The fifth chapter titled “Epistles and Episodes: Echoes of Narrative Identity” is a structural and thematic analysis of Chandran’s novel *Preface* delving into the construction of narrative identity through a dialogue between memory, space, and the self of the protagonist. This is followed by a concluding chapter, recommendations for further research, and a section on the works cited in the thesis.

Chapter Two

Space, Memory, and the Self

A triadic framework connecting space, memory, and identity using insightful concepts from the theoretical disciplines of Spatial Literary Studies and Memory Studies, and from select identity theories (theories that link place/space and identity) is an efficient gateway to probe the construction of the identity of the protagonists of the selected texts in relation to various micro-spaces and diverse memories that are evoked. By introducing the historical background of each discipline in brief, the major concepts that are relevant to the study under each umbrella category are dealt with while some ideas are also placed at an intersection and in interaction with each other transcending the strict disciplinary boundaries to forge a holistic working paradigm.

Space is a concept that persistently permeates the lives, discourses, and thoughts of all beings and determines their selfhood, existence, and sustenance. It existed in the thinking of the ancient Greek masters, Plato and Aristotle, and has diffused across centuries seeping down to the present carrying varied and altered readings. Even though the term originated in the discourse of science, especially in Geography and Mathematics, it has widely been employed in other disciplines such as Humanities, Social Sciences, Philosophy, Phenomenology, Psychology, Architecture, Cultural Studies, and Anthropology and has acquired varied and diverse meanings and interpretations in the present. Theoretical, performative, and practical usage of the term in an interdisciplinary manner has rendered fluidity and

dynamism to it and has led to the subversion of binaries and fixed conceptualisations of the world. Providing a single, all-encompassing definition for the term is a tedious task as objective, scientific, subjective, social, political, personal, and lived aspects, practices, and conceptions of the term widely spread across a large number of disciplines/fields are in vogue in the present. In general, the term has “a wide variety of uses denoting a period, quantity or interval of time or duration, as well as more common uses relating to notions of distance, area, extension, expanse, volume/dimensionality, a void/ gap, a cognitive realm, or outer space” (Merriman 6). As the geographer Neil Smith says, “[I]t is a vague concept with a multiplicity of sometimes contradictory meanings” (66). The major dimensions of space that have emerged so far are Euclidean space, Cartesian space (proposed by Rene Descartes), absolute space (theorised by Newton), relative space (developed by Gottfried Von Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, and later used by David Harvey and Gilles Deleuze), mental or psychic space, lived space or existential space (developed by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty in the philosophical and phenomenological traditions, which was later taken up by Casey and Jeff Malpas for their theory of embodiment, and also contextually altered by Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja in the sociological-Marxist tradition), social space (used by sociologists such as Emile Durkheim and Pierre Bourdieu and anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss) and relational space (used in the post-structuralist and post-humanist tradition by thinkers like Harvey and Doreen Massey). It can be noted that the term is employed on both humanistic, phenomenological, and existential grounds and more politically inflected grounds - examining the power-politics and identity-politics related to space - as reflected in Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and Soja.

Foucault famously proclaimed in 1967, “The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space” (22), which echoed other scholars of the time who observed that even though spatial consciousness or spatiality was in vogue since the classical times, the notion of space had only been treated as a background/backdrop, a container, and as a dead, immobile, and fixed entity over the more fluid, lively, and dynamic notions of time and history. The spatial turn that emerged in the humanities and social sciences to salvage space from its devalued status during the postmodern period, the 1970s and the 80s, with a renewed interest in the notions of space and place over time and its associated temporal notions, saw the divergence of the study to various branches such as Humanistic Geography, Environmental Psychology, Urban Literary Studies, and Postcolonial-Global-Transnational Studies. Before delineating the branches and concepts significant to the present study, the terms ‘space’ and ‘place’ can be dealt with through their existing definitions. While some scholars of spatial studies prefer one term over the other, some others use them interchangeably, and the historical backdrop of the terms is always explicated together. Although the distinction and similarities between the two have a long history in diverse disciplines such as science, philosophy, sociology, phenomenology, geometry, and geography, and their in-depth detailing is beyond the scope of this research, a quick glance at a few definitions that are valid for this study can be conducted. According to Merriman, the ancient philosophers Plato and Aristotle used the terms *chora* and *topos* respectively to refer to the geographical place, and the present usage of the term ‘space’ is said to be derived from *topos* (5). The major distinction between the two that can be traced in the spatial discourses that have emerged so far is that while space is considered vacuum, abstract, and

general, place is conceived of as concrete, particular, and rooted; Relph, Tim Cresswell, Casey, to name a few, have proposed their theories in this tradition (8, 29; 100, 112-113; “Between Geography and Philosophy” 683). In abstract spatial analysis, the geometric account of place, places are considered “nodes in space” that reflect “the spatial imprint of universal physical, social and economic processes” while in concrete environmental analysis, the phenomenological conception of place, places are significant “milieux that exercise a mediating role on physical, social and economic processes” (Agnew 317). Yi-Fu Tuan, the American-Chinese Humanistic Geographer, regards place as a ‘pause’, a moment of respite, and associates it with inhabited space, “security and stability”, and links space with movement, “openness” and “freedom” (*Space and Place* 6). For Casey, space is the “volumetric void in which things (including human beings) are positioned”, while place is “the immediate environment of [the] lived body - an arena of action that is at once physical and historical, social and cultural” (“Between Geography and Philosophy” 683). In the same line, R. B. Bechtel and A. Churchman, the Environmental Psychologists, conceive of space as an abstract entity, whereas place as that which holds “lived” and experiential realms (108).

A few definitions of space and place considered relevant for the research need some attention at this juncture. Michael Rios, Leonardo Vazquez, and Lucrezia Miranda define place as, “territorialized local communities, collective memories associated with territory, claims of authenticity by local actors, phenomenological associations with locales, and social relations among people in territorial communities” and as “a setting for the everyday, the location of ideas and practices, and identity produced by place” (5). For Lynn A. Staeheli, place is “a context or

setting, in relational terms”, “an outcome or product of processes”, and is “something active and dynamic” (159). For her, apart from being a physical location, place is a “social location” that designates people “within webs of cultural, social, economic, and political relationships that shape their identities, or positionalities” (160). In his work *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005), Lawrence Buell defines ‘place’ as “space that is bounded and marked as humanly meaningful through personal attachment, social relations, and physiographic distinctiveness” and regards placeness as “co-constituted environmentally, socially, and phenomenologically through acts of perception” (145).

Coming to space, Massey, the British geographer, conceptualises it in three ways: first, as “the product of relations (including the absence of relations)” and as a “complexity of networks, links, exchanges, [and] connections”; secondly, as an entity that carries “the dimension of multiplicity”; thirdly, as that which is “in a process of being made” and “is always under construction” (“Concepts” 17). Michel de Certeau, the French theorist, in his work *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), distinguishes between space and place using the terms *espace* and *lieu* respectively. For him, place “is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence”, while space “is composed of intersections of mobile elements” and “occurs as the effect produced by operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities”. More precisely, he states, “[S]pace is a practiced place. . . i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs” (117). With the advancement of information technology and the popularity of networking using the internet, virtual space became important and the term space began to gain the upper

hand over place to signify, more assertively, a fluid platform of interactions, exchanges, and dialogues leading to the production and consumption of meanings and discourses.

Evidently, some discourses and scholars attribute particularity, concreteness, and fixity to the term place and dynamicity and elusiveness to space, whereas some others use the terms in interchangeable and indistinguishable ways treating the line of differentiation between the two as narrow. The common ground that connects both is the existence of interrelations, networks, and relationships that provide meaning and identity to the people who inhabit them. There exists a purely subjective realm to the process of people experiencing a place/space and constructing the meaning of their selves. In tune with these definitions, the thesis employs the terms 'space' and 'place' as products and processes, a sum total of relations, and as active, dynamic agents that vitally influence people and constitute their sense of selves or selfhood. The term 'space' which is more commonly employed in the analysis of the primary texts will stick to the definitions proposed by Massey and de Certeau, with the objective of signifying a metaphorical plane - a certain symbolic, connotative, and second-level meaning - over the literal or first-level meaning that arises from the material relations that constitute the geographical 'place'. Also, the ideas of openness, fluidity, dynamism, and free flow of meanings are denoted through the employment of the term. For the spatial and memory analysis of the novels, a framework by integrating significant theoretical concepts from Humanistic Geography, Environmental Psychology, and Memory Studies is devised. Each concept is dealt with separately and the methodological framework integrating them is provided afterwards.

It is noteworthy that what binds the diverse spatial theories and their practitioners is their agreement on the integral relationship between space/place and its people's identity. Humanistic Geography is a branch that collates humans and their lived-in environment to examine their intricate interrelationship, and it addresses space and place as an integral part of designing one's sense of self or identity. The existence as a human, in an existential and phenomenological perspective, is the focal area of the discipline. According to Tuan, "Humanistic geography achieves an understanding of the human world by studying people's relations with nature, their geographical behavior as well as their feelings and ideas in regard to space and place" ("Humanistic Geography" 266), which marks the focus of the discipline on the lived and subjective experiences of people in connection with the places they inhabit. Tuan in *Space and Place* (1976) and Relph in *Place and Placelessness* (1976) together inaugurated an approach to geography by conflating the branches of philosophy and phenomenology. Delving into the complexities and multidimensionality of the interactions between man and his geographical world, the discipline brings to the fore "the existential dimension of an em-placed subject" and takes the idea of place "as a field of care, a locus of emotional attachment" (Antonsich 121). It later branched out into Cultural Geography, Phenomenological Geography, Political Geography, Existentialist Geography, Feminist Geography, and others intending to incorporate the socio-political aspects of human interaction. It can also be observed that it was with the arrival of Humanistic Geography that the ancient conceptions of space as immobile and as a mere container were subverted through the projection of its lived, active, and dynamic aspects across the planes of human interactions. Apart from Tuan and

Relph, Christian Norberg-Schulz, Martin Buber, and Marwyn Samuels are also some of the prominent figures in the field.

A key argument that the thesis endeavours to raise is the nature of the relationship that the protagonist maintains with his/her inhabiting place. Two significant terms in vogue in Humanistic Geography to delineate the binary aspects of attachment with and detachment from a place/space are topophilia and topophobia, which signify the dualistic and conflicting sentiments of affinity and disaffection that an individual breeds towards a place/space respectively.

“Topophilia” is a term coined by Tuan in *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception* (1974) using the Greek terms *topos* and *philia* (love), and it is defined as “all of the human being’s affective ties with the material environment” which can vary “from the fleeting pleasure one gets from a view to the equally fleeting but far more intense sense of beauty that is suddenly revealed”, and here place is conceived as “home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood” (93). The affinity for the place – “the love of place” - is said to emerge from aesthetic pleasure (obtained from a close engagement with nature), physical proximity, “awareness of the past”, and “patriotic rhetoric”, which is “the call of the roots of a community” (99). The profound emotional ties that one develops with a particular place/space through close identification or assimilation with the same is designated by the term and the critic Beatriz Muñoz González tags it as “a pleasurable habitat” (194). The antithetical postulation of topophilia is indicated by the term topophobia, which refers to the feeling of fear, hatred, and disgust that a person develops for the places/spaces of interaction due to unprecedented circumstances. Although Tuan does not use the term per se, he devotes an entire book, *Landscapes of Fear* (1979),

to explicate the element of fear that all beings carry, where he draws the “anxiety [they develop] in strange settings or on social occasions” and different types of fear such as “dread of corpses and of the supernatural; fear of disease, war, and natural calamities” and many others (3). In his work *Topophobia: Place, Narrative, and the Spatial Imagination* (2019), Robert T. Tally, Jr., the Geocritic, records topophobia as “the cartographic anxiety or sense of bewilderment” experienced by an alienated subject in his/her interaction with a space/place. The sentiment is also recorded by the feeling of “being lost” or “being uncomfortable in a place” (Tally 23), and even the emotions of anxiety, consternation, and disgust that familiar spaces such as home engender in people are attested to the term (25). The resultant action of topophobia is the urge of the subject to distinguish, separate, or sever oneself from the environment. Clearly, it is the subjective experiences of an individual with the spaces/places around her/him that contribute to the production of these feelings, and they significantly influence the identity of the persona.

Urban scholars/theorists (Daniel O’Hare, Peter Murphy), architects (Jean-Louis Cohen, Neil Leach, Vittorio Gregotti, and Paul Hogben), and geographers (Relph, David Seamon, Gaston Bachelard, Cresswell, Agnew, and Tally) have extensively employed the terms in their respective discourses conducting sociological, empirical, and literary studies of various kinds. Even though the discipline of Humanistic Geography had initially encountered criticism from scholars like D. Gregory that it is blind “towards the materiality of social life” (qtd. in Antonsich 121), with the emergence of Critical Human Geography that opened to other disciplines such as Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Postcolonial theory, and other interdisciplinary theoretical contributions and studies, it has gained

renewed prominence in the recent times. The research resorts to employing the terms topophilia and topophobia to analyse the alternate ‘topophilic’ and ‘topophobic’ sentiments cultivated by the protagonists as they move across various micro-spaces within their respective macro-spaces or outside of it and to elucidate their resultant identity-construction.

Along with these, another useful term adopted for the study is “topophrenia”, coined by Tally by combining the existing concepts of topophilia and topophobia to refer to a particular sense of place that dominates all thinking of humans (1-2). As Tally puts it:

[T]he pervasive place-mindedness infusing our subjective experience in and apprehension of the world is characterized by a profound sense of unease, anxiety, or discontent. Even in the more familiar or homey (*Heimlich*) zones of being-in-the world, we are nevertheless still cognizant of, and affected by, [a] sense of estrangement. . . . To put it differently, even when we are “at home”, we maintain our awareness of the unfamiliar, the *unheimlich*, and a subtle, yet visceral feeling of spatial anxiety subtends our thoughts and actions. (25)

Here, the admixed sentiments of love for and fear of a place that one simultaneously breeds are explicated. Tally proposes the concept by contextualising displacement, mobility, and spatial shifts that individuals encounter in their everyday life, and it gains immense significance for the thesis that navigates the identity of the protagonists in connection with their inhabiting spaces/places.

A key identity-theory proposed by Neil Leach, the British architect, that forms the crux of the argument raised in the thesis needs to be mentioned in

connection with the terms discussed. Although the formation of identity related to a space/ place has been a concern of humanistic geographers and environmental psychologists – the terms ‘place attachment’, ‘sense of place’, and ‘place-identity’ are significant in this sense and will be discussed in detail later – the notion of identity that Leach proposes can be seen as unique and unrelated to any other place-identity theory proposed till then, for its creative employment of the notions of topophilia and topophobia. In his essay “The Role of the Environment in the Formation of Identity”, Leach proposes his theory based on two essays, namely, “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia” by the French social theorist Roger Caillois and “The Mirror Stage” by Lacan, through which he emphasises the integral role a place or environment plays in determining the identity of a being. Leach briefs Caillois’s observations about how an organism attempts to camouflage itself from its surroundings and predators by mimicking the environment within which it lives. For Caillois, this act of mimicking is an intermediary phase in the ultimate process of “assimilation to the surroundings” (qtd. in Leach 32) which leads the being to lose itself and get caught in a state of confusion and crisis with regard to its sense of self and existence. Leach explains:

The inability to distinguish oneself from the environment. . . leads to a condition of crisis. . . . The reason why this condition is problematic is that identity depends on the ability of an organism to *distinguish* itself from its surroundings. . . . Without this ability. . . we descend into a condition that Caillois describes as “legendary psychasthenia. . . . Psychasthenia can be defined as a weakening of the sense of self, that is brought about by the erosion of distinction between the self and the environment. (33)

For Leach, Caillois challenges and subverts the established assumption that mimicry is an act of preserving the self, an act of successful survival, by postulating that assimilation, which involves the process of striking oneself indistinguishably similar with the surroundings, culminates in “a form of depersonalization” and “a surrendering of our sense of self”. He also records that even though Caillois postulated his theory in the context of organisms and their environment, “he is addressing the question of *human* behaviour”, the question of how humans relate to and construct their identity in relation to their living environment (34).

Leach then analyses Lacan’s “The Mirror Stage”, labelling the essay as a corollary to Caillois’s proposition, as indicating “a discovery of the self” opposed to the latter’s idea of the loss of the self (34). Lacan’s formulation of the mirror stage, where a child engages in an imaginary identification with its image on the mirror opposite to it, is considered crucial in the formation of the ego and subjectivity in the life of an individual. Leach specifically notes that the identification is an ““alienating” identification, in that the subject. . . identifies with itself objectively as an *imago* - and sets the scene for potential secondary identifications” (35). The mirror stage, according to Leach, provides the subject an opportunity to alienate the self and mark the distinction only to connect with the external world later, and he underscores the idea that “[i]dentity is born of an interaction between the self and the other, as a continual process of attraction and repulsion” (36). In this sense, it is also a critique of Caillois’s proposition that mimicry is only and always a dissolution of the self.

In the light of these two essays, Leach posits that identity is the result of one’s capacity to first establish a connection with the external environment, an

absence of which will lead to a “melancholic self-withdrawal”, and to later distinguish from it, an absence of which will lead to a “loss of self in the other” (39), where the “separation presupposes and generates the capacity for further identification” (37). As he notes:

The condition of identity is never a static one. It resides neither in the state of being connected, nor in the state of being distinct. Rather it involves in a continual shuttling between these two conditions, a keeping alive of the very possibility of change. Identity should be viewed as an interactive process of becoming – of becoming one with the world, and of becoming distinct from that world - where both states are locked into a mechanism of reciprocal presupposition, and are interdependent. It is only by becoming similar that a sense of distinction can be envisioned, while it is only by becoming distinct that a sense of connection can be postulated. (39)

Stating thus, Leach brings in the dualistic, mutually opposing yet complementary tendencies at work in the process of identity-formation. He affirms that the self is the product of “a direct identification with the environment - a form of *topophilia*” and “the urge to distinguish the self from that environment - a form of *topophobia*” (40). It can be observed that Leach’s formulation of identity points at an interstitial or in-between nature/form that identity assumes as it constantly shifts between *topophilia* and *topophobia*: it is neither a state of permanent or absolute identification with nor a state of absolute severance from places/spaces, but is the very process of change, the fluid state of in-betweenness. The interstitial aspect of Leach’s theory is adopted as an efficient tool to analyse the identity-construction of the protagonists in relation to diverse spaces and memories evoked.

The interstitial has been a field of increased interest in the modernist-postmodernist discourses, especially in relation to postcoloniality. Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity, the notion of "insider's outsideness", Gloria Anzaldua's theory of borderlands, and bell hooks's concept of the margins are the prominent theories in relation to hybridity and interstitiality that have emerged in the postcolonial context. In the discussion on interstitiality, the concept of liminality is one that gains immense significance in the research.

The idea of the "liminal" originated in the French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep's work, *Les Rites de Passage* (1909) translated as *The Rites of Passage* (1960), as the second phase of "transition" in "the rites of passage" in ancient tribal societies and religious cultures (11). The concept of the liminal was later extensively developed by Victor Turner, the British anthropologist, in his work *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969) to study larger societies - secular cultures and communities - and moments of transitions that span across them. His work primarily centred on the Ndembu tribe of Africa which later expanded to other cultural systems. In Turner's reading of van Gennep, *rites de passage* are "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age" and they signify a transition (94). Following van Gennep, Turner records the three phases in this process as follows: "separation, margin (or *limen*, signifying "threshold" in Latin), and aggregation" (94). The first consists of "symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions ("a state"), or from both", the liminal phase is one of ambiguity that does not carry the attributes of other phases, and the third phase stands for a reaggregation or reincorporation of the subject into

the earlier structure (94). It is the liminal phase to which Turner turns his attention and it is taken as a significant tool to negotiate the identity-construction of the protagonists taken for study. Turner's description of the term is as follows:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae (“threshold people”) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. . . . Thus liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility. . . and to an eclipse of the sun or moon. (95)

A significant feature of the liminal phase, as Turner identifies, is that it is unbounded, fluid, dynamic, unstructured, and open to new possibilities of change. The element of transformation, the renewal of identity, that characterises the period springs from the liberation that an individual gains from the structural constraints imposed by the larger society. As opposed to the norms, power, hierarchy, and top-down authority maintained by the established structure, the liminal phase stirs up the property of “anti-structure”, where the entity is temporarily freed from any mandatory role-playing stipulated by the larger structure and prepares for a transformation from the present state. As Bjørn Thomassen states, it is “a state of suspense, a moment of freedom between two structured world-views or institutional arrangements” (*Liminality* 7). Analysing one of the rituals of the Ndembu tribe, Turner professes that in the liminal phase, “submissiveness and silence” are the attributes of the liminal entity (103), but as Sarah Gilead observes, “[T]hese negative

features (negative with respect to ordinary "structural" thinking) carry a transformative power” for the occupant of the liminal state (182). Despite the temporary silence that the subject assumes in the liminal phase, it curiously and paradoxically holds a transformative potential within.

In his article “Uses and Meanings of Liminality”, Thomassen states different types of liminal experiences: in the case of an individual, unexpected events like “death, divorce, [and] illness” affecting one’s life or “individualized ritual passage (baptism, ritual passage to womanhood. . . [etc])” and critical stages of life such as “puberty or teenage” make them occupy the state of liminality; in the case of a group, ethnic and social minorities such as transgenders and immigrants, and events like graduation ceremonies are considered liminal; in the case of a society, wars and revolutionary periods, and unprecedented events like a plague or a natural disaster produce the state of liminality (17). The positionality in the interstices is granted by critical and decisive life-experiences and to those who are “standing outside normality” such as “artists or writers” at the level of an individual (18).

Ever since the term came into vogue, liminality has been a popular tool for theorists and scholars in diverse fields such as Literary Studies, Cultural Studies, Postcolonial and Postmodernist discourses, Performance and Theatre Studies, and Media Studies. Connecting the notions of transition, transformation, transgression, in-betweenness, marginality, and interstitiality, liminality has been symbolically employed in the case of individuals (real and fictional), groups, communities (diasporic and immigrants), and societies to register changing moments, epochs, and crucial periods, and it has also found a place in cross-disciplinary studies and non-European contexts. A few examples in this sense are *Contemporary Trauma*

Narratives: Liminality and the Ethics of Form (2014) edited by Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega, *Landscapes of Liminality: Between Space and Place* (2016) edited by Dara Downey, Ian Kinane, and Elizabeth Parker, *Liminality, Hybridity, and American Women's Literature: Thresholds in Women's Writing* (2018) edited by Kristin J. Jacobson, K. Allukian, Rickie-Ann Legleitner, and L. Allison, and *Beyond the Threshold: Explorations of Liminality in Literature* (2007) edited by Hein Viljoen and Chris N. van der Merwe based on South African literature. Some articles such as "Indeterminate Liminality and the Refugee Journey: Partition and Hindu Sindhi Women's Life Narratives" (2022) by Radhika Mathrani Chakraborty, "Narrating "India": Liminal Narratives of Northeast and Assertion of Identity" (2022) by Liji Varghese, and "The Concept of Liminality as a Theoretical Tool in Literary Memory Studies: Liminal Aspects of Memory in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*" (2022) by Claudia Mueller-Greene serve as examples of the application of the notion of liminality within narrative and cultural contexts to study Indian literature. In this sense, the term is considered a valid tool in approaching the select texts from Malayalam literature. Thomassen's observation that "liminality serve[s] not only to identify the importance of in-between periods, but also to illuminate the human reactions to liminal experiences [such as] the ways in which personality was shaped by liminality, the sudden foregrounding of agency, and the sometimes dramatic tying together of thought and experience" (*Liminality* 201), serves as the key to examine the primary texts.

One prominent criticism that the concept encountered is from Barry Stephenson, a theorist with a keen interest in Performance Studies and Religious Studies, who observes three limits of the employment of the term in the field of

Performance Studies: one, “the erasure of ritualized practice within the liminality paradigm” (1), two, the detachment of the term from its “original theoretical framework, to become ‘free floating’” and three, the valorisation of anti-structural liminality “at the expense of norms, institutions, and structures” by placing the two in binary opposition (3). It should be noted that the criticism is not generalised but rather arises from the writer’s analysis of the field of Performance Studies that is centred on real-life, lived practices. The thesis lays its focus on a world of fiction open to endless interpretations or readings, where liminality may or may not gain the upper hand, structures may or may not be subverted and the notions of ‘rituals’ or ‘rites’ can achieve symbolic or metaphorical status. As Thomassen states, “[I]t by no means follows that all these [liminal] experiences are demarcated with a transition *rite* – at least not the same kind of clearly recognizable and institutionalized rites with identifiable ceremony masters, as studied in the work of van Gennepe” (“Uses” 17). In the analysis, therefore, the original theoretical framework is attempted to be preserved, but it is symbolically channelised to approach and analyse the states occupied by the protagonists, which is expected to add a novel reading-angle to the existing ones.

The research employs Tuan’s propositions of topophilia and topophobia, Leach’s identity-theory, and Turner’s conception of liminality together to build a framework to negotiate the construction of the identity of the protagonists. It is an efficient framework for establishing the subjects as holding or exerting the possibility of agency, though not absolute agency, as the selected texts come to a close.

In connection with topophilia, a specific reference to the domestic or familial space - the home - as a site of the conflicting sentiments of attachment and detachment, of opposing ideologies and identities, resulting in the production of a space of hybridity and polyvalency rather than one of purity or singularity of meaning, is also brought under study. The space as a vital point of contact for an individual providing warmth, security, stability, and boundless affection, and as a prime determiner of one's identity has been a widely used notion in spatial studies. According to Jacobson, "Home is the pivot for the ingressive and egressive character of our way of being-in-the-world" (36), which highlights the significance of the space as a springboard for inculcating values, morals, and preachings for its inhabitant and as that which asserts considerable influence over an individual by designing and determining his/her demeanour and perceptions. Elizabeth H. Jones, the British author, talks about "the importance of affective investment" while examining the concept of home, and she associates it with the idea of "cultural belonging" (59), thereby emphasising the layers of social and emotional meaning that surpass its mere material and physical structure. Later studies began to incorporate the conflictual and contested nature of home by throwing light on the confining and imprisoning experiences that it offers to the inhabitants due to socio-political and cultural shifts, altered temperaments, ideologies, and attitudes. M. Jackson in his work *At Home in the World* (1995) states that home "always begets its own negation" and that it "may evoke security in one context and seem confining in another" (qtd. in Mallett 70). González also shares the ideas of the site as holding dualistic sentiments, where the house is imagined "as a prison, as a stressful place" but also that which evokes "peace and tranquility" (203). In *Locating the Destitute: Space and Identity in*

Caribbean Fiction (2014), Stanka Radović mentions Anthony Vidler's work *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992), a study on the uncanny and unhomey domestic spaces of the nineteenth-century narrative by delving into the spatial production of meaning. Radović records Vidler's opinion that there are spaces such as houses - tagged as uncanny by the author - that provide their inhabitants with the contradictory psychological experiences of familiarity and threat, of safety and slaughter (52). In a similar line, Alison Blunt and Ann Varley state that home is "a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear", where "meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life" are largely invested (3).

In the light of these observations, the engagement of the protagonists of the selected texts with their respective domestic spaces is analysed and their comforting and conflicting influences on them are highlighted laying specific focus on the role of the same in shaping their identities. How the earlier conception of the domestic space as static and fixed is challenged by this will be evident through the analysis. Apart from the take on home as a site of hybrid emotions, it is also studied as a space of active remembrance, where its role in determining and devising a person's identity in peculiar ways through the transmission of narratives such as intergenerational family stories, myths, folktales, traditions, and beliefs is brought to the fore.

Environmental Psychology is a discipline corollary to Humanistic Geography that seeks the functioning of the intricate relationship between man and his place/space when geographers began to resort more to the social side of subjectivity. Evident from the term, human psychology in relation to the

environment is the central field of analysis here. It is Environmental Psychology that proposes and explores the concepts of place attachment, place-identity, sense of place, and place dependence. Marco Antonsich observes that “there is no general agreement among psychologists about the definition of each of these concepts” (122), yet some common characteristics and features of the terms emerge.

Propounded by Harold M. Proshansky and colleagues during the early 1980s, “place-identity” refers to the ways in which a person's sense of self and personal identity are shaped by the places they inhabit or feel connected to. Proshansky *et al.* call place-identity “a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives” (“Place-identity” 59). In the article “The City and Self-Identity”, Proshansky states that it is precisely “those dimensions of self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills, and behavioral tendencies” (155). “Place Attachment” is closely related to place-identity, signifying “a positive, affective bond people form with particular places where they feel comfortable and safe and desire to maintain their connection” (Cross 494). Various theorists and thinkers have explicated the term as indicating a sense of belongingness, for its existence as a space of security, stability, peace, and comfort for the individuals on both physical and symbolic planes (Giuliani and Feldman 271; Seamon 12). It also points out the emotional, affective, and cognitive psychological association that people maintain with the land they reside in and it is essentially a symbolic relationship. Attachment to a place is evoked through a transformative experience whereby a neutral space is rendered culturally significant

and meaningful. Setha Low, the American anthropologist, in her article “Symbolic Ties That Bind: Place Attachment in the Plaza”, proposes six kinds of place attachment, such as “genealogical linkage”, “linkage through loss of land or destruction of community, economic linkage”, “cosmological linkage”, linkage through religious and cultural events, and “narrative linkage” (166). What is relevant to the present research is the narrative linkage. According to Low, “Narrative, that is, the telling of stories, usually origin myths, but also family histories and political accounts, can function as a type of cultural place attachment in that people's linkage to the land is through the vehicle of the story and identified through place naming and language” (173-174). This essentially throws light on the significance of stories and oral tales in the construction of one's selfhood. Andrés Di Masso, John Dixon, and Kevin Durrheim record the crucial role narratives play in moulding a person's identity by citing Robert Sabin who proposed the “narrative principle of emplotment”, whereby the formation of “a coherent sense of self” through storytelling by a self-location “in material and symbolic environments” is referred to, and also mentioning William Riley who focused on how people construct an internal narrative by setting private tales of fantasy connected with the occupied landscape (78). Evidently, these propositions indicate the function of language in constructing the inhabited or lived experiences of people in connection to their respective places. The interrelationship between storytelling and identity is a significant focal area in all three texts under study. How place-identity and place attachment are formed in the protagonists through the stories imparted by ancestors – mythical and historical accounts – and how this produces topophilia in them is attempted to be traced in the study.

Relph is widely known for his formulation of theoretical concepts connected to the lived, experiential realm of human life. He classifies and categorises various kinds of spaces such as perceptual space, existential space, and sacred space, and conceptualises human-centred experiences with a place through the terms “behavioural insideness”, “existential insideness”, and “existential outsideness” (51-55). Of these, ‘existential insideness’ is relevant to the study for its formulation of the relation between a person’s identity and place. According to Relph, existential insideness is the “most fundamental form of insideness in which a place is experienced without deliberate and self-conscious reflection yet is full with significances” and “the insideness that most people experience when they are at home and in their own town or region.” It “characterizes belonging to a place and the deep and complete identity with a place. . .” (55). Another concept that lies close to this is “sense of place” coined by Cresswell, another humanistic geographer, which is defined as “the meanings, both individual and shared, that are associated with a place” (113). What Cresswell underscores through the term is the way an inhabitant engages in a meaning-making process through his/her interactions with a place and the integral bond one maintains with it. Closely connected to these two terms is Casey’s formulation of the term “geographical self”. Casey’s focus is on the bodily experienced place, “the bodily basis of [the] self’s inhabitation of places in a circumambient landscape”, and by integrating the disciplines of Geography and Philosophy, he employs the term to refer to “the nature of the human subject who is oriented and situated in place” (“Between Geography and Philosophy” 683). In this research, where the mobility of the protagonists across various spaces within the larger socio-cultural space is looked into, these concepts gain immense significance

as they draw the interrelationship between identity and attachment built with the inhabiting place.

Another set of theories employed for the study belongs to the Marxist and urban geographers Lefebvre and Soja who radically redefined the conventional or traditional conception of spaces through their momentous works, *The Production of Space* (1974) and *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996) respectively. Lefebvre, the Marxist social theorist and spatial analyst, makes a notable contribution to the existing epistemology of space by analysing the process of urbanisation through a postmodernist lens and developing a spatial theory for contemporary urban geographical research. He proposes a triadic conception of space through the coinages, “spatial practice”, “representations of space” and “representational space”. Spatial practice, also tagged as the “perceived” or the “physical” space, refers to the ways in which inhabiting subjects interact with the social space that “secretes that society’s space” and that “propounds and presupposes” the space “in a dialectical interaction” (*Production* 38). The second category of space that Lefebvre propounds, alternatively labelled as “conceived space” and “mental space”, arises from the domain of urban planners, engineers, and other technocrats who delineate and design spaces through maps and similar media. He therefore calls it a “dominant space” (39) and a space that constitutes “the history of ideologies” (116). The third category of space is the “lived” or “social space”, “the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols, and utopias” (12). Also labelled as “representational space or spaces of representation”, Lefebvre conceptualises it as “the space of ‘inhabitants’

and ‘users’,” such as writers, artists, and philosophers, and as the one “directly lived through its associated images and symbols”; for him, it is “the dominated - and hence passively experienced - space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” by rising to the state of a counterspace (*Production* 39) and hence linked to the “clandestine or underground side of social life”, as Soja cites in *Thirdspace* (67). All revolutionary initiatives and social movements against the order of dominance that create significant repercussions sprout from this lived, social space that occupies the periphery or marginality, and hence it is envisioned as “the terrain for the generation of ‘counterspaces,’” and as the space “for struggle, liberation, [and] emancipation” (Soja, *Thirdspace* 68). Soja sees Lefebvre as breaking down the binary thinking in spatial discourses – such as “subject-object, mental-material. . . local-global, center-periphery, agency-structure” - as distinguishable from the physical and mental spaces and facilitating an all-encompassing mode of spatial thinking (60).

Geographers, urban theorists, and literary scholars have been extensively using Lefebvre's spatial critique in political, social, and literary discourses and it is also a popular theoretical tool in interdisciplinary fields of study. Anzaldúa's concept of the “borderlands”, hooks's theory of “margin”, and Bhabha's notion of “in-between” space and hybridity have all been influenced and inspired by Lefebvre's lived space. Despite its wide acceptance, the notion is not devoid of criticism. The abstract, vague, and complicated presentation of Lefebvre's spatial theory, as pointed out by Andy Merrifield in *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (108-111), is an example in this regard. Even though Lefebvre's core text carries complexity and vagueness to a certain extent, many interpreters and reviewers - Rob

Shields, Stuart Elden, Nathaniel Coleman, Don Mitchell, and Isabel Armstrong to name a few - have systematically studied the text and reduced its explicit unreadability. The spatial triad has been universally adopted in non-European contexts – in regional literary and urban studies in African, South Asian, Latin American, and Australian contexts - with the major emphasis on the politics of spatiality. *Spaces of Global Cultures: Architecture, Urbanism, Identity* (2004) by Anthony King, where African, Asian, and Latin American cultures are focused, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (2012) by David Harvey, and *Cities and Inequalities in a Global and Neoliberal World* (2015) edited by Faranak Miraftab, David Wilson, and Ken Salo are some of the works that utilise Lefebvre in non-European contexts. While employing the concept in other cultures, the unique, individualised socio-cultural specificities of the place are reflected in the way the different spaces are produced. Even though there is no explicit or direct take on the notion of human agency in Lefebvre, it is noteworthy that in the lived space, there is a considerable exercise of human agency and individualism, through which the transformation of the perceived and conceived spaces into an active counterspace is brought into effect. Despite the criticisms raised, Lefebvre's works are highly cited and adopted for contemporary studies on urban, global, and literary/fictional spaces.

Soja's formulation of the "Thirdspace" is inspired by Lefebvre's notion of lived or social space. For him, Lefebvre's formulation of the spatial triad by "linking historicity, sociality, and spatiality in a strategically balanced and transdisciplinary "triple dialectic" is an extraordinary attempt at foregrounding space unlike any other theorists till then (*Thirdspace* 6). He also admires Lefebvre for redefining the

social relations of production using a Marxist lens, for reconceptualising the centre-periphery relations of power, and for disrupting the logic or practice of binary thinking on spatial relations that had existed until then (*Thirdspace* 62). Drawing on Lefebvre's central argument – which Soja states as “the ontological, epistemological, and theoretical rebalancing of spatiality, historicity, and sociality as all-embracing dimensions of human life” – and clubbing it with the critical methodology named as “thirthing-as-Othering” devised by himself, Soja proposes a “trialectics of spaces” which is “not just a triple dialectic but also a mode of dialectical reasoning that is more inherently spatial than the conventional temporally-defined dialectics of Hegel or Marx” (10). He resorts to critically explaining and evaluating Lefebvre's rather vague and abstract description of the spatial triad by introducing three forms of spaces such as the “Firstspace” (physical/concrete/perceived space), the “Secondspace” (imagined/conceived/abstract space), and the “Thirdspace” (lived space). In tune with the first two spaces envisioned by Lefebvre, the firstspace is defined as that which is “fixed mainly on the concrete materiality of spatial forms, on things that can be empirically mapped” (*Thirdspace* 10), and the secondspace is composed of the “ideas about space. . . [and] thoughtful representations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms” (10).

For the research, the third category is of immense importance. Soja terms Lefebvre's third category as “an-Other term, a third possibility or “moment” that consists of both the perceived and conceived spaces but indicates not just a position of in-betweenness or a combination of the two but an “all-inclusive continuum” that deflates all sorts of binary formulations as the “either/or” to include “the logic of

both/and also” (*Thirdspace* 60). The lived space is thus conceived “*as a strategic location* from which to encompass, understand, and potentially transform all spaces simultaneously” (68). Rooted in this concept, the thirdspace is imagined as a liberated platform that incorporates and holds together mutually conflicting and contradictory ideas, visions, and thoughts - “a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives” (5) – and is devised to radically transform the existing two-dimensional or binary-logic of spatiality. Soja defines the term as

the space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an “unimaginable universe” or as Lefebvre would put it, “the most general of products.”

Everything comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. (56-57)

As evident, Soja’s complex conception of the thirdspace is, on the one hand, distinguishable from the first and the second, and on the other hand, is a transcending composite of all spaces. Soja cites the spatial conceptions of Anzaldua, hooks, and Foucault (heterotopia) in connection with the discussion on the thirdspace to draw parallels and underlying relations (*Thirdspace* 127-133). There is a conspicuous underlying strain of resistance in the formulation – a scope for

generating counterspaces as Soja himself interprets Lefebvre's lived space – and this makes it an effective tool in evaluating and analysing specific spatial constructions in real, urban societies as well as in fictional worlds.

The notion of thirdspace faced both wide reception and criticism as soon as it gained the attention of the scholarly world. It became a popular theoretical tool in the fields of urban planning, architecture, cultural and literary studies with wide-ranging applications. Some of the major lines of criticism that the thirdspace had to face were the abstract, vague, and complicated delivery of the ideas, and the complexity of language employed in the text. Massey, in *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), places the argument that Soja's formulation of the spatial divisions is abstract (and not specific) and that it restricts one from applying it in concrete analyses of space (129-130). The employment of the theoretical formulations and contributions of Lefebvre and Soja have both been praised and critiqued; while they are found to strengthen his theoretical base, critics like Merrifield argue that there is overemphasis of theories in Soja that result in incoherence. In "The Extraordinary Voyages of Ed Soja: Inside the "Trialectics of Spatiality" (1999), a review of Soja's *Thirdspace*, Merrifield raises his voice against the ambiguous, remote, and indirect expression of ideas in the work, finds a problem with his mode of equating Lefebvre's notion of spatial practice with his coinage of the firstspace, and wonders how one can exercise the theory in a Baudrillardian universe (simulacra-simulacrum) where the distinction between real and imagined spaces becomes difficult (346-348).

Despite the threads of criticism directed against the concepts of thirdspace and lived space on the grounds of abstraction and vagueness, they form useful tools

in the spatial analyses of modernist and postmodernist texts. Any theory that seeks to condense the lived world in theoretical, philosophical, and metaphysical words would bring along vagueness and abstraction to a certain extent, but this does not prevent one from employing it in spatial studies and evaluating spatial discourses of varying kinds. In the present study, the primary texts are works of fiction – products of art and imagination that consist of abstract and elusive elements – that are far from ‘real world’ or empirical world but are largely faithful, ‘realistic’ representations of it. Therefore, the employment of the concepts in the research is found to be valid and relevant. Soja’s stance on the utility of the thirdspace - “all spaces can be seen as Thirdspaces or heterotopias depending on the scope of one’s critical geographical imagination, the perspective one has on how far one can reach with a critical spatial perspective” (“Interview” 114) – throws light on the possibility of critical application that the concept provides in any spatial discourse. Lived space and thirdspace are efficient tools in negotiating the production of meaning by the protagonists in the select texts as they engage with various spaces. How do the individuals construct meanings and engage in a ‘place-making’ process through their interpretative acts can be effectively grasped through these effective tools. An approach of this kind will help one understand the production of their identity or selfhood as well.

Other formulations of Lefebvre such as “deviant or diverted space” and “appropriated space” (*Production* 383, 164-166) are also found useful for the study. Armstrong, in her study of nineteenth-century English novels, states the definitions of the terms (originally described vaguely) with appreciable clarity. According to her, diverted space is conceived as the “space wrenched from power by individuals

and groups, almost always the dispossessed” and as “the space made by the outsider and the outcast” (19). Lefebvre grants such spaces a progressive aura projecting their possible potential for initiating emancipation or revolution. Armstrong notes that the notion of appropriated space, which is “adapted from Marx’s understanding of the self’s work on the world”, is the “space of limited *freedom within the capitalist project*”, for which Lefebvre displays the example of “a house owned by capital and the tenant’s freedom to decorate it” (20). Lefebvre’s delivery of the terms is rather vague and abstract, yet they can be employed to evince valid insights into certain spaces under consideration in the selected texts.

Foucault is a towering figure of the twentieth century who redefined the notions of space, power, and knowledge in his structural-poststructural analysis of contemporary society. In Foucault’s oeuvre of spatial studies, the formulation of heterotopia is of immense significance and is considered a path-breaking contribution to the corpus of modern and postmodern epistemology. The term originated in his lecture titled “Des Espaces Autres” delivered in 1967 which was published posthumously in 1984 in the French Journal *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*, which was later translated as “Of Other Spaces” by Jay Miskowiec in 1986. In his radical revision of the medieval theories of emplacement and the Galilean postulation of space of extension, he considers the epoch of space as “the epoch of simultaneity. . . the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed” (22). Foucault also conceives of spaces as heterogenous in opposition to the existing notion of homogeneity and subverts all kinds of binary oppositions (such as profane and sacred, open and closed) through

his novel theorisation, of which the notion of heterotopia gains significance in the research.

Foucault envisions heterotopias as those spaces with the “curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect” (24).

He defines it as follows:

[I]n every culture, in every civilization, [there are] real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society— which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites. . . that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. (24)

Real places that function to challenge and subvert the dominant, normative spatial order of society can be tagged as heterotopia. Foucault identifies six governing principles for heterotopia. Declaring at the outset that there are no standard norms for determining the criteria of such a place, he resorts to classifying it into two: heterotopias of crisis and heterotopias of deviation. By the term heterotopias of crisis, he refers to “privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc” (24). According to him, this category is gradually disappearing and is taken over by heterotopias of deviation, “those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed”, and he cites prisons, rest homes,

and psychiatric hospital as its examples (25). As the second principle, Foucault articulates that society can alter the nature of functioning of existing heterotopia “according to the synchrony of culture” for which cemeteries are given as a prominent example (25). In the third principle, the possibility of juxtaposing multiple places in a single real place such as the theatre or cinema, where a set of places that are estranged or dissimilar to one another are collated on the stage or screen, is brought in (26). To point out the fourth principle, he cites the linkage of heterotopic sites to “slices in time” called heterochronies, where they encounter a break with the traditional conceptions of temporality. Museums and libraries are tagged as “heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time”, where “time never stops building up”, and festival grounds, fairgrounds, and leisure villages are cited as transient and transitory spaces of time (26). According to him, heterotopias “presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable”, which becomes the fifth principle. Such spaces have restricted entry (except in cases of mandatory entry) where “the individual has to submit to rites and purifications” as in the case of entering a prison (26). As the last principle, Foucault brings in a significant function that a heterotopic site performs, which is to create either “a space of illusion that exposes every real space” or a space of compensation, “a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” (27).

The conceptualisation of heterotopia was groundbreaking and was widely adopted by theoreticians and scholars of space/spatiality, sociology, architectural-urban studies, and cultural studies. Similar to the notion of thirdspace, heterotopia has a counter-cultural or counter-spatial stance ingrained deep within it and is a

highly political concept, but unlike the thirdspace, it is conceived of as real, tangible spaces in a society that seek to subvert all other dominant spaces. In the thesis, this concept gains immense significance in negotiating the relevance of certain spaces and their profound relationship with the protagonists who traverse them.

Approaching the text through a heterotopic lens is expected to throw light on the particular design of identity-construction that the protagonists undergo in the selected texts for study.

Being a humanist-Marxist, Lefebvre had a keen interest in evaluating the modern society caught in the whirls of capitalism and consumerism that thrust man into alienation, drudgery, monotony, and absurdity. In *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (1968), he attempts to approach everyday life through a philosophical and theoretical angle by exploring its complexities and nuances in contemporary society characterised by modernisation and urbanisation. Conflating such technological, capitalist, and modernist-postmodernist communities, Lefebvre evaluates the state of control and power levied by it over its inhabitants. He proposes the idea that people should resort to meaning-making and leisure through execution of their utopian creativity to surpass the hands of power. In the work, he records a significant solution:

Such conflicts and problems of everyday life involve fictitious solutions, superimposed on the real solutions when these are, or seem to be, impossible. Thus problems and the search for solutions overstep the frontier of make-believe, 'projections' unobtrusively fill the gap between experience and make-believe and people project their desires on to one group of objects or another, one form of activity or another: the home, the flat, furnishing,

cooking, going away on holiday, 'nature', etc. Such projections invest the object with a double existence, real and imaginary. (88)

Similar to the lived space in his spatial triad, here Lefebvre underscores the operation of fantasy and imagination as a way of meaning-making in the world of modernity. When dominant spaces repress the lives of individuals, they resort to appropriating spaces by employing “artistic and symbolic use of space for *counterculture*”, says Radović. Citing Lefebvre, she states that “festivals and fairs, ludic spaces, spaces of art and leisure, [and] subjective spaces” are the embodiments of “a utopian alternative to real space” (83). In the novels taken for study, dominant ideologies such as the colonialism, patriarchy, and casteism prevail, and they have disastrous influence on the protagonists. The ideas of the fictitious solution and artistic appropriation of spaces in the world of modernity are considered valid for the research, where the culmination of the trajectory of the protagonists across the planes of space and memory in a fictitious world is examined in detail. The particular form the identities of the protagonists assume on account of the employment of imagination, fiction, and mental projections in the above-mentioned way is expected to redraft the existing reading and acceptance of the texts.

Memory Studies or Cultural Memory Studies, supposed to have entered the domain of post-war critical theories as a distinct theoretical discipline with the institutionalisation of *Memory Studies* journal in 2008, is an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary discourse that studies, analyses, and problematises the notion of memory in popular culture, media, arts, psychology, neurology, cognitive science, sociology, and various other disciplines. Even though memory has been a field of interest since ancient times and has been critically evaluated and problematised by

various scholars like Maurice Halbwachs, Marc Bloch, and Aby Warburg during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a resurgent interest in the field emerged only during the 1990s and the 2000s, when postmodernist sensibilities were experiencing an upsurge. Erll, in her seminal study *Memory in Culture* (2011), identifies “historical transformations” such as the loss of the generation that had the first-hand experience of the Second World War and formulations of “the constructed nature and narrativity of historiography” as the context for the resurgence of memory in contemporary academia (4). She also observes that the interest in the notion of memory is not limited to the European context, but is spread across the world: “A ‘memory boom’ (Huysen 1995) in society and academia is evident in the United States as well as in Israel, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Great Britain, and elsewhere” (2). The profound interrelationship between memory or the act of remembering and identity, memory as a discursive practice by focusing on the constructed past and the idea that a recollection is always an act of reconstruction (and not a passive reproduction of the past) in accordance with the present, memory as resistance, and memory as the other of history are some of the major concerns of the discipline. The elusive, fluid, and dynamic nature of memory also allows the scholars of the discipline to indulge in problematising the notions of ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ by shedding light on the constructed or reconstructed state of meaning, which is actuated through the very process of retrieval of the past. Erll tags Halbwachs as “the founding father of cultural memory studies” for his contribution of the idea of collective memory (*Memory* 7) that serves as the founding concept of the discipline. Warburg, Frederick Bartlett, Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann, and

Arnold Zweig, to name a few, contributed to the intersections of culture and memory, inspired by Halbwachs.

Any study that bases itself on Memory Studies is incomplete without discussing Halbwachs' path-breaking coinage *mémoire collective* or collective memory (38), one of the strong pillars of the discipline, introduced in his *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* or *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (1925) and later in *La Mémoire collective* or *The Collective Memory* (1951). The term designates the memory of a collective, shared past transmitted through a continued process of commemoration and materialised through “officially sanctioned rituals which remember a group through calling upon a common heritage”, and ideates that each individual memory is constituted within specific socio-cultural contexts or social frameworks, and has a shared, common value (Eyerman 161). It refers to the “representations of the past in the minds of members of a community that contribute to the community’s sense of identity” (Manier and Hirst 253). Halbwachs sees collective memory as a major factor that contributes to the formation of both personal and collective identity that binds each individual into the specific socio-cultural matrix of a place (42).

Jean-Christophe Marcel and Laurent Mucchielli note that Halbwachs reworks on Emile Durkheim’s psychosociological theory that integrates individual experiences with larger social networks and frames called collective representations and that he develops a new theory of collective psychology based on the notion of collective consciousness (141). They refer to Halbwachs’ observation in this regard that “only collective psychology is able to show how motives, aspirations, emotional states, and reflective sensations are connected to collective representations stored in

the memory” (141). According to Marcel and Mucchielli, in his sociological discourse, Halbwachs focuses his attention on three aspects: “the social construction of individual memory”, “the development of collective memory in intermediary groups (family and social classes)” as intergenerational memory, and “collective memory at the level of entire societies and civilizations” resulting in cultural transmission and construction of tradition for its members (142). Family, religious institutions, and social classes contribute to the production of collective memory - where the hegemony of culture operates to construct an ‘accepted’ and ‘standard’ image of society - according to which its members, as a collective, mould their morality, thoughts, conduct, and sentiments, and forge a collective identity. The collective memory is thus conceptualised on two levels: it forms the organic memory of a person at the individual level (the ‘individual’ memories are never entirely personal, but social and shared, producing a ‘social self’), and it also designates the shared past among the members of a community resulting from interaction and communication. The way a collective identity is produced through the medium of narrative, symbolic transactions, and other discourses that are manifestations of collective memory is noted by Ron Eyerman as follows:

[W]hat the past means is recounted, understood and interpreted and transmitted through language and through dialogue. These dialogues are framed as stories, narratives which structure their telling and influence their reception. All nations and groups have founding myths, stories which tell [sic] who we are through recounting where we came from. Such narratives form 'master frames' and are passed on through traditions, in rituals and

ceremonies, public performances which reconnect a group, and where membership is confirmed. (162)

The interrelationship between collective memory and identity is well established here. The collective remembrance largely contributes to determining and shaping the identity of each individual in a community.

David Manier and William Hirst study the concepts of collective and episodic memories and resort to classifying them further as "collective episodic", "collective semantic", and "collective procedural" memories (257-258), of which collective semantic memory is a relevant tool of analysis. According to them, "All the historical facts (as well as many other facts) people recite without necessarily remembering where they learned them are semantic memories, and for the most part, collective semantic memories" (257). They constitute the collective memories of indirectly experienced historical incidents – the authors provide the Vietnam War as an example – gained through a variety of media such as television, books, the internet, and so on. Tagging them specifically as lived semantic memories, Manier and Hirst believe that they provide a collective identity, "a personal and communal sense of responsibility" and mutual coherence and interrelationship (258). The thesis pays specific attention to the collective semantic memories evoked in the text that contribute to the construction of the identity of the protagonists.

In connection with collective memory, Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann coined the term "cultural memory", which is referred to by Jan Assmann as a form of collective memory shared by a community that confers on its people "a collective, that is, cultural identity" ("Communicative and Cultural Memory" 110). Rooting in the basic definition of collective memory but identifying the exclusion of the

cultural sphere - “the realm of “traditions, transmissions, and transferences” in institutionalised forms - in the term, the theorists split the term into two: communicative memory and cultural memory (Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory” 110). Communicative memory is that realm of collective memory that consists of “history in the frame of autobiographical memory” and that which concerns a recent past (117). The definition given by Jan Assmann is as follows:

Communicative memory is non-institutional; it is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission, and interpretation; it is not cultivated by specialists and is not summoned or celebrated on special occasions; it is not formalized and stabilized by any forms of material symbolization; it lives in everyday interaction and communication and, for this very reason, has only a limited time depth which normally reaches no farther back than eighty years, the time span of three interacting generations. (111)

According to Jan Assmann, it is through communication that an individual “composes a memory which, as Halbwachs has shown, is (a) socially mediated and (b) relates to a group” and the communicative memory constitutes the realm of oral history (“Collective Memory” 127). Contrary to communicative memory, cultural memory is “intensely formalized and institutionalized” memory that pertains to “the remote past, the origin of the world, and the history of the tribe” and it “exists in the forms of narratives, songs, dances, rituals, masks, and symbols”, where specialists such as narrators, bards, shamans, priests, scholars, and others act as active memory-carriers (Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory” 112). If communicative memory is of the recent past, cultural memory belongs to the mythical past (“mythical primordial time, “3000” years), is formal, ritualised, and follows a

structure of hierarchy (Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory” 117). In the present study, both forms of memory gain immense significance and the intrinsic connection they maintain with the identity of the protagonists is examined.

One major criticism raised against the term collective memory is its conflation with history, as prominently pointed out by Jeffrey Andrew Barash, where memory becomes an umbrella term to not just encompass history, but various kinds of cultural productions and myths as well; history becomes a sub-category of collective memory (174). It was the scepticism towards historical productions, meaning, and truth that emerged in the postmodernist phase that drove more attention towards alternate modes of representing ‘truth’ or ‘reality’, and in such a context, memory began to gain prominence. It is to be noted that for Halbwachs, both history and memory were different entities, where the former was taken to be “abstract, totalizing, and “dead,”” and the latter was conceived of as “particular, meaningful, and lived”” (qtd. in Erll, “Cultural Memory” 6). It was the later works of cultural theorists like Jan and Aleida Assmann that brought in memory as a totalising term through their division of the collective memory into cultural and communicative. Erll, on the other hand, identifies both history and memory as two “*modes of remembering*” without forming a value-judgement of any kind (“Cultural Memory” 7). The chosen Malayalam texts carry recollective, introspective, and flashback episodes and narrative style, and varied forms of remembrances within. The bygone historical incidents presented as recollections, as grand narratives that influence a group or community in a certain way reflecting the subjective angle, can be effectively studied using the terms collective memory, cultural memory, and communicative memory. Therefore, the texts that contain not mere presentations of

historical facts in an objective manner, but which offer an insight into the lived, and experienced realm of the historical events, are approached employing the said terms related to memory.

“Memory is the home of our identity, that which provides the stable point from which our egress into the new is made possible *and to which we can return* with those new developments”, states Jacobson (39). It is the memory-system inherent in each individual that makes her/him capable of navigating the world, provides her/him a coherent sense of self, assists her/him in maintaining relationships, and directs her/him in envisioning and acting in the future in a certain way. The intricate relationship between memory and personal identity has for long been discussed by psychologists, neurologists, and philosophers who all arrived at the proposition that in the process of remembering or recollecting the past, the rememberer constructs and reconstructs her/his selfhood in a certain way. The memories retrieved here are autobiographical or episodic as it is such memories that form a direct relation with the constitution of one’s selfhood. Psychologists like Larry Squire and Endel Tulving agree on the categorisation of long-term memories into two: “procedural” and “declarative” (152; *Elements* 8-9). Procedural memories stand for those memories that make “possible the acquisition and retention of motor, perceptual, and cognitive skills” and declarative memories constitute the knowledge of the “facts and beliefs about the world” (Klein and Nichols 679).

It is Tulving who later made a pathbreaking distinction of declarative memory into ‘semantic’ and ‘episodic’, where the former is identified as registering and storing generic “knowledge about the world in the broadest sense” and that which “enables individuals to represent and mentally operate on situations, objects,

and relations in the world that are not present to the senses” (“What Is Episodic Memory?” 67). The episodic memory, alternatively termed “personal memory” and closely associated with “autobiographical memory”, refers to “the self’s experiences in subjective space and time” that arises out of the “autonoetic awareness” of the past (67-68). Episodic memory is the kind of memory that enables individuals to revisit and retrace past incidents and experiences – activating a form of time-travel - carrying their accurate temporal, spatial, and affective specifications. Psychologists Stanley Klein and Shaun Nichols have observed the tenacious networking between episodic memory and identity, where the act of “re-experiencing events from one’s past” through memory enables the person to construct his/her own narrative and provides him/her “an irresistible sense of being the same person”, that in turn, effectively drives and determines the present and future course of the persona’s actions (679-680). The self-referential nature of episodic memory is what makes it an area of ceaseless interest for psychologists. Apart from Tulving, M. A. Wheeler, D. T. Stuss, and Martin A. Conway took an interest in episodic memories and they commonly observe that such memories “preserve experience-near sensory-perceptual traces of significant events that represent what the person experienced at that moment” which constitute their “experiential components” (qtd. in Bouizegarene and Philippe 618). Frederick L. Philippe, R. Koestner, G. Beaulieu-Pelletier, and S. Lecours also recorded, with evidence, that “remembered level of satisfaction of three important psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) is a basic experiential component of episodic memories” (qtd. in Bouizegarene and Philippe 618). The autobiographical memory, the recollection of the bygone past by an individual, also largely contributes to the construction of self,

especially when it is manifested through the act of narration. Susan Bluck, Nicole Alea, Tilmann Habermas, and David C. Rubin categorise the functions of autobiographical memory into three: a directive function that enables the individual to extract the past to direct or guide the actions and thoughts in the present and also prospectively point at the future actions (109), a self function that is related to “identity maintenance” that ensures the “continuity and development” of the self (110, 93), and a social function that contributes to developing, maintaining, and nurturing social bonds” (94).

Tulving himself cites the branches of criticism that his terminology had to face in his article “Episodic Memory: From Mind to Brain” (2002) as follows: Vagueness, the pointlessness of the act of identifying veiled and complex organisations of brain raised by H. L. Roediger, M. S. Weldon, and B. H. Challis, the unreasonableness of sharply distinguishing between “facts about the world and facts about the self” raised by J. F. Kihlstrom, the apprehension that many forms of memory may be proposed apart from episodic as voiced by Roediger and Blaxton, the disagreement raised by R. Ratcliff & G. McKoon regarding the needless classification of memories that they consider baneful to the existing theory, and Cohen’s suspicion of the label ‘episodic’ although he favoured the idea of the existence of multiple memories (8). Evidently, a major part of the criticism against episodic memory emerges from the scepticism about categorising the abstract and elusive entity of memory. As seen, the criticism arose after his 1983 publication of *Elements of Episodic Memory*, and in the 2002 article stated above, Tulving answers the major queries by providing biological evidence to vindicate the reality of episodic memory. Alluding to the scientific and “neuropsychological study of

consequences of the kind of brain damage that selectively involve [sic] memory processes” (11) and “Functional neuroimaging techniques [such as Positron Emission Tomography (PET) and Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI)] as well as electrophysiological recording, from both the scalp and implanted electrodes”, he asserts the possibility to “examine brain activity associated with mental activity” (16). Through a set of scientific evidence, Tulving justifies his formulation of the term against the different kinds of criticism directed against it and underscores that it is “a permanent fixture in the thinking about memory in the minds of many memory researchers all over the world” (“Episodic Memory” 19).

Along with episodic and autobiographical memories, the concept of “self-defining memories” introduced by J. A. Singer and P. Salovey is also applicable to the thesis to examine the connection between the memories evoked and the identity of the protagonists. The term designates episodic memories “of meaningful and important life events” that are “vivid, emotionally intense, repetitively recalled, [and] highly accessible” and are found to be the sources for producing “self-images” (qtd. in Bouizegarene and Philippe 617). The research utilises both the notions of episodic memory and self-defining memory to grasp the way the protagonists remember their bygone pasts and strike valid connections with the construction of their selfhood.

Jonathan K. Foster’s statement, “Memory is better thought of as a process of reconstruction than as one of reproduction: ‘instead of reproducing the original event or story, we derive a reconstruction based on our existing presuppositions, expectations and our “mental set”’” (12), throws light on the significant contribution memory makes to constitute the rememberer’s identity in the present. The statement

importantly points out the aspect of selective remembering and the constructed nature of memory based on the goals, motivations, and needs of the present which will also have considerable impact on the future as well. In this sense, memories are Janus-faced: they look into the past and the future. Various scholars have commented on the influence of the present on the retrieval of the past, on how the present experiences filter the past to suit the self-image, and also on how it evokes a certain image of the future for the remembering persona. John Sutton, Celia B. Harris, and Amanda J. Barnier note that “memory is largely constructed. . . from a range of sources, including what is stored and what is accessible, personal motivations, social motivations, and situational demands” (213). Donald P. Spence observes that on certain occasions, there will be a distortion of the earlier memory in “the very act of talking about the past” and “the new description *becomes* the early memory” (qtd. in King 25). In line with Spence’s thought, Primo Levi also suggests that a repeatedly narrated memory “in the form of a story” will eventually distort the initial, ‘true’ memory and concretises or crystallises itself as a stereotype (qtd. in King 25).

The memory-model designed by Conway and his colleagues also unveils the peculiar working of episodic or autobiographical memory. Conway and C. W. Pleydell-Pearce have made significant contributions to the field of Memory Studies through their conceptualisation of Self-Memory System (SMS), a model comprising the components of “the working self” (265-266), and “autobiographical memory knowledge base” (271-275). According to the authors, these components interweave to form autobiographical memories (Conway 594). The concepts of self-coherence/coherence and correspondence are introduced as part of the

autobiographical memory base by Conway, Singer, and Angela Tagini in their article “The Self and Autobiographical Memory: Correspondence and Coherence” (492). The notion of coherence springs from the fundamental view that “memories may be altered, distorted, even fabricated, to support current aspects of the self” (Conway 595). Conway defines coherence or self-coherence as follows:

Coherence is a strong force in human memory that acts at encoding, post-encoding remembering, and re-encoding, to shape both the accessibility of memories and the accessibility of their content. This is done in such a way as to make memory consistent with an individual’s current goals, self-images, and self-beliefs. . . . [M]emory and central aspects of the self form a coherent system in which, in the healthy individual, beliefs about, and knowledge of, the self are confirmed and supported by memories of specific experiences. (595)

The particular characteristic in the process of recollection that filters memories so as to affirm a certain self-image in the present underlines the phenomenon of selective remembering. The influence of the present on the past, the alterations in and the question of authenticity of the representation of the past through memories, are addressed through the principle. The other principle, namely correspondence, as Sutton *et al.* define, refers to “the need for episodic memory to correspond with reality” (215). The two principles are integral to the development and construction of selfhood during moments of memory-retrieval.

Examining the aspect of selective remembering will bring in striking insights into the identity-construction of the protagonists as they involve in the process of recollecting the past. The evocation of certain memories - that are episodic and self-

defining - on crucial occasions that aids the protagonists in maintaining their affinity with or distance from various spaces and contributes to designing their selfhood is a major focal area of the research.

According to Jacobson, home “offers a person. . . a place to recollect, to remember [one]self, to cohere as this figure against the background of a wide world” and she sees displacement or dislocation as leading to the erasure of one’s sense of self (32-33). Home as one of the prominent spaces of interaction for the protagonists, a space from where he/she, being its member, imbibes values and identity, and from where memories spring up are the perspectives that are brought into focus. For this, the concepts of family memory, intergenerational self, and intergenerational identity are found to be useful. Family or domestic space is a vital space that acts as the first educational platform for children by moulding and manipulating their character, vision, and thoughts in particular ways through tales, songs, and preachings that abide by the existing tradition and cultural expectations. The familial structure, being the smallest unit of a society, reflects the larger religious, social, and cultural structures by being a strong medium for imparting those structural norms, principles, and values to its members. In his discussion of collective memories, Halbwachs throws light on the aspect of family memory (54). Erll condenses the concept thus:

Family memory is a typical intergenerational memory. This type of collective memory is constituted through social interaction and communication. Through the repeated recall of the family’s past (usually via oral stories which are told at family get-togethers), those who did not experience the past firsthand can also share in the memory. In this way an

exchange of living memory takes place between eye-witnesses and descendants. (*Memory* 17)

Here, Halbwachs marks family as a crucial transmitter of collective memories primarily through the medium of stories through which its members form a sense of connectedness and collective identity. Through the memory-transmission, the children of the family undergo a process of socialisation and conditioning by internalising the accepted tradition of the family and assuring their official entry into its collective framework. Erll also observes that the family memories that construct the self-image of the members of the family, the children, will serve as paradigms for moulding their future action fulfilling “normative and formative, value-related and identity-relationships” (“Locating Family” 307). It should be noted that family also serves as a key component and carrier of cultural transmission by imparting the larger collective myths and tales that exist in a specific cultural matrix. In a similar line, Qi Wang, Qingfang Song, and Jessie Bee Kim Koh, in their study of memory and narrative self-making, share their observation about how “parents model to children the narrative structures of organizing past events, show children how to interpret and evaluate personal experiences, and further instill in children the purposes and ways of remembering and sharing the personal past appropriate to their cultural assumptions” (203). The cultural integration of a child into not just the family, but also into the larger cultural sphere through the narratives is brought into focus here.

Similar to family memory is the concept of intergenerational narratives which plays a pivotal role in shaping intergenerational self for individuals. The concept fuses the notions of memory, narrative, and identity to form a trinity, where

memory imparted through narratives constructs identity in a certain way for the listeners. As the name indicates, intergenerational narratives are tales from the past that parents and grandparents share with their children. According to Natalie Merrill and Robyn Fivush, intergenerational narratives “sit at the nexus of personal and collective memories, in that they are lived experiences being told by the older generation, and received stories about the familial past to the younger generation” (73), where parents assume “the role of “identity agents”” (80). As in the case of family memory, a collective identity is shaped for the family-members through commonly shared memories, which construct their selves as intergenerational. Merrill and Fivush also observe that individuals encounter “multiple, and sometimes contradictory, aspects of the self” due to the immense influence of such narratives which will have to be worked out within themselves to forge a unique identity (81).

A key term connected to the intergenerational narratives or family memories passed down to generations is postmemory. Postmemory is an extensively discussed term developed by Marianne Hirsch from her experiences as the daughter of Jewish parents who had to suffer persecution as part of the Holocaust. Hirsch was insistent on the need for the present generation to have accountability for the traumatic experiences of the bygone generation by imbibing the pain they had undergone. It is Hirsch’s interest in Art Spiegelman’s graphic memoir namely *Maus*, which is about his views on his Polish father’s experience of persecution during Holocaust, that led her to theorise about the process of memory-transmission through mediation.

Contextualising traumatic memories, specifically of the Holocaust, Hirsch defines the term “postmemory” in her work “The Generation of Postmemory” as follows:

Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. (106-107)

It is the mediation aspect that gains importance in Hirsch’s formulation, where the memories are not literal but imparted to a generation through some medium, which is mostly the aesthetic medium of stories according to the theorist. Later, she distinguishes between two types of postmemory: ‘familial’ and ‘affiliative’, where the former is defined as the “intergenerational vertical identification of child and parent occurring within the family” and the latter as the “intra-generational horizontal identification that makes that child’s position more broadly available to other contemporaries” (114-115). For her, affiliative postmemory springs from contemporaneity and “generational connection with the literal second generation” forming “a larger collective in an organic web of transmission” (115).

There are two prominent lines of criticism directed against the concept of postmemory. Kathy Behrendt, in her “Hirsch, Sebald, and the Uses and Limits of Postmemory”, briefly states the two. The first is Joseph Butler’s stance that a person’s memory will only be available to him/her and that only a personal, direct experience will be fed into one’s memory-consciousness, which deflates the essence of postmemory (Behrendt 54). Hirsch mentions in her own work other critical

perspectives the term confronted with, such as Eva Hoffman's, who, in tune with Butler's argument, pointed out the inability to accept the idea that someone else's trauma or past can be one's own, and those raised by the critics Gary Weissman and Ernst van Alphen, who disagreed with her on the usage of the term 'memory' ("Generation" 108-109). Hirsch posits the explanation that one cannot have "*literal* 'memories' of others' experiences" and states, "Postmemory is not identical to memory: it is 'post,' but at the same time, it approximates memory in its affective force" (109). She resorts to the memory-theories of Jan and Aleida Assmann (communicative and cultural memory) and also to the significance of transmission of memories within the family to its members to assert her theoretical postulation of postmemory (109-110). Behrendt takes Hirsch's focus on the notion of 'affect' and considers "[i]maginative and affect-laden identification with the victim" as "a mark of postmemory", which carries "the question of empathy" (55). She names Hirsch's commitment of this kind as "the appropriation objection", which is the second strand of criticism against postmemory, and observes that postmemory deals "with something akin to counter-transference on the part of the post-rememberer. . . and [that] the focus is primarily on the self, not the victim" (55). Samuel O' Donoghue, raises another criticism of the usage of the term postmemory in critical, academic writings by various scholars who tend to solely equate it with "inherited trauma", which according to him, results in generalised and often misleading conclusions (par. 8).

It is Hirsch's stance that the present generation must be accountable to the experiences of the bygone generation that becomes significant to underscore the relevance of the concept. Hirsch's focus is on "how the break in transmission

resulting from traumatic historical events necessitates forms of remembrance that reconnect and reembody an intergenerational memorial fabric that has been severed by catastrophe” (109-110). It is the connection with the past through mediation that serves as Hirsch’s key concern. The thesis posits against Behrendt’s argument by stressing the element of empathy that operates here in a positive way to build a profound identification between the individual and the historical past or the victim who has undergone the trauma; it is because the focus of the self converges into the traumatic incident or the bearer of the trauma (the focus is not just on the self but also on the victim) that identification is effectuated through the medium of empathy. In this sense, the term is valid to indicate the particular way by which the post-rememberer’s identity is forged in relation to the past. O’Donoghue’s observation that “[f]ar from being a synonym for inherited trauma, which is how the term is often used in literary studies, postmemory describes a yearning to reconnect with the past” (par. 8), is taken as a cue to study the inherited haunting memories, both traumatic and non-traumatic, that the characters in the selected texts encounter in their course of life. Haunting memories mediated through stories and imagination are conceived as postmemories and their impact on the construction of the identity of the protagonists is examined.

What binds the above terminologies – episodic memory, collective memory, cultural memory, family memory, postmemory, and the relation they strike with the notion of personal identity – is the aspect of the narrative, the act of telling stories or experiences from the past. A narrative can be understood “as a representation, or a construction, based on a sequence of events in the past, that communicates something from the memory of the narrator” (Linde 2). What mainly constitutes

narratives is episodic memory, a reiteration of the past incidents of one's life, which provides narrative identity to the speaker. Narrative identity, the sense of self and personal meaning derived from the act of narrating one's life and past, has been a widely discussed area by narratologists, psychologists, and literary scholars. Ulric Neisser's identification of five categories of 'self' in the stages of a child's development, each pointing out a particular aspect of an individual's identity, can be taken into consideration here. At the outset, he claims that these "are not generally experienced as separate and distinct", and goes on to state the categories as follows: the ecological self, which is "the self as perceived with respect to the physical environment" (36), the interpersonal self, which is "the self as engaged in immediate unreflective social interaction with another person" (41), the extended self, "based primarily on our personal memories and anticipations", the private self that is the personal self unavailable to anyone but the individual, and the conceptual self, which is the "'self-concept' that draws its meaning from the network of assumptions and theories" (36). It is the extended self, the realm of memories that extends the self to a past period making it transcend the present moment, that is considered important for the study. Neisser records that the extended self becomes important as one grows older, as adults "develop a more or less standard life-narrative that effectively defines the self in terms of a particular series of remembered experiences", and correlates it with Tulving's episodic memory (49).

Nabil Bouizegarene and Philippe observe that the idea of narrative identity was pioneered by Dan P. McAdams in 1985 which signified the identity "formed through summarising past experiences in a narrative form, . . . creating a personal life story" (617). Later, narrative theorists and narrative psychologists like Anthony

Paul Kerby and Jerome Bruner contributed to the idea of ‘narrative self’ or ‘narrative identity’. Kerby observes that the self is the product of “narrative constructions or stories” (1) and that self-narration is an act of defining the speaking subject, an act that constitutes the reality of the subject (4). Bruner, in his article “The “remembered” self”, states, “Self is. . . a complex mental edifice that one constructs by the use of a variety of mental processes, one of which must surely be remembering” and underscores the retrieval of episodic memory as the basis for the narrative act of self-construction (41). He also links the narrative act with the notion of agency through the idea of ‘turning points’ that people come across in their lives. For him, turning points are “thickly agentive” and they “construct emblems of narrative clarity in the teller's history of Self”, and while individuals narrate them, “though they may be linked to things happening "outside," they play a vital role in propelling “a new belief, [and a] new courage” in them (50). How the act of narration becomes a prominent way of exerting the agential potential of an individual is what gets established here.

In the cases of self-narration (autobiographical and episodic memories) and the transmission of memories (collective, cultural, family, intergenerational memories) from one generation to another through story-telling, it is the narrative identity that gets manifested. This notion of narrative identity – personal and social - as giving a voice, agency, and selfhood to the characters in the selected texts is a key area of concern in the research. The devices used in the narration such as repetitions, flashbacks (“analepsis”), and flashforwards (“prolepsis”) are examined to evince valid conclusions on the interrelationship between memory and identity. Nicola King notes the following about repetition:

An event gains meaning by its repetition, which is both the recall of an earlier moment and a variation of it: the concept of repetition hovers ambiguously between the idea of reproduction and that of change, forward and backward movement. . . . Repetition creates a return in the text, a doubling back. We cannot say whether this return is a return to or a return of: for instance, a return to origins or a return of the repressed. (99-100)

When a memory is revisited or re-narrated, it corresponds with the rememberer's or the speaker's present that distorts or alters the past from its original leading the narrative in the present to gain dominance and determine one's identity. The repeated depiction of certain incidents in the selected texts is studied in this regard by focusing on how the process influences, shapes, and determines the identity of the characters in a certain way. Similarly, the process by which the past and the future are evoked through flashbacks and flashforwards, and their profound connection with memory and identity are also placed as major areas of concern in the study. What also lies as a significant field of analysis is the employment of memory metaphors, such as letters, diaries, and photographs, which are metaphorical representations of memory. According to King, "Two dominant and distinct ways of imagining memory. . . are as a series of photographs or visual images, or as a form of language or narrative" (25). How visual images and narratives that are representations of memory are intrinsically connected to one's identity, past, and present, and how they shape or constitute the selfhood of an individual is examined in the study.

Dreams that appear as a combination of both visual images and narrative constitute a significant part of memory. It is a notable area of discussion in the field

of Memory Studies, where their interrelationship with the unconscious, one's identity, and the larger culture is critically evaluated. The relationship between dreams and memory has been established by cognitive neuroscientists and psychologists. Katie Glaskin cites J. Allan Hobson, J. D. Payne, and L. Nadel who underscored "the functional relationship between dreams and memory" by observing that during sleep the brain makes "bit-by-bit adjustments in its long term repertoire of learning and memory" (qtd. in Glaskin 49), which throws light on the intrinsic connection between dreams and memory. In a similar line of thought, M. Stephen in "Memory, emotion, and the imaginal mind", underscores the functional aspect of REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep, where "the day's sensory input" gets encoded and etched within the "emotional memory system", which becomes a process of formation and storing of new memories (98). Glaskin also cites R. Stickgold's statement that "old memories" are "activated, associated, and integrated to form dream imagery and narrative" (49-50). Evidently, the interrelationship between dreams and memory is underscored by all the theoreticians of dream theory.

The integral connection between the past and dreams – dreams as a reflection of the bygone past – and the prospective or visionary side of it – dreams as pointing to the future - have been widely dealt with by all theoreticians of dreams from the diverse fields of psychology, memory studies, anthropology and cultural studies. The first major contribution to dream theory is from Sigmund Freud (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900), where the mental workings of his patients were analysed to formulate a psychoanalytic dream theory. His contribution consists of his dream work theory – the concepts of displacement (81-85), condensation (170-182), and the manifest and latent contents of dream (46-47, 70) – and it has been

widely employed, interpreted, and debated in literary and non-literary circles. Freud's sole focus on the unconscious and repressed desires (most of them are tagged as sexual) and his evasive approach towards manifest images employing free association were later argued against by Carl Gustav Jung who focused more on the imagery of the dreams. Rather than mere expressions of repressed desires, he viewed dreams as "forward looking" and "problem solving" (qtd. in Ewing 47).

Anthropologists like Katherine Pratt Ewing also recorded their disagreement with the regressive nature of Freudian theory and resorted to connecting it with society and culture in large. "Dreams are part of folk healing. Dreams are a social phenomenon", states Ewing (44). Instead of confining to the individual's mind and the unconscious, the intrinsic operation of culture is brought in as a key concern in the analyses and studies as in the case of Jeannette Marie Mageo who states, "Dreaming, in Shulman and Stroumsa's words, is "a cultural act" (1999); its landscapes, scenes, figures, objects, problematics, and solutions, as well as ways of recounting the dream, are all appropriated from culture" (24). Mageo focuses on how dreams are a reflection of the existing cultural schemas that directly influence one's identity and perceptions – dreams "expose the way we experience cultural life" - and provide one with a coherent sense of self (25-26). Mageo also points out the counter-cultural spirit that might surface in the dreams an individual sees, as she notes that "in dreams the apparently seamless interdigitation of cultural schemas and our experience frays, and our discomfort with these schemas, for most of us submerged in the onrush of daily living, surfaces" (24). This aspect of dreams as both a reflection of culture and anti-cultural elements is taken as a significant cue for analysing some of the dreams that the protagonists of the selected texts see. The

literary critic Bert O. States stressed the narrative aspect of dreams, where the author sees the narrative as “a persistent characteristic of dreams” and “the evolution of an emotional tension” as its “aesthetic coherence” (101). According to him, what lies central to dreams is the enactment of emotions or a particular emotion that lies at the core of the psychic state of an individual and its presentation as an amalgamation of the bygone past and the present experience (102).

Glaskin categorises different types of dreams based on the appearance of certain images, characters, and events in the mind of the dreamer. Those dreams where “deceased persons, ancestors, or ancestral beings appear and reveal new songs, ceremonies, and designs” are labelled as “innovative dreams” (51). She relates this category of dreams to R. I. Lohmann’s formulations of “soul travel theory” - dreams as the journey of a soul “or another culturally postulated aspect of the self” - and “visitation theory”, referred to dreams where “spiritual visitations” occur (qtd. in Glaskin 51). Glaskin labels “healing dreams” to refer to those dreams that consist of “a curative encounter, which may involve dream travelling to a metaphysically powerful location” or where the dreamer “encounters a shaman in his or her dream” (51) and equates it with Lohmann’s “generative” dreams that possess a predictive quality through “the manifestation of future events” (qtd. in Glaskin 51).

All the theoreticians pose the relationship between dreams and identity as central to their observations and an intrinsic connection between the two is established beyond doubt. Rather than dwelling on the Freudian unconscious developed by Freud from his patients’ history, which is purely grounded on the notion of the individual psyche, the thesis explores the larger associations that

dreams have with society, culture, and collective consciousness. Dreams present in the texts are interpreted as a manifestation of memory, and in this line, the study resorts to understanding dreams as closely connected to one's past, present, and identity adopting the insights from the cultural theoreticians such as Ewing, Mageo, Glaskin, and the narrative theorist States as mentioned above.

The theoretical model adopted for analysing the selected texts is a combination or integration of the insights gained from the theoretical concepts explicated above that form a triad consisting of the notions of memory, space, and identity. What forms the major focus of the study is neither the process of representation or portrayal of the larger places namely Mayyazhi, Lanthan Bathery, and Thachanakkara nor the collective identity of its people, but the identity of the protagonists of the texts as related to or constructed from memory, space (spatial identity), and narrative (narrative identity) primarily on an individualistic, humanistic, and existential level, but it also carefully addresses the specific socio-cultural contexts depicted in the texts. How the protagonists situate themselves as part of a place (developing place attachment, place-identity, sense of place, and a geographical self) through the medium of memories (autobiographical, episodic, family, collective, cultural, and communicative) is the initial step taken. Later, various sub-spaces or micro-spaces within the larger, macro-space are identified to analyse their interaction with them, where the memories of the protagonists gain immense significance, and the theoretical postulations of Foucault, Lefebvre, Soja, Tuan, Leach, and Turner are employed to establish the peculiar construction of their identities and the operation of their agencies. It is expected that the methodology

will draw valid conclusions that will both provide an altered and additional line of thought to the existing readings on the texts.

At this juncture, a note on the studies on the novels in Malayalam employing the notions of space and memory that have emerged so far needs to be brought in. A triadic methodological framework combining memory, space, and identity - or studies integrating these tools - remains absent in Malayalam literature to date. The spatial studies on Malayalam literature have been largely purely thematic in nature where associated notions of time, nation, nation-state, nationality, nationalist politics, and imagination gained dominance. Postcolonial and postmodernist spatial studies of Malayalam texts primarily centred on the Eurocentric and Western theoretical models. Malayalam critics such as Nellivila, Ramakrishnan, Rajashekharan, and Tharamel have conducted studies on Malayalam novels by drawing from Western spatial, philosophical, and urban theoreticians.

Rajashekharan traces the spatial imagination and spatial or regional consciousness in Malayalam novels in his literary criticism, *Andhanaaya Daivom* (2008), a text that celebrates one hundred years of Malayalam novels. Although Rajashekharan brings in references to the conceptualisation of place and the relationship between place and writing found in the ancient Sanskrit and Dravidian literary criticisms called *reethi* and *tinai* respectively, he observes that these ancient concepts are inefficient in dealing with the spatial aspects of the genre of novel, which is a modern literary form, and in addressing the complexity that space has acquired in modernity due to its relation to the notions of political-economic structures and larger power relations (128). Stating that such spatial complexity cannot be grasped or comprehended using the tenets of classical criticism, which is

solely concerned with space as the external environment or nature, he mentions the Western theoretical formulations like “nonplaces”, “sites of resistance”, “textual boundaries” and “cultural borderlands” (128-129), and resorts to valid theoretical concepts that emerged in the Western epistemology such as Hillis Miller’s topography, Foucault’s heterotopia, and Lefebvre’s spatial triad in his analysis of all major novels of the twentieth century. Nellivila’s *Sthalam, Kaalam, Cherukadha* (2013) is a study of the spatial and temporal aspects or dimensions in select Malayalam short stories. In the text, he resorts to a series of Western philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, Samuel Clarke, and George Hegel, and practitioners of metaphysics such as Celestine N. Bittle, Charles C. Miltner, and Herbert Spencer to conduct a purely philosophical and metaphysical reading of spaces in the short stories (25-28). External space, internal space, cosmic space, absolute space, and co-existence are some of the theoretical concepts that the author employs in this tradition to study the depiction of places in select short stories (30). Jacob, in his article “Sthalam, Yathra, Novel”, traces the significance of interrelationship between place, colonial history, and travel drawing from the European theoretical framework. He examines the way places are constructed through colonial travels and how novels depict travel and mobility of characters across various places by drawing on theoreticians and concepts such as Lefebvre’s spatial triad, the notion of non-place, and narrative theorists from the European context (41-43). Tharamel, in *Deshathinte Bhavanaabhoopatangal* (2017), studies select Malayalam novels from the modernist period of Basheer, Vijayan, Mukundan, Anand, Kunjabdulla, M.T., Sethu, and others to delve into the notions of space, nation, nationality, and imagined geographies (a concept put forward by Edward Said) using the major theoretical

discourses emerged in the European context. Some other works that primarily focus on the larger aspects nation and nationality are Jacob's *Malayala Novel: Deshabhaavanayum Rashtreeyabhoopatangalum* (2011), Mahesh M. R.'s "Novel, Desham, Aadhunika" (2005) and "Malayalanovelum Desheeyathayum" (2012), and Ramakrishnan's *Malayalanovelinte Deshakaalangal* (2017).

Malayalam literary criticism has not produced any regional theoretical or critical discipline concerning memory so far and comprehensive studies centring on memory are also absent here. Unlike space, memory is human and abstract, and the discipline that has been formed after thorough neuro-scientific research carries concepts that can be widely applied, universally, to humans all around the world. Also, in a globalised world, where exchange and transference of ideas have become the norm, strict compartmentalisation or closed boundaries will not last forever. Considering this scenario, adopting European theoreticians and theoretical framework to study the regional novels can be understood as acceptable.

Chapter Three

From Victim to Victor: Tracing Dasan's Journey Beyond

The cluster of rocks called Velliyan Kallu lay far out to sea like a bright teardrop. . . . The souls waiting to be born in Mayyazhi fluttered over the sunbright rocks as dragonflies.

—M. Mukundan, *On the banks of the Mayyazhi*

“Chronic illness that marred my childhood reduced my world to a little room smelling of rain and cowdung. It is in that confinement that I learnt the primary lessons of solitude and alienation which became the main themes of my writing”, writes Mukundan (qtd. in “M. Mukundan”). Mukundan gained immense popularity through his deep-seated knowledge of the intricate workings of the human mind and profound, philosophical reflections as that of a visionary on contemporary cultural dilemmas and conflicts. He inaugurated an existentialist tradition influenced by the French existentialist philosophers such as Sartre and Camus in Malayalam, and blended modernist themes with Indian, and specifically, the native contexts. As the introduction to his selected short story collection *The Train that had Wings* (2005) points out, “Mukundan offers [the readers] a cosmopolitanism of suffering and emotional alienation, suggesting that humans are united by experiences of personal loss, social awkwardness, institutional oppression, and libidinous evil” (3).

According to Panikkar, “In Malayalam literature of the post-colonial period the interrogation of colonialism as an intellectual, cultural or political phenomenon has been very rarely attempted. An outstanding exception to this general trend is manifested in the two novels by M. Mukundan - *On the Banks of the Mayyazhi* and

God's Mischiefs" (qtd. in "M. Mukundan"). *On the banks* (2014), translated by Krishnankutty, is a fictionalised and varied account of the late colonial, anti-colonial, and postcolonial periods of Mahe or Mayyazhi, located in the district of Kannur under the dominion of the Union Territory of Pondicherry, grounded in the historical realities of the 1940s and 1950s. With the second half of the twentieth century - that staged a tumultuous atmosphere with two world wars and an incessant cry for individuality and freedom through anti-colonial movements worldwide - shaping the larger socio-political background of the text, the writer gives voice to the inner conflict, existentialist angst, and anxiety of a 'lost generation' submerged in hopelessness and despair, and torn between split-commitments to family and nation. Conquered by the French during the early eighteenth century and liberated in 1954, Mayyazhi possesses a distinct and unique history in comparison with the rest of the country majorly conquered by the British for its unusually cordial and amicable relationship with the coloniser and a comparatively late achievement of freedom. Mukundan crafts the story by amalgamating the historical, geographical, and factual realities surrounding the town of Mayyazhi, its colonial times, and its demand for freedom with fictional or imagined characters and contexts drawn from real-life people and experiences, and he brings in an insider's perspective different from the objective, historical, colonial accounts. As Rajashekharan observes in *Andhanaaya Daivom*, "Time, space, and history fuse and conglomerate in *On the banks of the Mayyazhi* which grows into the stature of a chronicle or a myth. . . . Mayyazhi's history is the history of the struggle of a place, where a place searches for its identity. Mayyazhi searches for its political existence being caught between France and India" (my trans.; 174). Above the religious, economic, and historical

dimensions, the writer more prominently focuses on the socio-cultural facets, characteristics, and transition of the place and its people.

In the text, Mukundan portrays three generations possessing varying and mutually conflicting attitudes to the French colonial rule in the town of Mayyazhi: the pro-colonial and colonially conditioned first generation like Kurambi Amma (the narrative consciousness in the novel during the initial phase) and Kunhichirutha, the impassive-neutral yet colonially conditioned and educated second generation like Damu Writer (Kurambi's son), and the anti-colonial, liberation-seeking third generation such as Dasan (Damu's son) and Kunhanandan Master. Accordingly, three spaces - the space of the colonial order exhibited through the motifs and symbols of dominance, and description of materialistic structures such as horse carriages and bungalows, the space of the native order manifested through the mythical tales, beliefs, and traditions, and the space of the hybrid order displayed through the interconnectedness of the natives and the whites - emerge in the novel. Mukundan draws the phenomenon of political invasion that produces a socio-culture of white dominance, native submissiveness, and most importantly, hybridity, through a process of simplistic chronicling and mythification.

Beginning with Kurambi's recollections of the bygone colonial days when 'eminent' and 'elegant' white people used to stroll over the paths of Mayyazhi, the text delineates the birth, growth, and lifeways of Dasan from an obsequious family kid to an unanticipated anti-colonial rebel – which, notably, becomes a trace-marker of the evolution of Mayyazhi from a French colony to a liberated state through the freedom struggle headed by Dasan and other revolutionaries – and closes with a rendition of the postrevolutionary or postcolonial phase, of both the protagonist and

the native land. The “tension” of the text, to borrow from Allen Tate (267), lies between these mutually conflicting forces of affection and nostalgia for the French colonial order that faces an imminent demise on one end, and the intense desire and struggle for liberation from the colonial power that lies on its opposite end; the conflict is actuated by the newly educated generation of Dasan and other revolutionaries moulded in colonial modernity. Mukundan effectively delineates this tension through a deft combination of “the extrinsic political vigour of Marxism and . . . Western Existentialism”, as Tharamel states in his analysis of the text (my trans.; 45).

The community that the text represents is hybrid, consisting of the French colonisers (Mooppan Sayiv, Big Sayiv, and his allies), the natives of Mayyazhi among whom were three categories - the unprivileged who are submissive and obsequious to the foreign power (such as Kurambi Amma, Kunhichirutha), the French-educated and employed native sect (such as Mayor Chekku Moopar and Secrétaire Karunan) and the Communists and revolutionaries such as Dasan, Kunhanandan Master, Pappan, and Vasutty - the mixed-blooded descendants or “half-French citizens” who are the offsprings of native and French alliances including Leslie Sayiv, Robert Sayiv and Bear Sayiv, and migrants, policemen, and traders from the neighbouring Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu. Dasan is born into such a hybrid culture and the conflicting native and colonial veins of tradition exist throughout the course of his life: the native tradition imparted through myths, folk tales, and rituals primarily through his grandmother Kurambi, and the scientific, progressive line of thought imparted through the French education and the enlightened native sect like Kunhanandan Master.

The readings that have emerged on Dasan's identity primarily centre on his image as a subject caught between the colonial and postcolonial orders, as an existentialist, as a tragic hero, and as a man of contradictions. Critics such as Panikkar, Jacob, and Tharamel draw the internal conflict that Dasan undergoes as a subject of the colonial Mayyazhi, a place that bears diverging, conflicting sensibilities and mentalities towards the coloniser, and they mark the gripping state of existential dilemma he undergoes (77-81; "Mayyazhi" 34-38; 33-38). Jacob, in his spatial analysis of the novel, records the sense of consternation, anxiety, and perplexity that Dasan feels upon encountering the colonial spaces as he sets out from home and returns, and marks the ambivalence and conflicts in the course of his journey having been trapped between the two orders of nativism and colonialism ("Mayyazhi" 35-37). Tharamel identifies the society as hybrid and views Dasan as a subject drawn in the mould of French existentialism who experiences alienation, extreme loneliness, and anguish in the journey of his search for identity (46). Regarding the aspect of the tragic subjectivity of the protagonist, two views exist that opposingly exalt and degrade the particular characterisation. Varma, in her article "Aparangalude Mayyazhi", hails him as a saviour figure in his confrontation with the coloniser and sees the inner conflict he experiences as nourishing the overall tragic aura he possesses. She states that tragedy always accompanies a person who resorts to salvaging his community and thus eulogises the tragic state he assumes towards the end (107). The critic Paul also hails him as a complete revolutionary and praises the tragic dimensions of the character (94). Mohanan, on the other hand, raises his criticism against the characterisation of Dasan by perceiving the tragic aura conferred on him as deteriorating the entire character from

the status of a progressive-minded revolutionary presented in the beginning, and he labels him as a man of contradictions having been caught between native influences and colonial modernity (29). Evidently, it is Dasan's victimised and passive image that is highlighted and projected in the readings on his identity.

The active exchange between memory and space in the text is an area that has not been dealt with in the existing studies, but it highly contributes to sculpting the identity of the protagonist and understanding him in a new light. On the integral connection between memory and identity, Jacobson writes, "We find a place for ourselves as we develop meaningful relations with what is other than us, and by holding on to this meaning through the inhabited landscape that is our memory. It is through this memorial home that we are continually given back to ourselves by what lies beyond us" (33). How Dasan traverses beyond his existing subjectivities accorded by the discourses of existentialism and postcolonialism - such as a tragic hero who probes the meaning of life ending up in nothingness, and a confused and disempowered colonial subject constructed by orientalism, cultural assimilation, and ambivalence respectively which prominently confer a victimised and agentless state on him - are identified through the analysis of the interplay of memory and space. The nature of the space and its alterations, the power struggles between the larger structure and the subject-agent during the revolutionary phase, and the behavioural nature of the subject and the structure in the aftermath of the revolution are also evoked in the chapter. The major spaces identified are the familial space, the religious-mythical space, the social space (encompassing the mythical-cultural space and political space), and Dasan's private or intimate space drawn by a romantic affair.

Dasan, born in Mayyazhi pregnant with the sweet and scented tales of colonial legacy, its remnants, and unbroken recollections, drives and establishes his identity by forming a peculiar relationship with the elements that surround him. Dasan's intimacy with the familial space sprouts in the relationship with his grandmother, Kurambi, the representative of the mentally and culturally colonised natives who awe and admire everything European and white. The religious-mythical space cannot be separated from the familial space as the religious beliefs, oral, and mythical tales in circulation in the social and cultural sphere of Mayyazhi are primarily transmitted and informed to Dasan through Kurambi and the familial space. The archetypal figure of a storytelling grandmother -the narrator of folk tales and myths – is effectively portrayed through the image of Kurambi.

What contributes to the uniqueness and distinct identity of Mayyazhi are the myths, rituals, and religious beliefs that form the collective memory - propounded by Halbwachs (qtd. in Manier and Hirst 253) and analysed by Marcel and Mucchielli (141-142) - and cultural memory - developed by J. Assmann ("Communicative and Cultural Memory" 112) - of the land. Myths and beliefs such as the Velliyan Kallu, Gulikan, the Goddess of Smallpox or Vasoori Amma, and the Mother of Mayyazhi that appear in the text form the cultural memory of the place, where the cultural memory is identified as the "recollections of a shared past which are passed on through ongoing processes of commemoration, officially sanctioned rituals which remember a group through calling upon a common heritage, with a shared past as a central component" (Eyerman 161). Story-telling is an intensely active and dynamic process of transmitting the memory of myths and traditions that hold the uniqueness of the cultural realm of a particular community. Low's principle

of place attachment manifesting through the articulation of narratives (173-174) and the assertion of the cultural role of storytelling and narratives by Andrés Di Masso *et al.* (78) gain immense significance in this context. In the text, oral stories form the central medium, the fundamental gateway, for Dasan to build a space of intimacy and attachment within the family. These intergenerational narratives - the memories transmitted across generations about the ancestral past - impart a certain definition of selfhood to Dasan and serve as a medium to integrate him not just into the family but also into the macro-space, the socio-cultural space of Mayyazhi, by being the master narratives or founding narratives that facilitate his official entry into the community, and these aid him in the construction of his place-identity. Realistic narratives about past familial experiences are also collective family memories, and the active transmission of such memories from one generation to the other leads to the creation of an intergenerational identity for the familial members by welding them inseparably into the community, as articulated by Merrill and Fivush (73), Halbwachs (qtd. in Erll, *Memory* 17), and Erll (“Locating Family” 307). This idea of the transmission belt, the generationality created through a common and shared identity, operates in Dasan leading to the development of topophilia – propounded by Tuan (*Topophilia* 93) - for the inhabiting space.

In the text, mythical stories majorly dominate Kurambi’s narration and only one family narrative (the death of Dasan’s grandfather, Kelu Achan) is included in the course. Two central memories that mark the geographical identity of Mayyazhi arising in the mould of Kurambi’s narratives are that of the Velliyan Kallu and the arrival of Leslie Sayiv to buy snuff powder from her. The first significant memory is that of the Velliyan Kallu, a rocky island that lies in the middle of the sea that is

believed to be the origin and the final destination of all lives of Mayyazhi according to its inhabitants, and it forms the central myth that binds the natives of Mayyazhi. As the narrator describes, it is a “cluster of rocks in the sea where souls rest between births and which guards in its womb the secrets of the lives and births of the folk of Mayyazhi” (Krishnankutty 25). The following conversation between Kurambi and Dasan exhibits how the myth becomes fundamental to the latter’s existence:

‘Achamme’, where was I before I was born?’

Like all grandmothers in Mayyazhi, Kurambi Amma answered, ‘On the Velliyan Kallu.’

The cluster of rocks called Velliyan Kallu lay far out to sea like a bright teardrop. All of Mayyazhi’s children had come from there. The souls waiting to be born in Mayyazhi fluttered over the sunbright rocks as dragonflies. (31)

As the conversation evidently portrays, the myth, in its capacity as a metanarrative, a grand or master narrative, and a collective frame, conjoins the people of Mayyazhi by imparting to them a collective identity and membership in the specific socio-culture of the macro-space. Varma marks the significance of the myth as follows:

While the external space of Mayyazhi is marked by the contamination of colonisation and emancipation, of dominance and liberation, there is another pure and uncontaminated material space that covertly/indirectly determines the course of the novel. [It is the] Velliyan Kallu. . . . This ‘other space’ or ‘secondary space’ that is naturally welded into the organic spatial structure of the novel and that gets conspicuous through repeated readings is meaningful.” (my trans.; 105)

Although materially or physically apart from the macro-structure of Mayyazhi, the myth builds a unique spatial and experiential realm directly connected to identity and existence for its inhabitants. According to Tharamel, in the myth that holds the existence of a frozen period, an aperture between life and death, “[m]emory exists without giving any loopholes for the frozen forgetfulness” (my trans.; 44). The entire myth is constructed on the idea of an everlasting memory – the memory that lies suspended between life and death – and therefore, the role of memory in shaping the fundamental identity of the inhabitants of Mayyazhi is established beyond doubt. The Velliyan Kallu also gains the stature of a ‘real-imaginary’ space, for its amalgamation of a physical, material plane of existence and an imaginary, mythical realm associated with a collective belief. Suspended between reality and imagination, and carrying both material and spiritual elements, the space also acquires a hybrid quality on its own. The transmitted tale of Velliyan Kallu, like various other tales he would listen to, impacts Dasan deeply and he stands enraptured looking over the horizon imagining the flying dragonflies. The myth stamps his spatial self or geographical self (Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy” 683) that springs from an awareness of his birth enrooted in the unique geographical and mythical definer of the space of Mayyazhi. It is the myth that primarily contributes to and constructs Dasan’s place-identity (Proshansky, “City” 155) by suturing him into the cultural spatiality of Mayyazhi and developing a sense of place (Cresswell 113) and place attachment (Cross 494) in him. Dasan’s thoughts on life, death, and rebirth that emerge during certain crucial turns his life would take in the future, have their shadows traced to this myth as it becomes a significant, formative influence on him.

Narrated from a third-person point-of-view (with the initial part carrying Kurambi's perspective), the text opens with a portrayal of the colonial days, a period before Dasan was born when the French and half-French men used to tread the lanes of Mayyazhi in seamless union with the natives. Kurambi, who worships the 'fair-skinned' colonial leaders as well as mixed-blooded descendants and deeply desires for the posterity to emulate and adopt their 'elite' cultural ways, represents the native community enslaved by the supremacy of the Euro-centric, colonial system, which gets enacted through manipulated education and conditioning - instilling how 'ideal' and 'superior' the Western and European culture is compared to the 'uncivilized', 'pagan', and 'unsophisticated' native system – of the natives. The oft-occurring Kurambi's dream about the half-French Leslie Sayiv is located in these colonial days, in her memory of an ever-cherished habitual routine of his regular visit to buy some snuff powder from her. In the dream, she hears the hoofbeats of Leslie Sayiv's horse and sees the charming Sayiv, the "most fashionably dressed man in Mayyazhi" (9), requesting her a bit of snuff powder, which is followed by her enthusiasm in providing him his favourite leisure-bite and a gradual diminishing of the hoofbeats that closes off the adorable scene of intimacy. The first time the dream appears in the narration is during the moment of Dasan's birth, which is depicted as follows:

The sound of hoofbeats woke her with a start. A white horse with a bushy mane! Her heart beat faster. . . . The hoofbeats came nearer and the carriage wheels creaked to a halt. There was a sudden silence.

'Kurambi, kurambi, will you give me a pinch of snuff?'

She recognised the voice of Leslie Sayiv, who had died years ago.

She lay helpless, unable to move or make a sound. Her eyes filled with tears.

[T]he clatter of hooves died away in the distance.

A cock crowed. . . . Damu's happy voice merged with the feeble cry of a newborn child, 'Amme, it's a boy!' (24-25)

Evidently, Kurambi's dream becomes a recollection of the past, a revisitation of the bygone colonial days. As Tharamel records in his study of the novel, "Kurambi's snuff-box. . . is an olfactory symbol of the journey to the past" (my trans.; 35).

Dreams, the involuntary and unconscious revelations an individual obtains, contain projections of selected elements of one's past experiences that get manifested either directly or symbolically through associative or metaphorical images and are driven by the emotional and sentimental disposition or temperament of the dreamer in the present. Dreams, therefore, are the products of one's past combined with the experiences of the present; they are largely determined by the emotional and behavioural makeup of the dreamer in the present. Beyond the level of the individual, they are manifestations of the larger socio-cultural context of which the dreamer is an inseparable part, as observed by Ewing (44) and Mageo (24-26), which in this case is the colonial order. Every time the dream occurs, Kurambi appears as a muted figure unable to respond to the man's request and as highly distressed by his leaving her abode, which does not correspond to the real happenings of the past, where Kurambi used to gladly offer the snuff powder to him and astonishingly gaze at his charisma. The memory presented through the dream is a distorted version of the past, where a happy scenario is altered to project Kurambi's grief in the present, a time when she has lost Leslie Sayiv and his loving gestures as a habitual guest, and when an anti-colonial spirit has started to emerge.

In tune with the propositions of Foster (12), Conway (594-595), and Sutton *et al.* (213) on memory being a reconstruction of the past in accordance with the necessities and circumstances of the present, here, the dream becomes a reconstruction of the colonial past (and not a reproduction) attesting to Kurambi's emotional disposition in the changed times. In this sense, Kurambi emerges not just as an embodiment of colonial slavery and the colonial past, but also as a connecting agent between the lost colonial glory and the transformed present.

Even though Kurambi's memory is deeply personal and falls under the category of episodic memory (Tulving, "What Is Episodic Memory?" 67-68), due to its nature of a mental time-travel to a specific incident of the past, it evidently resonates with the larger collective, communicative memory of the people of Mayyazhi, pertaining to the historical, colonial period when the whites and half-whites used to intermingle with the natives in harmony and cordiality. Kurambi's remembrance of Leslie Sayiv in the form of a dream colliding with Dasan's birth carries a politics within it, which is manifested in the crafting of Dasan's identity in a certain way. The memory juxtaposed with Dasan's birth is a signification of the grandmother's staunch desire to see him as a 'respectable' and 'dignified' English-speaking gentleman akin to the elegant French Sayivs, a desire which is amply projected in the text as the story develops. Here, the dominant order of colonialism imposes the normative identity of a colonial subject on Dasan. Alongside this, the overwhelmed Kurambi's inability to respond to the query posed by the Sayiv followed by his waning image can be viewed as a prospective sign of the decline or the gradual disappearance of even the slightest trait of colonialism and the silencing of the older generation, for which Dasan would serve as a major catalyst. The

politics of the memory, therefore, is effectively manifested through the placement of Dasan at the juncture of Kurambi's intense yearning for the lost colonial times and her painful realisation of its irretrievable loss. By presenting Dasan's birth within such a paradoxical matrix, where desires and expectations parallelly encounter their obliteration and denial, his identity gets framed as a confluence, as a combination of dualistic or opposing traits and sometimes conflicting visions, which will get unveiled as the story unfurls.

The fundamental factor that drives the affinity between the grandmother and the grandson is the former's much-desired vision of Dasan as an Englishman - in the elite colonial attire and holding the 'sophisticated' job of the notary like Leslie Sayiv - enrooted in the memory of the past, a vision that Kurambi cherishes habitually. Kurambi's dream of Leslie Sayiv collides with specific stages of Dasan's growth. When Dasan leaves for his school on the first day, Kurambi adoringly blesses him with the words, "You must become a great man, like Leslie Sayiv" and pronounces her desire to see Dasan "in a coat and a hat" (28). Dasan is presented as an obedient, compliant, and lovable child of innocence at this stage. Later, when Dasan prepares for the 'Certificat' examination, a turning point in his school life, which is also the time when the family is caught in the whirl of penury and utter devastation, Kurambi envisions him as the sole source of hope by stating, "One day my Dasan is going to be a notary like Leslie Sayiv", and dreaming of him riding a horse in the white man's attire (56). How the normative order or the dominant structure of colonialism is conferred on him is evident here. The episode of Leslie Sayiv's visit strikes her memory at this point. Broken reminiscences of the Sayiv occur to Kurambi on various occasions and the dream visits her for the final time during Dasan's

preparation for the Brevet examination, promised as a gateway to a coveted career for him under the aegis of the French administration. Here, the exercise of power by the familial space comes into view. With Kurambi as the patroniser of colonialism and Dasan as a passive listener, the familial space levies considerable power over the child's formative phase and his identity by envisioning, conditioning, and socialising him as a colonial subject even before he attains agency to register his response to the same. Here, the family becomes the power-centre and Dasan assumes the state of a submissive recipient of the transmitted ideologies and occupies the periphery. As a child, Dasan's affinity for Kurambi remains unconditional and unchanged at this stage.

On the other hand, corresponding to the outgrowing revolutionary temperament in Dasan, the dream, where the fading hoofbeats and Kurambi's silence get projected more intensely than before, turns out to be increasingly disturbing, painful, and tumultuous for the grandmother. In this sense, the dream becomes a gauge, a pointer, to record the relationship between Kurambi and Dasan not just in the present but also in the future. Kurambi's affliction and stutter, although constant elements in the dream, get detailed and conspicuous every time the dream is repeated and as it proceeds from the initial phase to the next. Also, Kurambi's fear and insecurity, articulated through her bursting tears, signal the time when the older generation will be silenced by the rise of the anti-colonial powers or the revolutionaries.

The other stories that Kurambi narrates to Dasan are about the French patriot Joan of Arc, the native man Kunjakkan, the native beauty Kunhimanikkam and the merchant Vaisravanan Chettiar, and the myths of Vasoori Amma and the Mother of

Mayyazhi. If the first three belong to the realm of communicative memory for their non-institutionalised, informal nature and also for their denotation of a recent past, the two myths that follow form the cultural memory of the land. Despite the differences, these narratives, being the master frames, the metanarratives, or grand narratives of the land of Mayyazhi, bring into effect an intersection of the private or domestic and the public or cultural spheres, and they also serve as a definition of collective identity for its inhabitants. The tale of Joan of Arc who fought for her native French land against the British is hailed as an exemplar of untainted patriotism and unflinching courage by Kurambi. The tale about the brave shepherd girl leading the battle against the British and succumbing to death on a burning pyre set by the enemy that “every child in Mayyazhi had grown up with” (41), is a clear case of collective semantic memory or lived semantic memory (Manier and Hirst 257-258) apart from being a communicative memory and the instance of Dasan and Kurambi getting transposed to another world through the story indicates the impact of the event of recollection or re-narration on them. The articulation of the story of Joan of Arc by Kurambi is also a case of national memory becoming a family memory, an intersection of the public/ national consciousness and the deeply private/personal familial consciousness. The national memory enrooted in patriotism, nationalism, and audacity produces or becomes the familial memory, and it also contributes to the formation of a shared identity for both its tellers and listeners by being a binding force of the entire community. The story of Vaisravanan Chettiar, a rich merchant, and Kunhimanikkam, a coveted beauty of the town, acquires the quality of a folk tale with its mystical and rural elements. According to Kurambi, the merchant who could not satiate his desire for communion with the lady

was reborn as a serpent and murdered her after his sexual gratification. Here, Kunhimanikkam represents the consumerist mindset that was nurtured by colonial modernity and she also becomes symbolic of the native sexuality. Symbolically, the story becomes the manifestation of the triumph of nativism over colonialism. Even though Kurambi imparts nativism through the stories, the idea that the colonial order needs to be obliterated never strikes her, but Dasan, hugely impacted by the stories, gains a sense and ideology of nativism different from Kurambi, which will be unveiled only in the future. The memories operate in the context of storytelling and influence his identity considerably by instilling in him the necessity to combat external imperial/colonial powers (the French) and guard the native place, thereby projecting his future role as a patriot. However, at this point, the memory successfully places Dasan in the social and cultural grid of Mayyazhi once again - similar to the emplacement granted by the myth of Velliyan Kallu – and underscores his topophilia for the macro-space, his geographical self, and place-identity.

Kurambi shares another story which is about Kunjakkan, a native of Mayyazhi who went lame due to an inherited curse from the local deity (Gulikan) according to popular belief. The collective memory is that it is Gulikan's kick on the right foot of Kurambachan, Kunjakkan's grandfather who had once pilfered a bunch of bananas from the temple premises to buy an alcoholic drink, that caused lameness in him and that it got transmitted through generations to his son, grandson, and the entire family as a curse. This much-circulated tale is defied and deflated by Dasan who points out that Kunjakkan's son, Kunhanan, was not lame (44). Dasan shattering Kurambi's belief by posing his question, apart from indicating his innate trait of defiance of the establishment and his transformation from the image of a

gullible and innocent child to a matured and rational thinker, is the first instance of his disagreement with and breeding of displeasure for the mythical/social and familial space. The power relations shift with Dasan's defiance of the centre; the matriarchal power centre is subverted and Dasan alters his peripheral position. Similarly, at a later point in time, when Kurambi talks about her belief in Vasoori Amma as a powerful goddess who actuates the deadly disease of smallpox, Dasan defies it by stating, "It's a virus that brings smallpox, not Vasoori Amma" (62), which becomes a case of blasphemy for Kurambi Amma. The statement that Dasan utters, undoubtedly, springs from his scientific temperament and consciousness rooted in progressiveness, and it marks a sense of discomfort as well as a moment of distancing from the mythical-social space and Kurambi's love-circle. As Dasan defies the normative familial structure exposing himself as a non-conformist, it becomes the manifestation of his agency. It also testifies to Dasan's conscious act of distinguishing his self/selfhood from the general world and it emphasises his unique identity.

For a modern and rational intellectual who explodes the native belief systems articulated through Kurambi Amma by employing the veracity of science, the myth of dragonflies taking birth as humans is also an easily challengeable or disputable belief, but contradictorily, Dasan wilfully embraces it without critiquing it, along with the story of Kunhimanikkam. In his criticism, Mohanan points out that Dasan's characterisation as a revolutionary is flawed or ruined because of the unnecessary emphasis and relevance he places on the myths and folk tales throughout the course of his life (31). According to him, during the instances of Dasan growing up and deciding to participate in the freedom movement, and later when he is caught in

various dilemmatic situations, the Velliyan Kallu and other myths visit him as a constant thought, and this reduces the charisma of the character moulded as a rebel and revolutionary. The critic cites many instances, one of which is the moment when Dasan turns pensive about the liberation of Mayyazhi, and his thought is: “But where was Mayyazhi’s freedom? As far away as Velliyan Rock, where unborn souls hovered like dragonflies. . .” (116). One can look beyond the explicit contradiction or ‘weakness’ in the characterisation raised by the critic by citing a rationale rooted in the spatial dialectics of attachment and detachment that an individual possesses. The myths of Velliyan Kallu and Kunhimanikkam, especially the former, serve as the gateway to restore and rebuild Dasan’s intimacy with the familial as well as cultural sphere from which he gets severed owing to his progressive outlook, as an interplay of topophilia and topophobia is integral to the nurturing of the identity of the protagonist. The notion of rebirth or reincarnation forms the essence of both narratives. Beliefs on life, death, and rebirth lie at the heart of Dasan’s contemplations and he incessantly ponders over them on several occasions. The first time the thought hits Dasan is during his consciousness-awakening, his gaining of self-awareness by looking at his mirror-image as a grown-up individual. When Dasan matures and wears a dhoti for the first time gathering the disposition of an adult, the narrator from Dasan’s point-of-view remarks, “He was a young man now. . . . He wanted to grow up fast. . .” (59). This remarkable moment of independence that dawns on him is not just the product of his conscious distancing from the indulgence in childhood tantrums but also of his matured distancing from the ignorant, gullible learning and the conservative, orthodox values his family instills in him. Soon after this realisation, the narrator states, “Dasan gazed at himself again.

Once upon a time, my soul was a dragonfly, fluttering over the Velliyan Rock. He was lost in thought for a moment, full of wonder at the mystery of life and death” (59). Dasan’s staunch belief in the Velliyan Kallu is evoked at a crucial moment when his grownup state of consciousness severs him from his innocent state of childhood. The remembrance indicates Dasan’s effort to re-integrate into his lost childhood and affix himself within the familial frame of love and security. The memory serves two roles in Dasan’s life: one, as a reminder of his origin, an inescapable rootedness with the place however independent he might grow to be; two, as a perpetual chord of attachment, a tie of love that pulls him to Kurambi and the familial sphere after each phase of his detachment or distancing from the same due to ideological conflicts and differences, which is a part of his strategic play of constructing identity as interstitial by shifting between absolute identification with and absolute severance or detachment from the surrounding spaces. During many more dramatic occasions yet to unfold in his life such as leaving home to participate in the anti-colonial movement, feeling the absence of his family and home being away from his native land, and others, the Velliyan Kallu and the notions of life, death, and rebirth - foregrounded through the myth - emerge as a gateway to reinstate topophilia and intensify his ties with the familial space as well as the cultural space of Mayyazhi. King’s observation on repetition of events being moments of active recollection is significant here (99-100). In this sense, the two transmitted tales, apart from being grand, mythical narratives, serve to be Dasan’s self-defining memories – the concept propounded by Singer and Salovey (qtd. in Bouizegarene and Philippe 617) - that facilitate the preservation of a certain connection with the macro-space despite the differences and disagreements he holds

with the conservative practices of its cultural milieu. It is for this reason that despite carrying fantasised elements, these narratives remain unchallenged and undenied by Dasan and are seemingly approved and acknowledged by an act of silence. The complexity of the character springs from the co-existence of such mutually conflicting, contradictory ideologies, but viewing the contradiction as a product or effect of the assertive stance that he adopts for preserving his identity as interstitial aids one in thinking beyond the negative shade that the notion of contradiction confers on him. This emphasises the undeniable role of a place in designing a person's identity.

Analysing Dasan's interaction with the familial sphere, one sees the consecutive evocation of topophilia and topophobia and the space as a site of topophobia. The initial picture of love and affection for the familial space, primarily materialised and concretised through the act of storytelling, draws the state of topophilia for Dasan, and as the narrator traces his growth, one sees ideological differences triggering discomfort in the subject with the said spaces that subsequently lead him to cultivate efforts to reattach to the same.

Closely linked to the domestic space is the social space of Mayyazhi, as the incidents, changes, and repercussions in the latter find their reflection and alterations in the former. The public space of Mayyazhi constitutes not just the mythical space, but the socio-cultural and political spaces as well that offer intense and diverse experiences formative to the development of the persona. The social space that Dasan converses with has two experiential realms: one, his love for the hybrid English (constituted by Leslie Sayiv's wife Missie and their impotent son Gaston) portrayed through his constant engagement with the space of the bungalow; two, the

academic and political realm flourishing primarily under the influence of three spaces: Kunhanandan Master's house, the ideologically spirited space of Pondicherry, and Big Sayiv's bungalow. Of these, Dasan's interaction with the latter set is focused as the trio profoundly impacts and shapes Dasan's academic as well as political career more significantly than the first.

If Missie's bungalow turns out to be a source of selfless love, Kunhanandan Master's house becomes a site of learning and revelations keenly formative to Dasan's development as an individual. Dasan's first major interaction outside the domestic space happens in the master's house where he regularly pays a visit after leaving his school, and he imbibes the Communist ideologies and principles from the man, a core leftist at heart. During the havoc wrecked by smallpox, it is the master who initiates to assist the depraved and diseased, and Dasan, along with his allies namely Pappan, Kanaran, and Vasutty, ventures into charity and palliative care under the master's words of persuasion. With the waves of the freedom movement hitting the shores of Mayyazhi, materialised through the institution of the Mahajana Sabha under the leadership of the revolutionary Kanaran, the social space begins to witness unprecedented changes. Dasan's preparation for the Brevet examination, the qualifying examination conducted by the French administration to facilitate higher studies, converges with this phase of the freedom movement, and it profoundly shapes his ideals. Master's words, "Only in a Communist society we can hope for a world without war. Global communism is the only remedy" (70), to a worried Dasan who grows pensive about the surging wars across the world, sow in him the elemental thoughts about gaining freedom and installing a people's government in Mayyazhi. These words propel activism and revolutionary spirit in Dasan, which get

nourished and nurtured as soon as he reaches Pondicherry. It is the master's house that also offers an intimate, love-experience for Dasan through the introduction of Chandrika, the master's niece, although it remains unpronounced at this stage.

Pondicherry, a space outside Mayyazhi, marks a vital phase in Dasan's voyage by being an extremely influential political realm that shapes and prunes his existing revolutionary ideals, and sculpting him for the good cause of the state. Dasan's transfer to Pondicherry to pursue his higher studies happens with the French government of Mayyazhi (with Big Sayiv as the head of the government) patronising his future academics and employment after he qualifies in the Brevet examination. With Kunhanandan Master giving Dasan a letter carrying highly confidential information about the freedom movement to be handed over to one of his acquaintances at Pondicherry, the eventful phase at the place is strongly suggested. Even though Dasan's activities at Pondicherry do not form a part of the narration, his return to Mayyazhi with the determination to join the rising political movement for freedom testifies to his profound involvement with revolutionary ideals during the course of his first external spatial experience.

Varma observes, "The political space of Mayyazhi, being caught between colonisation and liberation/emancipation, is on the horns of a dilemma. Therefore, in the identity-construction of each child born in such a peculiar political circumstance, uncertainty and disintegration become prominent" (my trans.; 105). The generation of Dasan comprising the anti-colonial freedom fighters encounters this dilemma throughout their course of action. The dilemma gets its primary expression after Dasan returns to Mayyazhi from Pondicherry, when the first phase of the revolution had already begun with Pappan sticking the poster of 'freedom' on the walls of Big

Sayiv's bungalow (78), which triggers an atmosphere of commotion and suspicion across the socio-cultural and political realms of the macro-space. Dasan's return, unexpectedly welcomed by a letter from Big Sayiv offering him either a job in the Secretariat or an opportunity to go to France to pursue higher studies, turns out to be a crucial moment not only for the private, domestic sphere but also for the larger, cultural sphere of Mayyazhi. Dasan's rebellious proclamation to the elated and enthralled Damu, "I'm not going to France, Acha. . . . I don't want the job in the Secretariat either" (105), as he readies himself to join the national movement for the larger cause of the nation with a clear-cut awareness of the ruckus within the family that can ensue in the future, disrupts the atmosphere of joy, hopes, and expectations of the entire family, makes him an outsider at home, and launches him in the face of the first among the many crises to unfurl. The declaration, an open defiance of the colonial structure, is an explicit case of the realisation of Dasan's agential capacity.

Here, what Dasan along with other followers of the movement produces is Lefebvre's lived space (*Production* 12, 39) and Soja's thirdspace (*Thirdspace* 56-57, 62): for the revolution and art of imagination employed by its inhabitants attempting to counter and transform the dominant space through real, lived experiences and for generating a counterspace, a space of resistance and revolution against the existing, established order of dominance, respectively. Such spaces that arise from the margins are the products of a collaborative effort of progressive and artistic forces, and they also become the initiator of change in the existing system. Dasan also assumes an insider-outsider position; he is inside the macro-structure, but his ideology and revolutionary stance cast him as an outsider. This stage, most importantly, marks Dasan as occupying a liminal state, the space of in-betweenness

in a rite of passage or the middle-state between a severance or alienation from a larger society and a state of reintegration into the same, as Turner theorises (95). The most significant feature of the liminal is that the subject produces an identity different from his/her previous form, enjoys a state of liberation from all kinds of dominance, and remains anti-structural in his/her approach. Thomassen's opinion that wars and revolutions are liminal experiences ("Uses" 17) gains relevance in the case of Dasan, whose anti-colonial and revolutionary disposition is that which lands him in a liminal space. At this stage, Dasan breeds topophilia towards the political space by growing attached to the vigorous revolutionary principles but becomes detached from the intimate space of the family. If one takes a look at the power relations, although the colonial authority still occupies the central position, Dasan's staunch decision to go anti-colonial capacitates him to break his position on the periphery and grow closer to the centre to engage in a subversive act.

In the text, the Big Sayiv's bungalow symbolises colonial/imperial power, prestige, and patronisation, and Dasan's first direct encounter with the same happens after he qualifies in the Brevet examination when the colonial master consents to sponsor Dasan's studies in Pondicherry. In this episode, the power of the state exercised on the colonised subject is symbolically expressed through the images of the Big Sayiv's boots and his silhouette behind the side-drawn curtains, but Dasan steps out ecstatically relishing the fortune that he is provided with (74). Dasan enters the bungalow for a second time by raising the demand for freedom during the phase of the revolution, when his political views have altered, and he is struck by a sense of repulsion for the space. When temporal and temperamental shifts take place, the

Big Sayiv's bungalow transforms into a space of conflicting experiential realms for Dasan nurturing topophilia and topophobia alternately.

Dani observes that Dasan's decision to join the anti-colonial movement springs from his "realisation that his temporality/temporal consciousness is not in the present, but in the future" (my trans.; 53), and this disrupts and challenges the existing colonial temporality or the colonial consciousness that forms the fundamental living structure of his family as well as the majority of the natives of Mayyazhi. As one's temporal consciousness is closely linked to one's existence and identity, the conflicting proclivities – towards colonialism and nativism - engender a crevice, a rupture within the domestic space, and Dasan grows increasingly uneasy and disturbed with it. In tune with the arguments raised by Vidler (qtd. in Radović 52), González (203), and Blunt and Varley (3), the transformation of home as a space of conflicting ideologies – of attachment and detachment, of security and anxiety - due to Dasan's dislocation or spatial shift is evident here. Sara Ahmed notes that homes "always involve encounters between those who stay, those who arrive and those who leave" and that "[t]here is movement and dislocation within the very forming of homes as complex and contingent spaces of inhabitation" (340). It is the movement in and out of the established colonial consciousness that produces Dasan's home as a site of hybridity. As Minu Susan Koshy notes precisely, "In postcolonial societies, the house functions . . . as the site where hybrid identities are negotiated and a colonial past and a neocolonial present are constantly at clash with each other" (77).

"Dasan's eyes were heavy and swollen with sleep. It was six months since he had returned from Pondicherry and he had done nothing but sleep, or smoke

endlessly, standing at the window”, states the omniscient narrator (114), and witnessing the deadly silence in the family, Dasan finds himself incapable of subverting the stalemate. To worsen the situation, Damu, afflicted with the ailments of old age and who had expected his son to look after the family and household, turns despondent and hopeless and ceases conversing with his son. This prominently becomes the case of exposing Dasan’s identity as one lying between the identity imposed by the normative structure - the assimilations that the subject had bred towards it -and the identity of a rebel he moulds for himself. Dasan, haunted by the queries that life poses before him- about the future course and output of the liberation movement, about the propriety of his decision to fight for the freedom of Mayyazhi leaving behind his responsibilities and duty to family, about his livelihood and the poverty of his family – thus ends up contemplative and pensive, and the familial space produces topophobia in him. In the network of power-play, Dasan is sidelined and disarmed while the family and the colonial authority keep their power intact, as the agency of the subject remains unmaterialised. Notably, it is Dasan’s displacement to Pondicherry- not just physically but emotionally and spiritually – that causes his distancing from Mayyazhi. Even though the first phase of the revolution is inaugurated by Pappan and Vasutty, it is Pondicherry and the network of freedom fighters, thinkers, and revolutionaries that lay considerable influence on Dasan, and uproot and unsettle him once he returns. This once again marks the pertinence of place in determining one’s course of action and identity. Also to be noted is the interconnection between the social and the domestic space, as the repercussions in the former get articulated in the latter and lead the interacting persona to estrangement and alienation within.

The pivotal role of memory facilitating a reconnection with the native space comes into play when a crisis hits Dasan, and this brings out the intricacies of the identity-construction in the character. Pining for an effective compensation and soulful solution, Dasan recalls and revisits the past times in full zest and vigour. Dasan's consent and initiation to perform the rituals for his dead grandfather as per the belief of the community, a case of the evocation of ancestral memory, is the first effort on this account. Offerings are placed on a banana leaf believing that the dead will visit the living in the form of a crow to consume them and Dasan recollects Kurambi Amma narrating to him their belief in different kinds of spirits or souls of the dead such as Biran, Pena, and Bhandaram (125). Dasan performs the rituals remembering these words of Kurambi and she shares her belief that the scraggy crow that appeared late at night to have the offerings was her dead husband, to which Dasan does not respond and remains silent. Dasan, who had questioned Kurambi's belief in the goddess Nallamma (of Smallpox) and Gulikan through his enlightened vision and scientific wisdom, refuses to both challenge the ritual and propose his progressive stance. The act of upholding Communist principles while simultaneously consenting to the divine, spiritual rituals and beliefs crafts Dasan's persona as an extremely complex one. Although Dasan's silence does not vouch for an acceptance or approval of the custom, his tolerance for and endorsement of the coexistence of opposing ideologies is what gets pronounced through his act. A similar case of tolerance is put forth by Dasan in his conversation with Pappan on the festival of the Virgin in the church of Mayyazhi, a prominent festival of the land where people gathered irrespective of religious disparities. When Pappan despises the devotees by saying that they throng the festival pretentiously with the only

intention of consuming liquor (“Do you think all these people have really come out of devotion?”), is what he asks), Dasan retorts by asking, “You mean this whole crowd is here to drink?”, and laughs to contemplate, “Bhakti can make people more intoxicated than liquor” (127). Dasan’s admission that devotion is a powerful intoxicant that entices the crowd to the festival, even though obviously sarcastic, is a recognition, although not an unconditional acceptance, of the larger belief system of Mayyazhi. While Pappan completely belittles it, Dasan assumes a position of tolerance for it. Here Dasan also remembers the story of “the origin of the Mother of Mayyazhi” a story with folk and magical elements that Kurambi had narrated to him when he was a child (127). The tale describes a ship that had sailed into the Velliyan Kallu carrying an idol of the Virgin Mother, which got stranded with no visible cause only to hear a voice from the heaven that said, ‘Install me in Mayyazhi’ (128). According to the cultural memory, the church was built at the place where the captain placed the idol. To this widely circulated story also Dasan refrains from registering his opinion. The child Dasan who had defied and outrightly challenged Kurambi’s beliefs has grown to be a matured individual by learning the art of tolerance and acknowledgement of differences despite disagreements.

Beyond a natural phase of growth, Dasan’s approach of this kind is a deliberately, consciously designed strategy for the production of his identity in a certain way. Performing the rituals for the dead, an act of participating in the ritualistic remembrance, and recollecting the story of the Mother of Mayyazhi take place during a period of extreme crisis in his life, when he stands alienated from the familial space and is distressed, dejected, and dubious about the future. “Home is that which marks out and secures a space *for us*, and that enables us literally *to*

remember ourselves as we encounter and engage the otherness of the world beyond”, says Jacobson (33). For Dasan, these memories contribute to rebuilding the lost connection not just with the familial space but also with the social, cultural, and mythical space of Mayyazhi; the act of remembrance opens the way for spiritual rejuvenation in him. Dasan’s effort to reintegrate into the familial space is conscious and deliberate, whereby he assumes total agency – which springs from the collective memories - to reactivate topophilia with the space. It aids him in the process of his identity-formation for which a sense of place lies fundamental, although it is manifested in the aperture between active engagement and disengagement with it. What is also unveiled here is the contradiction in Dasan’s character - he appears as a rebel against the establishment and tradition, but simultaneously and strategically embraces a part of the same for his survival and sustenance – that results from the strategic dialectic of spatiality he employs in the construction of his identity. Going beyond the explicit view of the contradiction as exacerbating or affirming his tragic state, it is to be seen as an empowering faculty aiding the construction of his identity as interstitial.

Dasan’s second journey to Pondicherry to attend the Indo-French Congress as part of advancing the liberation movement once again ruins his relationship with the family. This is the second major crisis that strikes Dasan, and it converges with the incident of the extremist freedom fighters like Pappan and Vasutty taking power and the corresponding intensification of the control of the State over the revolutionaries. With Pappan resorting to violent means by murdering the Commisar, a high French government official, the authority stipulates the arrest of all the revolutionaries, and the unfortunate Damu is taken into custody upon finding

that Dasan had absconded from Pondicherry to avoid the arrest, along with his allies. Once again, Dasan assumes the status of an outsider, an outcast, and is severely accused of being responsible for pushing his family into extreme grievance and staying ignorant about familial needs and necessities.

Porter Kunhaman's house, located towards the east of the railway station outside the boundary that splits Mayyazhi from Azhiyoor, becomes a secretive and temporary abode for the revolutionaries in exile at this stage. Gandhian Kanaran and extremists like Pappan and Vasutty reside under the same roof discussing and drafting the plan of action for achieving liberation, and simultaneously grieve about the loss of peace and security. Among the many spaces that Dasan traverses, the porter's house acquires uniqueness for its positionality that confluences with not just his mental disposition but also with that of all his inmates in common. This inn is a materialisation of the liminal state they are undergoing, being the revolutionary freedom fighters of Mayyazhi, and being anti-establishmentarian and anti-structural through their action. The bordered state of occupancy of the house qualifies it to be a liminal space: both geographically and symbolically, it is a transitional, in-between, and interstitial space that confers a bordered and 'insider-outsider' position on the revolutionaries, where the aspect of belongingness owing to their birth in Mayyazhi provides them the attribute of insideness whereas the revolutionary act contributes to their outsideness. Dasan sees the cross and the lighthouse on Big Sayiv's hill from the house and feels that "he had lost his home and his country" (136), which explicitly spots him as an 'outsider' from the perspective of the mainstream Mayyazhi. This bordered position is materially articulated or physically manifested

through the space of the porter's house. Such a position becomes crucial for Dasan to invite memories of home and the native land.

Dasan envies Pappan's 'freedom' due to the absence of a family in his life, and his thoughts flow as follows: "Pappan is lucky. . . . He is a free man. If only I could be free like him, he thought. His father is in jail, his sister and grandmother, their images were like festering wounds in him. He thought, if only I had been alone in the world. . ." (138). The statement that explicitly pronounces his wish to be alone, perceiving familial responsibilities as a burden, indicates the detachment and distance from the familial space that he has developed. Soon after the thought occurs to Dasan, the image of Velliyan Kallu dawns on him - "Would he ever know peace of mind in his life. . . . Maybe when he returned to Velliyan Rock. . . ." - and he hopes that turning into a dragonfly will relieve him of his suffering and solitude (138). This emphasises the role of the cultural memory of Velliyan Kallu in connection with Dasan's identity or existence. The regret, "another form of emotional memory" as Emily T. Troscianko calls it (781), that Dasan develops in his downtrodden and dejected state is diametrically opposite to the self-image he has cultivated as a family-loving person and a committed patriot, and it also conspicuously exposes his 'vulnerability' and 'weakness', but considering the interplay of topophobia and topophilia in his interaction with the micro-spaces as a strategic attempt to construct his identity as interstitial, the subject transcends and explodes his explicit negative aura manifested through the 'weakness'. The memory of Velliyan Kallu evoked at this stage salvages him from his sense of solitude by relocating him to his origin and instilling in him the desire to be reborn in Mayyazhi. It contributes to the production of a sense of belongingness in him that restores the

purpose and motive of life in him. What Tharamel observes about the significance of the image of Velliyan Kallu is that more than a myth that forms the fundamental determiner of the lives of the natives of Mayyazhi, it serves as “an instrument to detail the existential dimensions of the hero” (47). Similar to earlier circumstances, the memory visits him when he is torn by a second crisis, and it effectively serves as a bridge to reconstitute intimacy and attachment with the space of Mayyazhi lost due to the physical and mental displacement.

At the inn, as the feeling of alienation and distancing becomes severe, Dasan’s mind goes back to Mayyazhi. Looking at the Mayyazhi river that flowed beyond the paddy fields in front of the porter’s house, childhood memories begin to visit him and he drifts into the past: “How many times. . . I have watched the river and the sea flow into each other, from the pier carpeted with red gulmohur flowers . . .” (139). The revival of the lost connection through an active process of remembering, through the evocation of episodic memories, is also supplemented by the arrival of Chandrika, who had shifted to Azhiyoor to her mother Leela’s house for pursuing her higher studies and whom Dasan is secretly in love with. Her presence and the visit to her house where he had been before with Kunhanandan master turn out to be an occasion for Dasan to nostalgically revisit the past more than gaining a brief and mindful respite.

The porter’s house also acquires the status of diverted space and appropriated space as coined by Lefebvre (qtd. in Armstrong 19-20), a heterotopia as coined by Foucault (24), a liminal space, and a thirdspace developed by Soja (*Thirdspace* 56-57, 62) for its geographical and symbolic peculiarities. The house is modified to employ it to a purpose different from its established purpose and is

subjected to an act of appropriation. As the space hosts a group of ‘outsiders’ and ‘outcasts’ (from the perspective of the pro-colonial community that forms the majority) formed out of the struggle between the powerful and the powerless, it becomes a diverted space, the space that operates against the mainstream system and breeds liberatory ideals, as Lefebvre envisions it (qtd. in Armstrong 19). Most importantly, being situated at the border of Mayyazhi and the neighbouring place, and being the abode for revolutionaries who war against the colonial social order, the house serves as a counterspace; by hosting ‘anti-social’, anti-establishment, and anti-State activities it becomes a thirdspace, and by positioning ‘outside the normalcy’ and exposing the existence of other ‘normal’ spaces, it becomes a heterotopia. If it is the hybrid attributes of the material and mental that qualify the house as a thirdspace, it is the status of the house akin to that of a counter-site, a real place, and an ‘out of place’ that designs it as a heterotopia of deviation (Foucault 25). It also becomes Dasan’s lived space as it acts as the space outside the larger social frame appropriated to channelise a counterculture of resistance against the colonial order by facilitating active revolution and social change through the employment of artistic and imaginative faculty, and as it preserves activism and dynamism at its core.

It is when Paputty and Bhaskaran, the revolutionaries operating in Mayyazhi while Dasan and his allies are in exile, resort to a forceful and violent attack on the Mairie, the French administrative office (the mayor’s office), by demanding voting cards for the natives for the proposed municipal election that the first phase of the revolution (1948) comes into a full swing. Dasan’s return to Mayyazhi raising the demand for freedom along with others culminating in a confrontation with the Big

Sayiv turns out to be another significant juncture in the former's life. Although Big Sayiv initially keeps his composure by giving the revolutionaries a false hope of freedom dawning on Mayyazhi, he soon sends the French battleships to suppress the rebellion. Seeing a thousand battleships over the horizon, exodus begins in Mayyazhi and Dasan is forced to leave the place once again under the threat of an arrest. The short-lived physical intimacy with Mayyazhi restored through Dasan's return is shattered through a forced displacement devised by the colonial authority. To the reader's astonishment, a worried Dasan leaves his family under the 'guaranteed custody' of Achu, the infamous criminal of Mayyazhi, and above all, Dasan's arch-enemy by being the watchdog of the French government. The action, undoubtedly, underscores Dasan's prioritisation of the love for nation above the commitment to family, and the drive behind the act is nothing but a deliberate destruction of the ties of intimacy and attachment with the familial space, although only to reattach with it later, which is his strategy of connecting with people and place in the process of constructing his identity.

Dasan, sentenced to twelve years in jail for treason by the colonial government, thus enters the second phase of his exile outside Mayyazhi. The political and the familial power-centre remain unchallenged and Dasan continues to be on the periphery. The second term of exile hits Dasan differently compared to the first due to his increased sense of loneliness and inner fragmentation. Dislocated and displaced, memories flood into him once again. He reminisces about his native land as follows:

[H]ow long it is since I walked on the soil of my Mayyazhi. . . over the pier, scattered with red gulmohur flowers, or in the Rue de l'Eglise, under the

shadow of the cross, or on the bridge where I used to stand often, watching the passionate mingling of the river with the sea. They were all so far away now. It seemed to him that Mayyazhi was no longer on this earth, but on some distant star. (171)

This sorrowful recognition of the separation and distancing from Mayyazhi is also paralleled by Dasan's innate desire to be one with it. The episodic memory actively contributes to intensifying his sense of attachment with Mayyazhi despite being outside the space. In the trail of this remembrance, one can also read Dasan's regret about the present state of affairs. The omniscient narrator, carrying Dasan's perspective, states: "In the old days, when he used to sit on the seashore. . . he had felt untouched by worldly problems. Thoughts of Mayyazhi's freedom, or of his father or Chandrika, had never disturbed him at those moments. He had never considered life a burden. Velliyan Rock, a silvery island, its outline blurred by the distance, had given him peace" (171). Later, in conversation with Chandrika, he calls her lucky for being untouched by any suffering or worries as his. These statements reflect Dasan's regret about his decision to leave Mayyazhi as part of the liberation movement which has shattered his state of peace and turned his life tumultuous and troublesome. This regretful thought arises in Dasan for the first time ever since he began his political activities and it undoubtedly emerges from and carries, implicitly, a sense of disconnection with the liberation movement that has severed him from the familial as well as the larger socio-cultural space of Mayyazhi.

What paves the way for the regret is clearly the physical and mental displacement from the socio-cultural space of Mayyazhi as well as the familial sphere, and the memories of the macro-space triggered by the distancing. The

memories of Mayyazhi and Velliyan Kallu become double-edged, for on the one hand, they actively contribute to Dasan's gradually growing discontentment with the political space as shown by his statement that implicitly expresses how the political cause he stands for and the revolutionary ideals have made his life turbulent, and on the other hand, they deepen his nostalgia, attachment, and intimacy with the space of Mayyazhi. The memories, therefore, hold two purposes here: they unsettle Dasan in his engagement with the political space and at the same time redress his wound of severance from his birthplace. Resultantly, they breed two conflicting emotions - painful distress and joyful yearning - in him.

Chandrika, who stays at Azhiyoor and triggers in Dasan the bygone moments he had spent with her in Mayyazhi, becomes a significant connecting agent between him and Mayyazhi. Juxtaposed with such reminiscences is Dasan's increased pining for her (absent during his first term of exile and the first of its kind ever since their relationship began in Mayyazhi), although the love remains unarticulated among them. The exacerbated vision of life as a burden and Dasan's yearning to see Chandrika on her train journeys serve as a sign of Dasan's growing unattraction and monotony with the liberation movement. For Dasan, episodic as well as collective semantic/cultural memories of the native land serve as a reminder of the lost security and tranquillity and accelerate his longing for the same, and they simultaneously instil a feeling of distancing and severance with the political movement in him.

It is the news of Girija's marriage with Achu consented to by Damu Writer that paves the way for Dasan's second visit to Mayyazhi, which marks another major crisis in his life. Even though his plan to visit home and dissuade his father from the plan of marriage is discouraged by other revolutionaries for the fear of his

arrest, Dasan determines to set out to save Girija, not with boosted confidence like his previous visit but with utmost scepticism and distrust. He says to Pappan, ““Pappan, I’ll never have the courage to stab anyone. . . . But give [the knife] to me anyway. I can kill myself with it if necessary””, and asks himself as he walks into the heart of Mayyazhi, “[W]ill I return safely?” (185). The second visit takes place in an atmosphere visibly characterised by suspicion, diffidence, and infirmity, in absolute contrast with the first visit, and it conspicuously reflects Dasan’s changed concerns. If the first visit with the sole aim of liberating Mayyazhi was executed bravely despite the threat of arrest, the second visit preferencing family over nation breeds consternation and dread of existence in him, which indicates his grown diffidence and discomfort (topophobia) with the political space. The spatial shift to Mayyazhi’s outskirts and the remembrances that follow it can thus be seen as altering Dasan’s orientation, although temporarily, since an absolute detachment from the political sphere also will not serve the dialectical identity-construction that Dasan carries forward.

The question of why Dasan, who bears a clear-cut foreknowledge about his grim future if got arrested, enters Mayyazhi needs to be answered here. The narrator says, “Dasan was back in Mayyazhi, on the soil that had borne and nurtured him. Suddenly, he felt happy. He forgot the danger hovering over him. If he was caught, he would have to serve twelve years in jail. It was possible that he would never get out of jail. He walked contentedly through the moonlight refusing to think all of that” (186). Evidently, the initial phase of uncertainty gives way to conviction and certitude as soon as he enters his birth-land. The description proceeds as follows:

In the distance, the Rue de la Gare lay as still as a dead python between the rice fields. He could see Meethalambalm. The deities would be walking about now. He thought of the legends that Achamma had told him as a child. Of how Kunjakkan's great grandfather had stolen a bunch of bananas and gone lame. The steps leading to the temple glowed in the pale moonlight. Was Gulikan, clad in tender palm leaves, seated on them? Was the sound Dasan heard the tinkle of his heavy anklets? (186)

Dasan's elated return as an escapee – freeing himself from the space of the revolutionary exile, a feeling that had already been aggravated by the thronging memories of the native land – facilitates him to relive and revisit the sweet old memories of Mayyazhi, and it aids him to renew the bond with the space. The memories called forth are crucial as they enable Dasan to accentuate his identification and attachment with the socio-cultural space of Mayyazhi, and they restore agency in him to fulfil his mission. Clearly, this episode of recollection of the story of Gulikan and Kunjakkan's lameness that Kurambi had narrated to him does not include his questioning of the belief or his act of defiance. This is a clear-cut example of the principle of coherence, one of the bases of autobiographical memory that Conway and others conceptualise through the Self-Memory System model, which signifies that the remembering subject retrieves only those memories that are consistent or do agree with her/his expectations and self-goals in the present while maintaining all others as distorted or hidden (Conway 595). Here, Dasan's primary intention is to restore his ties to the native land (to breed topophilia), but the memory of his defiance will serve as a major hindrance to the same, and therefore, it remains uncollected in the episode. Here, what the reader sees is not a rational-thinking and

progressive-minded Dasan, but a man who willingly betrays himself by adhering to the myths of the land, the remembrance of which serves as the sole solution to rebuild his lost affinity not just for the larger space of Mayyazhi but also for Kurambi, the tales being sourced in and expressed through her. How selective remembering and selective forgetting operate - in tune with the propositions of Spence and Levi (qtd. in King 25) and also of Sutton *et al.* (213) - to affirm and assert one's identity is evident in this case.

Dasan's decision to enter Mayyazhi despite being conscious of the destiny that awaits him is the craftily driven culmination of his growing detachment (topophobia) from the underground activities, as a momentary distancing from the external revolutionary space becomes mandatory to effectively assert and establish his identity as interstitial. While Dasan's reassertion of his place-identity, his spatial self, by cultivating a pleasure zone with the cultural space of Mayyazhi turns fruitful, the familial space gets torn and fragmented as he had rightly foreseen. Turned down and abused by Damu for being irresponsible, Dasan is cast as a 'rowdy' (while Achu is praised for taking care of the family) and is shoved into the hands of the whites. Visibly, the family as the power-centre never alters and Dasan is cast aside on the periphery. In this sense, Dasan's identification with the larger space remains partial and incomplete.

If the first crisis launches Dasan in the porter's house, the second crisis pushes him into prison for a sentence of twelve years. Dasan's life in the prison is not a part of the narration and the reader sees him only in the post-freedom scenario that collides with his emancipation. Yet, one can notice how the clarion call for freedom deep inside encourages him to appear on the political front once again,

despite the dejection and ill feeling towards the same. Similar to the porter's house, the prison also acquires the stature akin to that of a heterotopia of deviation, for being a real, counter-site within the dominant structure (Foucault 24-25). The spatial peculiarity of the prison also confers on Dasan a certain kind of identity that is interstitial and in-between. Connected to the heterotopia of deviation is Lefebvre's notion of the diverted space (qtd. in Armstrong 19), and the prison becomes one for being the abode for people who commit crimes including that of rebelling against the state and the establishment, and thus exhibiting a 'diverted' disposition as far as the mainstream state of affairs is concerned. The location of the prison as an inside-outside space – inside for its position within the establishment but outside for its operations against it - also qualifies it to be a liminal space. The spatial liminality also becomes an indelible trait of Dasan's identity for the anti-conventional and non-conformist stance he holds.

During Dasan's absence, the liberation struggle gains momentum (1954) with vigorous and strengthened action for ousting the whites, various government officials resigning their jobs, and commoners enthusiastically contributing to the movement. The protests culminating in Big Sayiv's bungalow and the Sayiv announcing, "Mayyazhi is yours" (212), proclaim the liberation of Mayyazhi from French domination. The post-freedom scenario is defined by utter chaos, commotion, and confusion among those natives who fail to accept the reality of white men leaving and the meaning of 'freedom', and also by the criticality of deciding the next ruling government. Dasan is emancipated and launched into the heart of Mayyazhi for a third time at such a juncture.

One phase of Dasan's agency can be located at this point. The revolution altering the existing system and effectuating a refashioning of the social order is a case of his social transformational potency. His interaction with the familial, political, and social spaces so far has shown both the successful and failed exercise of agency on various occasions and the projection of its possibility. The success of the revolution sets a structural change – from the colonial order to a liberated world-order – and the manifestation of Dasan's agency takes place in a renewed order. As Dani observes referring to the ending, “Dasan re-establish[es] the regional culture and its knowledge above the colonial culture as the latter perishes” (my trans.; 50). Even though the colonial administration is obliterated, it must be noted that the education imparted by the colonial order or colonial modernity that equips Dasan to fight against the colonial master is not erased, and in the post-liberation scenario, he finds the power-system intact with just the administrators changed.

Once out of the prison, Dasan is hit by polar emotions: on the one hand, he revels upon seeing the national flag on top of Big Sayiv's hill and the freedom achieved by the relentless struggle of the fighters, but on the other hand, he turns distressed and despondent having been deserted by his family who keeps him at a distance due to unabated detest. This stage marks the third major crisis in Dasan's life as the future remains bleak and clueless like never before. During the crisis, as in the previous cases, memories emerge as his saviour. Dasan traverses through the streets with thoughts as follows:

This was where Vaisravan Chettiar had come disguised as a serpent and overcome Kunhimanikkam. And this was where St. Sebastian had come riding his white horse, to battle Vasoory Amma when she spread the seeds of

smallpox through Mayyazhi. This was where Kunjakkan's great grandfather had fallen and broken his leg when Gulikan, clad in a dry grass skirt, had come out to punish him for stealing. And this was the spot where Malayan Uthaman had broken his neck under the weight of the headgear balanced on his head, writhed in agony and died. (218)

As in the previous recollections, the beliefs and customs that Dasan had challenged, defied, and denied with his rationale serve as crucial elements to re-bond with the land, and they are conceived of as essential to his self-realisation. Having been alienated from the familial and social space, the cultural and collective memories are invoked and toponophilia is activated to emplace the self.

Tharamel observes, "Mukundan's generation that was obsessed with or enchanted by Communism later remained discontent. They were destined to go through an inexplicable loneliness/alienation. The reason was the conflict/tension that existed between the class-behaviour and the individual behaviour" (my trans.; 43). Even though Dasan steps out of the prison carrying a galore of dreams and desires about the liberated Mayyazhi, he fails to positively connect with the scenario. Kanaran, the Gandhian, assumes power as the head of the people's government and takes over the Big Sayiv's bungalow as the centre of administration. Incidents such as Dasan getting pushed aside as the freedom rally proceeds and being offered a job by Kanaran either in the Mairie or in the Secretariat reminding him of the same offer proposed by Big Sayiv when he had returned from Pondicherry, make Dasan embarrassed and perplexed in the aftermath of the liberation. Dasan's question to Kanaran, "I once refused the job you are offering me now. Can you give me anything better?" (221), arises from a feeling of

futility, fruitlessness, and emptiness he nurtures about the results of the revolution as he experiences an unproductive postliberation atmosphere, which strikes him as a mere repetition of the colonial times with just the power-heads replaced. It is the episodic memory of his earlier visit to Big Sayiv's bungalow that triggers such a response in Dasan and leads to the breeding of discomfort with the active political space of his career. How memories determine one's future actions and thoughts, and become self-defining and self-constructing is quite evident in this case. This distancing is also aggravated by the actions of revolutionaries like Vasutty who opts to go to France and secure wealth saying that the "old principles died with the freedom of Mayyazhi" and that the whites were not enemies in the present, and Pappan who wanders aimlessly (228), both of which display the hollowness of the purpose and principles of the revolution and expose the obliteration of the fundamental ideologies of the freedom movement. Dasan's words, "Ever since I began to grow up, I've not known peace of mind for a single day. The freedom of Mayyazhi dried everyone's tears except mine" (232), effectively bring in his increasing despair with life and signify a clear sign of detachment he has developed from the political space. Topophilia and topophobia are thus seen to be interplaying in the case of the political space also as it was with the familial and mythical-social space. How the single space turns into a site characterised by topophobia is conspicuous here. Considering the interaction between the larger colonial structure and the interacting subject in confrontation with it, one can observe that the structure alters, transforming into an anti-colonial and later liberated society, through the actions of the subject. Even though there is a conspicuous exercise of agency on the part of the subject in this regard, the power does not reside in him permanently, on

the contrary, he is distanced from the newly established structure and other spatial elements.

Having explicated the peculiar dialectical relationship of connection and disconnection that Dasan maintains with the familial, mythical, cultural, and political spaces of Mayyazhi, Dasan's veiled, intimate space gains significance. The term intimate space is used in adherence to Neisser's definition of the 'private self' as the realm of "conscious experiences that are not available to anyone else" (50). When it comes to Dasan's intimate space, the focus is to be laid on the relationship between him and Chandrika. Chandrika initiates to meet with Dasan frequently from Mayyazhi, but he refrains from materialising the relationship with her as his priorities for the state had dominated his thoughts at that time. In fact, an explicit expression of love and concern for each other happens from the space outside Mayyazhi when Dasan is put under exile. Even though the reader grasps the attachment that Dasan builds with Chandrika, his inner thoughts are expressed as follows: "He knew she worried about him. She had told him that she lived only for him and that frightened him. He longed for her when she was not with him. But when they were together, he wanted to be alone" (172). This draws his inner conflict and confusion about the relationship, and at the same time points out its distanced-yet-affectionate nature. On the contrary, after he is liberated from the prison and the realisation that his father will never resort to a reconciliation strikes him, Chandrika becomes his sole relief; "I'll go mad without Chandrika, she's my only hope", says Dasan (232), and his intimate engagement with her leads to the burgeoning of a private space characterised by topophilia. The native Abutty Mapilla's half-

constructed building becomes the private abode for the couple, where they meet and exchange words and gestures of love.

Similar to the porter's house and the prison, Abutty Mapilla's house becomes a diverted space and a heterotopia, being a space that counters and digresses from the established tradition by hosting a pre-marital courtship. Although located inside the macro-space of Mayyazhi, in its capacity as a space of transgression, it also turns out to be a 'forbidden', 'outside' space and thus occupies a bordered, insider-outsider plane of existence. But this tryst exists only for a brief period of time until Bharathan, Chandrika's father, shuts the doors before Dasan and contains their relationship. With Bharathan demolishing the love-abode and arranging a marriage for Chandrika, Dasan's personal zone is vandalised which nurtures extreme distress and dejection in him making the intimate space breed topophobia.

The Vijnanaposhini library is another space that Dasan traverses, although not depicted in detail like the other spaces. Dasan's initial and formative learning, along with Kunhanandan Master, takes place at the library and it plays a key role in pruning Dasan's nationalist and anti-colonial proclivities. The library becomes a site of new learning for Dasan and in this regard, it assumes the stature of a heterotopia for forming a counterculture and functioning as a lynchpin in disseminating progressive, radical, and revolutionary ideas across the reading community. In fact, the library is one of the examples that Foucault provides while explicating the term heterotopia, where he categorises it as a heterotopia of "indefinitely accumulating time" (26). The library with its countercultural stock of ideas becomes a space that lies outside the mainstream temporality and considerably influences Dasan's identity as a rebel and a non-conformist. Having lost Chandrika's love, Dasan finds a

temporary shelter in the library, which turns into an inn for the outcast similar to the porter's house. Hosting the deserted Dasan, the library ceases to be a place of love and turns into a place of displeasure being in a state of alienation. For Dasan, topophilia and topophobia can thus be seen as alternately operating in the space of the library also.

Dasan, who has been evidently dialoguing with the micro-spaces of Mayyazhi by alternately attaching to and detaching from each space, by not giving permanence to either state of being, and stamping his distinctness during each instance of distancing or severance from the spaces, carves his identity as interstitial and in-between. As Leach professes in his identity-theory, an individual constructs his identity not as fixed or static, but as a continuous shift between the dual states of identification/assimilation (resulting from topophilia) and severance from the girdling spaces, objects, and people (resulting from topophobia), whereby the identity becomes interactional and interdependent (39-40). His inability to completely discard or denounce his familial and socio-cultural baggage, although he wars with its ideologies, and his incessant propensity to think and act as a progressive-minded, non-conformist mark the interstitial nature of his identity. Unlike Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) who gains the realisation that the shackles of family, nation, and religion (the church) are to be smashed on his way to becoming a triumphant artist, Dasan finds the ties with the family and the native place an essential critical tool towards sculpting his identity as interstitial. What the reader sees as the novel comes to a close is Dasan plunging into a state of existential dilemma having been alienated from the larger socio-cultural-political spaces of Mayyazhi. For Dasan, the macro-

space becomes one that gives him extreme tormenting experiences and therefore, it assumes the status of a space of repression. Chandrika succumbs to a secret demise, unknown to the general public (except for Dasan), and the older generation of Mayyazhi, including Kurambi Amma and Damu, confront the end of their time. As the narrative winds up, Dasan sitting on the beach and watching the Velliyan Kallu from its shore, also disappears and merges with the horizon.

Dasan's death is a reality, but on the other hand, the text also draws a possibility to read beyond the finality imposed by death through the image of Velliyan Kallu. It acquires immense significance connected with the established notion of identity as interstitial and strengthens the vision of an unfixed and dynamic existence that Dasan carries. The portrayal of the mythical image of dragonflies hovering over the Velliyan Kallu and the narrator's declaration that Dasan is one among them become political statements about his identity, pronounced through the employment of memory. On the one hand, the myth itself is built on the notion of memory – it exists as a site of memory between death and rebirth - and on the other hand, Dasan exhibiting a desire or urge to merge with the space becomes a case of active evocation of the collective memory, which grants him agential possibilities. The memory marks a cyclicity and continuity of life by opening the possibility of Dasan's reincarnation or rebirth; the credence to the myth that carries the underlying principle of birth and rebirth thus proposes an opportunity for Dasan to rebuild the lost intimacy with the socio-cultural space of Mayyazhi, which becomes an act of resistance against the larger structure that has given him alienating experiences by ousting him from all of its realms. The reconnection is essential to the process of

building Dasan's identity as interstitial, as one that lies between an absolute identification with and a permanent separation or a distancing from a space.

The possibility of Dasan's reaggregation into the macro-space is examined using different kinds of symbolic associations that the Velliyan Kallu acquires. Lefebvre's proposition about people resorting to fictitious solutions to resolve the problems they confront in their everyday lives, which is the only viable way to carve out a space for oneself in the macro-space of dominance and repression (*Everyday* 88), becomes valid in the case of the myth. Such fictitious spaces that emerge from the employment of art, symbols, dreams, desires, and subjective visions generate resistance and embody a countercultural spirit against the spaces of repression, as Radović points out citing Lefebvre (83). The Velliyan Kallu becomes one such fictitious solution, as Dasan projects his desire for reaggregation into the macro-space and resistance against the space of repression onto a real, material object – the rock – and consistently engages with its fantastic, imaginary realm. Notably, the object of Dasan's desire possesses a hybrid quality by being a combination of both fantasy/ myth and material reality.

The myth of Velliyan Kallu, suspended between death and rebirth, can also be perceived as a liminal space for its fundamental nature as a space of interstitiality and in-betweenness, where the subject is placed as 'neither here nor there'. This also enables one to conceptualise the dragonflies as liminal entities before 'transmogrifying' into humans. The liminal, being a state of in-betweenness, provides the subject with a regenerative transit and a space for renewal, accompanied by a transformative potential. Such an interstitial, liminal state grants liberation for the subject from structural norms and authoritative clutches of all

kinds providing him agency on a larger scale, and it is perceived as strategic for facilitating a temporary respite for the soul before reaggregating into the larger society. Dasan's resurrection in this sense must be in a renewed form, but as its manifestation is suspended and arrested owing to the peculiarity of the myth, his present state becomes 'persistent liminality', where the state of being liminal continues to be, without offering an immediate or imminent reintegration into the macro-space, but at the same time keeping alive its larger possibility on the other side.

Radhakrishnan states that Dasan always searches "for a space outside Mayyazhi", carrying the desire to merge with the private space of family/ home severing from the larger, public space, and as private spaces increasingly become alien to him, he begins to dream of a distant past devoid of any trait of colonisation, which is where the Velliyan Kallu becomes important. "The place may be the one that he finds as a solution for the materialistic problems that haunt him", states the critic (55). It is Dasan's persistent and unabated memory of the Velliyan Kallu that strikes him on crucial occasions and confers on him agential possibilities by triggering actions that are significant, decisive, and determinative for his identity and existence. The Velliyan Kallu also becomes a thirdspace for its role in hosting a space of resistance, in offering the protagonist an agential potential to restore his ties with the mainland that evicted and isolated him, and for aiding him in resuming the dialectic interplay of topophilia and topophobia. It becomes a thirdspace and a lived space manifesting a spirit of defiance and resistance and upholding the possibility of reincorporation into the macro-space by integrating, encompassing, and also transcending both the firstspace (the rock lying distant in the sea) and the

secondspace (the space that hosts the dominant belief that humans are dragonflies before their birth, and where the entities are considered merely passive and submissive). As a thirdspace, it subverts, challenges, and redefines all kinds of dichotomies or binaries by producing a realm that is both real and imagined, subjective and objective, abstract and concrete, conscious and subconscious, and it facilitates a plan of action with a prospective vision and resistive impulse. Connected to this lies Lefebvre's conception of a lived space as a revolutionary space occupied by artists and thinkers with a potential to breed changes in the existing spaces through active imagination (*Production* 39), and the Velliyan Kallu evidently becomes one for the element of imagination it works on and for its immense potential to redefine the existing living spaces and boundaries between death and rebirth. Instead of designing a novel scheme, Dasan actively transforms the existing mythical space into a lived space, a counterspace to combat the expulsion and alienation that the macro-space has subjected him to, which is attempted to be actuated through his imaginative spatial practice. A predictive vision of Dasan's reintegration into the socio-cultural space of Mayyazhi in this sense helps one read the text as open-ended and subvert its explicit closure. Significantly, it also helps one redraft the pessimistic tone that the text visibly projects on its outer scale and conceive of it as proposing a hopeful and optimistic vision.

Even though Dasan's merging with the space of Velliyan Kallu becomes an assertion or a reassertion of the existing structure, a reproduction of the resources and norms of the native structure, the possibility of his return to the land of Mayyazhi indicated through the image of the myth points out his resistance against the macro-space that has alienated him in many ways. The projected return, in a

renewed form, to continue the spatial dialectics of topophilia and topophobia carries an element of agency, as Dasan actively performs the construction of his identity as interstitial and dynamic. In this sense, when the critic Mohanan devalues Dasan as a man of contradictions and conflicting ideologies, and others reduce him to a tragic figure, those views can be revised by viewing the entire journey of Dasan in a new light taking into consideration the 'beyond' of the text: Dasan's torn mindset between the native and the colonial traditions that directly confers a contradictory and tragic dimension to his character exists, but the process of his identity-construction as interstitial by strategically attaching to and detaching from the spaces around him empowers the subject. The contradiction becomes the very characteristic of his interstitiality.

This reading leads one to think beyond the tragic aura that Dasan acquires throughout the text - which it visibly and directly proposes towards the end and which is underscored by the existing modernist and postcolonial readings - by reconfiguring his image as a powerful agent capable of driving the course of his life in a certain way. While the existentialist readings cast Dasan as a failed modern man, as one who tragically falls into nothingness despite his efforts and actions to rewrite destiny, and as a man whose will and voice submerge into the claws of death, the postcolonial readings expose Dasan's colonised subjectivity as a site of conflict, dilemma, and angst, being torn between the Western and the native ideologies. Without denying these subjectivities, a challenge and a possibility to subvert the image of Dasan as a permanent figure of failure by perceiving the subject's playful positioning of himself between absolute identification or attachment with and absolute withdrawal or detachment from the spaces he engages

with, are posited. This proffers a line of thought beyond the established frames of tragedy and victimisation where Dasan is inescapably trapped. Despite the sufferings that arise from various conflicts and counter-currents in life, the interstitial becomes a marker of his identity and he continues to construct the same, where memory and liminality become the grand providers of agency.

Being a classic, *On the banks* continues to fascinate its readers extending endless interpretations and readings, with the lenses of memory and space revealing themselves as significant gateways as depicted in the chapter. The triadic framework of memory, space, and identity redefines the established and existing take on Dasan's identity and agency, and it also reveals the richness and complexity of the text. Above all, the pivotal role of remembrances and spatiality in determining one's sense of self and existence in the complex world of modernity is established beyond doubt.

Chapter Four

“I remember, therefore I am”

Stories are my home. I can suddenly walk into a story and shut the doors on the outside world.

—N. S. Madhavan, *Litanies of Dutch Battery*

Intrinsically crafted stories with a strong political undertone and impeccable insight into the social and cultural conflicts of the time mark the oeuvre of Madhavan. Representing the phase after modernism – which showcased a shift in its focal point from individual to society, from purely individualistic or subjective experiential analysis to a critical evaluation of larger socio-political issues – Madhavan offers his readers a strong historical sense by questioning the hegemony of mainstream historical narratives, creating alternate sub-histories, and conceiving individuals as representatives of a specific era and as complex carriers or recipients of larger repercussions of societal changes. As P. P. Raveendran states, he is “an artist for whom art has meant, simultaneously, life, language and history” (50).

Litanies (2010), translated by Rajamohan, which carries the interplay of the dual aspects of memory and space/place, is a retrospective narration, an autobiographical retelling of the first sixteen years (1951-1965) in the life of a Latin Catholic girl named Jessica, parented by Matilda and Mathaeus Asari, born and brought up on the island of Lanthan Bathery, an imaginary island said to be located near Ponjikkara in Ernakulam, girded by the Periyar, Vembanad backwaters, and the Arabian Sea and coloured by a blood-spilt colonial history of dominance, deceit, power-rivalry, and genocide. In the novel, Lanthan Bathery is a real-imaginary

island with all the geographical, topological, and historical references being factual and empirical, and the core story being fictional and imaginary. Madhavan confers the name ‘Lanthan Bathery’ or ‘Dutch Battery’ to one of the two islands – somewhere near Mulavukad - in Kamponjikad (“Company Woods”), where some of the Latin Catholics of the mainland of Kochi who were converts from the ‘low-castes’ (including the Hindu fisherfolk) and some of the offsprings of the Portuguese and native alliances (known as the “Parankis”) found a refuge having fled from the Dutch in fear of persecution, and the name is said to have emerged from “a battery of five cannons” installed by the Dutch “to control the river trade” (Rajamohan 35). The text takes us through the political, social, cultural, historical, artistic, maritime, and culinary milestones of Kochi and of the Latin Catholic community of the island during the fifties and the early sixties of the twentieth century, and also through some significant episodes from Indian political and cultural history- historiography being the prime focus of the writer – clubbing along with it, Jessica’s personal narrative. The autobiographical narration constitutes Jessica’s birth and first-hand experiences with various entities of the island, which makes the text a bildungsroman that traces her journey/growth by gaining fresh pieces of knowledge and recognition at each phase of her interaction with the outside world, and it culminates in a tragic experience of her being molested by her Mathematics teacher Pushpangadan leading her to a state of ‘insanity’ (the truthfulness of madness is posed as a question and the text is left open-ended).

For its accurate portrait of mainstream historical events that belong to the said period without any questioning or subversion – expressed through objective narration, imaginary conversations between the fictional characters, and sketches of

real, historical persons as characters (such as Robert Bristow, Collector Ramakrishnayya, Ponjikkara Rafi, H. Mehboob, and Kundan Lal Saigal to name a few) - combined with the imaginary tale of Jessica and her family, the representatives of the Latin Catholic carpenters of the islands of Kochi, Khushwant Singh calls it a “historical fiction” (qtd. in Rajamohan). On the one hand, the text engages in a recreation of various parts of the mainstream historical narrative (pertaining to both Kerala and India) along with the illustration of the regional and familial history of Lanthan Bathery, but on the other hand, the depiction of the reflections and repercussions of the historical incidents on a specific region and its natives that do not form a part of the mainstream history transforms the text into an alternate history itself. The Latin Catholic community asserts its uniqueness through the description of the island life, its maritime culture, the tradition of carpentry, the Latin catholic rituals and traditions - such as the chanting of litanies (prayers), observation of fasting during the season of Lent, and the Arrow procession - and also through the first-hand experiences of various historical incidents, such as the rivalry between the church and the communists, and the smallpox vaccination project that the islanders underwent, and this becomes a strategic crafting of a new history of the marginalised community. Alongside the depiction of historical events truthful to the existing records, a revisionary approach to history is also effectuated through the conversations on Chavittunatakam, where the murder of Godse instead of the Gandhi assassination is brought in (28-31), and on the Coonan Cross, where Chinnathampi Annavi, the founder of Chavittuantakam in Kochi, is said to have bent the cross by singing the song he composed (24). Such radical subversion or distortion of the dominant narrative qualifies the text to be a historiographic fiction,

a writing of history combining fictional elements, a common trend in both modernism and postmodernism, and it becomes the construction of a new history and identity for a marginalised, subaltern community. The text possesses modernist features such as breaking the conventional, linear form of writing and resorting to the innate mental working of the character in the first-person in a non-linear form, and numerous postmodernist features such as amalgamation of various genres, metafictional narration, narrative shifts between the past and the present, and parody of myths. It destabilises the conventional autobiographical writing by adopting an interdisciplinary narration, where, a number of varied genres like history, geography, letters, and diaries are woven into the body of the text, and by providing a wider and comprehensive socio-cultural framework of the time rather than confining exclusively to the nuances of one's personal life and family. The first-person narration captivantly constructs the identity of Jessica as well as the island before the readers.

Considering the absence of studies centred on Jessica's identity and also of a paradigm collating spatiality and memory, the triadic critical approach clubbing memory, space, and identity offers one a possibility to recraft the explicitly visible character of Jessica. The identity-theory of Leach, the notion of liminality developed by Turner, the spatial contributions of Lefebvre, Soja, and Foucault, and other theoretical concepts from Memory Studies are valid tools to identify the pivotal role of Jessica's memory and the spaces she interacts with in constructing her identity, the employment of past remembrances as a strategy for shaping her present in a certain way, and the function of resistance that her memory possesses. This aids one

in redefining Jessica's agency and extending a thought beyond her victimised and tragic image that the text offers in the end.

The Latin Catholics are converts from the 'lower-caste' Hindus to Christianity - facilitated by the arrival of the Portuguese - due to extreme caste discrimination and oppression they had encountered from Hindus of the 'higher strata', and are therefore considered as "Christians of lower-caste ranking, compared with the Syrian Christians who claim upper-caste status" according to J. Devika (132). Although 'Anglo-Indians' was an umbrella term (from 1911 onwards) that gathered under it all descendants from mixed European and native ancestry, the poorer of the Parankis and the Latin Catholics were discontent with the discrimination on the basis of 'purity' of race they faced from the better-educated Parankis and Catholics - the converts and the members of the hybrid community were perceived as inferior and subordinate to the 'pure-blooded', 'upper-caste' St. Thomas or Syrian Christians - who gained various socio-economic advantages in the mainstream scenario. In fact, the term 'Anglo-Indian' carries only the English baggage, where the community with British ancestry and English as their mother-tongue is brought in reference, which is not related in any way to the Latin Catholics or the Parankis who trace their roots to the Portuguese. Hence, in the study, the communities are referred to by their respective names discarding the term 'Anglo-Indian'. Devika also observes that by the twentieth century, "the dividing line between the poorer majority of Parankis [the community with mixed Portuguese and native ancestry] and the native Latin Catholic community was wearing thin" (132). Both the Parankis and the Latin Catholics were underprivileged communities caught "within the politics of race, caste, religion, region, and language" (Raj and Parui

349). In *Litanies*, Jessica belongs to the Latin Catholic community as evidenced by her recollection of her great-grandfather's ancestry (16-17), and through the depiction of collective memories of various socio-political and historical incidents of the twentieth century that the islanders had experienced or witnessed, the relationship that the islanders used to have with 'outsiders' – the small-pox vaccinator Saradamma from Ernakulam, Gothuruth Achan from Ernakulam who wars the natives of Lanthan Bathery regarding the staging of Chavittunatakam, and Communists like Ramachandra Shenoy are the major figures - and also with the Westerners (the British, the Portuguese, and the Dutch) is portrayed.

References to the historical invasion of the island are recorded through Jessica's words and her recollection of Edwin's (Jessica's uncle) words, which contribute to understanding the expression of the Latin Catholic identity in the text. When Jessica talks about the history of the European conquest of Kochi by imagining the place as a pie, she states, "If the first piece had the hot peppery bite of the Portuguese, the second had the tangy sourness of the Dutch and the last piece, that of English, could conjure up nothing but the bland taste of drinking water" (15). Here, the ancestral Portuguese during whose reign conversion to Christianity happened on a large scale, which led to the emergence of the community of Latin Catholics, is remembered with immense pride, and the consequences and violent after-effects of their rule – murders, forced marriages, the emergence of the community of Latin Catholics who encountered marginality and alienation in the mainstream scenario – remain absent in the narration. The ancestral pride is also reflected in Edwin's words as follows:

What if Gama had never come? Imagine our plight. We would have been picking weeds out of the farms belonging to upper-caste Hindus We needed to carry a yardstick to measure the distance we had to keep from those upper-caste lords. . . . But now? Are we not living in style, munching on raw plantain fritters, listening to *Jeevitha Nauka* songs and, to top everything off, sipping Triple X rum? (62-63)

These statements prove that the text portrays the community as having an intimate relation with their Western, ancestral roots, that they are obliged to the Portuguese for salvaging them from the caste discrimination of the ‘upper-caste’ Hindus, even though their traditions are largely distanced from the same and they mostly blend into the local community such as the Parankis in the present. Along with the above, Edwin, the biriyani-maker of Kochi, also records in a tone of gratitude, the contributions of the Portuguese such as the *sabola* (onion) and dried chilli, and Jessica later recollects the words of Raghavan Master, a prominent native of Lanthan Bathery, about the linguistic contributions of foreign powers to Kochi such as *mesha* (table), *kasera* (chair), and *janal* (window) from the Portuguese, and *kadalas* (paper) and *vakil* (advocate) from the Arabs. Edwin also talks largely about his amicable relationship, as a companion and cook, with Sir Robert Bristow, the British harbour engineer who contributed to the development of the Cochin port, and also of how his father Tobias was Bristow’s favourite cook and Kochi’s renowned figure (42-43). These statements once again underscore the positive remembrance of the foreigners that the text projects forth.

Although the text appears as a historical fiction, Jessica remains neutral and objective in the depiction of political movements such as the Communist movement

on the island, historical incidents such as the Mattancheri firing of 1953 and international wars to name a few, and socio-cultural events related to music and Chavittunatakam. Except for a remark about the invasion of the imperial and colonial powers, the writer does not directly portray the identity-crisis or marginality or the victimised state the community had to undergo as its consequence in the past centuries or the present. If Johny Miranda's novella *Requiem for the Living* (2013) - a translation of the Malayalam work *Jeevichirikkunnavarkku Vendiyulla Oppees* (2004) - depicts, directly and conspicuously, the identity-crisis faced by the Paranki community, *Litanies* does not portray the community – be it Latin Catholics or Parankis - as undergoing an identity-crisis or as engaged in any quest of meaning or truth in their lives; the people of Lanthan Bathery celebrate their living in harmony with the island and observing its rituals and traditions. Although the representation of the Latin Catholics in the text is not the focal area, some correlations between certain circumstances that the protagonist recollects or undergoes and the collective status, positionality, and experiences of the community (taking the protagonist as a symbol for the island and the community) in the past can be brought in on a symbolic or metaphorical level.

“We each author our own life story; in constructing and recounting our past, we are simultaneously constructing and reconstructing ourselves. Who we are is very much created through autobiographical narratives”, state Fivush and Janine P. Buckner (149). Jessica's autobiographical narration emerges as a dynamic act of self-construction throughout the text. The retrospective storytelling that the text is composed of becomes a manifestation of her spatial memory through the portrayal of diverse cartographic associations and spatial orientations rooted in the specific

islandic culture and constructs her identity/self as inseparably connected to the social, cultural, and historical matrix of the land. The autobiographical articulation, in fact, serves as a fitting example of episodic memory, the recollections of one's past with accurate contextual, temporal, and spatial details, that encompass and constitute one's identity (Tulving, "What Is Episodic Memory?" 67-68). In the text, Jessica's act of story-telling becomes an articulation of her identity and her memories that arise on various occasions play a vital and decisive role in unveiling her individuality and shaping her prospective thoughts and actions.

As the text opens, Jessica appears as an ardent lover of stories, one who passionately loves not just narrating but also listening to stories from her mother, father, and grandfather. Stories are active carriers of collective, communicative memory - the shared memory of a community arising from collectively experienced socio-cultural events from the recent past -transmitted from generation to generation carrying unique socio-cultural markers that shape and determine one's sense of self and belongingness by binding him/her to the socio-cultural matrix of a place. Story-telling that lies fundamental to Jessica's identity, that lies as the core trait of her existence, springs from the historical identity of the island itself. Jessica states:

Our delta, called Dutch Battery was young. . . . Dig a little deeper and you would find brackish water and soggy sea sand. Not many people dared to excavate further. If they did, they might have found chests filled with Venetian ducats guarded by the ghosts of black slaves, baby dragons crawling out of Chinese silk pennants, enamelled dinner china that belonged to Carmeline priests, burnt altars of chapels set on fire by the Dutch. . . . History was the most important commodity our delta imported. History grew

dense on Lanthan Bathery since it couldn't break free of the island's confinement by water. Stories had to be invented to temper its pent-up intensity. (2-3)

This articulation indicates the significance of history in shaping the land. In this recollection, the reader sees the depiction of Lanthan Bathery as a storied land. The land is pictured as the product of the gruesome colonial history, of the violent conflict between the colonial powers such as the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English, and is said to carry its materialistic remnants all across the land. Stacking and sharing stories that serve as the core identity of the land grant Jessica the habit of story-telling, as reflected in her words as follows: "All that I am writing is born out of what I saw, heard and experienced. . . . I had to invent stories to kill time" (3). The word 'invention' in the statement, on the one hand, highlights Jessica's creative faculty, on the other hand and most importantly, signifies the constructed nature of the place, the idea that the space-place is craftily and carefully 'made-up' through her words. The word 'made-up' in the statement also throws light on the metafictional feature - drawing attention to the 'constructedness' of the text - of the postmodernist text. Despite the claim raised by the narrator that the stories are 'made-up', the historical events and incidents that the text details are accurate and true to the existing and established historical records, absolutely devoid of distortion of any kind, except for the incidents mentioned earlier. What the writer envisions, in a postmodernist sense, is the diminishing line between history and story by remarking on the constructed nature of both the texts ('co-texts' as New Historicism propounds), where myth, fiction, and history are conjointly presented by the narrator

in the form of a story, which thereby becomes a crafty construction of alternate history.

It is the tradition of storing up history that the island has that largely contributes to Jessica's talent for story-making as well as story-telling. The identity of the individual closely and profoundly linked to the larger place-identity is evident through Jessica's words. They mark the significance of narrative self-making and storytelling that lie fundamental to the identity of the speaker. Qi Wang *et al.* state, "The processes of remembering and narrative meaning-making are continually conditioned by culture. . ." (202), and mention Bruner's thought about how individuals construct their selfhood "in line with their cultural expectations" (199). The various personal and historical narratives that Jessica shares with the readers in her narration, which become the collective, communicative memories of the island, contribute to her narrative identity, the identity constructed through narratives or storytelling, as Kerby and Bruner postulate (1, 4; 41, 50). The act of narration of the past aids Jessica in constructing an extended self, the idea developed by Neisser to refer to the aspect of the self produced through the narration of one's memories (36, 49). Jessica's artistic and creative mind along with the playfulness in narration as reflected in the statement draws her close to Jithen in Chandran's *Preface* that offers personal remembrances in the first-person, while severs her from Dasan of *On the banks*, where an omniscient third-person forms the narrator and does not have a protagonist possessing creative or artistic faculty as Jessica has.

Jessica remembers her birth in the context of a significant phase in the health-history of postcolonial Kerala - the emergence of smallpox vaccination on a massive scale in the fifties. In an age characterised by insecurity, inhibition, and

suspicion created by the vaccination project, Jessica records her life as one begun on 24 April 1951 “in stealth and silence”, “when eighteen smallpox vaccinators from Ernakulam arrived. . . looking for newborns” (1). Along with this, Jessica also quotes the event of the release of the film *Jeevitha Nauka* that took place months before she was born. She claims that even before she learned the ‘prayers of confession and creed’, it was an orally circulated couplet about watching the film that had stuck firm to her heart. *Jeevitha Nauka*, directed by K. Vembu, was a pioneering enterprise in the history of Malayalam cinema, as Jessica tells us, with its novel storytelling and narrative mode that possessed a sense of unprecedented unpredictability. This is Jessica’s initiation into the theatrical space – her love for films and stories is mentioned throughout the text – and this also hints at the integral role that films are to play in Jessica’s life ahead.

It is of paramount importance to note the beginning of Jessica’s recollection. Discarding the conventional model of autobiographies, where the narrator’s background is concreted through the tales of ancestors and forefathers, and other familial and domestic descriptions, here, Jessica juxtaposes her birth with two major events in the history of the island. The vaccination project that turns out to be a nightmare for the natives – presented through the descriptions of how the natives attempted to flee and escape the vaccinators and how a glimpse of the representatives from the health department became an alarming call for the natives to go into hiding (1) - and the film that permeates the everyday life of the natives – depicted through the launching of *Jeevitha Nauka* glass bangles, wedding blouses, and the ditty about watching the film that even children had learned by rote (1-2) - are nothing but collective, communicative memory in active circulation on the island

that stays fundamental to the collective identity of its inhabitants. The events spring from a shared, common socio-cultural and political context or experience that contributes to the formation of a shared identity for its members. The deep imprints that the events had created in the cultural arena of the island as evident from Jessica's descriptions, thus, serve as "social frames of references" (Doolan 15) for her narration and effectively establish herself as part of the island, as one of the stake-holders of the collective identity. Merrill and Fivush observe that "personal narratives coalesce the past, present and future into a coherent narrative identity in order to create a sense of unity and purpose across time" (73). Jessica, unable to cut out her life exclusively, away from the societal frame, reconstructs her identity as embedded in, submerged in, and inter-related to the existing socio-cultural space of the island. This extension of the self to the social space is a deliberate act of locating oneself as a significant part of the larger, abstract, and intangible islandic space and it is the employment of collective, communicative memory as a narrative form that effectuates this.

It is also to be noted that these two events are characterised by mutually conflicting aspects: anti-conventionality (a face of audacity portrayed through the reference to the film) and dread and suspicion (a face of reclusion generated by the vaccination project). Through the active process of remembering these incidents and underscoring their significance in detail while talking about her birth, Jessica sets the stage for carving her identity as characterised by similar dualistic traits of rebelliousness and apprehension. This trait can be seen as representing the Latin Catholic community owing to the ostracisation and marginality imposed upon them that lead them to conceive of their identity as carrying oppositions, contradictions,

and as caught in a state of dilemma. These contradicting attributes will find validation in the events to unfurl as the narration progresses. The hidden politics of remembrance that lies in the representation of Jessica's selfhood as dual-faced and carrying opposites as stated above, thus comes into the limelight.

Jessica's birth takes place when Saradamma from the Health Department of Ernakulam visits the island with the smallpox vaccination project and the entire atmosphere is pictured as tumultuous and trepidatious. In her narration, Jessica paints Matilda, her mother, as lily-livered, and a cowshed, along with a bunch of women and family, sets the stage for her delivery. Even though the tremor that Matilda exhibits is sourced in the general suspicion that was in existence both in the mainland and the islands of Kochi related to the vaccination project, one can also strike its connection with the insecurity and uncertainty that the Latin Catholic community and Parankis had experienced in the face of the 'upper-class', dominant Christians of Kochi. The islanders, subjected to alienation and segregation from the mainlanders, connected to the happenings of the mainland through a sieved vision characterised by suspicion, uncertainty, and dubiousness. Jessica recollects, "I braced myself to be born. Like a ship entering the Azhi, I moved my head to the fore" (12). The preparatory stage of the birth is described as follows:

The wax-coloured bag that held me burst and the waters oozed all around me. Suddenly, I was about to learn of many things: the acidity of the earth, the snows at the poles, rain in the eastern mountains, and dolphins that dart out of the backwater's surface like sudden ideas in the mind. . . . When I realized that I was going to be naked at birth, I knew about sin and purity.

(39)

The language Jessica employs in this narration carries island and river metaphors abundantly, and this locates her in the space of the island and underscores the relationship she bears with the space that becomes a marker of her identity. In the recollection, the diversity and colour of the island in store for her is expressed with utmost joy and ecstasy and it also brings in her expectations about the future-bonding with the land. The reference to the notions of sin and purity needs attention here, as they largely contribute to driving Jessica's life in unexpected ways in the future and they are repeatedly articulated in the text. By mentioning them many a time on various occasions in the introductory chapter itself, the writer employs the narrative technique of flash-forwarding or foreboding and thus emphasises its unavoidable significance.

Here, a curious aspect with regard to the interplay of internal and external spaces comes to the fore. Saradamma as an outsider, 'encroaching' or 'trespassing' the isolated, independent island of Lanthan Bathery as well as the private, familial spaces creating a general atmosphere of fear, tremor, and repulsive behaviour in the natives, and Jessica as an insider at two levels – a native of Lanthan Bathery and a baby inside her mother's womb- are placed in stark opposition. Jessica records Saradamma's perspective as follows: "She saw a delta packed with dry coconut-leaf thatch fences. Within the enclosures, Saradamma saw trees alien to her mainland eyes: a guava tree. . . and anjili. . . . The ruptured leaves of the breadfruit trees made her think that they had been abandoned halfway during the course of evolution" (11). This clearly denotes the outsider's vision of the island - the outsiders being both the Westerners and the mainlanders of Kochi - who always saw the island as an alien land, isolated, and in solitude, and connected the same to the existence and

innate identity of the islanders. The confrontation of the two spaces generating an admixed atmosphere of excitement, joy, apprehension, and terror constructs Jessica's identity as hybrid and coloured by opposites wrapped in a composite whole. It is the tonal colouring that memory gives that helps us discern the tension that exists between the two spaces.

The autobiographical narration coloured by collective and social memories alongside the personal memories, aids in establishing Jessica's identity in relation to the inhabiting space and marks the inseparability of a place and an individual. These memories become her self-defining memories – developed by Singer and Salovey (qtd. in Bouizegarene and Philippe 617) - shaping and constructing her identity as a native of Lanthan Bathery. In fact, the narrator develops a certain sense of geographical self, as Casey puts it to refer to the way one orients and locates oneself in a place through constant interaction and engagement with the same (“Between Geography and Philosophy” 683), and in this case, it occurs with memory as the mediatrix between the self/subject and the place/space. By conceiving oneself as an integral part of the inhabiting space, Jessica, the geographical subject, establishes a sense of belongingness to the island of Lanthan Bathery and brings along what Relph terms as existential insideness (55), and what Proshansky labels as place-identity (“City” 155).

It is important to examine the process of Jessica's identity-formation and development of a sense of place – the concept developed by Cresswell (113) - through her active interaction with diverse spaces within the macro-space of Lanthan Bathery. Unlike Dasan, Jessica does not engage with the larger social space of Lanthan Bathery with a specific mission or motive that is reformist or

revolutionary in nature. If contemplations, philosophical musings, and expressions of modernist angst aptly fit Dasan into the role of a thinker and he consistently engages in the pursuit of a 'truth' or a 'meaning', Jessica possesses a playful and frivolous attitude and does not involve in any explicit search for the meaning of her existence. More similar to Jithen in Chandran's *Preface*, she records her responses to the events she witnesses or experiences while remaining passive in some cases and her subjectivity gets shaped in a way slightly different from that of Dasan.

The major epicentres – private and public/social spaces - that provide diverse personal and socio-cultural experiences for Jessica are the Church (religious space), family and body (intimate spaces), the Malacca House, the theatre, and the imaginary world of stories (artistic spaces), the Cannon ground, and the school (academic space). They play a vital role in constructing, conditioning, and colouring Jessica's sense of self and identity through a certain process characterised by a contrasting, opposing, yet complementary attachment-detachment pattern at its core. Initially, locating herself in the spaces around her, Jessica attempts to strike a connection with them by emphasising the principles of identification, oneness, and assimilation. Later, the subject develops a negative, conflicting, or rival stance with those spaces and marks her distinct and separate existence that results in her subjectivity being decentred and displaced. This phase is followed by a strenuous attempt to restore the lost positive connection with the spaces - implicitly or explicitly asserting the need to build intimacy with them – which takes place with or without a deliberate effort on the part of the subject, and the cyclicity created by the consecutive feelings of love and hate for the spaces is taken forward. The text portrays Jessica as encountering two major crises that launch her at the peak of

displacement and alienation: the decision by the Church to deport her to Ernakulam for higher studies and the sexual assault by her Mathematics teacher Pushpangadan. It is her memory that serves as a strategic tool in restoring and reinstating her selfhood through re-establishing the lost connection with the spaces during these moments of crisis. Also, Jessica's movement from place to place indicates a collision between deeply private or personal and public spaces, and it serves as material manifestations of the power-struggle between an individual and a power-centre. The influence of the societal structure on the agency of the protagonist, her positionality in relation to the spaces of interaction, and her spatial shifts from the centre to the periphery and back are elements that contribute to her identity formation.

The Latin Catholic Church is a significant micro-space of the island that is religious and conservative, and it functions according to certain stipulated rules and norms. It not only dictates and delineates the matters of faith, religious beliefs, and rituals, but also serves as the fundamental identity-builder, driving force, and 'lighthouse' for the believers; it is undoubtedly the major power-centre, a surveillant and dominant authority inside the community. The church, therefore, acquires the status of a dominant space - propounded by Lefebvre as an abstract, closed, and contained space of power (*Production* 165) - that levies authority over the subjects who engage and interact with it. In the narrative, all memories associated with the church are marked by a combination of awe and respect for and hatred or revolt against the performing space, put forth explicitly and implicitly.

The first instance of Jessica's introduction into the religious space is the occasion of her birth, where she remains a passive recipient of the religious

tradition. Jessica's birth that takes place inside a cowshed nearby her house, on a rolled out "screwpine-leaf mat" (40) with lanterns hanging around, and accompanied by the Health Inspector Saradamma, neighbours such as Sylviachechi and Gomeschettan, and many others, is analogous to the birth of Jesus described in the holy *Bible*. This parodic recreation of the holy birth, accompanied by the visit of Santiago, Francis, and Michael - the natives of Lanthan Bathery and promoters of the long-lost art form of Chavittunatakam - to see the newborn by proclaiming themselves to be Emperor Karalman of France, Emperor Albiranth of Turkey, and Emperor Diocletian of Rome respectively, another parody of the visit of the Biblical Magi to see Infant Jesus, initiates Jessica into and locates her inside the matrix of Christianity. The memory of the myth, which is also a collective and cultural memory – Assmann's coinage (*Communicative and Cultural Memory*" 112 - evoked in the narration, serves as a tool to concretise her religious identity in a certain way. Jessica's positioning inside the framework of Christianity turns out to be crucial to the development of affective ties with the space and marks the moment of topophilia, although Jessica has not yet acquired the stature of a conscious and mobile agent.

The first episode of Jessica's conscious interaction with the space of the church is her naming ceremony during her baptism at the church. In the explication of the origin of the name Jessica provided during this occasion, one can evidently spot the role of memory. According to Jessica, the name belonged to a doll her grandmother had given to her mother when the latter was a child, and it was with the doll that her mother had learned to look after babies. Apart from this individual, personal memory, a piece of collective, cultural memory that is associated with the

name is provided by Father Pilathose of the Catholic Church of Lanthan Bathery, which is that of the Biblical story of three women, one of whom is Joanna which is also another name for Jessica, who had visited the sepulchre where Lord Jesus was buried but failed to find the body (78). It is this story of a failed search that is quoted as a reference to the name Jessica. Various other names also get attached to the little girl by way of memories and commitments of various kinds: ‘Margarita’ in memory of her mother’s mother and also for the patron Margarita of the holy *Bible*, ‘Anne’ in memory of St. Anne “the patron saint of women in labour”, ‘Maria’ in memory of her father’s mother, ‘Irene’ in memory of St. Irene, ‘Theresa’ in memory of the saint who inspired many women to choose religious vocation, and ‘Edwina’ as a gesture of obligation and love to Edwin, her godfather (78-79). The Biblical references that are brought in serve as clear-cut examples of cultural memory for their transmission through a formal institution (the priest and the church) and lie closely connected to Jessica’s identity. At this point, Edwin points out the historical Edwina, Lord Mountbatten’s bride and he recounts the clandestine relationship that is rumoured to have existed between Jawaharlal Nehru and the lady. This piece of communicative memory becomes double-edged by being both a referent to a historical past and a foreboding or a prospective hinting at a similar charge that would be laid on Jessica later in the story following her tragic encounter with Pushpangadan.

All the Biblical memories are examples of collective semantic memory or lived semantic memory (Manier and Hirst 257-258) apart from being cultural memories, where, general incidents of the past are remembered without the exact spatial, temporal, or affective specifications (free of the context of the happenings), contrary to episodic memory. The name conferred upon Jessica as

“Kanakukattathil Edwina Theresa Irene Maria Anne Margarita Jessica” (79) becomes an embodiment of the collective semantic memory, and although the semantic memory is not directly related to identity as episodic memory is, one can draw its impact on Jessica’s identity-formation. The name transforms Jessica into a carrier of the collective, cultural memories of the dead ancestors and also a symbolic signifier of audacity, determination, compassion, and piety as represented by St. Margarita, St. Irene, and St. Theresa respectively. The memory as in the previous case of the holy birth once again places Jessica within the dictates and directives of the religious space of Christianity. As quite popularly accepted, one’s name is a distinct marker of one’s identity and selfhood. Here, the naming process, an explicit exercise of power and agency by the ‘other’ over the self, conditions Jessica by making her conform to the accepted dictates and expectations of the family as well as the religious Christian society, and this results in the validation of the questioning or crucifixion of any kind of ‘deviant’ behaviour. At this stage, her relationship with the church remains neutral as she lacks agency of any kind and passively accepts the name conferred on her.

As the narration progresses, Jessica declares that her “mind vanished” when “the baptismal water fell on [her] head” (79) – the usage “mind vanished” indicating a loss of her state of consciousness, self-awareness, and sense of being – which can be taken as Jessica’s indirect criticism of the Catholic Church and Christianity; a mockery at the hollow, absurd ritualistic regime such as the naming ceremony that dominantly and unnecessarily conditions and drives meaningless expectations about a persona while it is one’s performing individuality, agency, and will that matter the most. On the other hand, the statement also points at a disempowered, puppet-like

existence that Jessica claims to have undergone since her baptism and shows how agency still vests in the hands of ‘the other’, the dominant church. Through this seemingly passive description, two aspects are implicitly established: first, Jessica is in a private war with the church by registering her protest and unwillingness to be a part of the establishment, which also points out the development of topophobia (by breeding a sense of discomfort and uneasiness of being there), and secondly, the Church is the power-centre and Jessica occupies the periphery. This scenario is an inevitable phase of Jessica’s identity-formation, although it changes in her subsequent encounters with the church.

It is during her Holy Communion that Jessica explicitly exhibits the first act of defiance against the church. She sleeps off during the ritualistic Latin recitals and in her dream, she sees her mother narrating to her the story of the marriage at Cana. The thought that pops up in Jessica’s mind following the dream is a question directed towards Jesus Christ who “heartlessly asked Holy Mary, ‘Woman, who are you to me?’” (104). The questioning undoubtedly springs from Jessica’s underlying awareness of the unfairness and unjustness of Jesus’ query. How the dream reflects both the existing cultural schemas (the tradition of Christianity and its associated religious culture/ceremony that constitute Jessica’s socialised, conditioned selfhood) as well as the defiance against it – that signifies her innate counter-cultural spirit – in its manifestation of the bygone past as Mageo puts it (24), is evident here. The subject in confrontation with the dominant, normative structure is exposed here. The ritualistic Holy Communion strikes Jessica with a sense of boredom and impassivity while the dream hits her so hard as to stay with her for a longer time and to recollect at a later stage as in this narration, and she vividly repeats the questioning of the

unjust act of Jesus. How Jessica gradually develops a hatred of and discomfort with the space of the church, marking the sense of topophobia, is evident here and gets conspicuous in many more instances to follow.

Jessica's obsession with the notions of sin, guilt, and punishment appears on various occasions in the text and they become extremely influential in her future course of life. The first time she thinks of them independently, after receiving direct and indirect instructions, preachings, and admonitions from the church and the family, a playful, frivolous, and light-hearted attitude is displayed. She states that she forgets all the sins she had committed by the end of a week and accidentally 'stumbles' upon one following which all the sins – such as calling her neighbour girl Natasha a 'Sneaky Parangi girl' and faking prayer recitals – become vivid, and the punishment she gets is Father Pilathose 'merely' asking her to recite 'Our Father, who art in Heaven' (122). By indicating the aspect of forgetfulness of sins, its recreation, and the simple penance offered, Jessica once again criticises and ridicules the hollowness of the rituals of Christianity and the Church through the tool of childhood innocence.

Jessica's confession at the church, at a later moment in time, is another remarkable episode that underlines her growing discomfort and disgust with the religious space. Confession, in fact, involves the process of recollection; one makes a re-entry into past actions and thoughts to subject it to evaluation. Jessica decides to confess after she is crushed down by the story of the film *Neelakuyil* narrated to her by Matilda, the rationale and logicity of which remains unacceptable to her on account of it being patriarchal and anti-women. The story, where an 'upper-caste' born hero impregnates a 'low-caste' heroine and rejects her on account of 'dignity'

and makes her end up in suicide, upsets Jessica who twists and tosses throughout the night of listening to the story by thinking of the question raised by the hero, “Shouldn’t I respect the dignity of my community?” (127), which clearly marginalises and negates the existence of the lady through its overtly gendered and caste-ridden implication. The hero’s question arises from the perception that ‘dignity’ is the sole, privileged possession of Man and of the ‘upper castes’, and also from the tradition of assuming a woman as the sole carrier of the dignity and esteem of a community by objectifying her body as the inviolable site of purity and chastity and imposing the threat of being tagged as a ‘sinner’ if the constructed rules of the community are not abided by. The questions of ‘sin’, the dignity of the community, self-will, the extent of one’s agency, and exercise of choice with regard to a larger society are posed here and Jessica’s incessant pondering over it carries a forewarning for the impending happenings of her life. It is the next morning of this sleepless night that she decides to confess her ‘wrongdoing’ with her body, the carnal ‘sin’ of masturbation. Jessica confesses her sin of masturbation but opens up that she “wasn’t sure if [she] could promise [she] would never do it again” (129). The strongest defiance against the ethical, moralistic ‘do’s and don’ts’ and taboos dictated by the Church comes from her at this point. She contemplates, “[I]f my flesh carried sin, why did it comfort me?” (129). This clearly shows that Jessica’s confession was merely to satisfy a systemic compulsion and not an execution of her independent will and choice. The questioning springs from the agency derived from the dormant memory of the film that makes her rethink the constructed notions of ‘sin’ constantly fed into her. How memory drives and determines one’s actions and builds ideologies and agential capabilities is evident from this instance, and it also

underscores the sense of estrangement Jessica develops towards the space of the church. On the one hand, the act of confession is bound by the dictates of Christianity (which shows her assimilation with it), but on the other hand, the contemplation marks her ideological disagreement with and distancing from the same, once again underscoring the alternating sentiments of topophilia and topophobia.

Jessica's contemplation of sin continues in another episode where she recollects her Sunday school experience with Lawrence Pallath, her teacher. Madhavan craftily uses this snippet to draw the contemporary socio-political scenario of the war between church and communism that was widespread in Kerala during the fifties through the sketch of the Sunday school teacher. Lawrence Pallath utilises the catechism classes as propaganda for propagating anti-communist ideologies by teaching the students that E. M. S. Namboothirippad is the 'Antichrist' of the twentieth century (146), that Education Minister Joseph Mundasseri is a Satanic incarnation, and that the macaroni, introduced to the poverty-stricken people of Kerala by the Communist government due to the shortage of rice import, is a 'forbidden' food item because it is made of wheat. The question that Jessica asks the teacher following this lecture is, "What about the holy bread?" (148), which fingers at the contradiction inherent in Pallath's statement that while the holy bread, despite being made of wheat, is 'sacred', the communist-imported macaroni becomes a 'forbidden', 'sinful' food. It becomes a vehement criticism of the unfair practice of the priests who exploit the sacred, religious space by manipulating it as a vehicle of a certain ideology and thus transforming it into a biased and propagandist space. Pallath whacks her on her head and charges the sin of blasphemy on her for the

questioning, but on the way back, she introspects, “‘If I am a sinner, what is my sin?’” (148), which brings in the idea that she has not accepted the sin and that she unflinchingly believes in the teacher’s wrong lessons and the unjust punishment. The whacking on the head by Lawrence Pallath remains an everlasting insult for Jessica and in a later part, while mimicking Brother Vadakkan’s speech before her friends, she condemns the teacher as follows: “Thus Lawrence Pallath who hit a little girl on her head deserves to be banished from the Lord’s temple” (172). It is her indelible memory of the shattering experience that triggers the question against the false and biased preachings of the church and leads to locating herself in opposition and distance with the space of the church. The act that marks her identity as distinct and unique also confers a certain agential potential on her.

While Lawrence Pallath incites disgust, enmity, and hatred for the religious space in Jessica, Brother Vadakkan, also a representative of the Church, attaches and entices her to the same space. Even though an anti-communist, Brother Vadakkan stands against extremist battling ways and the unjust practice of using religion as a tool to fight Communist ideologies and adopts a moderate and peaceful stance.

Remembering his speech at a ground near the Ponjikkara church, Jessica states:

[B]rother Vadakkan spoke about Jesus. We could feel Jesus. It was not the Jesus whom Father Pilathose and the Sunday-school teacher Lawrence Pallath kept in the confines of the skinny two-column pages of the Bible speckled with chapter and verse numbers. Johnson and I breathed in every word spoken by Brother Vadakkan. They began to live inside us. In a short while, we invented a game called ‘The Speech of Brother Vadakkan’. (167-168)

Jessica also records Brother Vadakkan's quoting of the words of Jesus during his visit to a temple in Jerusalem, where, seeing the livestock and moneychangers occupying the temple, the Lord lashed out against the money-mongers for defiling the sacred space (168). Evidently, Jessica turns intimate with the space of the church through the memory of Brother Vadakkan and the space begins offering her positive and vibrant emotions, which thus marks the sense of topophilia. Father Pilathose and Lawrence Pallath on the negative realm and Brother Vadakkan on the positive realm, as Jessica remembers in the narration, signify the mutually opposite drives of hatred and love that detach from and attach her to the religious space respectively. Similarly, while she questions Jesus's approach to Mary at the marriage at Cana, asserting her disagreement with the same, she later admires and worships Jesus for his pronouncement against money-mongers, once again underscoring the alternating topophilic-topophobic sentiments she harbours for the religious space.

In the episode of interaction with the religious space that follows the above, the sentiment of topophilia is undermined with the production of hatred and aversion for the space and Jessica distances herself from the same. In her recollection of the historical days of the liberation struggle in Kerala (1958-59) carried out by the church to oust the communists in power, Jessica remembers her determined denial of the demand for the contribution of a one-rupee note in solidarity with the struggle (even to the displeasure of her family), an incident that happens during a prayer held inside the church. Later, by imitating Brother Vadakkan's speech, Jessica expresses her protest against Lawrence Pallath and her staunch disagreement with the money-collection inside the church. "Lawrence Pallath has made my Lord's temple dirty. It is a house of prayer, yet Pilathose Achan collected money. . . to donate to the

Liberation Struggle”, declares Jessica, and reads Jesus’s statement on his ‘house of prayer’ being converted into “a den of robbers” (171). Jessica’s protest, in fact, sprouts from her memory of Brother Vadakkan’s speech who had talked about Jesus’s vexation at the money-mongers, the profit-minded buyers and sellers who desecrated the sacred space of the temple in Jerusalem, and it is the memory that shapes Jessica’s identity rooted in combating injustices within the church and urges her resistance in the present scenario. In reaction to this unfair act of the church, Jessica defecates in the church premises against the standing order of Father Pilathose which becomes, conspicuously, a temporary exertion of her agency and will, although she would face its consequences at a later stage. Jessica’s violation of the norms of the church in this way can be seen as an act of appropriation, where a power-structure like the church is transformed into a site of protest producing what Lefebvre labels as appropriated space (qtd. in Armstrong 20). In a sense, the act also gives rise to a diverted space, another coinage by Lefebvre (qtd. in Armstrong 19), for hosting an act of deviance through a power struggle and making Jessica an ‘outsider’. Opposing the norms makes Jessica an outsider which becomes conspicuous after she is molested. Here, the exertion or articulation of her agency also becomes an act of production of power and definition of novel identities, and it prominently leads to the activation of topophobia for the space of the church in her.

The last time Jessica confronts the church is for her confession following the molestation by Pushpangadan Master. Jessica’s words to Father Pilathose, “I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed” and “Achan, give me the severest penance” (273), mark the state of devastation she is in, and she repents her ‘fault’ of not having resisted the man’s advances (273). To her surprise, Father Pilathose

declares, “Jessica didn’t sin” (274), and says that Pushpangadan is the wrongdoer but cannot be punished since he is not a Christian. The moment when the Father casts the master as the sinner gives Jessica hope of gaining justice and increased credibility in the system, as it, quite shockingly, relieves her from her ‘sin’, but the next moment she is hit hard by the declaration from the system about the impossibility of punishing the molester owing to his religion. She raises her voice against the unfairness of having to wait till the Judgement Day to see Pushpangadan’s penance and this ‘impatient’ response on Jessica’s part, as Father Pilathose labels her questioning, gets counted as a ‘sin’ according to the religious structure. The act of confessing itself, as in the previous case, displays Jessica’s closeness with the religious space. Although the episode initially brings in Jessica’s submissiveness as she casts herself as the ‘sinner’ before the religious structure/space, her open protest asserting the inability of the religious system in providing her justice pulls her apart from it, reflecting her staunch disagreement with and detachment from the same. The strategic construction of interstitial identity by the alternate placement of the self in attachment with and severance from the space is evident here, and this helps one think beyond the explicit image of docility that Jessica has at this juncture.

When the novel closes, the reader sees Jessica plunging into a state of ‘insanity’ – the state of madness is presented as ambiguous and its truth is placed in question - and it is the religious space where it gets materialised. It is during the season of Lent that Jessica starts exhibiting ‘lunatic’ symptoms, and by reciting prayers as in a state of delirium, she gathers the attention of her family. As she proceeds along the religious stalls installed with quotes from *The Bible* and reaches

the eighth station, she decides not to move, chants prayers as loud as she can, and collapses (305), sending waves of shock across the family and public. Even though Jessica develops discomfort and disgust for the religious space as in the previous instance, she is seen to be constantly returning to the space during moments of crisis, as in the case of the confession followed by her molestation. Although this might not indicate a clear-cut topophilia, the inevitability of the space in her life is evidently marked through these incidents.

Tally's coinage of topophrenia, the dualistic and conflicting emotions of familiarity and estrangement a homely place can radiate to its inhabitant (25), is a valid tool to negotiate Jessica's stance. In all the interactive episodes with the church detailed above, consciously as well as unconsciously, Jessica is seen as consecutively building the opposite sentiments of intimacy or attachment with and alienation from the space and vice-versa, indicating topophrenia. As seen, it is the strategic employment of memory that activates the opposite and dualistic, yet complementary feelings for the space, and it can be noted that the moments of distancing from the space through assuming a rival stance are also the moments where Jessica marks her identity as unique and distinct from the 'other'. Although this often pushes her to the periphery, to a decentred position (considering the church as the centripetal force), she keeps returning to the same or acts from within its framework, paradoxically, holding a curious position of 'in-betweenness.' The intimate-yet-estranged relationship with the space built through the aid of memory, thus, lands Jessica in a strategic position of hybridity that serves as the definer of her identity.

The intimate space of the body and of family/home is another significant arena where the dialectics of attachment and detachment operate. The body, the intimate space, is of paramount importance in the development of Jessica's selfhood. The body is the materialisation of one's selfhood; the physical, carnal form exerts the idea that one does exist. The sense of self that one develops is intensely and intrinsically connected to one's own body. How the body becomes a site or a carrier of the dualistic impulses of topophilia and topophobia can be examined by drawing attention to the bodily remembrances and varying approaches to the self that Jessica displays in the course of the narration. The body and the imagery of the island, invoked along with it as a comparison, correspondence, or juxtaposition can also be taken as an analogy of the Latin Catholic identity.

The profound relation between Lanthan Bathery and Jessica's identity is asserted through the similarities drawn between the topographical peculiarities of the island and Jessica's own bodily, sensorial reciprocations. One of the first expressions of the close identification between her body and the island, giving the readers a sense that Jessica herself is the island, is as follows:

The day I was born, the water around Lanthan Bathery was placid with hardly a ripple. I knew about the great water surrounding us ever since I was in the womb of Matilda. . . . When the Vembanad backwater. . . arched its back upwards during spring tides, the amniotic water where I lay would stir in tidal surges. When, during July monsoons, the turbulent and turgid River Periyar. . . turned brick red in colour, the water in my mother's belly too would take on a menstrual hue. (4)

Alongside this, Jessica also claims that inside her mother's womb, she used to "feel the solitude of the delta" (5), a striking analogy to the sense of alienation and isolation experienced by the islanders belonging to the Latin Catholic and Paranki communities due to discrimination and oppression by the 'upper caste' Christians and other 'pure-blooded' communities of the mainland. Drawing a correlation between the crest and trough of the waterbodies and the fluid inside her mother's belly – the movement inside resonating with the movement outside - what Jessica paints in her memory of the land is an image of inseparable interconnectedness. Also, throughout the description of how her mind and body synchronically move and reciprocate with the flows and force of the water, the notions of fluidity, influx, and dynamism that characterise a flowing body get correlated and connected to Jessica's selfhood. The images of Jessica lying inside her mother's womb surrounded by the amniotic fluid and Lanthan Bathery girded by waterbodies mark the body and the land as one, as mutually extensible and inseparable entities. Rhythmic ululation and chorus singing with the words "ailasa", "elelam", "land ho" and "heave ho" by a bunch of men and women (41) as in the case of launching a 'machwa' (a small boat) or a boat into a river is what accompanies her birth. From the amniotic fluid inside the womb, she is launched into the bed of Periyar, the heart of Lanthan Bathery. Similarly, in the parodic episode where the trio (Santiago, Francis, and Michael) visits Mathaeus Asari's house to see Jessica for the first time, when the father says to the visitors that it is a 'girl' and they look "at the space between [her] legs" (52), it impacts her profoundly and she contemplates:

My body's wound in its middle; my wisdom. . . my taboo; my purity; my transgression. . . my temperate zone. . . my impurity; my hinterland. . . my

alien land. . . my sandbar; my salt's sourness. . . my magnetic needle. . . my
portal. . . my faith. . . my mountain pass; my harbour mouth; my
chronometer; my anchor; my tabernacle; my blessing; my vulva. (52-53)

The portrait of the synchrony between body and land is a clear example of Jessica shaping her identity or selfhood by maintaining a seamless attachment and oneness with the inhabiting space. A mixture of emotions – happiness, dread, suspicion, insecurity, self-doubt, and pride – is depicted here. The woman's body, presented as a site or carrier of island metaphors, images of navigation, and the notions of purity and impurity, can be associated with the history of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British navigation, exploration, and invasion which violated the 'purity' of the land of Kochi, and it can also be seen as suggestive of the Latin Catholic identity as a terrain of both pride and conflict, as well as uncertainty and insecurity, reflecting a crisis of existence.

The intimacy with the island also finds a place in Jessica's words articulated at a later moment in the text, when she narrates the process of her birth in detail. "As a child, I used to examine my redundant naval cavity in the middle of my stomach, from where I occasionally received messages about a broken bridge", cherishes Jessica (45). The 'broken bridge' is a reference to an incomplete bridge-construction conceptualised by Robert Bristow during the early part of the twentieth century which could have eliminated the insular status of the island by forming a connection to the mainland, and this historical episode narrated by Edwin is a semantic memory that often popped in Jessica's head. The relevance of the memory-image needs some attention. The severance of the umbilical cord that creates a separation between Jessica and her mother connected with the imagery of a broken bridge, a historical

episode from the island, draws the intricate and intimate connection between Jessica's selfhood/identity and the inhabiting island, and the act of recollection becomes an assertion of her place-identity (Proshansky, "City" 155) and place attachment (Cross 494) through the one-to-one correspondence and identification built with the islandic space with the body as a medium. The unfulfilled historical project designated by the usage of 'broken bridge' becomes Jessica's grief and it is indicated by the tone of despair exhibited in the statements, "His third bridge would have ended the isolation of the backwater deltas" and "[The] island was a state of bridgelessness" (45). These statements mark the similarity drawn between Jessica's selfhood/body and Lanthan Bathery as isolated bodies - by the force of nature and history - and as entities that carry an immanent craving for networking and connecting with the 'other'.

Jessica also recollects the state of the river at the time of her birth. From inside her mother's belly, she hears "clear water. . . set[ting] in the brackish river Periyar", schools of various species of fish swimming in, and "a series of splashes and thuds from the Cannon ground", which is the sound made by boys leaping into the water (6). Here, two aspects come under focus: the first one is the notion of change signified by the impermanence of the river, which is profoundly connected to Jessica's selfhood through its oneness with her characteristic trait (her growth in the novel proves it), and the second one is the sensorial, bodily unity and harmony that Jessica seeks to sustain with the island, especially the river, and the intuitive knowledge she gains through a pure connection with the land. One can also note that the description carries a welcoming, joyous tone coinciding with her birth. The topophilia thus works out to build an attachment with the land. The two spaces that

Jessica mentions in this memory are the fluid, dynamic space of the river and the fixed, rooted space of the Cannon ground. The selection of *these* two spaces in her recollection is noteworthy, as they are the ones that play a vital role in moulding and shaping Jessica's life in significant ways, and their presence once again indicates the dualistic traits in Jessica as well as the phases of dynamism and stagnancy her life will exhibit in the impending future.

The space of the body begins to give Jessica feelings of hatred and disgust soon after she misbehaves with the church by defecating on its premises, for which Father Pilathose punishes her by deporting her to Saint Teresa's school in Ernakulam for higher studies. "I was a fat and dark girl; I guess it was not easy to take to me. The mirror in the bedroom also seemed to say the same thing. All it knew was to flip me from the left to the right, and copy all my actions, but it did not attempt to console me", wails Jessica (175). This realisation hits Jessica when she is around nine years old and it remains a crucial aspect of her identity-formation. The gaze of the mirror - 'the other' – marginalises her; here, the othering happens within the self and the subject/self becomes a detestable thing. The alienation from the religious space correspondingly creates cracks and crevices and a feeling of diffidence deep within the self, and leads her to a sense of estrangement from her own body.

A momentary attachment with the body/self is evoked by Jessica's childhood memory narrated as follows: "When I was born, apart from the red wart that held me back in Lanthan Bathery, I had just one more mole – the one on the left foot. As I grew, five more moles appeared. . . . Sometimes I used to sit alone and curiously examine the parts of my body, like they belonged to some toy" (204). This presents

the body as an object of pleasure, as a trace-marker of her growth, and also as a site of intense fondness. The significance of the image of the mole requires attention as Jessica starts to breed feelings of torment and self-disgust by its presence at a later stage, even though here she sees it only as a matter of curiosity. The topophilia developed so is but unsettled by her memory of the growth of the body and the process of menstruation. Jessica remembers her friend Natasha's words, "It'll come like a bolt; then a deluge of blood will follow" (204), that breed fear and discomfort within her. During the onset of menarche, she ruminates: "Menstrual blood disappointed me. It was thin, like sweat. As I walked back home, I felt the earth had sharpened its bite. I remembered the discovery of a new mole on my right foot, at the boathouse. I guessed that it could bring an end to my solitary perambulations" (239). Menstruation turns out to be a 'disappointing' experience for Jessica because her thoughts are coloured by the memory of Natasha's words and they fill her heart with expectations and apprehensions about the menstrual blood. Seeing her body offering only a 'thin' blood, her expectations die and she develops a distancing from her body. Along with this, the phrase of the earth 'sharpening its bite' on her indicates how the onset of womanhood seems to be burdensome for her on account of the societal conditioning from conservative and conventional powers (admonitions related to sin, morality, right and wrong would start governing her) turning out to be irresistible and inescapable like the earthly pull. Although the second statement that the newly-discovered mole could bring her some solace is again an immediate move to be intimate with the space (the memory of how she had loved counting the moles on her body gives her a feeling of affection with her bodily self), this proves to be ephemeral.

The culmination of this love-hate relationship - a distancing within the self, a rupture in the conception of the self - happens during and after Jessica undergoes a grave sexual assault by Pushpangadan Master at the Malacca House, where she goes to attend the master's mathematics tuition class. Jessica's state of trepidation and terror as the master's hands grope over her body is poignantly portrayed in the text. "I couldn't pull my legs back. I froze", says Jessica (252) before recoiling from his grasp and calling him "Satan" (255). Emaciated by typhoid that catches her post-molestation, she sees in the mirror "a scrawny and dark child" with "a tonsured head" (266) that becomes a distressing, loathsome, and depressing moment of self-realisation. The mirror-facing takes place several times after this and the traumatic memory of molestation exacerbates the feeling of disgust with the self-image. Once she says to Johnson and her other companions, "[T]he dirt on my body doesn't seem to go away. I feel like I am menstruating all the time" (283). As widely discussed, the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that affects individuals who have experienced violent attacks, physically and mentally, results in altered representations of the self, absolutely different from the pre-traumatic sense of self. The clinical psychologist Donald Kalsched remarks, "Trauma doesn't end with the cessation of outer violation, but continues unabated in the inner world of the trauma victim, whose dreams are often haunted by persecutory inner figures" (5), which clearly underscores that the trauma arises as a repeated memory to haunt the soul of the victim. The incident causes not just self-deprecation but also pulls her apart from the love-circle of her family. Jessica recollects that during those days the moles on her body "tightened their grip" on her life - once again, denoting the suffering within and the distancing from the self - and contemplates, "Did moving about mean

anything in a bridgeless delta where all pathways led to the water?" (301), where the correlation with the geographical feature of the island indicates the sense of aloofness and estrangement she experiences not just from the intimate space of her family but also from the public. Here, the mole symbolises an 'alien', undesired presence and an exploitative force that encroaches upon Jessica's body without consent, creating self-disgust and self-deprecation in her. It is the traumatic memory of the violation of the body that constantly arises in her that leads to her body becoming a site of alienation and disgust, and this marks an intense sense of topophobia.

On a metaphorical plane, the incident of molestation, the violation of the body, can be linked to the violation and exploitation of the land of Kochi by foreign powers, especially by the Dutch, a traumatic experience for the community of Latin Catholics and Parankis. When recollecting the historical past (invoking the semantic memory), Jessica states that the Dutch assassinated many Portuguese Catholics and "then turned their anger on the local Catholics, converts from the Hindu fisherfolk and other low castes, and also on the children the Portuguese had fathered from local women" (34), some of whom later escaped to Kamponjikad under the Portuguese dominion, which was later acquired by the Dutch. Pushpangadan Master as the coloniser, the imperial master, and Jessica as the symbol of the victimised, oppressed island-community is what gets signified metaphorically through the act of molestation.

A positive and affectionate feeling toward her body sprouts at a later stage when she 'turns' insane and is later admitted to a mental hospital in Ernakulam. In a state of delirium, distress, and self-degeneration, Jessica goes out of her house

holding a candle, stands on the platform where the cannons are installed, proclaims to her amused father, “Appan, I am a lighthouse”, and states that she is guiding the ships arriving towards the island as she envisions the arrival of Jews, Arabs, Chinese, Portuguese, the Dutch and the British ships one by one (308). The complete identification between herself and the island is manifested through the image of the lighthouse and this is an image of positivity, where the historical past of foreign visits is cherished discarding the traumatic memories she breeds after molestation. Evidently, the reference to the arrival of foreigners is an evocation of the collective, communicative memory that aids her in healing her wounds. Having been ousted by the family and society, this conception of the self that Jessica holds aloft (where a seamless identification of the self with the island is effectuated) before ‘turning mad’, can be viewed as her desperate attempt to re-bond with the space and restore the lost intimacy with the same. Narrated in a dreamy state of mind as the novel closes, the body, having assumed a strategic position, is presented as a carrier of intimate emotions in connection with the island. The consecutive functioning of topophilia and topophobia or the generation of the sentiment of topophobia related to the site of the body can thereby be successfully discerned.

If the church is a major power-centre in the public/social space, the family is the centripetal force that governs and regulates Jessica’s behavioural patterns and thoughts in the private/personal realm. The notion of home as a consolidation of intense affective and emotional ties, as a confluence of love, intimacy, and security, has been widely discussed in the scholarly world. The other opposing discourse on home as the space where conflicting emotions – estrangement, love, enmity, fear, and affinity – flourish, which disturbs and subverts the one-dimensional conception

of home as a pure and sacred site, gained prominence lately and this leads one to conceive of it as a hybrid, amalgamated space.

For Jessica, stories or narratives serve as the medium for building attachment with and striking a severance from the familial space. Narratives that pertain to both the socio-cultural and the private (familial/domestic) spheres establish a concrete bond between Jessica and her parents, draft and design her identity in accordance with the existing, widely circulated cultural beliefs and expectations, and also lead her to develop a sense of estrangement and distancing from the same space.

Narratives from the socio-cultural sphere presented in a storytelling mode – by Matilda to Jessica - are exclusively from the arena of films such as *Jeevitha Nauka* (1951) and *Neelakuyil (The Blue Koel, 1954)*, which can be characterised as communicative memories, and they highly impact her in both positive and negative ways. Different from Kurambi's narration of mythical-folk tales and socio-cultural traditions and customs that form the collective identity of the natives of Mayyazhi, the stories that Jessica wants to hear or that Matilda narrates do not belong to an ancient, erstwhile age but to a very contemporary, material space connected to the every-day experiential realm. If the mythical, religious, and folk elements (the collective, cultural memory) are what define the identity of the natives through their emplacement in the macro-space and constantly bind them into the socio-cultural framework of Mayyazhi, what one finds in *Litanies* is the dominance of historical and geographical narratives – the communicative memory - that grant the inhabitants of Lanthan Bathery their unique identity. When Dasan attaches to the larger socio-cultural realm and establishes his spatial or geographical sense of self and identity through religious and mythical stories, Jessica's identity gets shaped by

the historical and geographical realities of the land, everyday realities, and the medium of films. Although the religious traditions of the Latin Catholics find a place in the narration – there are references to the religious ceremonies and celebrations like baptism, the Lent season, and the Arrow Procession – they do not appear as formative influences on Jessica as they were on Dasan, but they are challenged and criticised as she confronts the religious institution. The filmic stories are directly passed on to Jessica from Matilda but the political history and geographical tales are articulated in the course of the narration and not in the form of storytelling inside the family. Except for a passive mention of the myth of ‘Kappiri Muthappan’ - “the spirits of [the] black slaves” who guard the treasure saved by the Portuguese beneath the earth during their elopement from the Dutch conquerors (195) - no myth as an encompassing or a common binding force of the natives appears in the text. There is an imagined realm, a realm of fantasy common to all the novels, but the nature of the fantasy is different: the tales in *On the banks* cannot be strictly tagged as ‘fictional’ and their point of origin and veracity cannot be accurately identified, while the stories in *Litanies* spring from the imaginative faculty of man, which can be located back to an individual or a group of individuals engaged in an act of creation. The private, familial narratives – stories of Jessica’s ancestors – passed on to her form the other set of stories that considerably influences her selfhood. The role of intergenerational narratives - the experiences of the familial past transmitted to the posterity - in devising an intergenerational self and identity for its members is evident here.

The beginning of the text draws a joyous and jubilant family portrait with Jessica, Mathaeus Asari, and Matilda exchanging adorable conversations among one

other, a major part of which accounts for stories that Jessica is in love with listening to. Jessica's statement, "I would plant a kiss. . . on her forever half-opened lips. And then I would ask, 'Amma, tell me a story'" (3), testifies to this. When Jessica recollects her mother's words, "'Had it been possible for me, Koch, I would never have let you come out of my belly. You could have lived inside me, like a twin companion'" (5-6), she underscores the inseparability and intimacy with the familial space that creates the sense of topophilia within her.

On the contrary, the other side of this love, which is the intense anger, frustration, and exasperation that Jessica develops with the family on account of the family name she inherits from her ancestors, also becomes visible. "All are born with one original sin, but I was born with two", records Jessica (14). It is here that the notion of 'sin' is introduced into the narration for the first time, which is of paramount importance as her life takes its course. The sin, as she mentions, lies in her family history that gets reflected through the family name - "Kanakkukattathil", meaning "one who had stolen calculations" (17) - which Jessica inherits and is compelled to don as an identity-marker with an absolute denial of own choice and willingness. Jessica explains to the readers the story about how her great grandfather Valia Louise Asari disobeyed Cornelius, his master in carpentry, by successfully learning the formula of ship-building which he was denied from learning, and how the notion of 'theft' - Cornelius catches him red-handed with the diagrams of a ship - got attached to him and all his successors to follow. When Louis is found holding some ship diagrams in his hand, Cornelius questions him, to which he answers that he wants to learn the art of ship-building, which is followed by some Nair mercenaries from Paravur ordering Louis to leave the place. As Louis leaves the

place for the island of Lanthan Bathery, Cornelius curses him: “Louis, never in your life will you make a ship. A machwa or a small boat, that’s your destiny” (16).

Relating the incident to the plight and exploitation of the Latin Catholics will help one discern the conflict and rivalry that existed between the mainlanders and the islanders, most of whom are converts and descendants of mixed marriages. The prevalence of the politics of hierarchy among the ship-builders, where the “pure-blooded” upper-class Christians degraded and belittled the converts by glorifying themselves as superior and dignified, and the repressive, discriminatory force in the name of caste imposed by the Nairs and other upper castes of the mainland on the “low-caste” Latin Catholics were main causes for the downtrodden, oppressed, and alienated status of the community who was prevented from climbing the social and economic ladder. Here, although Cornelius’s curse comes to be true and Louis goes on to make only small boats, Jessica’s family is not depicted as explicitly undergoing any suffering, existential dilemma, or crisis of living; on the contrary, the history of the family name is presented as a matter of pride by Jessica’s family.

The snippet from the past is a clear case of family memory transmitted to Jessica by her parents, which is repeatedly shared by her even without experiencing it first-hand. She tags the incident and the inheritance of the name as a ‘sin’, which provides us the idea that she not only lacks any feeling of pride or joy about the inheritance but also painfully bears a sense of shame and guilt brought by the name. This comes into vision when her mother chastises her for scoring low marks in mathematics, despite their family being carpenters and unbeatable experts in calculations, and sees her as the causative agent for disgracing and desecrating the family name. “How could you be born an idiot? How could Valia Mathaeus Asari,

who builds boats with all the calculations he knows. . . have such a daughter?” is how Matilda chastises Jessica (135), and the denial of the routine goodnight kiss by her mother hits Jessica hard as a grievous “act of rejection” (136). Jessica despairingly states thus:

When Valia Louis Asari fled from Vyppin in a small boat with the stolen calculations, Cornelius, silhouetted by the full moon over the estuary, had cursed him. The curse had now fallen on me. It impaled me on the cross of a plus sign. Giant nails of minuses wounded me deeply. The guards who had gathered to gamble for my cloth made a sign of multiplication by crossing their spears. . . . (136)

With an obvious Biblical reference to Jesus’s crucifixion, the excruciating pain caused by her family’s rejection is evidently portrayed in this episode of contemplation. As she narrates, “How could I say that I belonged to a family of carpenters?” (134), the impact of the memory on her sense of belongingness and existence itself is projected.

Notably, this is a case of Jessica’s inherited memory that contributes to the generation of an intergenerational self in her, the self or identity that is the product of interactions with previous generations and ancestry. The inherited memory creates an interface between the persona and the bygone, historical past, considerably impacting her perspectives, thoughts, and identity. In the text, the incident is not portrayed as traumatic to all the generations that followed (except for Jessica), but exalted as a matter of pride and prestige for the proficiency exhibited in the field of numbers and calculations; the great-grandfather, grandfather and her father are portrayed as unparalleled experts in boat-building using the formula of

ship-building (17). The ‘infamous’ family-name generated by a history of defiance, recalcitration, and ‘unpardonable’ violation of norms becomes a burden and trauma for Jessica as it begins to act as a gauge of her actions such as her performance in academia. O’Donoghue’s interpretation of Hirsch’s theory of postmemory - that her focus is on the larger idea of transmission and inheritance through mediation without the incident necessarily being traumatic in all cases (par. 8) - can be brought in here to vindicate Jessica’s case as an exemplar of postmemory, at least in a partial sense. It is the aspect of inheritance, of transmission from one generation to another by transcending space and time the memory of a bygone incident, that the notion of postmemory becomes valid. It is to be noted that it is Jessica’s present experience that colours the event of the past and her recollection of the same in a certain manner. In tune with what Levi and Spence have postulated about the influence of the present on memory-retrieval (qtd. in King 25), in the narrative, as the past is reiterated, the original version is distorted to the extent that its impact and impression on the speaking subject gain a negative hue and it is this memory that gets concretised and solidified within her. Although lacking in direct or first-hand experience, the manifestation of a particular incident in the present through the mode of stories and reminders plays a crucial and influential role in driving Jessica’s subjectivity and identity. This case of postmemory, a sore spot in Jessica’s life, being an irresistible dominant, master narrative, becomes crucial in constructing her identity in a certain way by creating a sense of detachment from and disgust with the much-loved familial space. According to Katie Barclay and Nina Javette Koefoed, “When we inherit memory from parents and other family members, we also inherit identity, a sense of who we are and where we come from. Memory work within

families plays a central part in establishing, negotiating, understanding, and adjusting personal identity” (3). Jessica’s insecurity and inhibition about her unsatisfactory academic performance in Mathematics and her image as an unskilled, incompetent person is sourced in and affirmed by the memory of her ancestor’s expertise in the field. The particular kind of identity, the intergenerational self, (such as a ‘weak’ student and a ‘disobedient child’) that Jessica derives from this intergenerational memory becomes a permanent and persistent trait throughout the course of her life. It is interesting to note that when Dasan in *On the banks* inherits the stories that Kurambi narrates to him with great affection and clings to the myth of Velliyan Kallu (and to which he returns for restoring his lost connection with the macro-space), Jessica detests her familial inheritance and treats it as a matter to be abhorred. How the familial space offers differing experiences to the protagonists is conspicuous here.

On the other side, another tale in circulation about Valia Louis Asari and Amrita the painter (Amrita Sher-Gil, the acclaimed Hungarian-Indian painter of the twentieth century) becomes the exemplar of the innate virtue of the man grounded in the notion of fidelity. The man who meets the lady - who had visited Mattanchery in Kochi for some professional work - to supply the easels he had built for her is said to have triumphantly dissuaded her sexual advances by remembering and reminding her of his dead wife Theresa. Within the family, the story is juxtaposed with *The Wife*, a quite popular film of the time that treats infidelity at its core (Sunny killing his wife, Leelamma, after forming an illicit alliance with U. P. Gracie) and praises the grandfather’s innate virtuousness and chastity by casting him as a stellar of the community. Jessica narrates, “After finishing the story. . . Vicky aunty would say,

‘Are there no more men like Louis Valiyappuppan left in this world? [H]as the clay with which you made men like Louis Valiyappuppan gone out of stock?’ (222-223).

This narration could also be seen as a point of confluence of the historical or national memory of Amrita Sher-Gil’s visit to Kochi and the personal memory of Jessica’s great-grandfather’s meeting with her. This communicative memory narrated within the family can be seen as extending a positive connection towards the familial space in Jessica, opposed to the sense of the ‘burden’ her ancestor had left for her.

In the altering circle of topophilia and topophobia, Jessica’s disaffection with the familial space is once again manifested during Matilda’s repeated singing of “engane nee marakkum kuyile” (meaning “how can you forget, my dear cuckoo bird”) to Jessica, a popular song from the film *Neelakuyil (The Blue Koel)* that serves as a reminder of the sin and guilt of the heroine (Neeli) who commits suicide having been impregnated and deserted by her lover Sreedharan Nair, a man of the ‘upper-caste’, and thereby portraying the lady as the sole carrier of the ‘dignity’ of the community and liberating the man from shame, sin, and guilt of any kind. The song is issued as a gendered forewarning to Jessica, as an implied and indirect implanting of the idea that she might be subjected to castigations related to ‘sin’, ‘chastity’, and ‘purity’ (designed and constructed by the patriarchal society objectifying the female body) in the future and that her femininity will keep burning experiences in store for her. In this sense, the song becomes a traumatic and distressing experience for the girl, and all the occasions where she comes across the song or the song is repeatedly mentioned turn out to be devastating and harrowing as the song kindles fear, guilt, and shame in her. The night Jessica listens to the filmic

story from Matilda becomes tormenting for her – her “underbelly was heavy like a rain-laden cloud” (128) - and she remembers the question regarding dignity posed by the hero to the heroine- “Shouldn’t I respect the dignity of my community?” (127) – which Matilda had repeatedly quoted during her narration. In the remembrance, instead of the story in its entirety, only the conversation is invoked, which shows Jessica’s selective remembrance - as Conway has theorised (594-595) - in tune with her present thoughts on sin, femininity, and the accusatory remarks of patriarchy that are constantly fed into her by her mother, which points out the submissive, servile, and disempowered subjectivity that Jessica possesses within the patriarchal structure. It also abides by Spence and Levi’s opinion on the present remembrance gaining dominance over the original memory (qtd. in King 25), as here only the aspects of sin and dignity come into view in the place of the real story of the film.

The song is also sung on the night when Matilda rebukes Jessica for scoring less in her Mathematics exam and accuses her of dishonouring the family name (136), which implicitly posits the charge of ‘sin’ on her. This is the narrative technique of repetition that the writer employs to forebode the events that will eventually take place in Jessica’s life surrounding sin and guilt followed by her molestation by her master. The repetition is an act of recall, as King states (99-100), which here becomes a revisitation of trauma for Jessica. The principle of selective remembrance and the influence of the present on recollection – the present colouring the past - as in the earlier case is evident here as well. How the repeated memory disarms Jessica and becomes a causative agent for her discomfort and distress inside the familial space is conspicuous here.

Merged with such episodes of topophobia are also incidents and moments that weave Jessica closer to her family. The leisure trip she has with her family to Ernakulam, her father showing around the illuminated Ernakulam city from the island during the Kerala Piravi Day (the day celebrating the birth of the state of Kerala), the love and caressing of Vicky Aunty (her mother's elder sister and Edwin uncle's wife) and so on testify to the sense of topophilia, with a profound kinship with people and affinity for the familial space. At the same time, the distancing and estrangement from other spaces such as the church, the theatre, and the Malacca house, resulting in breeding intense hatred and anger towards her from the familial space, cultivates increased anxiety, disgust, and displeasure within the spatial realm. The detachment from the familial space peaks with Jessica's defiance of the rules and norms dictated by the church (such as disrespecting the holy bread and purposefully dirtying the church premises) and its culmination in the penalty charged by the church to deport her to Ernakulam for her high school studies. Jessica's words, "I was becoming another person in the eyes of my Appan as Father Pilathose's list of complaints grew" (174), her father's words that he could not go to the sea when he has lost peace due to Father Pilathose's curse of Satan possessing Jessica (175), and Vicky Aunty's malicious remarks, "And you, Jessica, how could you scoff the holy bread of the Communion? Uncouth imps! Little Lucifers!" (176), show how severely Jessica gets subjected to her family's disgust and hatred and how she eventually plunges into alienation within the familial space.

How the space of home, the domestic or familial space, possesses and exudes dualistic and opposing sentiments of love and hatred for the inhabiting subject is evident in Jessica's case, in tune with the propositions of Vidler (qtd. in Radović

52), González (203), and Blunt and Varley (3). The attachment-detachment that the persona maintains with the familial space indicates that a space like home can signify multiple meanings, sensations, and emotions to its members rather than a singular, pure, and untainted affective experiential realm. Jessica's identity is crafted by the Janus-faced narratives - of security and threat - and actions that both grant her identity through emplacement within the familial sphere and at the same time uproot her from its safety owing to the conflicting ideologies. In this sense, topophrenia, which encompasses both the notions of topophilia and topophobia, also resonates with Jessica.

One can note slight differences between the protagonists of the two novels considering the aspect of their interaction with the familial space. If Dasan constantly attempts to flee from his family owing to ideological differences to pursue his journey, and later, memories that spring from the same space persistently draw him back to it (and his adherence to it continues despite detachment on various occasions), Jessica does not encounter such a scenario. She does not exhibit the memories related to her family as passionately as Dasan – in fact, the familial inheritance appears more as a burden to her - and there is a more passive tone of narration involved throughout.

In the journey of her identity-formation, when Jessica experiences moments of crisis, she ventures into a restoration and reassertion of her bond with the land and her loved ones for which memory serves as the bridge, the medium, and the connecting tool. The novel depicts three major crises that Jessica experiences. The undesired and forceful deportation to St. Teresa's High School in Ernakulam marks the first moment of crisis, which is also the culmination of a series of acts that cast

her apart as distinct, but decentred, dissociated, and disoriented. Transferring herself from her familiar habitat would result in not just a severing of the connection with the land that has made the distinction of her selfhood possible, but would rupture the matrix of harmony and disharmony, of intimacy and estrangement, of affection and separation that serves as the fundamental building block of her identity. Therefore, at such a moment of crisis, she strategically exercises a 'going back', a revisit to the past, by invoking her grandfather's memory.

Jessica, on the morning of the day she was to go to Ernakulam, profoundly remembers her grandfather, Valia Markose Asari, believed to have drowned at sea forty years ago. Desperate and disappointed at leaving the island and replete with inexplicable angst and anxiety, she beseeches in front of the picture of the Holy Family: "Dear Lord! When shall I see an end to this childhood, so replete with unending pain, little fears and adults' tyrannies? My father. . . needs distance to see me clearly. My mother, Matilda, exhaled life into her childhood rag doll and made me" (181). This clearly indicates that Jessica is painfully undergoing an existential crisis. Even though she had faced criticisms and felt discontent with the spaces she had moved about, a thought as intense and fierce as this had never struck her till then. This brings our attention to how an absolute displacement or dislocation from a place with which a certain kind of identification is built, tears away one's sense of self, disrupts one's place-identity, and pushes one into states of perplexity and uncertainty. It is at this point that she unexpectedly invokes her grandfather, the unseen figure for whom she had not expressed any devotion or reverence or affection so far, by looking at his picture and praying, "Appuppan, come to me" (181). The story of the grandfather had been casually mentioned earlier, where

Jessica states that he had died at sea and that her great-grandfather, who refused to believe his death used to mumble, “Like Jonah, he is living inside a whale” (17). Except for this reported reference, Jessica’s first-hand impression or conception of the man remains unrecorded till this point and here it is expressed through the memory triggered by his photograph. The photograph is a carrier of memories, of the traces of a bygone past, and it acts as a metaphor for memory. As Hirsch states in her preface to *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (1997), family photographs engage in “a narrative act of adoption that transforms rectangular images of cardboard into telling details connecting lives and stories across continents and generations” (xii). Even though the memory is evoked by an external stimulus, there is also a conscious or voluntary act involved in the act of recall. As a miracle, the ‘dead’ grandfather appears alive, and it turns out to be a watershed moment for a stunned Jessica.

The grandfather is a connecting agent, the bridge between the past and the present. Having encountered a boat accident – where he lost one of his eyes - and later entrapped in Lagos in Nigeria, he spends several years under the bout of insanity. He later joins a group of evangelists working among the Ibo tribe of Nigeria and does some odd carpentry work before being cast into an old-age home upon turning completely blind. The displacement drains the man of his vigour casting him into isolation which is expressed through his words, “Maria, what did I do in Africa? I simply got old” (201). Disconnected for a long period from the island, he is the man who experiences the transformation of the island and it hits him intensely. ““Ayyo, the smell of this place’s water and land, too has changed” (183), is how he exclaims upon his arrival at Lanthan Bathery. His words, “For the past

forty years, I haven't spoken a word of Malayalam. Yet all my dreams were in Malayalam. I have come here to die a happy death, listening to the language of my dreams" (192), underscore a clear-case of place attachment (Cross 494) and the innate urge to merge with the place.

Valia Markose Asari considers Jessica as the embodiment of his dead wife Maria, Jessica's grandmother. Touching her and feeling her delicate body, he utters: "Maria, your granddaughter's hair is silkier than yours. Maria, she has the same broad forehead as you had. The child has your sharp nose and thick eyelashes as well. Even her long neck reminds me of your heron-like neck" (192). It is this resemblance that makes him declare, "Maria isn't going anywhere. She will stay with me as long as I am here" (193), and saves Jessica from going to Ernakulam. Evidently, it is the grandfather's memory of his dead wife that returns to him upon touching Jessica that acts as a linchpin in rewriting Jessica's destiny. How memory plays an integral role in decision-making and how it gets related to one's identity is conspicuous here. It is Jessica's memory of her grandfather and the latter's memory of his dead wife that act as powerful catalysts in the production of topophilia. In Jessica's recollection, it is the process of the psychological principle of coherence devised by Conway (594-595) that operates. Here, the memory that Jessica recollects is not of her great-grandfather about whom stories had been narrated to her by her parents nor of any others with whom she had previously been familiar, but of her grandfather who had only been casually mentioned and with whom she does not have any direct familiarity. The grandfather appears as a figure of miracle – the one who survived death – and taking into belief his capability to tackle adverse situations, Jessica projects her desire for survival and audacious living on him, the

necessities to drive her unfavourable present into a pleasant one. With the crucial decision taken to retain Jessica at home and the grandfather regularly demanding her presence beside him (to visit the cemetery of his wife, to assist him host a party for his old friends at his home, and so on), Jessica begins to regain the sense of security and joy that she had once lost. The memory plays a vital role in restoring Jessica's intimacy within the familial space and it once again becomes a lovable, pleasurable abode for her. A comparison on this note with Dasan will give one an interesting read. If Jessica dreads her deportation to Ernakulam and is saved by her grandfather from the same, Dasan willingly transfers himself outside the rooted domestic space and remains spiritually displaced once the spatial shift brings in harsh outcomes and experiences topophilia in a space outside the macro-space of Mayyazhi. In Dasan, it is the spatial shift that turns out to be a catalyst in his identity-formation, while for Jessica rootedness brings in a different reality and experience altogether.

Another crisis, though less severe, hits Jessica during a picnic for the sixth-graders organised by Raghavan Master to Ernakulam, when they get stuck in an elevator during their visit to the Tata Company. In a terrified atmosphere of cries and implorations, Jessica acts as follows: "I shut my eyes in perfect peace inside the lift's grim darkness. The rhythmic sounds of the factory reminded me of my mother's heartbeats, which I had heard a long time ago in her belly. I made my way to the vacant space in the rear and did a somersault" (209). This reminds us of the narration in the beginning, where, Jessica recollects how she had performed somersaults inside her mother's womb – "When the water soared into the frolic of a carnival, I turned somersaults in my mother's belly" (5) – and her enthusiastic discovery of having defied gravity – "I learned this trick of gaining freedom from

gravity” is what she says (5) – followed by her mother’s sweet admonition. This is the case where the autobiographical episodic memory is reiterated to achieve a specific goal in the present, which is to restore mental peace and stability. Thomas Suddendorf and Michael C. Corballis state that episodic memory is not just the “mental time travel into the past, and its associated auto-noetic consciousness, [but] may exist to enable us to construct and simulate possible future events” (qtd. in Grmusa and Oklopčić 74). Conceiving the elevator as her mother’s womb and somersaulting inside it – not just reliving but also reenacting the past - Jessica asserts her agency and freedom and regains peace; the bond with the mother is recalled and reasserted to keep her composure. Similar to the previous instance, here too, the subject makes a cautious selection of memories and chooses the one that is perceived to be capable of gathering her scattered self. Having been displaced from the island and arrived at an unfamiliar, estranged, and absolutely unrelatable city of Ernakulam, the lost attachment with the land is restored with the aid of a ‘pre-birth’ memory, and it saves her from the crisis of dislocation and disturbed mental disposition.

The gruesome and horrifying incident that becomes the worst-hit crisis in her life and that accelerates Jessica’s strangeness at home and discomfort with the familial space is the sexual assault by Pushpangadan master. The experience pushes her into intense trauma and affliction that she develops a feeling of alienation both from the self and the familial space. The agony and anguish following the unexpected molestation is marked by her words, “I feel cold and my head is splitting. . . . I couldn’t sleep even after the sound of the last boat had receded. I buried my face in a pillow. I saw a train of grey, shadowy figures milling across my

closed eyes” (256). Most importantly, she finds herself a “stranger” at home as shown through the statement, “My Father, I am a stranger in your house” (258), uttered with a reference to Kundan Lal Saigal’s song ‘Babul Mora’, a song that carries many meanings, one of which is the death-like feelings of a bride who perceives the journey to the groom’s house as a death-procession and feels like a stranger in her own home, as Gilbert of the Kundan Music Club of Lanthan Bathery had once explained to Jessica (250-252). Jessica increasingly turns self-accusatory, charging upon her the sin of delay in resisting Pushpangadan master’s advances (“Why did my body take so long to resist Pushpangadan Master?”), attempting to normalise the incident by contemplating, “Or is sin a natural state?”, and perceiving herself as sinned and defiled (259). The self-accusation also leads to an immense hatred of the self, a strong detachment from the sense of self. The feeling of alienation is not just confined to the family, but extends to the inhabiting island as well, as Jessica articulates, “I pulled the blanket over my head, hoping to keep my home and Lanthan Bathery away” (259). The traumatic memory of the molestation and the memory of the song together cast Jessica into a state of distress and alienation within the familial space as well as the islandic space and she is cast into the darkness of existential dilemma, uncertainty, and paranoia.

It is at this moment that, as in a state of hysteria or delirium, Jessica begins to see a series of “violent dreams”: of exploitations, brutal murders, rape, looting, and assassination inflicted upon the island of Lanthan Bathery by the imperialistic, colonial, and dominant powers (261). The dreams indicate two aspects: on the one hand, it is the articulation of an intensely disturbed, traumatic mind expressed by drawing correspondence or identification with acts of encroachment and violation of

the island; on the other hand, it symbolises Jessica's intense yearning to regain, restore, and re-establish the relationship with the island and home from which she stays largely alienated and distanced, which gets expressed through the language of the unconscious, to put it in Freudian terms. The state of delirium can be read in association with the unstable identity of the Latin Catholics, who, having been severed from the Portuguese tradition, blended into other local communities of the place, and at the same time were not able to escape the degradation and segregation among the 'upper-class' Christians. Considering Jessica as the embodiment of the island itself established through her bodily correlations with the topography of the island, the dreams she sees are manifestations of the disturbed, problematic, and insecure existence of the people of the community.

The narration of the set of dreams begins with the statement, "The water surrounding my delta was turbulent" (261), indicating the body imagined and conceived as one with and inseparable from the island, or precisely, the body as the extension of the land. In the first dream, Jessica sees the rampant destruction and violence perpetrated by Australian soldiers supported by the British ally, on the natives of Lanthan Bathery, especially women. "Destruction. . . was terrifying. Amma was sitting beside me on the bed and I held her hand tightly. . . . I could feel how completely helpless Kochi was on that day", states Jessica (261). The second vision that Jessica has in the state of delirium is that of the Chinese mercenary soldiers shooting down Portuguese women during the colonial attack by the Dutch, along with a series of violent attacks on the naive people of the land, and she sees the "corpses of many a fat and dark young girl" (262). This image is horrifying because Jessica brings in assimilation between herself (she describes herself as "fat"

and “dark”) and the native women during their enervated, victimised, and helpless moments. The dream signifies the victimisation and exploitation of the powerless and the downtrodden islanders of Lanthan Bathery by the dominant, hegemonic, and privileged colonial, imperial powers and closely aligns with Jessica’s present state of existence. Along with this, Jessica also hears the historical Nair warlord Paliath Achan commanding his soldiers to fight the Christians of Lanthan Bathery after his failed attempt to assassinate the British warlord Colonel Macaulay, following which women and children are murdered, and Jessica sees the ribbon bands worn on the legs of the soldiers drenched in blood. The last of the dream-visions that haunts Jessica is that of cannons, “mounted on the promontory of Lanthan Bathery”, blowing up boats and barges and sinking all foreign goods meant to be exported from and imported to Kochi into the river, and the drowning heads of the imported horses fired by the cannon balls (264).

Dreams are evocations of memories of various kinds that pertain to the conscious and unconscious states of being. More than being the reflections of the dreamer’s present state of being (traumatic or joyful or nostalgic), dreams possess various social and cultural identifiers that turn the memories into products of an individual’s social and cultural dialogue with the inhabiting space, as Ewing and Mageo propose in their respective texts (44; 24-26). “Memory is both biological and cultural, so culture is implicated in how dreams are imaginatively shaped, remembered, reported, and experienced”, states Glaskin (46). Evidently, all the dreams carrying a turbulent and chaotic scenario display the cultural identity of the island of Lanthan Bathery as a colonised, brutally exploited, and obliterated land under the European imperial and colonial powers. All the dreams are cases of

violation of and encroachment upon the 'chastity' of the virgin island by foreign powers - the instances where the islanders were haunted and persecuted by colonisers other than the Portuguese - similar to what Jessica had undergone at the hands of Pushpangadan. The symbolic significance of the dreams denoting the fret and fear, the inner turmoil that Jessica experiences post-molestation, is brought in through the evocation of 'postmemory', the term coined by Hirsch ("Generation" 106-107). Here, Jessica experiencing or being haunted by the historical trauma of the ancestral generation by striking an absolute identification and connection with them is a conspicuous case of postmemory. All the dreams are based on historical events that Jessica did not directly witness or take part in but that are transmitted down to her from her grandfather, and it is the operation of Hirsch's affiliative postmemory ("Generation" 115) that facilitates the conversion of the larger public memory surrounding Lanthan Bathery into a deeply personal experience for her leading her to an in-depth assimilation and identification with it. The dreams emerge as the product or outcome of the collective semantic memory triggered in the direction. The postmemory, therefore, serves as an effective instrument that aids Jessica in restoring the lost attachment with the alienated islandic and familial spaces through a one-to-one identification. It can also be noted that here, a consistent narrative is built into the dream, and it reflects the particular distressed psyche of the individual, which is in tune with States' observation on narratives (102).

According to Ewing, dreams are to be conceived as "efforts to reposition the self and constitute identities by fitting new experiences into old narratives of identity. . ." (51). The dreams are attempts to integrate the present experiences of the

subject into the framework of existing cultural, social, and historical narratives on the grounds of the similarity of the notion of identity manifested in them. Dreaming of the land in a state of devastation and ruin, while undergoing personal trauma, paves the way for Jessica's self-survival through assimilation and profound identification with the native space. The communicative memory of oppression, exploitation, and violence that forms the collective identity of the natives of Lanthan Bathery reproduced through a revisitation in dream assists the geographical subject in relocating herself to the stability and security of the sheltered spaces. It is noteworthy that the process of selective remembering as Conway devises (594-595) is executed in this case also. When Jessica is in a state of illness, the recollections are also of the pathetic state of the island, where the positive and beneficial contributions of the colonial powers remain absent, suggesting that the dreams undergo a selection and filtration to suit the needs of her present. The intrinsic connection between dreams and the constitution of Jessica's selfhood is evident here.

After the episode of perturbing dreams, the reader sees a peaceful Jessica - "Peace returned to my sleep", says Jessica (265) - who sees a motherly figure, a lady "like a sculpture of the Holy Mother of Dolores" (266), in a tranquil vision that follows. This can be discerned as the sense of peace Jessica regains after the vital act of revitalizing and rejuvenating the self through topophilia. The final image falls under the category of 'healing dreams' as Glaskin puts it (51) for the appearance of a healing figure – the mother-like figure - that largely contributes to the generation of tranquillity in the disturbed subject and the reinstatement of altered selfhood. In fact, the series of dream images can also be seen as belonging to Lohmann's

classification called 'soul travel' dream theory (qtd. in Glaskin 51), as Jessica's traumatic journey is portrayed as being embedded in the specific socio-cultural context, striking correspondence and one-to-one identification. The operation of memory on the disease-bed therefore empowers and equips Jessica to confront the future.

After the restoration of peace and love for the inhabiting space, one sees Jessica's audacious act of entering Pushpangadan master's room at the Malacca House and tearing his research papers as an act of revenge. "Sinner!", she yells, and proclaims to the inmates of the Malacca House such as Gilbert, Peter Noronha, and the Communist Party secretary Josef, "This man isn't what he looks like. He is a phoney sleazebag. This Satan tried to molest me when I came here for tuition" (276). This unprecedented incident sends shockwaves across the social space of Lanthan Bathery as well as her family and Jessica is cornered and chastised for the act by her mother, father, and Vicky Aunty. This is a vivid case of Jessica asserting her agency. Her mother addresses her as "Lucifer" and "tramp" and severely accuses her of bringing shame and disgrace to the family (278). Her father weeps for the first time and considers all the bright dreams woven about her future as shattered and even sighs that a male child would not have brought such torment to the family. Jessica, at this phase, occupies a liminal space of in-betweenness (Turner 95) after the separation from the major structure (both the social and the domestic spheres) and before a reaggregation into the same. She carries the element of change – she has astonishingly assumed the identity of a rebel unseen by her family – and continues to be anti-structural by being anti-patriarchal and thus anti-establishmentarian, which form the prominent characteristics of liminality.

During such a heavy-hit crisis, only the grandfather and Johnson, Jessica's cousin and bosom friend, favour her by foregrounding the wrongdoing and the wrongdoer and accentuating the need to mete out justice to the victim. Jessica succumbs to silence and agony, and plunges into longer contemplation and introspection. The incident distances her not just from the familial space but from her sense of the self as she laments, "Now when I see my body while bathing, I feel sickened" (278) and "I don't know; the dirt on my body doesn't seem to go away" (283), and it underscores the body as a site of trauma, hatred, and contempt. The social spaces that Jessica, along with her grandfather, mother, and neighbours, visits with the hope of obtaining justice - The Communist Party office and Father Pilathose's house - discard her either asking her to forget the matter and stop proceeding with the accusation or accounting the allegation as a figment of her imagination because of their inability to conceive Pushpangadan as a molester. This once again decentres, displaces, and alienates Jessica from all private and public spaces she moves about, and her effort to prove herself as innocent and the master as the abuser becomes a failure. The ostracisation, and Jessica's discomfort and dislike for the familial space as well as the larger islandic or social space exacerbate with the unexpected incident of Pushpangadan master's suicide followed by his bereaving mother's failed attempt to prove his innocence by visiting Jessica, who audaciously repeats the execution of his crime. Even Johnson and her neighbour friends who had earlier stood in her favour begin to detest her, blaming her for letting Pushpangadan master touch her body, and her future turns bleak. Jessica's utterance, "The days that followed were the loneliest in my life. One by one, people deserted me" (300), indicates the trauma and distress, and the extremity of alienation she undergoes.

This stage marks the third major crisis in Jessica's life and once again, the grandfather comes to her rescue. It should be noted that it is only the grandfather who provides words of solace to her as she idly spends time confined to her home reading stories and pining over her lost future. To supersede the suicidal thoughts and win the lost favour and affection from the family, he proposes the idea of Jessica "becoming a madwoman" (302). "Insanity doesn't catch you like fever and cold. You have to will it. It is an alternative to taking one's life and requires just as much as strength of mind", he says and reminds her of his own decision to go mad in Nigeria that saved him from thinking of death (302). Following her grandfather's words, Jessica 'goes mad' during the season of Lent. One can see that it is a conscious and self-willed act on Jessica's part – "[I] decided to go mad" is how she puts it (303) – and her subsequent behaviour can be counted as pretension on this account, although the readers are placed on a plane of confusion with regard to its veracity as the text comes to a close. 'Madness' invites sympathy from the familial and societal spaces and gives Jessica an opportunity to strike a chord of intimacy with the same.

The dual principles of topophilia and topophobia through the activation of memory serve as an undercurrent in Jessica's interaction with the space of the family as explicated above. The space also holds the state of topophrenia with its constitution of the opposing sensations of security and threat of expulsion and lands the geographical subject in a borderline, hybrid state of being.

The Malacca house is a socio-cultural, artistic, and political convergence of the island of Lanthan Bathery during the 1950s that holds the offices of the Kundan Music Club, the Democratic Youth Federation (the banned Communist party in

disguise), and the Chinnathambi Annavi Memorial Chavittunatakam Sangham and, therefore, becomes a microcosmic space that encompasses music, politics, and performance art under a single roof. The place also serves as the abode for Raghavan master and Pushpangadan master who live in the building as tenants. Jessica introduces the space in a neutral, objective, and unbiased tone, as a distant observer during the narration, but the reader sees the immense influence it levies on the subject as a dominant space (similar to the church) and also instances of appropriation of the same – positing a stance of opposition – as she does in the case of the church.

Jessica's personal encounter with the space materialises when she accidentally enters the House, after getting lost in the crowd during the Arrow Procession hosted by the church to fight the deadly smallpox. Caught in a strange place and seeing the portrait of Stalin, Jessica gets terrified and falls asleep, but wakes up hearing Raghavan Master's speech about the foreign words that Malayalam had absorbed and made its own. The speaker's statement that Malayalam is a language that consists of numerous loan words and that many of its alphabets "are there only to receive foreign visitors" turns out to be a major revelation for Jessica and she recollects the moment as follows: "I shut my eyes again. My language had been perforated. . . . I shivered" (117). The new learning that Jessica gains, that even the language she possessed was impure, 'polluted', and 'defiled,' and was not self-dependent but in debt with and submissiveness to the 'other', slashes her uncritical and innocent conception of the world of appearances as the world of reality. Although the realisation brings in a certain sense of discomfort and uneasiness with the occupying space, evident from her introspective thought-line, it

imparts a significant lesson to Jessica to disbelieve the given 'reality' and question the established norms and conventions. Another significant lesson that Raghavan master imparts to Jessica in his speech is on the linguistic contributions by the conquerors like the Dutch, the Portuguese, and the Arabs to the language of Malayalam – words that are used in day-to-day affairs. After listing out the words, the master declares, “[F]oreigners gave us the family life as we see it now” (118), to which Jessica retorts, “Master, is family good or bad?” (119). It is the memory of the anti-conventional approach to things as exhibited by Raghavan master, the Communist, that inspires Jessica to pose such a query. As seen, Jessica gaining courage at this stage surpassing the initial feeling of fear marks the space as offering topophilia. It is also to be noted that Jessica is not in a state of sorrow on account of her unexpected separation from the familial sphere, rather, she cultivates a sense of uncertainty and dubiousness about the necessity or virtue of the familial system itself. The separation anxiety steering its way for an increased curiosity and love for questioning the conventions, norms, and age-old conditional teaching-and-learning, undoubtedly, marks the positive influence of the space of the Malacca House on Jessica and her incipient topophilia. Notably, it is the shift from the familial to the public, social space of the Malacca House that triggers the question in Jessica, which emphasises the idea that mobility from space to space, the spatial shift, effectuates a considerable sense of emotional transformation, an alteration of the emotional tenor, in the agent-subject. Jessica’s agency stands out prominently in this case.

Jessica’s second encounter with the Malacca House is attending tuition classes at Pushpangadan Master’s room and she is shattered by the experience of molestation. The space that had once proffered novel experiences for Jessica in

terms of language, politics, and art becomes a space of agony, anguish, and distress through the activation of the traumatic memory, clearly marking it as ‘topophobic’. The experience pushes her to the periphery and casts her decentred. Although Jessica enters the space again in the hope of obtaining justice from the church and the communist party after her molestation, the space proves to be a failure in satisfying her wants.

As far as artistic space consisting of Chavittunatakam and Kundan Music Club is concerned, Jessica puts forth an expression of disinterestedness and impassivity, except for once when she grows curious about knowing the meaning of a song “Babul Mora” eternalised by Kundan Lal Saigal. Jessica gets captivated by the meaning of the song (a bride considering herself a stranger at home while leaving for the groom’s house) and it turns out to be influential as seen in her remembrance of it after the molestation, where she strikes a chord of identification with the character of the song. Although a love for the space is not developed here, its persistent presence in her life despite a previous experience of topophobia, comes into view with this piece of narration. As in the previous spaces, the Malacca House gifts Jessica with the combined experiences of topophilia and topophobia and remains an indelible presence in her life. The intimate-yet-estranged relation she sustains with the space, undoubtedly, shapes her identity as a state of ‘in-betweenness’.

The theatrical space is another significant space that possesses a powerful role in shaping Jessica’s identity. The theatre fits into the category of dominant space mediated by technology as Lefebvre postulates by its nature of being a closed and contained space that imparts certain manipulative ideologies to the interacting

subject (*Production* 164). Jessica's first interaction with the space happens through the medium of filmic stories narrated to her by her mother. As the recollection begins, the story of *Jeevitha Nauka* and its massive influence as a cultural sensation is presented as a much-cherished memory, narrated in connection with her birth, and at this stage, intimacy is developed with the theatrical space.

While remembering her first experience of watching a film with her neighbours Gomes and his three daughters, what Jessica cherishes is her first experience of urinating by standing, against the warning of her neighbour-cum-friend Rosie, thereby opposing the prescribed, systemic 'law' and 'culture'. Jessica expresses thus: "The day I saw my first movie, I also learned for the first time about being a woman - although, inside the urinal, I stood up and peed" (108). Jessica remembers her first physical experience at the theatre in connection with her body, which turns out to be pleasurable and triumphant for her, and she strikes a chord of positivity with the space.

The memory of the films shared in this context belongs to the realm of communicative memory – the recent past and everyday communications – and considerably impacts Jessica. *Neelakuyil* hits her on this note. The film, mediated through societal norms and conveyed through the conversations with her mother, conditions and feeds into her certain ideologies with respect to the body, morality, and sin, and it exerts strong imprints on her memory. The negative impact of the film resulting from the communicative memory creates immense agony in Jessica and the space starts sending waves of distress and discomfort to her. Closely aligned with this is Jessica's remembrance of watching the film *Chemmeen* with her parents. She recollects, "When I saw a married Karuthamma lying dead on the seashore

along with her former lover, I understood quickly that the wages of sin was [sic] death. However, I was puzzled to find that her husband Palani also died. . . when it was Karuthamma who had sinned” (247), which brings in her dissatisfaction with the theatrical space that fails to answer her queries related to sin, purity, and chastity as in the case of *Neelakuyil*. At a later point in time, Jessica recollects her interaction with Johnson who makes her aware of the fact that the visuals in films are just illusion and not reality (206). This heavily impacts her who had till then conceived the spectacle as pure, original, and real. Beliefs proven wrong, Jessica develops a disharmony with the theatrical space. The love-hate relationship through the functioning of topophilia-topophobia with the theatrical space, evoked by memories, thus marks a significant phase in her identity-formation.

In the text, the Cannon ground is described as the place where “the Dutch had mounted a battery of five cannons” (66) and it becomes a “site of memory” (*lieux de memoire*), a historical place or a site where “memory crystallizes and secretes itself”, as propounded by Pierre Nora (7). The ground serves to be the stage for hosting public events and gatherings and for exhibiting protests and demonstrations of various kinds, and therefore, symbolically manifests the ideals of liberation, revolt, and freedom of speech.

The cannon ground is the first external space that Jessica comes into contact with after she gets her ‘mind back’ (the baptismal water had snatched her heart away). Jessica’s first interaction with the ground is portrayed in connection with a remarkable achievement in world history, the conquest of Mount Everest by Tenzing and Hillary. Jessica enters the ground to attend a function felicitating Tenzing, and Gilbert, a popular native persona and the former captain of the Indian Navy, being

the chief guest of the function, talks about how Hillary, the New Zealander, deceived Tenzing, the Nepali, and stole the credit of the first man to set foot on the Everest and went on to accept accolades from around the world. Gilbert directs his criticism on the whites who, he says, draw everyone into their “web of deception” (103). This is evidently a retelling, a subversion, and an opposition of mainstream history as part of the reclamation of the tarnished past through a rational attack on Eurocentric politics and a reinstatement of the native pride and power. Although Jessica presents this memory in the form of a third-person observer’s distanced reporting without mentioning her subjective reaction to it, the subject dealt with at the meeting and the relevance of the space that facilitates it invite a certain amount of attention, especially with regard to its connection with her immanent life. What Jessica experiences for the first time in a space outside her home is the clarion call to subvert the established conventions and to raise one’s voice for justice and freedom, which can be taken positively as a case of topophilia. It is to be noted that it is a piece of communicative memory that sets the stage for evoking this sensation in Jessica. One must also pay attention to the incident as the islanders’ or the community’s perspective on the larger happenings in history; their connectedness with the larger socio-cultural sphere is what gets marked through this incident, which becomes a confluence of the private and the public spaces. For Jessica, it turns out to be a formative phase as it indirectly nurtures her courage and confidence to expose Pushpangadan master’s heinous act and assert her dignity.

The second time Jessica enters the cannon ground is to conduct an experiment with hydrogen balloons, along with her neighbourhood friends Rosie, Daisy and Natasha, and her cousin Johnson (131). This personal experience is

juxtaposed with the historical event of the launch of the first ever artificial satellite namely, Sputnik, by Russia in 1957. Jessica's expectations about the high-range flight of the 'Sputnik-like' hydrogen balloons sent in the air - "We too sent a Sputnik", marvels the narrator - are but unexpectedly and shockingly obliterated by Raghavan Master who teaches her about the gravitational pull of the earth that would pull back the balloons sent by them (133). The momentary excitement triggered with the aid of the semantic memory of Russia's Sputnik dies with Raghavan master's teaching, and Jessica forms a negative connection with the space. In the beginning of the text, Jessica mentions her desire to challenge and overcome gravity- symbolically, the societal norms and conventions - and gain freedom from it. Through Raghavan master's words, Jessica is made aware of the idea that liberating herself from the rules and ties of the world is close to impossibility. Thus, the cannon ground marks a moment of despair and shattered hopes for Jessica. The other disgusting experience Jessica confronts with at the cannon ground is that of watching the first ever *kathaprasangam* (the song-story) in her life, *Lord Macaroni* by Rajan (157). Unfortunately, this shatters her expectations as she finds the story fake and forged (158), and the space once again impacts her negatively.

After this unpleasant experience, the cannon ground makes way for various revelatory moments for Jessica such as the adolescent secrets with regard to the growth of the body shared by her cousin Johnson (206) and the vision of the illuminated sky due to the firing during the Indo-Pak war (268-269), as she recollects in the narration. The same cannon ground later sets the stage for an utter transformation of Jessica's life from 'sanity' to insanity'. It is by standing on the

ground with a lighted candle watching the ships and boats pass by and proclaiming herself to be the ‘lighthouse’ like the Statue of Liberty that Jessica exposes her ‘madness’ to her family (308), following which she gets admitted to the mental hospital in Ernakulam. The ground, thereby, acquires a revolutionary charm by facilitating the concretisation of her agency and will – she resorts to evading the systemic rules by baffling the very founding beliefs and norms such as that of normality – and exerts the power of topophilia. Throughout Jessica’s interaction with the space, the notions of topophilia and topophobia operate alternately, and the space gives Jessica two extremely opposite experiences of intimacy and estrangement.

In the course of the narrative, Jessica enthusiastically recollects her initiation into the primary school and the first day of attending the class. The academic space triggers certain realisations in Jessica, both positive and negative, and proves to be an integral phase of her life by facilitating the journey of her growth in a certain way. The first memory of school that Jessica presents is that of Raghavan master, her class-teacher, commenting about the unusual length of her name and asking her to select just one name of her choice from the longlist of suffixes to the name ‘Jessica’. Jessica chooses ‘Edwina’ influenced by the memory of a picture of Edwina, Lord Mountbatten’s “fair and tall” (109), “beautiful wife”, which she had saved from a newspaper (108). Though ‘Edwina’ was originally conferred on her in dutiful obligation to her godfather Edwin, Jessica’s memory of the name with the colonial might and power gains the upper hand and she proudly chooses the same by discarding all other names.

The school also lets Jessica's highly potent imaginative faculties grow and sows some sober realisations in the child-mind. The popular song-story of the crow and *neyyappam* (a sweet snack) that she learns from the class is a testament to this. Jessica turns the crow-song into a product of her own imagination by envisioning herself as engaged in a real-time conversation with the crow. During the conversation, she says that she is applying the lesson of "us[ing] guilt to get things done" - an art she claims to have learned from her mother - to the song and rhetorically asks the crow if its child would not cry when left hungry. To the crow's tricky demand for the *neyyappam* from her hand that follows, even though she boldly retorts with a 'No' - "I need to learn how to say No", utters Jessica (109) - she is subjected to deception with the crow snatching the appam from her hand. Opposed to the usual response of laughter that children who listen to the song produce, Jessica is crushed by grief and disappointment. She states, "I was bawling. Not for the loss of *neyyappam*. Not even at having been tricked. I cried at the forewarning that I would be pushed around and shoved out from many places in the years to come" (109). Here, Jessica's intuitive knowledge and faculty of foresightedness gained through the heart-wrenching experience is expressed. This incident throws light on two fundamental aspects related to Jessica's life: one, the notion of guilt, which, like that of sin and purity, turns out to be a decisive factor in her life and hangs above her as a Damocles' sword; the other, the intuition she gets that despite being bold and brave at heart, she may remain a victim, as an object tricked and deceived by entities who hold power. In this sense, Jessica as a representative of the Latin Catholics who used to undergo identity-crisis and discrimination in the mainstream scenario comes into the limelight. The

interpretation of the tale conspicuously projects the pitiable state of the subject which can symbolically denote the puppet-like existence of the community in the hands of foreign powers who took advantage of their state of despair by operating mixed marriages and conversions that led to the emergence of mixed-blooded descendants, who deprived of an affixed, affirmative take on their identity ended up marginalised owing to discrimination in the caste-matrix of the converted Christianity.

While the semantic memory of Edwina brings in a sense of pride, self-love, and might, and attaches Jessica to the academic and the self, the oral memory of the *crow song* shatters the security and intimacy with the same. The love-hate pattern with the space is established with memory as an integral catalyst and determiner of identity.

Having dealt with the major spaces that Jessica interacts with, it can be observed that she never permanently attests to or identifies with a structure or a space - be it familial, religious, or societal – nor does she exist permanently devoid of or severed from these very spaces, and so it leads to the establishment of her identity as “in-between” the states of topophilia and topophobia and as interstitial. Her self-localisation happens in the lacunae, the crevice, or the split between absolute identification with and absolute displacement or distancing from the spaces of interaction. As Leach envisions in his identity-theory (39-40), she shifts between the conditions of being connected and distinct from the spaces of interaction and crafts her identity as dynamic and ever-changing. The question of Jessica’s agency can be examined in relation to her state of ‘madness’ manifested as the novel comes to a close.

Jessica behaves in odd and mysterious ways during the Lent, and seeing her state of being as crossing the bounds of ‘normality’, she gets admitted to a mental hospital in Ernakulam for a shock-treatment despite the pleas of her grandfather - who senses the “deadly turn” the game is taking - to stop her acting and retreat to ‘normality’ (309). At this point, the readers are led to a conflict concerning the truthfulness of Jessica’s madness. Jessica enters a state of trance visualising herself as a free-floating body in the gush of the river Periyar and as possessing a trail of free-flowing thoughts like the river that carries her along its course. The novel closes with the following thoughts of Jessica as she gets electrocuted lying on the hospital-bed:

I felt the cold of flowing water. A river had just been born. . . . I could hear the sounds of bubbles bursting in the mountain brooks and water rushed through holes in the rocks. . . .

Periyar became a lake at Pallivasal dam. I dived under water. It rid me of gravity. . . . Then I swam past the sandbanks of Aluva, into Lanthan Bathery and, beyond, to the estuary at the Azhi, and into the Arabian Sea. I, Irene Margarita Maria Edwina. . . Ayyo! I’d forgotten my name. Oh chumma. I was kidding. In the end, too, there was the word, and the word was with a stutter. (309-310)

Evidently, the narration is replete with the imagery of a seamless amalgamation of the self (the body) and the islandic nature, and the fluidic, floating narration indicates a hybrid, trans-spatial (transcending all spaces), and ‘trans-bordered’ space that Jessica enters. On the other hand, it is ambiguous and open-ended in two ways: first, by its projection of the question of whether Jessica’s

madness is real or feigned, and secondly, by its suggestion of either Jessica slowly submerging into a semi-conscious, death-like state (akin to a coma) or death itself. The possibilities of either a recovery, back to a 'non-insane' state (despite the truth behind the 'madness' as feigned or real), or the death of the subject exist with equal weight upon them. Even though these questions persist with no definite answer to them, the memory and spatial tools help one redefine Jessica's apparent tragic and victim-state articulated towards the end. From a historical perspective, the community of Latin Catholics that was pushed to the margins and into an existential dilemma by the 'upper caste' Christians and the Dutch can be seen as symbolically defined through Jessica's madness.

Considering the possibility of Jessica's recovery, memory as a strategy to build identity through the evocation of topophilia and topophobia alternately and as an instrument of resistance can be seen as continuing to the final part of the text also, where madness sets in as an aiding tool. The space of the mental hospital offers Jessica a solution to appropriate the dominant, mainstream space that has made her an outcast – both within the public/social and familial spheres - through the act of narration, employing creativity and imagination. The abundance of aquatic imagery at the end of the text reminds the reader of the similar description at the beginning of the narration which signified Jessica's inseparable bond with the island and its fluidic planes and extensions. In the beginning, when Jessica reminisces about her life inside Matilda's womb – turning somersaults with the soaring of the islandic water that surrounds the island and gaining freedom from gravity (5) – it becomes an assertion of both the sentiment of security and bliss she had gained then.

Prominently, the vision of a newly-born river and her body seamlessly merging with

its flow - that occurs to Jessica at the hospital when she is detached from the mainland of Lanthan Bathery - is a re-evocation of her pre-birth stage, a remembrance of herself inside her mother's womb as a free-floating entity in resonance with the ebb and flow of the river Periyar and other waterbodies by defying gravity. Describing her present state of consciousness attuned to such imagery is a clear case of assertion of her identity as connected to the macro-space of Lanthan Bathery. It indicates her innate desire to restore the sense of belongingness with the land of Lanthan Bathery (which had ostracised and discarded her by conferring on her the status of an outcast), to evoke topophilia, and resume the dialectic interplay of attachment with and detachment from the space, which lies fundamental to constantly building her identity. Memory as a device of resistance is exhibited through two significant terms in the narration: 'gravity' and 'word'. The desire to get rid of gravity - where gravity stands for the dominant, systemic rules and norms, and which is also a repeated reference throughout the autobiographical narration - that gets materialised as she freely floats across the land is a clear-cut exertion of her agency. The term 'word' with which the narration ends - that denotes the beginning of creation or Genesis according to the *Bible* and the scripture - and the image of the self that merges into the Arabian Sea - the largest source from which all water bodies originate and to which all are destined - together strongly suggest the inception or origin of another birth and thus a cyclicity of life. Her final words, therefore, carry a spirit of resistance by way of connecting with the macro-space - through a prospective 're-birth' - that has banished her for her 'deviant' behaviour.

Unlike *On the banks* which offers a realistic ending, *Litanies* blurs the boundaries between reality and imagination and subverts the conventions of writing through the employment of a strong sense of playfulness. The playfulness also reveals the unreliability of memory in Jessica, but here it becomes a technique of narration to construct her identity not just as interstitial, but also as elusive and performative in the postmodernist tradition. While Jessica narrates the process of ‘going mad’ during Lent and the treatment at the mental hospital, the reader does not sense any strong grief, remorse, or infirmity in her tone as in the case of Dasan’s death in *On the banks* that hits the readers hard and heavy. Although one immediately grasps the tragic state that the persona is put under, her casual, frivolous, and light-hearted style of narration prevents a fuller attribution of such a state to her and leaves nothing more than a twinge in the mind of the reader. While *On the banks* affirms the death of its protagonist, to put it in realistic terms, *Litanies* only hints at it as one of the possibilities by leaving the narration open-ended. This helps the reader perceive Jessica’s identity on a more dynamic and performative level compared to that of Dasan.

The symbolic significance of the mental hospital and the notion of madness become extremely crucial to the development of Jessica’s identity in this sense. The mental hospital falls under the category of the heterotopia of deviation as Foucault names those sites that exhibit deviance from the ‘norms’ and ‘normalcy’ imposed by the dominant society (25). ‘Insane’ people, often neglected and undervalued by mainstream society, are demarcated for being ‘outside’ the constructed conditions of ‘normality’ and are therefore forced to assume the status of outcasts. Madness and the psychiatric hospital thereby occupy an insider-outsider position: it is a part of the

larger society (inside), yet kept at a distance by the same society (outside). Jessica's audacious act of publicly exposing Pushpangadan master as the molester lands her in such a space - a space of deviance built by going against the 'norms' of femininity - and the state of madness that she assumes afterwards becomes its material manifestation. On the other hand, one can read beyond the direct proposition of 'going mad' that the text offers by looking into how it paves the way for constructing her identity in a certain way.

Jessica adhering to Valia Markose Asari's advice to act mad to preserve her selfhood can be seen as projecting her desire to reintegrate into the familial and social spaces of Lanthan Bathery onto an unrealistic, make-believe activity of 'going mad' and onto an external space of 'deviance'. The madness also becomes an active case of the generation of a counterspace against the dominant space of repression, that is, patriarchy. This is in tune with what Lefebvre states about people developing fictitious solutions to resolve the crisis of their lives by employing subjective visions, projecting dreams and desires, and envisioning symbols (*Everyday* 88). Here, madness is a subjective and artistic space - being a product of her imaginative faculty and being a space constructed through the projection of her desire of resistance and reaggregation onto the material object of the mental hospital - through which Jessica's attempt to restore intimacy with the macro-space manifests in two ways: one, through the artistic appropriation of the space of the mental hospital as a strategic and subjective space, where Jessica strives to construct a narrative identity - an identity that is created through narrating stories - by lying on the hospital bed and being engaged in a process of retrospective storytelling; two, through the language of vagueness, abstraction, and ambiguity that madness licenses as

displayed in the playful tone employed towards the end of the text, where the ‘forgetfulness’ of the subject is projected and a re-origin is indicated. Forgetting, which is antithetical to remembering, but an integral part of memory, becomes a political act here. The importance of the mutability of memory is recorded by Sarah Katherine Vinson Foust as follows:

[T]he very concept of memory as an exact replica of the past is thrown into question, leaving memory as a potentially mutable construction that is often multiple, contradictory, ambiguous, and ever-changing. . . . And it is the basic fact of memory’s mutability that allows it to become a tool of resistance and a space for construction and reconstruction of the self, of the group, and of the world. (6-7)

In this sense, Jessica’s playful forgetting manifested through the narrative act becomes an act of asserting her selfhood. This is in tune with what Lefebvre states, “[L]anguage is a medium of make-believe” (*Everyday* 88). Narrative theorists like Kerby and Bruner have professed the centrality of narrative in developing a concrete sense of self in individuals. Their observations that the consciousness and self-esteem built into oneself, the sense of ‘I’, and identity, are the products or creations of narratives and stories one continuously produces and tells oneself, and that individuals exert a certain sense of agency through the act of narration (Kerby 1,4; Bruner 41,50) are quite valid in this context. Low produces a notable statement in this regard by identifying narrative as one of the six types of cultural place attachment, where story-telling (mythical, familial, historical, and political accounts) is found to create a profound link between people and their inhabited space (166). Jessica’s autobiographical storytelling is, therefore, a manifestation of her

emplacement in the island, a reassertion of herself within the matrix of the island that deserted her, which becomes an act of resistance and defiance against the powers of patriarchy. The integral role of a narrative is also studied by Paul March-Russell in his study on short stories, where he cites Walter Benjamin's ideas of *Erlebris* and *Erfahrung*, of which the former stands for the way one's mind salvages the self from plunging into despair and anxiety by organising one's experiences in the form of a narrative. Benjamin identifies the process as a conscious act, where there is a deliberate recall of one's past (qtd. in March-Russell 23). Another notable observation made by McAdams about autobiographical memories that they "are encoded and retrieved in a way that serve [sic] the goals of the current working self" (194), is also a relevant statement applicable to Jessica's state of being. Jessica, in her 'madness', engages in a description of self-defining memories in the form of narration through selective remembering – she actively records her responses to the incidents concerning her family, the church, and films, but turns passive about politics and art – and expressing admixed sentiments of love and hate towards the spaces she interacts with, which becomes a gradual and careful construction of her identity as interstitial. Remembering here manifests as an act of healing by transforming the agential status of the subject by playing a key role in constructing Jessica's narrative identity, which notably becomes highly performative for the postmodernist style of articulation carrying an endless play of words, unreliability, and a fluid utterance. As Bruner articulates the act of narrating autobiographical memories, the reiteration of turning points or significant incidents or experiences of the self, results in a concretisation of one's agency (50). Jessica's act of narration through recollection can also be seen as an attempt to assert the Latin Catholic

identity through the production of an alternative history which is performed from the state of marginality against the dominance imposed by the 'higher' order; it becomes integral to the existence and survival of the community.

Similar to the case of Dasan, the theoretical concept of liminal space developed by Turner is a valid tool in vindicating the position of in-betweenness that Jessica occupies and the agential status she attains as the novel comes to a close. The liminal, the state between a separation from the dominant or mainstream structure and a reintegration or reaggregation into the same in a renewed form, the central, interstitial, or in-between position in a rite of passage from one state to another, acts as an agent of change and is anti-structural by nature (Turner 95). What lies as the fundamental feature of the liminal is the freedom from all kinds of structuration which becomes a privilege that the subject attains. Madness launches Jessica into a liminal space that equips her to strategically devise her position against the dominant social order that has cast her away by making an effective return to the mainstream scenario, in a renewed form. Different from the case of Dasan whose liminality is effectuated by the myth of Velliyan Kallu, it is the ambiguous state of madness (between real and imaginary) and the 'death and not death' or 'both dead and living' phase that Jessica is caught in (effectuated by the openness of the narrative style) that qualify her state as liminal. The idea of "prolonged" or "arrested" liminality, a term that Mark M. Hennelly coins in the work "Contrast and liminality: structure and antistructure in *Jane Eyre*" (1993), gains significance here. "Jane as a model of 'arrested' or 'prolonged' liminality as she tries to transform and to reintegrate herself into society without sacrificing or even compromising her antistructural ideals", states Hennelly (93-94). In Jessica, there is no adherence to any established

socio-cultural belief, myth, or ideal of the macro-space (unlike Dasan who attests to the myth of Velliyan Kallu) and she remains staunch in her anti-structural stance (against patriarchy and all injustices that emanate from it) even as she tries to re-bond with the islandic space with which she has had a strong identification through intuitive and innate bodily correlations. In this sense, hers is a prolonged or arrested liminality, different from Dasan's whose liminal state continues without offering an immediate manifestation. Similar to Dasan, Jessica's reaggregation into the macro-space remains unmanifested.

“When the body loses its memories, it is forced to reinvent itself. In the process of reinvention, the identity of the body shifts and changes. . . . The process of reinventing/remembering requires the body to experience growth and change. . . .”, says Gregory Hampton, the American critic (270). The aspect of transition before renewal or regeneration that the state of liminal guarantees is hinted at in Jessica's narration towards the end through the notion of ‘forgetfulness’, the images of her merging with the island, the Biblical ‘Word’, and the fluidic notation of a beginning or an origin. The entire narration, a manifestation of Jessica's autobiographical memory, carried out from the liminal space is a strategy built towards self-survival and sustenance, an act towards reaggregation with the macro-space through the ‘rite’ of active remembering and narrating. In this perspective, the agency of the subject in the liminal framework is established; the passive state of ‘madness’ is erased and what emanates is creative insanity.

Unlike Dasan, there is no immediate manifestation of any social transformational potency in Jessica as she does not initiate or partake of any revolutionary act that perceptibly brings in a systemic change; if it were to be

transformational, Jessica's return to the macro-sphere in her post-madness phase, in a renewed form, would have had to find its manifestation in a different structure or order, like the transformation of the structure brought into effect by Dasan. The construction of narrative identity in a particular way is an act of exercising agency, but it does not manifest as transformational affecting a radical alteration of deeper societal structures nor can it be discarded as a passive act as it may have considerable influence on an individualistic level (which is not materialised in the text anyway). It is the creative and imaginative faculty that Jessica employs in her state of 'madness' - the playful approach adopted towards it - and the act of narration manifested along with it that carves Jessica as a potential agent. Therefore, rather than closing off the reading as a cessation of Jessica's existence or considering Jessica as a mere tragic figure or as a victim trapped in the mental hospital as the first reading convinces the reader, one must see the intense urge on the part of the subject to strike new beginnings through the bundle of memories that she opens on her disease-bed.

In this sense, the space of the mental hospital and the body manifesting or materialising 'madness' become what Lefebvre labels as the diverted space, the space created by outcasts and outsiders who act against the sect of power by resorting to rewriting and revamping the existing, established system, which might or might not be fruitful, but holds an emancipatory urge at its core (qtd. in Armstrong 19). Jessica engages in an appropriation of the space of the hospital to suit her needs and necessities sticking to Lefebvre's concept of appropriated space (qtd. in Armstrong 20). Most importantly, the hospital and Jessica's lived, material or physical body hosting an 'insane mind' serve as a thirdspace as Soja formulates in

Thirdspace (56-57, 62): first, in the case of the mental hospital, the firstspace - the concrete, physical, measurable building that secretes meaning for people through their spatial practices - and the secondspace denoting the primary or dominant function for treating 'abnormality' are brought in as a composite, and at the same time are transcended to project the thirdspace and Lefebvre's lived space (*Production* 39) that rewrites, questions, and subverts the 'norms' and 'normality' through constructing a unique experiential realm; in the case of the body, the firstspace of the material body and the second space of the 'insane' body are brought together to construct the thirdspace and the lived space that destabilise the binaries of 'normality' and 'abnormality'; secondly, both amalgamate and encompass binaries of all kinds to forge a real-and-imagined, concrete-and-abstract, conscious-and-unconscious, objective-and-subjective realm, and a bordered positioning; and thirdly, both open a possibility to breed a counterspace, a space against the dominant social order through Jessica's elusive and ambivalent delivery of her state of normality (the question of its veracity remains open-ended), her occupancy of the decentred space of in-betweenness ('normal'-'abnormal', real-imagined), her attempt to combat patriarchy by registering her unwillingness to be submissive to any systemic rules by defying the laws of 'gravity', and her assertion of liberation from the oppressive system of expectations and morality. In this sense, Jessica's state of being can also be qualified as lived space, where being an inhabitant with an artistic mind, she builds a strategic location for staging her resistance and defiance through constructive, creative mind-projections.

In both *On the banks* and *Litanies*, the strategy to reintegrate into the macro-space springs from a location outside their selves, but while Dasan abides by the

myth that was implanted in him through the matrix of collective memory and social conditioning, Jessica clings to an idea raised by her grandfather and turns it into a creative alternative through the narrative act. It can also be noted that there exists a realm of fantasy and imagination in both cases - Dasan's adherence is to folk, myth, and fantasy in the course of re-attaching to the macro-space whereas Jessica invests herself in the power of imagination (stories) - but the agency involved in it differs. For Dasan, the final allegiance to the myth of Velliyan Kallu signifies the agency driven largely from the structural matrix of Mayyazhi, although his own agential factor is involved. Jessica's agential potential springs not from the larger socio-cultural space, instead it is located in the sphere of individualism with the narrative act becoming a lived space, a transformative space that is imagined and artistically conceived with the fundamental drive of active counteraction against the repressive space. While the macro-space of Mayyazhi undergoes considerable change in its larger structure – Mayyazhi becomes liberated moving beyond the colonial system - with the intervention of its subject, Lanthan Bathery remains unchanged with Jessica's figure looming large as a sole fighter without rising to power as a reformer as it was in the case of Dasan. Even if a reading that favours Jessica's death is conducted, the projection of agency through the act of narration remains unaltered; the idea of regeneration or a renewed return to the macro-space will not manifest materially but only symbolically through the narrative act.

The integral role of space and memory in determining the identity of an individual is evidently established through the case of Jessica. The inevitability of these notions for one's existence and living also becomes conspicuous through the study. Reading *Litanies* through the lens of memory, space, and identity opens up

immense possibilities for the reader to redefine, redraft, and subvert the existing readings, and the paradigms remain a point of incessant interest and passion for literature-lovers.

Chapter Five

Epistles and Episodes: Echoes of Narrative Identity

Memories had roots. They had branches and twigs. Memories would flower and bud. Sometimes they would get mixed up and create new flowers and fruits, never seen by anyone before.

—Subhash Chandran, *A Preface to Man*

Chandran grabbed a high perch among the frontline postmodernists of Malayalam literature gaining profound readership and popularity through his short stories and novels that prominently reflect contemporary men and manners, the prevalent socio-political scenario and complexity of life in a fabric of admixed sentiments. A contemporary of K. R. Meera, T. D. Ramakrishnan, Benyamin, and others, the writer employs diverse techniques of writing such as blending history, myth, epic, poetry, and fiction, and non-linear narration to continuously expose the uncertainties and hollowness of life, to examine the deterioration of values and humanity, and to question the established power structures that haunt man ceaselessly.

Chandran's Kendra Sahitya Academy Award-winning novel, *Preface* (2019), translated by Fathima, is a hot spring for literature-lovers and thinkers to debate and discuss in diverse ways the socio-cultural and political convergences of the twentieth century in Kerala and to analyse the foregrounding of rampant and dominant casteism that permeates the social and personal life of contemporary man. Commencing with a futuristic time of Jithendran's (shortened as Jithen) death in 2026 at the age of fifty-four in a flat in Thachanakkara, a real-imaginary place – the

writer's birth-place of Kadungalloor in the district of Ernakulam is imaginatively renamed so, similar to Madhavan's Lanthan Bathery - the novel takes a retrospective look at the first twenty-eight years of his life as well as that of his ancestors who lived decades ago, which thereby becomes a detailed account of the story of three generations of Ayyattumpilli that is carved out of real-life experiences of the writer and spread across the twentieth century. Considering the portrayal of Jithen's death in the beginning, the entire novel serves as a narration in flashback, a recollection facilitated by Ann Marie, Jithen's wife who reads his letters, diaries, and snippets of the incomplete novel he had wished to write on Thachanakkara. The writer resorts to capturing the transition of an imaginary Nair joint family and a place in its entirety from a feudal tradition rooted in casteism - Narayanapilla or Naraapilla, Jithen's grandfather, being the prime embodiment of caste fanaticism, caste pride, and severe caste discrimination - to urban modernity characterised by the renaissance, reformist movements and technological advancements of the twentieth century primarily represented through the characters of Menon Master (Naraapilla's tenant), Govindan (Jithen's uncle), and Jithen, which also realistically marks the transition of the perspectives, lifestyle, thoughts, and aesthetic sensibilities of Keralites across the realms of socio-culture, politics, literature, art, customs, and traditions (of which casteism is the prominent one). Rajagopalan observes, "The novel consists of people who are altered and operated by history" (my trans.; 46), which underscores the significance of history, both as a framework and theme, in the text. Thachanakkara, conceived of as a microcosm of Kerala, stages the story within the mould of diverse cultural and emotional journeys and experiential shifts in the life of a Malayali in the twentieth century Kerala, and this provides the reader an insider's experiential realm

- a Keralite's subjective perception - of the objective, historical records pertaining to the period in the form of a narrative. It is Jithen's democratic and progressive outlook that sets the frame for critically delineating the evolution and transition of a society over a hundred years. Some snippets from the panorama of Indian history also form a part of the text. Such a rewriting of history foregrounding the imaginary tale of the family of Ayyattumpilli through the combination of real, historical persons, incidents, and places with imaginary characters, through the projection of the narrator's opinions and comments on the historical, socio-cultural, and political events, and also employing meta-fictional narration that brings in self-reflexivity, makes it a fitting example of postmodernist historical fiction. Other postmodernist elements such as non-linear narration disrupting the conventional unity of time and place, analepsis and prolepsis, and a blend of genres like letters, poems, diary, songs, history, and fiction, also make the text a rich and fascinating read.

What the text foregrounds are casteism – significantly projecting the historical Sree Narayana Guru, the advocate of equality, and the fictional Naraapilla, the embodiment of casteism, as antithetical entities - and other varied forms of supremacy that man exerts over fellow humans through the prolificity of his baser instincts that lead to rampant inhumanity and absurdity in life, where human potency gets exhausted or vainly spent only for lust and self-centred carnal pleasures without getting channelised into any other productive act benevolent for posterity. The transience of life, the stark reality of death, the necessity of nurturing liberated and lighted minds through creative thinking and writing to defy the gigantic death, the system of hierarchy within the family presented through men-women relations defined by patriarchy, and sexuality are other lines of thought raised in the text.

The existing readings on the novel that centre on the depiction of the larger place of Thachanakkara, its historicity, and the cultural terrains of the land do not focus much on Jithen's identity, except merely on a thematic level. Jithen as a figure of failure caught amidst the absurdity of modernity and as a victim of larger power-structures such as casteism, which the text itself directly projects, is reasserted through them. By bringing in the notion of memory and space - the exchanges between the self, remembrances, and spatiality - an altered and novel view of Jithen's subjectivity or identity and agency can be brought in.

Different from the novels dealt with so far, *Preface* is an artistic combination of both first-person and third-person narrations, carrying both autobiographical and objective, omniscient points of view. The novel, divided into four parts such as "Dharma", "Artha", "Kaama", and "Moksha" - referring to the four 'purusharthas' (the goals/aims) of human life according to Hinduism - with each part carrying ten chapters, is composed of parts of Jithen's letters to Ann Marie that serve as a prologue to each chapter, parts of his incomplete writing project about Thachanakkara, and the third-person omniscient narration about Thachanakkara and the Ayyattumpilli family, all aiding in a complete discernment of Jithen's life. The readers are enticed into the text through Ann Marie's reading of Jithen's forty letters spanning from 29th March 1999 to 1st January 2000 that profess his unconventional and nonconformist thoughts, opinions, and comments on human life based on several socio-cultural and political incidents and happenings of the past (the twentieth century), and they showcase some remembrances of his childhood and family story, which, apart from being an active reconstruction of his life becomes a meditation on modern man. The letters in the first-person are manifestations of

Jithen's autobiographical memory, defined by J. A. Robinson as a personal "record of discrete experiences arising from a person's participation in acts or situations which were to some degree localized in time and place" (qtd. in Neimeyer and Metzler 105), an analysis of which helps one discern the interrelation between autobiographical memory and identity. The letters are, therefore, memory metaphors and a reflection of Jithen's selfhood, which showcase a confluence of two time-frames: Jithen's present while engaged in the process of letter-writing and the past when the events occurred. They also project a pertinent quest for the meaning of life and identity in their deepest contemplations.

According to Bruner, one of the aspects of the self is that "[i]t is "storied," or narrative, in structure" (43). In line with the observations of McAdams, Kerby, and Bruner on the significance of narrative and story-telling in the construction of a certain sense of self in individuals (194; 1, 4; 41, 50), the text with its dual narrations constructs Jithen's narrative identity in a certain way with the aid of active, passive, and indirect remembrances, and spatial dialogues.

There exists a vagueness and ambiguity about the novel – a feature of the postmodernist style of writing - as the reader is unable to differentiate between the snippets of the novel on Thachanakkara that Jithen had written, the third-person narrator's storytelling, and more importantly, Ann Marie's imagination contributing to the narration. Three levels of readership are implied here: Ann Marie reading Jithen's past, the third-person omniscient narrator reading Jithen's past, and the actual, physical reader outside the text reading the story. Ann Marie's contemplation in the voice of a third-person before she begins to read the letters – "[B]ut now she had all the time. . . to reflect [on Jithen's letters and parts of his incomplete novel]"

again and again and to transform those word-seeds. . . into gigantic trees and dense forests” (Fathima 12) - largely suggests her own imagination influencing the reading process and also strengthens the possibility of the chapters of the novel being the product of a creative, selective arrangement or rearrangement of the events mentioned in Jithen’s incomplete novel. Assuming so, Ann Marie acquires the status of a third-person omniscient narrator. What emphasises this perspective of imaginative reconstruction by Ann Marie is the fact that the letters are neither chronologically ordered nor complete. The letters that begin and end with ellipses, and which also have abrupt or in media res beginnings and endings, show the presence of a selective as well as an omissive act in the process of reading, which adds to the constructed nature of the text. Another significant feature of the text as a metafiction asserting the presence of an outsider, a third-person omniscient narrator, comes into view as the novel is left open-ended. The ending, where Ann Marie dreams of a person very similar to her dead husband gifting her the novel *A Preface to Man* claimed to be penned by him as per the desire of her husband (expressed in a metafictional narrative mode) and later experiences the same pre-meeting scenario - such as the ringing of the door-bell and the calendar flying off the nail - in reality that mounts her expectation of Jithen’s resurrection, actuates ambiguity through positing either Jithen or Ann Marie or a third-person narrator (or Chandran himself) as the author of the novel one reads.

Jithen, who defies the ‘family law’ dictated by Naraapilla and Chinnamma through an inter-caste marriage, spends his life unwillingly in a toy factory, views life in a stark, pessimistic manner, and appears before the readers as an outcast. In Jithen’s forlorn and alienated state, the writing of his dream novel (that remains

incomplete) and/or the novel *Preface* that one reads itself becomes a medium or a process towards the rejuvenation of his selfhood and reconstruction of his identity, which is effectuated through the ambiguous ending of the text. Jithen's identity gets constructed as dual-faced, which is manifested through a correlated reading of the letters in the first-person (which also consist of snippets of diaries and parts of the novel) and the chapters in the third-person (Ann Marie or the omniscient narrator), and this becomes a case of narrative identity that offers one a possibility of reading beyond the explicit pathetic and pessimistic state of the man that the text initially conveys. The interconnection between the letters and contents of the chapters is established using the notions of memory and space, and the construction of Jithen's identity takes place through a dialogue of attachment with and detachment from various spaces for which memory serves as a key instrument. Here, Jithen's identity emerges through the form or structure of the novel; the identity-construction is manifested through the process of reading the narrative structure of the text. The familial and personal or private spaces are the major spaces with which Jithen directly interacts, which also unveils his stance on social realities.

The portrayal of Jithen's death at the beginning of the text gains immense significance. Shattering the conventional conception of death, the narrator portrays the scene in a non-serious, casual, and playful tone with hardly any touch of tragedy or grief. Jithen dies when a "pain that began as a tickle in his lower abdomen rush[es] to his heart" while sitting on a sofa listening to the divine music of A. M. Raja and re-cherishing his frolic youth and childhood (*Preface* 1). Ann Marie's utterance, "'Gone?'" looking at the "bittersweet smile in remembrance of those things" on his lips (3), and her nonchalant and composed demeanour devoid of any

exaggerated display of anguish or tremor add to the frivolousness of death, and they underscore the transience of life. For Jithen, memories lighten up his heart and help him welcome death peacefully. The recollections that flash forth just before he expires hold two aspects: first, he historicises his existence by conceiving of himself and his generation as a significant part of the social and technological development of the twentieth century and strongly asserts his spatial self; secondly, they serve to locate him as the connector and the carrier of change between two different eras. Cherishing the pleasantries of the past thus enables him to evoke a certain sweetness in the bitterness of death. Compared to Jessica and Dasan, Jithen speaks to and reflects the modern-postmodern human who confronts existential issues of various kinds; in other words, he is every man. The crafting of a man whose course of life and states of being converse with, identify with, and deeply relate to the contemporary human strikes one more intensely than what Jessica's was, and the narrative tone of the two texts remains significantly different.

The familial space is the domestic space that consists of Jithen's grandfather Naraapilla, grandmother Kunjuamma, mother Chinnamma, father Shankaran, siblings, cousins, and associated maternal relationships that Jithen is introduced to in the initial phase of his life, and also the set of ideologies and values he inherits from them. Jithen's connection with the familial space is one coloured by the dualistic tendencies of attachment and detachment that get manifested through his recollections that Ann Marie peruses.

The two pieces of recollection presented in the first chapter of the text through the voice of the omniscient narrator pertain to the macro-space or public space of Thachanakkara and the private, domestic space of Jithen's family

respectively. Both the memories are transmitted to Jithen in the form of a tale by his grandfather, similar to Kurambi's narration in *On the banks*, but different in their nature and thematic value. The first picture of familial intimacy is drawn from Jithen's childhood when he used to accompany his grandfather to the fields when the latter wanted to defecate. During those visits, Jithen used to sing out the couplet that the grandfather had taught him, which consisted of the "names of the hills that had given birth to and nurtured the Periyar River" such as "Chokkaampetti, Paachi, Kaali, Sundar, Naaga, Ko, and Valli", and which is said to be written by Naraapilla's father decades ago (12-14). The poem points out the artistic and creative blend of imagination and existing geographical realities, and the names that are scattered across it might be the slang names for the seven hills in the Western Ghats originating and surrounding the river Periyar. The couplet, a piece of collective, cultural memory, is a significant geographical marker of Thachanakkara, and it places the space within the matrix of the seven hills in the Western Ghats. This scene serves two purposes: taking into account the fact that the text is a retrospective vision of Jithen's life depicted after his death and therefore a reconstruction of his life and identity, this initial recollection is instrumental in establishing Jithen's bonding and soulful connection with the land that is inevitable and fundamental to the assertion of his geographical self (Casey, "Between Geography and Philosophy" 683) or spatial identity; it also marks Jithen's sense of intimacy with the familial space through the adorable relationship with Naraapilla. The couplet thus marks Jithen's initiation into and location of the self in two extremely relevant spaces: the geographical or physical place of Thachanakkara and the familial space of Ayyattumpilli with Naraapilla as its head. The rhyme, with its

illustration of four women and three men (whose ‘sweat channels’ are said to form the river) who “were sweating with the kind of exertion Jithen would understand only when he was older” (12-13), also indicates one of the prominent themes that the novel envisions, which is that of man’s irresistible urge for sexual pleasure and the repeated yet futile indulgence in sex leading to a misspending of his creative potent that culminates in his pathetic, vain death as an aged, ‘adult-child’.

The origin of the family name, “Ayyattumpilli”, is the other tale that Naraapilla narrates to Jithen, which is a clear-cut example of the transmission of family memory, which Erll and Halbwachs mention in their works (“Locating Family” 307; qtd. in Erll, *Memory* 17). It is said that the name originated from the fierce snap – an ‘aattu’ that sounded, “Pho! Pho!” (18) – uttered at the flesh-eating vultures by Ayyaapilla, Naraapilla’s “eldest uncle’s eldest uncle” (14), imprisoned in an iron cage built in the shape of a man that is suspended on a tall tree-bark, for an unsaid, grievous crime under the orders of the King of Thiruvithamkoor decades ago. The tale marks the exceptional audacity and perseverance of the man who hung on the tree-top for twenty-seven days devoid of food or water and defied the claws of death unlike any other convict, and it is presented as an incident that was the first of its kind in history until then. “By challenging the authority of the sovereign from inside the cage, Ayyapillai [sic] was showing his grit and unquenchable desire for freedom”, states Sreekumar (24). The third-person narration recounting the terrifying yet heroic temperament of the figure who was perceived with awe and admiration by the natives establishes an ancestry or a tradition of violation of norms, questioning of power, and unparalleled courage and resistance for Jithen, the listener.

These two memories play a crucial role in determining Jithen's identity through producing a specific place-identity (Proshansky, "City" 155) and place attachment (Cross 494) in him. The first rhyme that pertains to a public, collective space - the Periyar River which is an inevitable geographical marker of Thachanakkara and which exerts immense formative influence on the lives of the natives - and forms a part of the collective, communicative memory, and the second tale that is also a transmitted, but personal-yet-collective memory (inside the family) together actuate Jithen's initiation into both the public, social, as well as the private, familial spheres. The thought on lust implied in the topographical rhyme and the traits of defiance and audacity signified by the ancestral, lineage-history of Ayyattumpilli are the two aspects that will mould Jithen's future course of life. Both of them become self-defining memories for Jithen and so, they surface during the process of remembrance facilitated by Ann Marie, the reader. These showcase the importance of place to one's definition of the self. If Kurambi's narratives in *On the banks* are products of fantasy and pronounce the mythical and socio-cultural beliefs of the place, here, the tales do not reflect a myth but historical and geographical facts or realities that collectively define and determine identity for the members of a community and a family.

Similar to Jessica and Dasan, Jithen is introduced as a lover and listener of stories through these remembrances. Identity developed through the transmission of stories that belong to both the private and the public spheres from the previous generation - resulting in the formation of an 'intergenerational self' as Merrill and Fivush point out (73) - is a common aspect in all the texts. The stories play a vital role in moulding the perceptions, visions, and identity of the listeners or the

receivers by attaching them with and detaching them from their familial spheres and the macro-spaces, but they are rendered differently in each. Compared to other texts, Kurambi is the sole grandmother figure and who has a sustained role in delivering stories that are mythical and folk in nature. One can sense a similarity between *Preface* and *On the banks* to some extent considering the tales, poems, and songs Jithen listens to from elders that belong to the realm of oral traditions and folklore, but unlike *On the banks*, there is no prominence of myth in the stories nor there exists a single, colossal figure as a story-teller in *Preface*, where the transmission of stories is minimal, and it takes place through the figure of Jithen's grandfather and aunt Kunthi. If Dasan is driven through the course of his life by the myth of Velliyan Kallu, no myth serves as a determiner or definer of identity in the case of Jithen. More similar to Jessica who is fond of history, cooked-up tales, and stories of films, it is familial history, larger socio-political history, and geography that become formative to Jithen's journey; his obsession is with a world of stories that are more factual and less fantastic in their content and nature of transmission. The difference springs from the modernist and postmodernist sensibilities, where the former (re)affirms an affinity for cultural, folk, mythical, and primitive elements while the latter restructures and questions established, grand narratives. Another major difference is that while Jithen later appears as a creator of poems and stories blessed with immense imaginative faculty and insight, different from Jessica who playfully narrates and constructs herself as a source of 'cooked-up' tales, Dasan does not emerge as a creative artist throughout the course of the narration.

The picture of intimacy is shattered in the letter that follows this recollection. In the letter addressed to Ann Marie, Jithen places on record his annoyance about

and disappointment with the caste system that permeates and overpowers everyday life, even the lives of those who appear ‘progressive.’ In Jithen’s statement, “Haven’t you written that I seem to be a Nair, from my manners and ways? With all my love for you, let me tell you that I hate myself for having made you assume so” (21), one can sense regret, shame, and embarrassment, and evidently an implied hatred for the inherited caste name and ancestry. This is a clear case of distancing from the familial space that has brought him the utmost distress and displeasure owing to the development of a progressive and anti-orthodox mentality. It is Jithen’s altered present and the narration from the present time-frame that register the distancing from the domestic space, which crafts his narrative identity through the dialectics of topophilia and topophobia. The third-person narration that follows the letter details Naraapilla’s casteist disposition rooted in hatred for and degrading of the ‘other’ - the said-to-be ‘lower castes’ - by showing his staunch disagreement with the incident of Gandhi’s visit to meet ‘Nanu’ Swami (Sree Narayana Guru), “a low-caste Ezhava sanyasi”, in Naraapilla’s words (22). The letter that strongly exhibits Jithen’s disregard for casteism followed by the representation of Naraapilla as the staunch carrier of the same through recollection in the chapter, indicates the former’s detachment and disagreement with Naraapilla. Similar to Jessica, Jithen despises the familial inheritance of name and ancestry, and treats it as a burden throughout his narration, simultaneously recollecting the sweet moments of his long walks to river banks accompanying his grandfather. This kind of recording of remembrances carrying the opposite impulses of topophilia and topophobia towards the domestic space characterises Jithen’s identity as one that is dynamic, constantly shifting, and interstitial.

For Jithen, the contradictory sentiments of love and contempt for the familial space primarily breed through Naraapilla, Kunjuamma, and Govindan, their eldest son and Jithen's uncle. Kunjuamma and Naraapilla are pictured as polar opposites throughout the text. According to Sreekumar, "Narapillai [sic] remains as the personification of the rotten undercurrent of caste in the changing postcolonial Kerala, as the patriarch who refuses to change" (25), and he carries a demonic aura in relation to the innocent and ingenuous Kunjuamma, who grievously suffered in her marital life. The text, through its descriptive phrases, demarcates the characters of Kunjuamma and Naraapilla in memory: the grandmother is presented as the one "whose goodness could shame a crepe jasmine" whereas Naraapilla is depicted as its diametrically opposite character being "stocky", "a drunkard", and having "the colour of Indian rosewood" (27). This demarcation persists throughout the recollection and reflects Jithen's relation with the familial space, fundamentally rooted in the dialectics of attachment and detachment. It is the representation of Kunjuamma as the epitome of virtuousness through recollection that restores Jithen's affinity for the familial space despite his disgust and hatred for his caste-ridden ancestry. The chapter titled "Glorious Mother" portrays the first meeting of Naraapilla and Kunjuamma, and draws her innocence as well as her defiance of Naraapilla in various ways. Kunjuamma, who connects her husband's name with Sree Narayana Guru (resulting in the unbounded wrath of Naraapilla) and who openly blurts out that Naraapilla had a bad breath, is addressed as a 'braveheart' and praised for her 'boldness' (39). When Naraapilla takes revenge upon Kunjuamma (for having associated him with the person he despises the most) by triggering a sense of regret and shame in her by asking her to eat burnt laterite stones, her

childhood psychotic disorder, Kunjuamma fails to grasp his intention and dreams of eating the stones out of innocence and naivety. The stubborn Naraapilla and the innocent Kunjuamma are vividly juxtaposed here. Similar differences between the two are expressed through various incidents such as the meeting with Kuttipuzha Krishnapilla, the eminent Malayalam poet at Menon Master's house where, the poet is admiringly looked upon by Kunjuamma but is abused by Naraapilla, and in the matter of treating their diseased children, where Naraapilla takes a negligent stance while Kunjuamma remains helpless and deserted.

Jithen recalls his unseen grandmother in one of the letters as one who possessed innate goodness and charm, as reported by others around him. The remembrance is quoted thus:

So, grandma existed only in the realm of hearsay for me. During my childhood, if anyone contracted conjunctivitis in Thachanakkara, someone would come to Ayyattumpilli to take some of the crepe jasmine growing in abundance in the southern corner where grandma had been cremated. The Thachanakkara folk believed that the crepe jasmine growing there had more power for restoring human sight than any of the same kind of flowers that sprout elsewhere. (90)

Extolling the inherent virtue and esteem of the grandmother becomes an indirect memory transmitted from someone to Jithen, which becomes his own. Kunjuamma's birth, course of life, and death are unfurled in the chapter, and the reader gains an image of an innocent but sagacious and bold lady with a progressive mindset rooted in an anti-casteist and humanitarian vision. Even though the letter springs from a distanced observer and lacks any explicit display of admiration for the lady, the

chapter titled “Crepe Jasmine” is dedicated to marking the innate goodness of her character. Kunjuamma’s pristine relationship with Kesavan, her nephew, is portrayed through her memory or vision that springs into her mind as she slips into death after showing bouts of insanity by banging her head on the walls of the house. It was Kesavan who imparted progressive values - such as the need to discard orthodoxy and casteism - to Kunjuamma and she adopts a brave decision not to add the surnames of ‘Nair’ or ‘Pillai’ to the names of her children (95). The section also presents the ferocity of Naraapilla, his face of hatred and detest towards Kunjuamma, and it contrasts the latter’s virtue with the former’s brutality.

Jithen’s letter in the succeeding chapter implicitly and indirectly records a feeling of sympathy, love, and respect for the dead grandmother through reminiscing about Gandhiji. According to Jithen, “the hapless Mohandas. . . can’t be found anywhere else in India other than on the five-hundred-rupee currency note” and the country is still “racked by guilt over patricide” (102). Jithen’s worship of Gandhiji as a pure soul and his portrayal of Kunjuamma also as a ‘crepe jasmine’ possessing inherent virtue are to be measured on the same scale. Kunjuamma’s audacious act of approving Govindan’s marriage with the ‘low-caste’ Sulochana and frequent meet-ups with her daughter-in-law against Naraapilla’s warnings carve her as the first persona to start a revolution inside the obstinate familial structure rooted in upper-class bigotry and discriminatory casteism. When she questions his brother Appu Nair’s disparaging, casteist take on the girl and declares, ““Say that my son has found a girl who has everything. . .”” (107), Naraapilla curses Govindan saying, ““If he dares to marry some Ezhava girl. . . [n]o way will I let them enter these premises”” (108), which marks the diametrically opposite attitudes of the characters.

Kunjuamma is thus portrayed as a progressive-minded revolutionary who thought ahead of her generation and is contrasted with Naraapilla who despises the temple entry act of 1939 (that facilitated the entry of ‘lower caste’ Hindus into temples) and disparages Ayyankali while praising Chattambi Swamikal on the grounds of the community of their birth. Remembering Gandhiji as a righteous revolutionary and reiterating his invaluable esteem and meritorious personality as a prologue to the chapter detailing the inherent virtue and defiance of Kunjuamma in a positive tone, therefore, marks Jithen’s affinity for the lady and also the phase of attachment with the familial space. Kunjuamma is also represented through memory as an ardent lover of literature – she “used to pore over the pain expressed in poetry” (104) – inspired by her conversations with Padminiyamma, the wife of Menon Master and her greatest companion at home. Jithen’s conception of Kunjuamma with a sense of awe and admiration is also coloured by his artistic and creative flavour, which will be unveiled as the text proceeds.

Along with Kunjuamma, Govindan, her eldest son and Jithen’s maternal uncle, is remembered in positive ways throughout the text. Jithen affixing himself onto Kunjuamma and identifying with Govindan becomes a case of disagreement with and distancing from Naraapilla, revealing the dualistic sentiments of love and hatred Jithen breeds for the familial space. Govindan is introduced as a pure soul who ardently loves reading and literature and who used to spend most of his childhood inside Menon Master’s library befriending his son Achyutan. He is also drawn as a virtuous and righteous persona, opposed to Naraapilla and more aligned with Kunjuamma. Jithen’s attachment with Govindan fundamentally grows through books and literature. The first time Jithen proudly articulates about him is on the

occasion of his wife's (Sulochana) demise, when Jithen, with his mother and all others except Naraapilla, visits Govindan's house. The remembrance is presented as follows:

The first time I saw Uncle Govindan's wife, she was dead. I have not heard anyone mention that grandfather mourned my grandmother's death. But I saw Uncle Govindan cry the day my aunt died. I still remember that day. I too was seeing him for the first time. Yes, that great man entered my life, crying. Now I know that it was the entry of a real man. My girl, I think that the generation of real men started and ended there. (243-244)

Jithen admires and worships Govindan, and by placing Naraapilla in comparison with his uncle, he marks his strong inclination towards the latter. Although Jithen observes and experiences his aunt's death as a distant observer, impassively and nonchalantly, the external space - Govindan's house - offers him a revelatory experience. Presenting Jithen as standing near his uncle's bookshelves, alone and unaffected by the commotion inside the house, and Govindan as remembering his childhood seeing the enrapt Jithen and fondly kissing the child gathering him into his arms, the text emphasises an intimate and intensively bonded alliance between the duo (252). Clearly, Govindan is one among the two kinsmen (the other one is his father) openly and directly admired by Jithen in his letters. The fundamental ground on which Jithen and Govindan are connected is their flair for literature and books. Upon reading Jithen's short-story on a guru and a journalist, it is Govindan who advises him to write a story about Thachanakkara, his grandfather, and other blood relations (374), and he becomes the prime source of inspiration and godfather behind Jithen's desire to write the novel. Govindan also plays a vital role in

imparting valuable lessons regarding the significance and necessity of genuine art and creativity, quality writing, rightful living, and pure love to Jithen.

Similar to Kunjuamma, Govindan also emerges as a rebellious familial figure upholding progressive values and ideals. Govindan is remembered as the one who exposed the vicious and barbaric face of Naraapilla through his own impeccable behaviour. The first episode where Govindan exhibits an act of defiance is when Naraapilla aggressively beats him for disobeying his prohibition of swimming in the Aluva river and throws the books gifted to him by Menon Master into the river, to which he responds by ferociously beating his father (79). Govindan inhabits an insider-outsider space, a diverted space as Lefebvre coins (qtd. in Armstrong 19) for the revolutionary inter-caste alliance that he engages in: it ousts him from home but simultaneously he remains accepted by Kunjuamma. In this sense, Govindan becomes the pioneer or torch-bearer of resistance against the orthodoxy and conservatism of the family, and Jithen carries the same spirit of resistance in his later life as he marries Ann Marie. Jithen's pleasant and positive recollections about his uncle and grandmother reveal his absolute identification with them owing to the progressive demeanour they exhibit and also for their passion for literature and poetry. This marks Jithen's topophilia for the domestic space.

Followed by the exposition of Jithen's identification with the domestic space, the letter in the fifth chapter of the first part, which briefly mentions his experience of having witnessed the friendship between Thakazhi and E. K. Nayanar (49), serves as an efficient backdrop for the chapter that details Govindan's friendship with Achyutan, the child of his favourite Menon Master, and also the kinship between Menon Master and the eminent poet Kuttippuzha Krishna Pilla. The

letter records Jithen's literary flair and his appreciation of pure friendship, which is placed in absolute contrast with Naraapilla's disregard for literature (57). This implicitly marks his growing detachment and disaffection for Naraapilla and marks the other side of his intimacy, topophobia, with the familial sphere.

The distancing from Naraapilla and his casteist disposition is also reflected in Jithen's recollection of Sree Narayana Guru as "the Eternal Spirit of Knowledge" and in his contempt for one of his relatives who degraded Narayana Guru in favour of Chinmayaanandan (referred to as "Our Chinmayaanandan"). Jithen poses the pertinent question, "[W]ho is this 'us' and 'our'?" (59), which clearly points out the prevalent upper caste disposition that holds absolute intolerance towards the marginalized 'others'. The chapter delineates Naraapilla's hypocritical 'upper-caste' mentality through the portrayal of his illicit liaison with Kaalippennu, who used to do field-work at Ayyattumpilli and with whom he is unconcerned about 'untouchability' or casteism, and also through his declaration to Kunjuamma that if they "kept sticking to castes" they will be "doomed" (62), which is devoid of any upper-caste prejudice or discrimination. The third-person narrator also records the discussion of the temple entry by the natives of Thachanakkara, including Menon master and Naraapilla, where Naraapilla's regressive and conservative stance on the same is highlighted and contrasted with Menon Master's progressive and humanistic approach through memory (63-68).

In Jithen's recollection of his childhood in one of the letters in the second part of the text also the contradictory sentiments built for life and the familial space emerge. In the letter, Jithen largely glorifies childhood, but only to undermine it the very next moment. For Jithen, childhood is "the brotherhood of all creatures of this

world” and “the essence of childhood cannot be influenced by time-space differences” nor is it influenced by the factors of religion or caste or gender, but he soon contemplates over the fate of human life which forces everyone to “outgrow that exalted state” resulting in “self-deprecation” (213). Evidently, this statement undercuts the former, romanticised vision of childhood bringing in an attached-detached approach to life. Through the voice of the omniscient narrator, Jithen adoringly remembers aunt Kunthi who used to narrate tales, sing songs, and play games, which weaves a close-knit picture of intimacy, bonding, and selfless love. The narrator records Kunthi giving descriptors to all the children of Ayyattumpilli, of which Jithen’s was the “treasure chest” (220), referring to the chest of memories he holds. The chapter winds up by providing the readers a continuity and a cyclical sense of time through the depiction of Jithen holding a metal vessel beside his grandfather who had come to defecate on the riverbank, a repetition of the first memory presented in the text. But, the earlier frame of innocence – where he had casually repeated the rhyme after his grandfather without any in-depth pondering over it – now gives way for a creative, imaginative, and above all, a counter-conventional and anti-establishmentarian introspection, depicted through a conscious distortion of the much-famed folktale of the goddess and the axe. He reconstructs and reconfigures the story of the woodcutter and the goddess by imagining Parashuraman in the place of the man and placing the idea of him assassinating his mother at its core. When the goddess appears to put him to a test with three axes, Parashuraman wonders at having gained back the blood-stained axe even after throwing it into the sea – he had murdered his mother – to disown it, to which the goddess replies that she gave him back the axe to counsel him that

matricide cannot be escaped from - “Where can you get rid of the axe with which you killed your own mother?” is the question raised - and also says that Parashuraman would be incomplete without the axe. Jithen also muses that the man later installed himself as the deity of Thachanakkara holding the axe and assuming a grave and solemn countenance, and the reader sees Naraapilla’s ‘roaring’ laughter in the end (221).

This memory-distortion carries a larger politics within it. The story unfolds two ideas: first, one’s karma and the past (memories) determine one’s identity from which there is no escape, and second, the arrogance and haughtiness aroused by male ego and hypermasculinity, which is emphasised and complimented by Naraapilla’s ‘roaring’ laughter. The goddess’s words imply that the past will be an omnipresent reality, that past sins will perpetually haunt the doer, and that one’s innate characteristic traits will be persistent throughout one’s life. Having juxtaposed Naraapilla’s horrifying laughter here, the man’s ‘triumphant’ assertion and vindication of his inherent arrogance, male-ego, and rootedness in casteism are highlighted as the markers of his identity. The production of this memory serves as Jithen’s indirect or implicit assault on Naraapilla - and thereby his ancestry itself - and it also emerges as a realisation for Jithen that his sinned ancestry will always remain a Damocles’ Sword over his head indirectly governing and surveilling all his actions and thoughts, how much ever he attempts to resist and surpass its hegemony. Even though the same scenario, with Jithen accompanying his grandfather to the riverbank, was mentioned in the beginning, the latter part – Jithen’s imaginative thought-line with the altered vision of the story – was absent in it and it appears only in the present time-frame. “Whenever a memory is narrated, it rejoins the outside

world and has the potential to engender in others new memories and narrations in an infinite interchange”, states Claudia Mueller-Greene (279). When the memory of the walk with the grandfather strikes Jithen at a later point in life, it enters into dialogue with his transformed ideologies and visions and gains a new semantic dimension. As Spence and Levi observe that the narration of the remembrance in the present leads to the new memory assuming the place of the original memory (qtd. in King 25), the repetition of the memory but with an altered sensibility and attitude (in Jithen) shows how memories change their colour over time, and attain new and altered meanings according to the rememberer’s mental disposition in the present. On the one hand, this marks Jithen’s journey from innocence to maturity coloured by creativity and critical mindedness (of the established myths and convention), and on the other hand and most importantly, by granting his grandfather a villainous trait through the aid of the story and waging a secretive war against him, Jithen successfully establishes his detachment and distancing (topophobia) from the overpowering intimacy of the familial sphere.

Jithen’s attachment with the familial space is restored in the letter that succeeds, in the third part titled ‘Kaama’, where he presents a series of sensorial memories of his newborn days. Jithen narrates the memories in the form of the novel he had ardently desired to write but abandoned due to diffidence and other reasons that sprung from larger thoughts on life and creativity. A part of the narration is as follows:

On the oiled tummy, warm water keeps sliding. In the nose and eyes, the sting and aroma of soap bubbles. When his mother blows a mouthful of air on the top of the head to dry his hair after bathing him, the momentary

shudder and loss of breath. The bubbies that ooze milk when given a kiss . . .

. Then, the odours of shoulders and necks. . . . Sounds kept boiling over.

Suspended in them, many emotions. (225-226)

Presented from the point of view of how a little child experiences the world around it, grasping every sound, movement, and odour of people and things, the letter crafts Jithen's adorable initiation into the pampered, selflessly loved, and cared familial space. The chapter consists of the narration of familial bonding through Jithen becoming Naraapilla's favourite, making him the first of the ten grandchildren of Ayyattumpilli to build a tie of love with Naraapilla. "He was the first among the grandchildren of Ayyattumpilli who touched Naraapilla" is what the narrator states (233), and like how he used to pamper his once-favourite Chinnamma addressing her as "Embilla elava", the old man once again begins using the phrase to address his now-adorable object, Jithen (234). Even though it is Chinnamma's strategic move to seize the New House by favouring Naraapilla that paves the way for Jithen's cordial relationship with him, the grandchild-grandfather rapport indirectly becomes a trajectory to mend, at least to a small extent, the friction of rivalry that existed amongst the daughter-father duo and the siblings. The adorable picture is drawn thus:

When Naraapilla went behind the cove of the coffee trees at Puzhampallath to escape from his overflowing toilets, Jithen accompanied him. . . . When he became strong enough to lift the kindi. . . Jithen carried it as he walked with him. From his momentary inspirations, he blended the many stories his tiny ears had heard to spin new ones and narrated them to his Grampa. In return,

he had only one tale to tell his grandson. The tale of the Periyar originating from the seven mighty hills of the Western Ghats. (233)

Here, the intimate space temporarily shifts from Raambilla police, a popular figure of Thachanakkara, to Naraapilla, but soon one also sees a shift in Jithen's interests from Naraapilla to Govindan, and the chord of attachment built with his grandfather slowly waning away in favour of certain shared interests of literature, progressive mindedness, and activism.

Jithen's memory of the rings he used to get as a reward for accompanying his grandfather to the fields presented in connection with his advice to Ann Marie to discard all kinds of ornaments or jewellery during marriage constitutes the letter to the sixth chapter of Part Three of the text. Here, the memory is not a soothing or a sweetened one, but it is rather an explicit portrayal of Jithen's attitude rooted in displeasure and disgust towards his grandfather. When he says, "When he defecated, the stench was of solidified misdeeds" and uses the phrase "prehistorical stench" (275) to denote his grandfather's defecation, an insightful awareness, which stems from a maturity beyond his age, about his grandfather's diabolic and unjust nature or temperament rooted in casteist prejudices, caste pride, and patriarchal aggressiveness, emerges. It is the narration or pronouncement of the past in the present – the memory colliding with the present – that colours the narrative tone and qualifies the space as 'topophobic' for Jithen. On the one hand, the copper discs and rings made from them bring in a positive and delighted memory; on the other hand, the statements that follow the memory undermine and undercut the former sense of positivity and lead Jithen to a distancing or detachment from the figure of the grandfather. It is only when the same memory repeats for the fourth time in the text

that Jithen's criticism of and staunch disagreement with Naraapilla becomes explicit and prominent. The memory, thus, serves as a marker for Jithen's transition from innocence to the attainment of certain valid, progressive insights.

In the letter-prologue to the ninth chapter, once again, Jithen empathetically remembers Naraapilla, evoking fondness for and intimacy with him. In the recollection, Naraapilla's death is mentioned against a mythical and mystic backdrop through the frame of the popular belief of 'thachankozhi' or the mottled wood owl that is believed to "announc[e] an oncoming death" through its shrieking call (312). Narrated from a child's perspective and thereby assuming the tone of curiosity, fear, and wonder, the letter shows Jithen's absorption into the myths and beliefs of the land as well as his sympathy or slight compassion for Naraapilla. The part of the letter says:

To cry out at midnight to portend death, [Perumthachan's son] had flown across the river from Uliyanoor, the land of Perumthachan. . . incarnated as a bird to outlive his pitiable death by a falling wood chisel. The elders of Thachanakkara used to say that thachankozhi used to fly to the house where the son was wishing for the father's death. He sat. . . with a head, which could be rotated three hundred and sixty degrees. . . .

The night before Grampa's [sic] death, the bird came and roosted in one of the big trees in Ayyattumpilli. I was woken up with a start at midnight by this alarming call, which I heard in the darkness outside, and lay with a palpitating heart. My asthma curdled in my chest like a cooing dove. (312)

Apart from indicating the absorption into the familial space – with an admixture of fear of death and compassion for Naraapilla – the memory also signifies Jithen's

temporary affinity for the collective, social space through the acceptance of the myth of the land. The myth does not have any other significance beyond this remembrance and myths do not form a constant determiner of selfhood for Jithen, unlike Dasan.

Another instance of Jithen's coloured acceptance of his ancestry is remarked through a dream that he shares with Ann Marie in one of his letters:

I was standing as a night sentry holding a flaming torch in one hand and a spear in the other under a large tree. . . . A terrific bolt of lightning struck the torch out of my hand and then struck the earth. . . . [S]eeing an extraordinary flame of light high above in the tree, I looked up, tilting my head. Something heavy came down. . . . It was a vulture with its wings aflame! With a burning heart, and trembling with fear, again I looked up into the tree. Horrified by the vision of a human shape burning from the lightning strike, wearing an iron torture chamber fitted like body armour and swinging slowly to and fro on the tree from which it was hanging, I woke up. . . . (115-116)

The dream occurs to Jithen when he is severed from Thachanakkara and when he experiences dissatisfaction and disappointment with his job in a toy factory in the present. Conspicuously, the horrifying dream of Ayyaapilla is a clear-cut example of postmemory – the inherited trauma as Hirsch puts it (“Generation” 106-107) - and testifies to the perpetual intervention of the past in the present, the overpowering presence of ancestry that influences and affects the posterity in various ways. Other than signifying postmemory, the dream also becomes a reflection of the cultural schema - which Ewing and Mageo postulate (44; 24-26) - that Jithen is embedded in. The dream where Jithen assumes the role of the sentry guarding Ayyaapilla with

heightened dread and terror is devoid of any admiration, pride, or appreciation for the ancestral figure that had characterised Naraapilla's narration during Jithen's childhood. The mature Jithen revisiting the past through his dream conveying a sentiment opposed to the previous memory emphasises the insecurity, trepidation, and uncertainty he experiences in the present, where he is displaced from his native roots and holds an unsatisfactory job. It is the severity of the punishment (with the human-shaped cage and the vultures surrounding it) rather than the survival instinct that the ancestor had showcased and that had defined the previous narration of the same that gets highlighted here, and it brings in a correlation with Jithen's own mental and physical suffering. Here, the present colours the past – a selection process undergoes in the realm of memory as Conway (594-595), and Spence and Levi (qtd. in King 25) posit - and it shows Jithen's development of identification with the ancestor, at the same time indicating an underlying topophobia for the space.

The chapter to which the said letter serves as the prologue details instances of the young generation remembering the older ones, in both admiring and despising ways. Chinnamma, Naraapilla's youngest and Jithen's mother, who immaturely bawls her throat out at her mother's demise and the newly wedded Pankajaakshan (another child of Naraapilla and Kunjuamma) who was enjoying his marital bliss with his wife during Kunjuamma's death mark the pretentious and dishonest form of love for one's ancestry. On the contrary, Kochu Parashu, the son of Poovamparampath Shashvathanpilla who had owned a grocery store in Thachanakkara, keeps his father's name on the nameboard of the shop he inherited from the former as a note of remembrance and gratefulness and emerges as an

exemplar of untainted filial love. Jithen's dream of his ancestor signifying an unpleasant experience and the references to his mother's and uncle's feigned or absent love for their mother (his grandmother), together draw the familial picture devoid of intimacy and fondness. This is evidently Jithen's withdrawal and disengagement from the familial space. How Jithen's memory of his ancestry including Ayyaapilla, Naraapilla, Kunjuamma, and Govindan is defined both by intimacy and detachment, bringing in topophilia and topophobia alternatingly is evident here.

The recollection of his parents is also noteworthy in the discussion of Jithen's interaction with the familial space. In his letter that follows the above, he states his disappointment after watching a film about the relationship between an old mother and her son, as he could not connect with the actress whose "eternal expression of maternal affection" seemed to him a 'mask' (125). At the same time, the chapter depicts the bright and positive image of Chinnamma through her bonding with her elder sister Thankamma, her companionship with Muringaattil Leela, and their leisure time spent at the riverbank playing regional games. Also, Chinnamma's 'deviant' behaviour manifests when she disobeys her father by boldly swimming in the Aluva river despite his forbiddance, and one discerns that the narration favours or sympathises with her – the gigantic Naraapilla 'trembling' in rage and 'gnashing' his teeth while beating Chinnamma and she recognising "the truth that she had become an orphan" and feeling "miserable" (128) – drawing the pitiable state of the sufferer. The memory of Chinnamma's past drawing her innate goodness and innocence - juxtaposed with Jithen's suspicion regarding the maternal character - is intended to contest the tone of coldness to relationships revealed in the

letter, and it suggests his bonding with the maternal space. Jithen's defiance of the familial norm through an inter-religious marriage, apart from following the lineage of his uncle and grandmother, can also be traced to Chinnamma's audacious act of breaking stereotypes.

Jithen remembers his father with reverence and affection, and considers himself incapable of speaking about him. Calling him a siam weed (the herbal plant commonly termed as 'Communist *pacha*' in Malayalam), referring to the self-made Communist from the 'upper-class', he sees him as a hardworking individual possessing self-dignity in abundance (147). In his letter, he admits that he does not deserve to talk about a pure soul like him. When Jithen records the event of his birth, he fondly mentions his father among all the people who had gathered to see him as "[the] man who had kindled for him ten months ago, the light, the sound, the touch, the sweetness and smell of amma's milk, and also all the joys, sorrows, desires, and rejections of life on earth that were yet to come" (189). If Jithen possesses love and admiration for his father, the other side of the familial intimacy - hatred and disgust – gets expressed in the letter that follows the above through the recording of the word "meanie" and the assertion of his origins with the utmost regret. The casteist conditioning and the 'upper-caste', hierarchical, and discriminatory temperament within the family is referred to by Jithen as "the worst kind of mental conditioning that Thachanakkara had left in [him]" (157). The chapter embodies the splitting up of the land of Ayyattumpilli, Chinnamma's enmity and hatred for her father's obstinacy, and the disruption of sibling-relationship through mutual envy, resentment, and conflict. Here, memory and the mode of narration depict the shifting sentiments with the familial space.

In the succeeding letter, Jithen shares an extract from the *Mahabharatham* about the final journey of the Pandavas and Droupadi to heaven - a memory of the myth - where, only the eldest Yudhistira succeeds while his siblings and wife fall down and become ineligible to enter heaven. Jithen questions and challenges the established myth by tagging Yudhistira as selfish for his “act of proceeding alone without heeding the tragedy that befell his siblings” (168) and implicitly busts the myth of ‘heaven’ and beliefs of a similar kind by exposing the hollowness of the principles that drive these concepts or notions. In the chapter, Kunjuamma’s runaway son Chandran is illustrated as a thinker, who chooses a nomadic, lonely life liberated from all kinds of relational ties which he finds as obstacles to a peaceful and meditational way of living (170). He occupies an unconventional, deviant space inside the family like his elder brother Govindan for challenging the established norms of Ayyattumpilli, but at the same time his attachment to his mother, Kunjuamma, surpasses all bounds, which is conspicuously portrayed through the pomelo plants he plants for his siblings to always remember their mother, which becomes symbolic of the unconditional love he has for her. The references to the story from the *Mahabharatham* and Chandran’s episode could be seen as intersecting on a common ground that signifies the necessity to remain distant and dispassionate in blood-relationships to pursue one’s goal, and they underline the principle of detachment. The third-person narrator juxtaposes Jithen’s birth along with these cultural and episodic memories. Here, the memory from a collective, cultural realm and a personal memory conjoin to carve the backdrop for the narration of Jithen’s birth, which reflects both the ideas of attachment to and detachment from people and places. The politics of narration - by placing certain

memories and descriptions close by and evoking certain memories during specific occasions - is a key factor in defining and constructing the subject.

Home as a site of hybrid emotions, as asserted by Vidler (qtd. in Radović 52), Blunt and Varley (3), and González (203), and as a space characterised by topophilia (Tally 25) is conspicuous here. Even though the incidents take place in different time-frames – the letters written by a mature Jithen in the near past and the remembrances belonging to a distant past – the process of narration through Ann Marie’s eyes (and/or another third-person narrator’s perspective) that also becomes a revisitation of Jithen’s past, is a process of constructing Jithen’s self as lying between his identification or attachment for the familial space (the identity imposed by the normative structure) and his assertion of separatism owing to his progressive mentality. The letters and the chapters carrying the opposite yet complementary sentiments of affinity and detachment – topophilia and topophobia respectively - signify the construction of Jithen’s identity as shifting and interstitial between the two, in tune with Leach’s proposition (39-40).

The pivotal role that memory plays during moments of crisis in Jithen’s life comes into view through a few incidents narrated in the text. Realistic incidents from the past – episodic memories as Tulving puts it (“What Is Episodic Memory?” 67-68) - and not myth (as in Dasan) contribute to restoring Jithen’s scattered self during such moments. Apart from the discontent and dispute with the prevalent casteist thought that runs wild like a grapevine in the familial structure, the other crisis that strikes Jithen is his displacement from his home to a rented apartment in the town of Kozhikode as part of his job as a supervisor at a toy-manufacturing company that brings along monotony, distress, and displeasure for him. The first

explicit depiction of Jithen's grief and dissatisfaction appears in the letter prefacing the fourth chapter under the section 'Kaama', where he shares with Ann Marie the disgusting experience of finding guttered water inside his rented house on a heavy rainy day. His distress finds expression in the letter as follows:

I feel like crying. From the time I remember, I have not cried aloud. Tears of twenty-seven years have welled up like a pool in my soul. . . . Are you able to comprehend? I lay there, fully dressed, listening to the gutter water lapping into my room. For no reason, I dreamt about a tortoise which had fallen into our well in my childhood and which was rescued by my father who climbed down into the well. (253-254)

The chapter details Jithen's childhood memory of the tortoise that accidentally "fell into the well in the New House, having lost its way when riding the floodwaters", a tortoise "which was tired of circling along the laterite wall of the well" (257). The description, doubtlessly, helps one place the tortoise on par with Jithen who is surrounded by the guttered water in the rented house and who breeds the feeling of being "caught in a whirl" (253). The intensely isolated, afflicted, and forlorn man is entrapped by the displacement from his native place, the homeland of Thachanakkara/Ayyattumpilli. The interplay of attachment with and detachment from a space essential to the construction of an interstitial identity is carried forward through the memory of the tortoise in the well, and the displacement is complemented by a re-establishment of the chord of attachment with the native space. In the dream, a close identification between the tortoise and Jithen is built on the grounds of displacement and insider-outsider disposition they attain as a result of it, and this becomes an act of survival on the part of the speaking subject. It is the

memory that facilitates Jithen's transportation to an imagined space, where similar to his father's helping hands that rescued the tortoise, he hopes and looks up to obtaining some solace for reinstating his lost self. This serves as an example of a healing dream as Glaskin proposes (51), for the imaginary journey that the dream initiates to a space of solace, peace, and comfort for the dreamer, and the memory of the domestic space evoked through the image of the tortoise emerges as a provider of consolation to the distressed persona.

Similarly, Jithen, at the peak of disillusionment and disappointment due to the burden of his job and unsatisfactory place of stay, narrates his experience of having visited his colleague's house in search of a rented room, where he happened to use the bathtub that triggers a set of memories of his native place. He explains: "Immersed in its lukewarm water, like a child trying to recall its previous life lying inside its mother's womb, I tried to reminisce about Aluva river. But lying inside that bathtub which didn't belong to me. . . I was reminded of the temple pond of Thachanakkara and of the centuries-old algae bloom-ridden water in it" (322-323). The conscious effort to bring back the memories of the birth-place lying inside the bath-tub is a strategy that Jithen devises to form a virtual, invisible chord of attachment and affinity for the place, which is fundamental to overcoming the sense of dislocation he experiences in the present. Similar to the previous instance, when Jithen intensely struggles inside the rented house, here too, amidst a severe mental crisis, Jithen evokes the past to restore his stable, rooted self.

A major difference in the process of restoring familial intimacy (topophilia) can be spotted between Dasan, Jessica, and Jithen. In the case of Jessica and Jithen, individuals with similar ideologies and perspectives as theirs exist within the

familial sphere and they extend their assistance to the protagonists during times of crisis through their appearance either in person or in the form of recollections thereby rebinding them to their once distanced familial space, but Dasan fails to find any such insider support. When Dasan makes a deliberate return to the familial rituals and tradition to initiate toponophilia and to reaffirm and reestablish the strayed intimacy with the space, Jessica and Jithen detest their ancestral inheritances - the familial name and tradition - owing to their catastrophic impacts on them and attempt to elude them. They attempt to evade the hideous face of their familial spaces and, at the same time evoke some pleasant memories that prevent them from getting absolutely detached or distanced from the same.

Jithen's intimate or personal space constitutes the profound philosophical contemplations and observations on life, death, creativity, and writing that are expressed through his letters. Even though his visions are scattered throughout the text, the fourth part titled "Moksha" most prominently and repeatedly demonstrates the introspective and contemplative Jithen who talks about diverse subjects such as the efficacy of writing, life, death, and man's endless craving for sexual pleasure. The letters strewn with Buddhist, Zen, and folk tales carry an in-depth vision of the frailty and fragility of humankind, and philosophical ruminations on the monotony, absurdity, and repetitive drudgery of man's life, which reflect Jithen's persona as a thinker and philosopher. It is in these letters that the reader comes across Jithen's intense desire to write a novel on his birthplace and family, inspired by the words of Govindan, and also his pining over his inability to materialise his desire. Unlike Dasan and Jessica who breed visions that are imaginary and fantastical, Jithen does not nurture any imaginary vision but projects a realistic desire to pen a novel.

Similar to the intimate-yet-estranged sentiment that Jithen nurtures for the familial space, his musings on life and the aspect of creative writing also carry the dualistic stances of affinity and repulsion. The intimate space is analysed by dividing the letters into two sections: one that deals with his thoughts on life and death and the other that deals with his stance on writing and creativity. The letters being the narration from Jithen's present, an altered time-frame compared to the time of the actual happening of the events, they become a confluence of the past and the present, and the memories acquire new meaning and significance, varied from their original. The dualistic self of Jithen – as one who is obsessed with and detached from the realm of writing and holding the same oppositional approach to life itself – emerges through the peculiar narrative structure or narrative order of the text. The letters and the chapters carrying such contrasting and conflicting attitudes exhibit the pattern of alternating topophilia and topophobia, which lies fundamental to the construction of Jithen's identity as interstitial.

Jithen, a man caught in the whirl of existential dilemma, monotony, and extreme distress about the present state-of-being, holds a grim and bleak vision of life. He recognises the flaws of the system he lives in such as casteism, patriarchy, lack of egalitarianism, rampant authoritarianism that slays humanity, and man's incapability to engage in any productive or creative activity beneficial to the world other than the futile act of repeated reproduction, but falls a victim to the last despite sincere efforts to surpass the same. The monotony also finds its strong source in Jithen's undesired and distressful job at the toy factory in Kozhikode. The letters, where Jithen registers his protest against the flaws of contemporary society, are embodiments of his resistance through memory and are manifestations of his anti-

establishmentarian and non-conformist attitude. Unlike Dasan or Jessica, Jithen does not engage in an open or direct revolt against the system he lives in, except for the inter-religious marriage that becomes a personal protest against the casteism rampant in his family, and the marriage takes place rather peacefully compared to the consequences of the rebellious acts of Dasan and Jessica. The greater hurdle he faces is the crisis of existence itself.

Even though Jithen exhibits a pessimistic view of life with a strong underpinning thought of death in his letters, the chapters that follow each letter record those instances and incidents from his memory that are pleasurable and that display a pleasant, positive, and affirmative attitude to life. Jithen's pessimistic vision of life is initially expressed through the statement, "This bond of ours too is only a coincidence for certain other births in the offing" (39), where he deromanticises life and love-relationships by disrobing them of their established divinity, grandeur, and invaluable stature. The reduction of life into absurdity, into one that which serves solely as a medium for reproduction, and the dwindling of self-worth as a 'human', one of the prominent themes that the text carries forth, get projected in the letter. Soon after imbibing life in its senselessness and frivolity, Jithen shares with Ann Marie the incident of him revealing his decision to marry her to his mother and the response of shock that his mother had shown to the same. The deromanticised state of love expressed earlier proves to be a state of temporariness as the present articulation becomes an enthusiastic revelation of the same love. Jithen also records his grandfather's shock, when years ago his uncle Govindan proclaimed his decision to marry his lover, as follows: "The same shock that my grandfather had felt, half a century ago, when Uncle Govindan decided to marry a

lower-caste Thiyya woman from Cherai” (39). By remembering Govindan at this juncture, Jithen marks and situates himself in the same lineage of rebelliousness and audacity, and for the same reason, the narration confers a sense of pride and self-worth on Jithen, undercutting the previous statement that had devalued him.

Memory, here, provides solace and resilience to Jithen. Similar to Jessica who invokes her grandfather while caught in a crucial situation in her life, Jithen resorts to the memory of his uncle, the one with whom he builds a relationship of cordiality on account of the similarity of interests and ideologies, while narrating a crucial juncture in his life to stabilise and secure his self. Contrary to the devaluation of life in the letter, the chapter depicts a series of incidents - such as Menon Master arriving as a tenant in Naraapilla’s Old House and Chinnamma’s birth - that are about the formation of new relations and they affirm a positive quality of life in fruition. These episodic memories from the past throw light into the positive side of existence, where the emergence of new relations is cherished to the fullest, which lies contrary to Jithen’s perception in the letter.

Similar to Dasan and Jessica, Jithen occupies a deviant space on account of his progressive thoughts on caste and the ‘revolutionary’ decision he takes to marry his lady-love belonging to a different religion. Countering the establishment, when the couple begin life in a rented apartment, it becomes a material manifestation of the act of deviance exhibited and also the exercise of Jithen’s agency. In this sense, the space of the rented apartment assumes the character of heterotopia (Foucault 24) for its functioning as a counter-site against the dominant casteist spirit of the family as well as the macro-space of Thachanakkara. Although the rented apartment is located outside Thachanakkara where Jithen works, the couple later move to an

apartment raised on the playground where Jithen had once played cricket in Thachanakkara. The space then clearly acquires the status of an insider-outsider space, a forbidden space within a dominant establishment, which reinforces its heterotopic status. For the counter-spatial ideology – the ideal of anti-casteism – that it projects, the rented apartment emerges as Lefebvre’s lived space (*Production* 12, 39), a counter-space of resistance to the dominant ideology where revelations and epiphanies in the form of letters replete with philosophical, prophetic, and contemplative thoughts are developed.

Another profound contemplation on life appears in the letter preceding the eighth chapter of the first part where, followed by a reference to Kozhikode, Kappad, and the arrival of Vasco da Gama, Jithen ponders over his present state of being. He juxtaposes his existence, caught in an unpleasant job in the land of the Zamorin as the Assistant Creative Officer in a monkey-toy manufacturing company, with the event of Gama’s sail to conquer the land, and he states that the sea he had crossed was the sea of tears and the ship was that of loneliness. Terrified and silenced at the face of an absurd life, he considers himself an alienated figure, an outcast: “In the long line of outsiders starting from Gama, at the other end is this poor me”, says Jithen (80). The third-person narration that follows this depicts the memory of a major crisis that had struck the Ayyattumpilli family, where severe whooping cough affects all six children of the family and results in the death of one of them, namely Padmanabhan. It is Naraapilla’s negligence to his sickly children – for him, the coughing children resembled dogs in the heat during the month of Kanni (83) - that leads to the tragedy despite Kunjuamma’s pleas to get him treated. The section lays its focus on Govindan by detailing how he, along with his siblings,

visited an ayurvedic practitioner for treatment, read medicine books from his shelf, and impressed the man with his knowledge from the great epics. The bonding between the siblings – Govindan, the eldest one, and Padmanabhan – is also fondly evoked through the memory of the former carrying his brother on his shoulders and attending to his needs (87). Along with this, the solace that Govindan gains through their friendship with Achyutan, Menon Master’s son, amidst the desperate situation also records the deepest of sentiments that sprout across relations. When the narrator says, “When the body was taken southwards. . . Govindan, who had kept his heart on a leash by holding on tight to Achyutan’s hand, started to roll on the floor and wail” (88), it registers not the loneliness or alienation of man as Jithen complains in the letter, but the sanctity and purity of love in unconditional relationships. At this juncture, the narrator also places a flash-forward memory of Menon Master and family leaving Thachanakkara, which sets the stage for another emotional display of bidding farewell. The narrator’s words, “Padminiyamma and Kunjuamma hugged each other and cried. Govindan and Achyutan looked into each other’s eyes and cried” (89), and the poignant portrait of Govindan following the car and Achyutan continuously waving back at him, once again draw in the significance of connectedness, sisterhood, and brotherhood. The episode connects with Jithen in two ways: one, Govindan’s state of loneliness at the loss of a sibling and a friend draws parallels with Jithen’s state of loneliness and alienation, which binds them on a similar plane of detachment with the larger realm of life; two, it evokes the value of relationship and interconnectedness, a sentiment that binds one to life, thereby activating topophilia. The forlorn and desolate state drawn in the letter characterising topophobia towards the condition of existence is in conflict with the

third-person narration that evokes the memories of valued relationships, companionship, and profound kinship, and that elicits a valued view of life.

A similar depressing perspective about life is articulated in another letter, where after thanking Ann Marie for gifting him flowers on his birthday, he states, “With gifts of flowers and pleasant words, can we lessen anyone’s pain for having been born?”, and also utters in despair: “My birthday is in the month of Chingam. . . . On the hapless star of avittam, wedged and squeezed between thiruvonam and chathayam” (180). Evidently, the statement echoes existential crisis, dejection, and heightened monotony, and it presents the aspect of birth as a case of extreme distress and displeasure. In the letter, he also shares an excerpt about his birth penned in his incomplete novel, where he portrays his mother’s perspective after delivering him, such as watching the newborn and sensing his smell and mannerisms. The description destabilises and deflates the established notions of motherhood and mother-child bonding – usually considered blissful, sacred, and eternally joyful – by bringing out the mother’s fear of, unfamiliarity, and lack of intimacy with the newborn child. The mother sees the child as the one “who tormented her existence with the pain of pulling out the roots”, as “ugly” with “patches of white film” all over his body (180) and limbs hanging “lifeless like cloth”, and gets scared by “the size of the infant’s head and penis” (181). Here, the reference to the gigantic penis reasserts the theme of man’s incessant obsession with carnal pleasures. Jithen outlines two possibilities for his life ahead: he was doomed either “to be an extraordinary artist” or “a world-class criminal” (181), which points to the dualistic approach he takes on life, of hope and hopelessness about the future, of self-

exaltation and self-deprecation, and of love and disgust towards the self, all characterising topophilia and topophobia consecutively.

Contrary to the dismal take on birth and life in the letter, the third-person narrator revisits the enthusiastic preparations made for Jithen's delivery and also brings in the wondrous and affectionate responses of the relatives upon seeing the newborn. Apart from recording the overwhelming love and fondness of his relations, Jithen's point of view also finds a place in the narration. The baby's rolling eyes attend to each peering face around him and particularly get stuck on to his father Shankaran's face. The narration goes as follows:

Like the iron particles in sand vibrating in front of a magnet, every tender cell of the newborn vacillated towards that face. His soul, not yet matured to use language, tried to hail this man who had kindled for him ten months ago, the light, the sound, the touch, the sweetness and smell of amma's milk, and also all the joys, sorrows, desires, and rejections of life on earth that were yet to come. (189)

Evidently, the birth brings along ecstasy, delight, and a pleasant curiosity above the feeling of gratitude. The revisitation of such a memory indicates the sentiment of pleasure and delight bred in life as opposed to the devaluation of life in the letter; the phase of birth and pampering is an affirmation of the positive self, and it activates topophilia over the sense of disgust and diffidence expressed in the letter.

Similarly, in the letter dated 15 August 1999, when Jithen worries about the need for writing and cultivates suspicion and diffidence about writing his dream-novel – “This cursed loneliness be damned!” is what he states in dejection (336) – the chapter aids him to resolve the crisis through the recall and revisitation of a

nostalgic past that helps the man in reconnecting with the social, domestic, and intimate spaces. The first memory is that of Jithen gaining intimacy with an outsider of Ayyattumpilli for the first time, Raambilla Police or “Granpa [sic] Raambilla”, and his growing affection for the latter’s house (341). Through a third-person narration, he reminisces about the days he used to go for long walks with Raambilla, his humorous enactment of Narasimham (one of the avatars of Lord Vishnu), and the endless tales he used to tell Jithen. A series of remembrances such as the lessons that Raambilla had taught him, his house which Jithen considered his own, and the childhood days when the time was “a celebration of today” with no concerns for the past or future, are also laid in a nostalgic tone in the section (342). Memories flood Jithen’s mind as follows:

Those were happy days. A childhood of plenitude, when rains beamed like sunshine and sunshine drizzled like rain. They were like the easy-to-read illustrated tales, simple and limpid. . . . Jithen could recall every detail till the day of his death: the upside-down image of the world seen on the drops of water, during rainy days. . . . Even the tingling that the raindrops caused on the skin as one touched and took them in one’s dry palm was different with each drop. (341-342)

Apart from the above recollection, Jithen also gets absorbed into the domestic or the familial space through a sensorial experience of the elements surrounding him such as his father setting out to the factory, his mother doing household chores, his cousins engaged in various acts of self-pampering and adolescent cravings (342-343). For Jithen, the memory with its sensorial episodes becomes a self-rejuvenating act that serves as a way of finding a sense of rootedness through building intimacy

with the familial and the native space. Jithen's growing attachment to his stubborn grandfather is also casually mentioned in the narration.

These two instances of attachment - with the social and the familial space – stand diametrically opposite to the projection of loneliness and alienation in the letter. While the letter details a major crisis in Jithen's life, the third-person narration presents a pleasant past replete with childhood nostalgia, value of relationships, unconditional love, and affinity for life. Most importantly, the remembrance about Jithen's crucial age carves a space that is both heterotopic and 'deviant'. The narrator states:

In the thirteenth year. . . when one is a human child in the perspective of others, yet is starting life as a man, Jithen's mind was muddled more than that of the other Ayyattumpilli children. Sitting in the toilet, he would ponder for hours over God, a God beyond the temples and tales of His incarnations. He was certain that this place was better than the temple for such ruminations. And when he would stand in front of the sanctum sanctorum for the evening deeparadhana pooja at Thachanakkara temple. . . brushing against mature women in the crowd. . . his animal instincts would wake up and trumpet. (343)

Thomassen identifies the stage of passing from childhood to adolescence, attaining puberty, as a critical life-stage and calls it as liminal ("Uses" 17). Here, the age of thirteen, where one is neither a man nor a child and which signifies a transition from childhood to adolescence, becomes a liminal space (Turner 95) for being in a state that is between adulthood and childhood. Evident from Jithen's ruminations, the liminal space is anti-structural, breeds liberal, 'tabooed', and defiant thoughts, and

constitutes a change in Jithen's personality and ideologies compared to his innocent childhood. The state also carries hybridity – "Jithen was a child; at the same time, a man. It was more strenuous than living life as half-human, half-animal or half-man, half-woman" (344) - holding opposites into one wholeness, which makes it Soja's thirdspace (*Thirdspace* 56-57, 62): it is a state that is both real and imagined, a bordered and marginal state, and also that which sets the stage for generating anti-establishmentarian and countercultural stances. The human instinct for carnal and materialistic pleasures exalted above divine and devotional senses as signified by the depiction of his animal instincts waking up while brushing past women in the temple and a carnivalesque thought-line on toilets being better places than temples for ruminations and self-meditation point out Jithen's rebellion with the ritualistic dimensions of worship or belief. By evoking the memory of such a state in the chapter, a reassertion of the liberal and creative self is brought in as opposed to the disappointment with the self projected in the letter, once again indicating Jithen's interstitiality characterised by topophobia and topophilia.

In another letter, Jithen reminisces about adolescent boys who begin to breed libidinal feelings by eyeing everything around them through a sexual lens, referring to his own experiences. The letter sticks to one of the prominent themes that the text projects forth - the dominance of man's sexuality and sexual yearnings – which the writer considers futile and less significant in comparison with other forms of productivity. He tags his adolescence as a stage "which paid homage to libido" and during which he used to visualise the pictures of goddesses sexually and commit 'crimes' in solitude, which resulted in the emergence of melancholy and immense guilt (345-346). On the other hand, the third-person narrator revisits Jithen's

bonding with Govindan Master who had come home to perform Naraapilla's death-rites through productive conversations on books, reading, and informative talks. The chapter also registers Jithen's memory of his attempt on his fourteenth birthday, along with his companions Unnikrishnan and Babu, to secretively watch a couple's copulation and his desperate misunderstanding of an aged woman's dying moans to be the moans of the lady engaged in the act of physical intimacy, which leads to an obliteration of his carnal yearnings (354). Similar to various other incidents mentioned in the text, here sex and death are drawn in parallel, and the futility and hollowness of adolescent pining or sexual desires are brought in contrary to the suggestions in the letter, marking the dual sentiments that Jithen's persona cultivates. This incident also marks a particular space of oddity, a space where sex and death are clubbed together.

The pattern of undercutting, where a notion, an idea, or an opinion is raised contradictory to what is previously mentioned, continues in the chapter that follows the above. "Do you know that every man is a child deep inside? A small child who cries standing in the festival grounds of life, lost in the sounds of the crowds and unnoticed by anyone", states Jithen in his letter (356-357), striking a profound observation on life and the frivolous nature of man's existence. Disrobing man of all his embellishments such as pride arising from the self-conferred 'supremacy' over all other beings, by reducing him to the image of a child and exposing his core fragilities such as the fear of existence, death, loneliness, and alienation, Jithen's melancholic and pessimistic take on life is unveiled. In the letter, he also admits that he came to be aware of his innate feelings of cruelty once he embarks on a romantic journey with Ann Marie and thinks about the selfishness that characterises most

relationships. He also talks belittlingly and disparagingly about himself by stripping off the masculine ego that had surrounded him in the following manner: “Before. . . [meeting you], I used to have this vain belief that I was someone great; had arrogantly believed that I could love the whole world, all by myself. However, that belief has abated somewhat now” (356).

The third-person narrator records a past episode from Jithen’s life, where he gradually builds intimacy with his uncle through conversations related to art, the responsibility of an artist, genuine talent, and others, and the relationship begins to resemble the one between a guru and his disciple. When Govindan sees his nephew performing the art of mimicry, he lovingly advises him that the real purpose of art is enlightenment and that an artist has to be “the sanctuary of life” instead of displaying mere mockery, defamation, or ridicule of others. Govindan’s words to Jithen to discard his love for an unproductive art like mimicry, emphasising that “[e]very art has an invocation to save” and that “every art is an enlightenment” (361), throw light into the productive potent that each man holds within him and that needs to be kindled in the right manner. Jithen discerns ‘sagacity’ in his uncle’s words and admires his wisdom. To inform Jithen of this piece of wisdom, Govindan uses a Buddhist tale where the Buddha advises his disciple of the real purpose of mimicry and enlightens him about the motive of art, which forms part of the collective memory. Govindan’s words present mankind positively, highlighting the possible productive, creative potential lying inside every man, and thus stand in contrast to the pessimistic take on man that Jithen presents in the letter, where man’s alienation and infirmity are projected. The recalling of this particular memory that exhibits kinship, profound and meaningful exchange of words, and a saintly

interconnectedness with each other through a third-person's voice but carrying Jithen's point-of-view, is a deliberate act to facilitate a resolution to the intensely depressing and despairing state-of-mind reflected in the letter. The revivalist and recuperating role of episodic memory revealed through a third-person voice, which contributes to the construction of Jithen's selfhood as constitutive of mutually opposing yet complementary sentiments of affinity and detachment from the varied spaces of interaction, is established here.

Jithen's existential angst and pessimistic view of life are also sourced in his strong dissatisfaction with his profession in the toy factory. One of the first instances where he expresses his disgust with the workplace and the job is when his boss calls him to show him one of the acts - the odd and disgusting act of collecting dirt from navels - that gained a place in the *Guinness Book of Records*. The boss utters, "I told you, to make one's mark in this world, anything is acceptable", and condemns Jithen's opinion that a work of art should carry the element of "Purity of God" as utter idiocy (365). Jithen utters to himself that working under him in the factory is also idiotic and thinks about the boredom that the repetitive nature of the work gives him - "Drummer monkey. . . . That is an interesting toy for a kid for some years. But what about the one who manufactures it all his lifetime?" is how he puts it (366) - which is his first explicit expression of monotony and displeasure with the job. The sense of topophobia bred towards the workspace and the artistic space, and the displeasure generated towards the notion of creativity are reflected in this. On the contrary, the chapter recalls Jithen's aesthetic and artistic talent through the memory of a short story he had once written about a saint and a journalist. The story that carries layers of meanings and philosophical implications is highly appreciated by

Govindan master, and his advice to Jithen - ““Now you should try for a bigger one. There should be Thachanakkara in it. You, me, and your grandfather should be in it”” (374) – displays the affinity and passion for the artistic and creative space Jithen had once carried. Projecting the pleasant remembrance at a juncture where Jithen remains dubious and perplexed about his work and creative abilities exhibits the ‘other self’ of Jithen in opposition to the first-person self displayed in the letter. The memory returns the lost intimacy and respect for his selfhood having been caught in the world of impassioned job-space where his creative faculty is misspent or wasted unproductively.

The increased lamentation over the dreariness of life continues in the letter which serves as a prologue to the fifth chapter in the fourth part, where Jithen turns despondent about his life at the rented apartment that is dingy and constricted. He tells Ann Marie that he will be inviting her to hell-like circumstances after their marriage - “I think it is unfair to invite someone to my life without giving advance notice about such hells. An injustice like how God brought us into this world without our permission” (375) - which points out his diffident and pessimistic approach towards life. Then, he also recollects an old Zen story where a caged tiger who walks around says to a bird freely flying outside that he is writing cipher, the only intelligible, writable thing when one is imprisoned (376), which once again underlines the absurdity and meaninglessness of life that constricts and contains man in various ways. The third-person narration begins with an expression of dissatisfaction with life, where Jithen’s regret about being born at a time when his creative faculties remain unspent and also his thoughts on other infirmities and frailties are mentioned:

As a child, he used to curse himself for not being born one of the heroes extolled in the heroic ballads of north Kerala. . . . During adolescence, he used to feel disappointed at the Indian Independence having taken place a quarter century ago. . . . Recognizing himself as one jostling for space among a throng of youngsters caught in a life with nothing to look forward to beyond studies, job-seeking, marriage, and building a house, and dreaming of pleasuring themselves, his soul gagged. (376)

Along with this, the narrator mentions that even his habit of diary-writing about his acquaintances ended with Ann Marie's warning not to judge people by quoting the holy *Bible*, and remembers the sentence – “Therefore, all the notes herein till now have no validity” - he had written in his diary (378). In this way, Jithen presents himself as unreliable, self-dubious, and diffident, and even the slightest element of his creative potential is shown to be in demise. What affects Jithen the most is the emptiness he feels in life “without being able to find a decent soul as a friend or a mate or a guru” (377), marking him as a representative of the modern man facing the hollowness and absurdity of life.

The dark vision of life is contrasted through a revisitation of Jithen's friendship and conversations with Sofia Begum, an intelligent reading companion Jithen gets at Thachanakkara library. Jithen senses her unique personality, creative brilliance, and imaginative, literary, and artistic fervour, and finds her an engaging friend at the library. The remembrance takes us to their plan to write a novel in the future and conversations regarding the theme, readability, and possible acceptability of their work. As a part of the conversation, Jithen declares that he would write a story “which Malayalis are always going to read” (381) and both of them discuss the

necessity to pen a work consisting of one's locale, life, and times. He also recollects the words he had exchanged about his family and lover Ann Marie with Sofia. Although he admits that Naraapilla's blood flows through him, he acknowledges the influence of Ann Marie through the words, "[M]ore than Kunjuamma's, the blood that is flowing through me now is Ann Marie's!" (381), before praising her love and faith in him. Clearly, both Ann Marie and Sofia Begum are evoked as soulful companions and as kindling a new light in Jithen, a sentiment opposed to the expression of the emptiness of life projected in the letter that precedes the chapter. The interchanging sentiments of pleasure and disgust for life and the self appear in this case also and the construction of identity becomes interstitial as the sensibility shifts between the two extremes.

In the letter that follows, Jithen shares with Ann Marie the memory of two nightmares he had had that testify to the insecurity, existential dilemma, and hollowness he experiences in life and in the realm of art. In the first dream, he sees himself as a dead person with Ann Marie wailing and weeping for him, which later transitions into a scene of joy and celebration with the crowd appreciating Ann Marie for translating the lines of a Hindi song that was playing on the tape recorder as a sign of mourning, despite Jithen's attempt to say that the soul of the song is lost in translation (395-396). In the second nightmare, he finds himself captured by the moral police for the charge of "insulting India's performing arts" after having bought, stuffed, and installed a famed Bharathanatyam dancer in front of his house (396).

Dreams are narratives where the past and the present intersect and they symbolically signify various aspects of one's innate consciousness, thoughts, and

personality. If the first dream is closely analysed, concerns such as man's state of pity and despair, the absurdity and senselessness of grandeur conferred on life and the reality of death, and a world devoid of humanity and compassion but replete with pretensions and hypocrisy, surface prominently. The image of the stuffed dancer indicates an artistic distortion, projecting the idea that real or genuine forms of art remain absent, while distorted, forged/fake, and pretentious art that is soulless and creatively hollow at its core grows abundant. The dream symbolises Jithen's quest for real, true art that has arisen from the revelation that art in the contemporary world is feigned and mechanical. Both visions embody significant losses, that of life and soul, and also pose a perennial quest for the meaning of life that arises from the writer's strong underlying consciousness of the emptiness that life presently provides him. According to Ewing, "Dreaming is one way in which the mind organizes itself, sorting and categorizing recent experience, analogous to what Piaget called "assimilation" of experience to existing cognitive structures" (49). Here, Jithen dreams in a displaced space, outside Thachanakkara, where he experiences utmost dissatisfaction and monotony with the job and cultivates existential angst. The symbols of the nightmares closely correspond to his present state of being and reflect the discontentment and drudgery he undergoes. How dreams are cultivated in accordance with the inhabiting cultural space as Ewing and Mageo put it (44; 25-26) is evident here, as the dreams become a product or reflection of the cultural deterioration and degeneration that Jithen is experiencing in the present.

The chapter attempts to resolve the crisis by showing Jithen's creative, artistic past through the evocation of a memory of three poems he had written in his

thirteenth, fifteenth, and seventeenth years. Even though he ridicules and laughs at himself reminiscing about the love-poem written in his fifteenth year sensing its immaturity, he appreciates himself for the other poem written later when he was seventeen years old (397). The two poems are quoted in the chapter as precious remembrances at a time when Jithen ponders over his present state when he has abandoned writing altogether and mourns his loss of poesy. In such a state of utter devastation and self-loss, the memory of genuine creativity and productivity serves as a gateway to restoring and reinviting the lost interest or affection for the space of writing and creativity. Another set of remembrances placed in the section consists of Ann Marie's past, how Jithen had met her at UC College in Ernakulam, and had later asked for her hand. The narrator states, "[I]t was the spirituality which shone in the girl who was to become his wife that beckoned Jithen" (398). It is a sentence written on the board in one of the vacant classrooms of the college - "'Man is the only creature that perishes before attaining full growth!'" (403) - that steers their meeting and their conversation gradually brings them into a love-relationship. The statement raises one of the prime themes of the text, which is that of the transience of life and the insignificance of human existence and it is such a philosophical ground that binds Ann Marie and Jithen. Affection and love in their sanctified form are presented throughout the chapter such as Ann Marie's commitment to marry Jithen despite her father's word to offer her as the lord's bride and his strong declaration to his mother of his decision to marry her despite the hurdle posed by casteism in his family. These remembrances of the past love-life bring back Jithen's attachment and intimacy with life in contrast to the bleak and pessimistic vision of his own demise narrated in the letter. The episodic memories thus become an

efficient medium to reinstitute the attachment with life and self for Jithen and they expose the dual selves of the man. A note on the space of the UC college needs to be mentioned here. The UC college emerges as a ‘diverted’ and a ‘transgressive’ space for its role in facilitating a ‘transgression’ or ‘violation’ of the rules and norms of the casteist society by staging an inter-religious alliance between Ann Marie and Jithen. It also becomes an appropriated space for the act of appropriation of the academic space that Jithen engages in.

A direct expression of detachment, disappointment, and discontent with the workspace is recorded in the letter to the eighth chapter of part four of the text.

Jithen’s words to Ann Marie are as follows:

[S]omething rises and boils over, with a roar from my innermost soul. . . .

Can you imagine the anomaly of someone, after majoring in History and doing a post-graduation, becoming a supervisor in a toy factory? Beyond doubt, I am a true representative of the modern-day youth. An imbecile who’s making rubber monkey dolls, after forgetting all history. A counterfeit Brahma! (405)

Evidently, the passage carries phrases of ridicule and self-mockery, and it portrays the self in utter devastation. The monotonous, mechanical, and unproductive task of inspecting the toys that results in a total misspending of one’s creative talent and time, and the realisation that the obsession with toys - literally and metaphorically - is on a rising scale, together contribute to Jithen’s detachment with the work-space. He turns ponderous about the contemporary world which is “filling up with mere toys of objects and facts” and declares that he feels like “throwing away” his life (406) perceiving the entire life as a surface-play with man’s endless fascination for

toys. Following this bleak vision of life, the omniscient narrator delves into Jithen's past when he joins the toy-manufacturing company in Kozhikode at the age of twenty-seven as the Assistant Creative Officer against his desire and will, foreseeing the monotony that awaits him. Later, in absolute opposition to the sentiment projected in the letter, Jithen's most wonderful creative thought, which contributes to affirming and restoring the lost interest in the realm of creativity, comes into view through the recall of a productive memory. The chapter presents a heightened state of Jithen's insightful mind and creative brilliance (the writer calls it his "epiphany") through the imagination and production of a vision - of a "Creation-Song" or "Creation-Geetha" (409), a deconstruction, subversion, and a positive recreation of the *Bhagawad Gita* – that he writes in his diary hoping to include it in his dream-novel. Jithen writes that the *Bhagawad Gita*, the sacred text that forms the core of a country and is also considered the embodiment of truth in courts, is a "Song of Annihilation" by its conversion of an innocent Arjuna into a fighter against his kith and kin and states that it promotes assassination and violence instead of love or compassion. He also criticises the holy books of other religions for upholding "pronouncements and deeds against humanity" and considers them to be devoid of any purpose for humankind (410). Opining that the inability to create should be man's greatest angst (and not the angst regarding the incapacity to kill people as in Arjuna's case), and also pining over the present generation (including him) that is unable to produce any genuine work of art, Jithen proposes the need of "a new song which will lay a hand on the shoulder to energize and exhort, to wake and create, rather than kill and win" and calls it the "Creation-Geetha" (411). By invoking the memory of such an original, productive thought at a juncture when he expresses the

loss of his creativity by calling himself a fake Brahma and laments over the world becoming a space of pretensions, the activation of topophilia towards creativity and the self is effectuated.

Jithen's writing of this nature reveals itself as a lived space (Lefebvre *Production 39*) being a space of art and imagination and that which upholds counter-cultural and anti-establishmentarian ideologies, which becomes a resistance against the conventional, conservative, and dominant structures of contemporary society. In fact, all the imaginary tales he pens in his childhood and the fiction he produces during his adolescence constitute the lived space in the above sense. At this stage, Jithen does not actively exercise agency, as he keeps degrading himself and his writings, and they also fail to reach the limelight. Evident from the correlated reading of the letters and the chapters, Jithen's approach to life is marked as dual-faced, showing the two phases of attachment and detachment that contribute to his interstitial state of existence.

Jithen's musings on writing or manifestation of any form of creativity, which he considers mandatory for surviving one's death, are scattered across the text on various occasions. He grieves over the senseless and idiotic life that he leads in the present, where he experiences a severe loss of his creative potential and finds him incapable of producing a soulful work of art, and turns apprehensive about the future world. The observations and opinions on writing that Jithen articulates become the artistic space of the text, and the affinity and distancing he alternately maintains with the same are unveiled through the letters and the contents of the chapters.

The narrator records Jithen's creative faculty for the first time as he describes the incidents related to his birth. The news of a buffalo's body floating in the Aluva

river spreads like wildfire during Chinnamma's delivery, and after detailing Jithen's birth, the narrator provides the story based on the dead animal that Jithen had made up as a child to share among his fellows. In Jithen's imagination, it was Thachanakkara Thevar who threatened the God of death, Kaalan (who had intended to take his and his mother's lives), killed his buffalo, and later threw the carcass into the Aluva river for the people to witness the shocking sight (190). In the letter dated 8 May 1999, Jithen says to Ann Marie that whenever he resorts to writing a letter, he feels like being "in God's lap". "Write something readable about life; or else, live in a way fit for others to write about you- these are the only two ways to escape death", is what he declares (191). Soon, Jithen records the challenges posed by writing for a writer and turns apprehensive and pessimistic. He identifies childhood as the one state that is extremely difficult to translate into language and believes that all writers would fail at that point. He also ponders over the struggles that a person who is incapable of bringing 'real art' into his writings and who miserably fails to live life in its fullness will have to face to survive his death.

The third-person narration deals with the expansion of the Ayyattumpilli family with the proliferation of Naraapilla's grandchildren and details the grandparental traits that each child acquired. The narrator recollects the past when Jithen used to be tagged as the 'Tenth One', referring to the ten incarnations, and pointing out the specialties of his birth such as "the first one to be born in a hospital", "the first one to be taken out with a scalpel", and "the first grandchild to affectionately touch Naraapilla" (194). The tale behind the name Jithendra (adopted from the Hindi actor's name Jeetendra), Jithen's birth followed by the excitement shared by the entire family, the conversations among the relatives who pamper and

playfully dote on him during his twenty-eighth day ceremony- such as “Can you see his roguish smile?”, and “[D]oesn’t he resemble our grandfather...?” (199) - and the love and affection for the child are nostalgically and fondly portrayed in the text. If the letter prologuing the chapter carried sceptic and pessimistic remarks on writing about childhood, the chapter challenges it through the exuberant episode of Jithen’s childhood through an efficient selection and organisation of memory and language.

In the subsequent letter also, after referring to Alamboori of Thachanakkara – an insane person who speaks into an imaginary phone – Jithen turns anxious about the profusion of technology such as mobile phones which he thinks might take over letter-writing and the unbounded use of words (202). In order to surpass the distancing and detachment with the space of creativity generated due to the suspicion, Jithen shares with Ann Marie an excerpt he had written about his uncle Pankajaakshan, fondly called ‘Pankachammaavan’. In his half-veiled vision, Jithen presents the man as a hero by seeing him drink buttermilk that ‘leaks’ from his navel assuming that he is “a magical man with a hole in his tummy”, and juxtaposes it with his memory of listening to Kalidasa’s *Kumarasambhavam*, where the fall of a raindrop on Parvathi’s eyes is picturised as welling up in her navel. An insightful thought follows this writing, where Jithen remembers his teacher Remadevi’s lessons on Kalidasa’s epic in school and the realisation “that the navel of a woman is not an erotic sight, but merely the reminder of the connection with the mother” that he gained from it (236). The memories evoked here are episodic (Pankachammaavan’s and the teacher’s memory), collective, and cultural (*Kumarasambhavam*), which vitally contribute to shaping Jithen’s identity and ideologies: while the memory of his uncle binds him to the familial space, the other

memories impart him a significant lesson for life by erasing his misconceptions of sexuality and redefining the notions of body and motherhood. Apart from these roles, the remembrance through writing also serves as Jithen's attempt to bind himself with the artistic space and overcome, at least momentarily, the fear of his inability to write and also the distance that was formed with the same. The wisdom he gains testifies to the affinity re-built with the creative space.

In another letter (dated 3 July 1999), Jithen exhibits a similar dualistic attitude. After attaching with the letter the part of his writing on his childhood memory of him accompanying his grandfather to the riverside and about the ring made out of the copper disc that he used to avail of as a reward from the latter, Jithen degrades himself and his work claiming it to be lacking any value – “I don't think that they are of any worth” - and asks Ann Marie to “throw away [the] sheet” after reading it as he does not intend to add it to the novel he desires to write (275). In the subsequent letter written on the 11th of August, Jithen appends another excerpt of his writing – about the mother looking at the newborn with wonder, disgust, and perplexity – but similar to the previous letter, he expresses his suspicion about the novel-writing. “Don't you want to know how [my birth] is depicted in my book that has little possibility of being completed?”, is what he asks before attaching the piece of writing (180), which evidently points out the interchanging sentiments of attachment with and detachment from the artistic space that Jithen breeds within. In tune with what Leach suggests in his identity-theory (39-40), how the man constantly shifts between close identification and severance from the space of writing activating topophilia and topophobia alternately comes into vision here. This

records Jithen's identity as interstitial, suspended between close identification/attachment and separation/distancing from the space of interaction.

In the subsequent letters, Jithen turns more diffident about writing his dream-novel. He believes that a new mode of narration needs to be invented to write about the present times and shares with the reader his apprehension about the reception of the novel if ever he writes one. Then he resorts to evaluating the nature of reading among Malayalis – which he considers as meagre - and strongly expresses his suspicion about writing a novel on Thachanakkara, projecting alongside the sense of loneliness that life keeps offering him. The detachment reaches its peak as he raises a question on the purpose of writing itself. “Why do they sit down and spend so much of their time writing...? In this island of solitude, where neither money nor fame is of use, why does one want to sacrifice oneself? I want to ask these questions . . . in the full-throated manner of Ayyattumpilli stock”, is how Jithen puts it (335). The reference to the family-name is an invocation of the inartistic temperament of the family that has proven its expertise only in orthodox, conservative traditions and practices. The dejection with the artistic space is also reflected when Jithen expresses self-doubt about writing the novel and declares that he will rather go for a porn movie instead (336). The chapter, on the contrary, begins with the detailing of Jithen's creative process behind his debut poem on a hibiscus flower written at the age of thirteen, and the entire poem is quoted as an episodic and self-defining memory. Delving into the past, the narrator records Jithen's thoughts that the poem “had something that was intrinsically of his own”, that it was the manifestation of many “unnameable sorrows” lurking inside him, and also mentions his realisation that it was “beyond the powers of appreciation of his classmates and not amenable to

parsing by his Malayalam teacher” (337). The narrative space and manner dedicated to delineating the work of art by highlighting Jithen’s creative skill indicates, more than his pride and delight about it, a pathway to reinforce and restore intimacy with the artistic space by engaging in the process of remembering during a moment when he stands utterly desperate and dubious about the idea of writing itself.

The manifestation of Jithen’s creative and imaginative potential as well as his inherent virtuous nature gets reflected through another memory, where Jithen revisits the tales narrated to him by his father’s sister, Kunthi. One of the stories he remembers is that of the Sun and the Moon returning from a feast and the ideal second son, the Moon, giving Mother Earth a grain of rice saved for her, which leads the mother to bless him (saying that those who see him will be delighted) and curse the Sun (saying that those who watch him would melt and curse him). Jithen used to conceive of himself as the obedient and good-hearted Moon of the story, and when Raambilla advises him to join the police force, his thought is narrated as follows: “Jithen knew that the child, who in his previous incarnation had carried in his ear a grain of rice for his mother, could never be the policeman who would beat up people and extract their juices” (340). The interrelationship between memory and identity is established here. The story that belongs to the realm of oral, collective memory is recalled by Jithen to design his future role and it serves as a determiner of his mental disposition and selfhood. Both manifestations of creativity and imagination become crucial to reveal the ‘other self’ of Jithen characterised by affinity towards the artistic space and a revised approach towards life, in contrast to the tone of dejection revealed in the letter.

Considering the aspect of storytelling and creative faculty, a prominent difference between the protagonists of the novels comes into view. While creativity and imagination are not manifested in Dasan and he only becomes a passive listener and recipient of the stories imparted to him, both Jessica and Jithen emerge as story-makers; for them, the aspects of story-telling and creativity become the defining factor of their identity. Even though Jessica claims that she cooks up or invents stories to quench her boredom, the stories are products of the happenings of the past which she presents in connection with her life-story, and it is the process of narration that gives her a narrative identity. In fact, the creative, imaginative faculty and thereby more of an artistic individualism is manifested in Jithen who manipulates and reconstructs versions of old, established tales in circulation and whose narrative identity is constructed by inculcating the snippets of his novel and diaries throughout the narration.

In the subsequent letter dated 12 Nov 1999, Jithen expresses his detachment from the project of writing and decides to abandon the venture for three reasons. The first strong reason that pulls him back is sourced in the feeling that he is “incapable of narrating the story of the Ayyattumpilli family and at the same time recording the sentimental history of Malayalis of over a century” (413). The earlier apprehension and anxiety about whether the book will have a reading community or enough receptibility is repeatedly articulated here as the second reason, and other commitments such as family life becoming hurdles in the career of writing are cited as the third reason. On the contrary, the third-person narrator projects Jithen’s desire to write a novel about Thachanakkara and narrates his remembrances of the place through the events of him gifting a walking stick to Uncle Govindan and his

conversation with him about Ann Marie (416). Jithen recognises his creative talents but worries over his impotency in delivering or manifesting the same. The narrator states:

Jithendran used to pine for creating something by which he would be remembered in this world after his death. . . but. . . unable to follow his heart's desire, he grew flustered. . . . He tried to take refuge in the belief that time for all creativity had ended and such attempts were futile. He started feeling that, in the book that he was trying to create in the form of a novel, every line written about the new era was like something which had been translated inelegantly from another language and given to him. (420-421)

The utmost displeasure for and distancing from not just the artistic space but life as a whole is evidently portrayed here.

A contradictory sentiment is projected as the narrator juxtaposes Jithen's musings on the process and possibilities of writing the novel on Thachanakkara, which reflects a renewed thought on venturing on manifesting his creativity. He believes that the characters of a particular era cannot be placed in the framework of another place and time; they can only be "renovated" (421). Jithen indulges in self-introspection by validating the relevance of the novel he wishes to write by stating that the lives of the characters will not be rendered meaningless if they are designed according to the sensibility and sentiments of the particular era they belong to (421). The writer then records Jithen's thoughts as follows: "Jithen asked himself: can it be said that they were undeserving of becoming characters in the great book of human life? Can a child who receives a rubber monkey doll, which plays the drums, be said to be superior to the one who creates his own toy using immature coconuts and

spines of the coconut leaf?” (421-422). The image of Jithen as a dancing peacock, as memories of Thachanakkara flow into him (422), shows the extremity of delight and ecstasy that he possesses for the larger socio-cultural space, his intimacy, and affection for the same, despite the sense of withdrawal from life and monotony with the space of writing/creativity that was projected before. This line of thought, undoubtedly, establishes Jithen’s urge to bring to the world his locale and family through his creative calibre. The placement of Jithen’s musings of this kind in juxtaposition with the earlier phase of detachment is a strategy exercised through memory to restore the affinity and activate topophilia for the space, and it also enables one to think beyond the explicit desperate and victimised status of the speaker revealed in the letter.

In the letter that follows the above, Jithen shares with Ann Marie his perspective on childhood. Enrapt in a nostalgic and innocent state, he declares that he will recall “the furthest extent” of his childhood treasuring it as a pristine state of one’s life. He also observes that it remains unaffected by any temporal or spatial differences and regrets that everyone will have to outgrow it. Soon after the utterance comes the diametrically opposite thought on the transience of childhood and a degradation of life itself: “There is only one job in which, with every promotion, one has a feeling of self-deprecation: Life” (213). The letter is an admixture of exaltation and degradation of life, which reveals the sentiments of attachment and disgust for the same space. Opposed to this, the third-person narrator presents snippets from Jithen’s childhood in Ayyattumpilli, with his father’s sister Kunthi as a favourite playtime companion for him and his siblings, who constantly got them engaged with her folk, regional songs, games, and stories. The revisitation

of Jithen's childhood and the remembrance of his creative, imaginative faculty exhibited through the story of the woodcutter and goddess - placed in juxtaposition with his regretful feeling of loss of the past times - effectively contribute to resuscitating the attachment with the artistic space and life in totality.

In absolute opposition to the sentiment expressed in the previous letter, the letter dated 25 December 1999 proclaims a direct expression of dejection towards the artistic space of writing and creativity. Jithen says to Ann Marie that he is "abandoning halfway what [he had] started writing" realising that "there is nothing valuable" in it and asks her to read the "useless piece of paper" before throwing it away as he admits that "[i]t's the farthest point of [his] memories, the awakening of [his] senses" (225). The excerpt added is a sensorial depiction of Jithen's childhood, where the toddler keenly and curiously observes and experiences the world around him. The baby sees various unfamiliar faces, becomes elated when the mother gives him a warm bath, drinks milk, hears the sounds of birds and pampering voices of his relatives, and gets a wholesome experience of life in its inception.

In continuity with the reminiscence on childhood that Jithen writes in the piece of writing attached to the letter, his childhood is recollected in the chapter along with various pleasant images of his cousins' companionship with him. Most importantly, the chapter illustrates Naraapilla's growing affection with the two-year-old Jithen, a relation which the former had never struck with any of his grandchildren till then. The "intense fondness for Jithen" that Naraapilla feels is returned to him by Jithen who "recognizes in his grandfather, a stronger magnetism pulling him from Granpa [sic] Raambilla" (233) and Jithen spends his leisure time at his grandfather's house, which offers endless fascination for him. The creative,

constructive, and productive exchange of words they used to have during their walk to the riverbank – how he used to construct new tales to tell his grandfather - is also mentioned in the chapter (233). Similar to the episode given at the beginning of the novel, Naraapilla's failed attempt to recollect the couplet he had learned years ago, followed by Jithen's completion of the same by which the former gets impressed, is repeatedly portrayed here. The revisitation of Jithen's childhood and creative faculty is a reassertion of affinity or attachment for the familial space and his creative and productive past, in contrast to the growing diffidence and disgust exhibited in the letter. The reiteration of the visit with Naraapilla to the river bank and the chanting of the couplet, memories that served as a formative experience for Jithen, restore his attachment to the spaces through memory.

As seen from the correlated and comparative analysis of the letters and the chapters, Jithen's identity gets constructed as interstitial in his approach to the creative space, shifting between topophilia and topophobia, both evoked through primary and secondary remembrances. The interstitial self of the subject is the product of an interplay of memory and interaction with the familial and intimate spaces; the interstitiality is the result of the conflict that arises from Jithen's identification with the normative structure and at the same time his innate urge to shatter the shackles imposed by it.

Similar to the final set of letters Jithen sends to Ann Marie, the last letter dated 1 Jan 2000 records the extremity of his dejection towards life. "My darling, my condolences to you for sincerely loving a man of straw!", declares the man (424) at the peak of self-deprecation. Then, proclaiming that he is 'locking up' all his writings, he warns Ann Marie to 'delete' from her memory all the details he had

shared about the book with her (424). The chapter turns back to Jithen's past when he attends the farewell function of his boss and sees a set of odd visions in his dream as he happens to sleep amidst the same. He sees a group of "venerated Malayalis", social reformers, and artists, in a parade such as Nataraja Guru, Irayimman Thampi, and others, but fails to recognise any of them, except Irayimman Thampi from a lullaby he sings for Jithen (426). Similar to the previous dreams, this one also highly resonates with Jithen's present state by symbolically standing for his dwindling memory and connectedness with the historical past, loss of historical consciousness, and most importantly, the hollowness that life exhibits. Jithen's oblivion about the reformists but the remembrance of the lullaby, apart from his distancing from the larger social space, is an indication of the inevitable return to the roots, home, and origin. The mid-point in Jithen's life, when after marriage he shifts to a rented apartment with Ann Marie, is also revisited along with this. The description of their marital life characterised by a combination of enthusiasm and monotony, and a continued musing of the disillusionment and disappointment with life find a place here, and it culminates in a fierce love-making between the couple. The final episode in the text before the epilogue - twenty-seven days after he assumes his new post in the company, when pessimism and dejection towards life reach their peak – turns out to be a crucial moment in Jithen's midlife:

[H]e could not recall entirely the seven mountains which nurtured Periyar, mentioned in the couplet. He failed to recollect the name of the washerwoman. . . . Neither could he recollect any of the stories, which he had heard so many times. . . . Imagining thousands of such details fleeing from the book he wished to write, he sat on the bed. . . . A primal lust to

implant on earth some sign of his existence, to extend his legitimacy beyond death, filled him. He undressed himself in a hurry and subjected his wife. . . to his will. (433-434)

Similar to Jessica who forgets everything except the name of her island and the river Periyar, during Jithen's mid-life crisis, as he gains the realisation that he is incapable of writing a novel about Thachanakkara and copulates with Ann Marie with the intense desire to stamp his existence in the world through posterity even after his death, he enters a state of oblivion where he cannot recollect the couplet his grandfather used to sing nor the names of the natives of Thachanakkara but remembers and utters clearly the thunderous roar – “Pho!”- of his ancestor Ayyaapilla (434). The reference to his ancestor is also brought in through the description of his body as a “torture chamber. . . with his soul enclosed in it, and suspended high over a thoroughfare" (434), the reference to the acute thirst he feels during copulation, and most significantly through the repeated portrait of ‘snapping at death’ with the roaring utterance that emanates from the “centuries-old blood” signifying an age-old “survival instinct” (434). Even though Jithen falls victim to the same ideas and way of life he had been objecting throughout his life, the evocation of the memory of Ayyaapilla provides a tone of regeneration and survival instinct to the rememberer. The ancestral memory serves as a reminder of his roots, a call of the past, a call of the wild blood of exceptional survival and defiance of his great-great-grandfather. Having been displaced from his birth-place and the workplace, but at the same time finding himself a failure to fulfil his creative talent through writing a novel, the crisis that Jithen lands in prompts him to strike a chord of connection with his past, which emerges as a crucial gateway to asserting his

identity. Amidst the crisis of displacement and dislocation, it is not a pleasant memory of Thachanakkara or his family that visits him, but Ayyaapilla's "aattu" that symbolises audacity and perseverance, unlike the same repeated utterance by the despicable Naraapilla (which comes as the epitome of arrogance, haughtiness, and power). The image of the body as a cage drawing a total identification with Ayyaapilla hanging on the tree-top denotes Jithen's state of helplessness as he engages in an act perceived to be meaningless, monotonous, and vain – he feels like he is torturing himself through the act of sex – and the fierce snap indicates his rigorous attempt to fight against the undesired act similar to Ayyaapilla's attempt to ward off the vultures and escape the torture-cell. Jithen's memory of the ancient time that carries immense vivacity, perseverance, and spirit of survival emerges as the mental sojourn to the roots, the point of origin, which thereby signifies his intense desire for a transformation and a new beginning. The next twenty-five years of Jithen's life remain unrecorded and the reader only sees him at the age of fifty-four just before his death in the new apartment in Thachanakkara.

The reference to the twenty-seventh day is significant as it is the period of twenty-seven days, being the term of punishment, that serves as the common ground connecting Ayyaapilla and Jithen. Ayyaapilla stays alive on the tree top fighting the claws of death for twenty-seven days; in his case, the number serves as a gauge for his spirit of survival, exceptional audacity, and perseverance. When it comes to Jithen, he copulates with Ann Marie at midnight after gaining the realisation that his creative potential needs to be spent efficiently, exactly twenty-seven days after assuming the new post in the company and finding the same monotonous. He experiences the same affliction and torment that Ayyaapilla had experienced inside

his punishment chamber as he lies in the rented apartment. The period of twenty-seven days here too serves as a ‘trial’ period, but unlike Ayyaapilla, there is no expression of perseverance or determination on Jithen’s part and it only becomes a revelation of the pitiable and pathetic state of a man who makes a strenuous attempt to push the life forcibly imposed on him. The utterance of “Ppho!” by Jithen (434) becomes a resonance of the same old survival instinct of his ancestor, but while Ayyaapilla rewrites history by prolonging his death, Jithen invokes it as a strategy for survival and sustenance amidst the crisis of his life.

It is also to be noted that Jithen’s mysterious behaviour is exhibited on the last day in their rented apartment before they shift to another new apartment in the city. The rented apartment and Ayyaapilla’s man-shaped iron cage are ‘transgressive’ spaces, spaces that exhibit acts of ‘violation’ of norms and rules: the apartment being the materialisation of Jithen’s anti-casteist and progressive ideology manifested through his inter-religious marriage and the iron cage being the space that defied the normalcy of death. In this sense, they also become diverted spaces as Lefebvre propounds (qtd. in Armstrong 19) and assume the status of heterotopias of deviation as per Foucault’s proposition for being real places that exhibit resistance against the existing normative structure (25). The rented apartment signifies a space of transition in two ways: first, the remembrance of Ayyaapilla, the absolute identification he builds with his ancestor placed at the juncture just before the spatial shift indicates Jithen’s intense urge or desire to embrace his roots and assert his identity enrooted in a sense of ‘placeness’; the memory serves as a strategic device to salvage Jithen’s sense of self amidst the peak of disillusionment, and secondly, the new apartment stands for a new beginning altogether. The chain of deviance is

kept unbroken in the transition and the ending marks another beginning actuating a cyclic structure in the text.

The interplay of memory and space that facilitates the construction of Jithen's identity as dual-faced and interstitial is established here. Unlike Jessica and Dasan, who exhibit interstitiality through their real-time interactions with various spaces, Jithen's interstitiality is a textual or narrative construction, where the enigmatic narrator engages in a recall of certain memories in the third-person juxtaposing them with Jithen's letters in the first-person that exhibit the sentiments of attachment with and detachment from the spaces of interaction. It is in the set of letters where the notion of creative writing is mentioned do the readers see the appearance of these alternate sentiments in the same time-frame (the few months of letter-writing) unlike the letters and the chapters that emerge in two different time-frames (of the period of letter-writing and Jithen's bygone past).

The epilogue of the text, where the readers are reintroduced to Ann Marie's present as it was in the beginning, brings in a cyclic structure to the narration. Ann Marie undergoes a set of illusions and reveries where she gets "hallucinations of the sentences [in Jithen's letters and diary] she had underlined", and she envisions innumerable names, characters, and words crowding into a book (436). Ann Marie assuming the role of the omniscient third-person narrator is conspicuous here. In another dream scenario, she sees, to her astonishment, "a middle-aged man resembling the person who had died last month" gifting her the book *A Preface to Man* in which she sees a few lines written by her dead husband in one of his letters which she had also underlined the previous night (441). The man claims that he is a native of Thachanakkara, that he has been writing the book - about Jithen and his

family history - for her dead husband, and to her wonder, he also says that he was the one who wrote the sentence (on man as the sole creature who perishes before reaching his growth) on the blackboard at UC College that resulted in the alliance between Jithen and her. The resumption of Jithen's journey is actuated by the narrative technique of surrealism, where Ann Marie and the readers are equally kept hanging on threads of suspense and anxiety, and by hinting at what Ann Marie had earlier dreamt of – she hears the knocking on the door and sees a person with the facial appearance of her husband – becoming imminent reality through a projection of her hope of his 'second coming' or resurrection. The narrator describes the scenario thus:

A great hope filled Ann Marie from somewhere. It was a faith that it is possible for a light, which smouldered like an oil-less wick inside a tortured empty soul for a quarter century and then was extinguished, to be resurrected in three days or in three years. . . . A corporeal resurrection possible in the son of God [sic] may seek other avenues in mere mortals: in another body, in another place, in another time. (443)

A play of imagination, fantasy, and surrealism arises here. The text is left open-ended, as Ann Marie, "trapped between dreams and reality", gets prepared to look through the peephole of the door (443), a repetition of the same action as in her dream.

The metafictional narration in the postmodernist tradition distinguishes the text from the other texts by bringing in an ambiguous ending: the writership of *Preface* gets equally accorded to the character of Ann Marie and the writer-figure (the novelist) who appears towards the end. It is the dream that sets the stage for

ambiguity regarding the 'authorship' by introducing a third-person novelist and it also sketches a realistic-imaginary, a surrealistic scenario of Jithen's 'resurrection' in the form of his much-desired writing. The dream falls under Lohman's formulation of 'generative dreams', which refer to dreams of a predictive or prospective nature that manifest the future events (qtd. in Glaskin 51). What the text offers here by blurring the boundaries of reality and imagination and by employing the technique of surrealism is a fictitious solution - Lefebvre's concept (*Everyday* 88) - projected through Ann Marie's desire to see the book envisioned by Jithen coming into reality. Unlike *On the banks* and *Litanies*, where the fictitious solution is generated within the individual consciousness of the protagonists - aided by Kurambi and Valia Markose Asari - to activate the process of their reaggregation into the society, here the imaginary solution is sourced in Ann Marie's consciousness, and this marks Jithen's agential possibility arising within a metafictional framework. One can also see that even though death is a reality both in the case of Dasan and Jithen, while it exists only as a possibility in the case of Jessica, the notion of 'rebirth' has varying renditions in each text: in *On the banks* it is projected onto a mythical realm, in *Litanies* it exists in a realistic realm, and in *Preface*, it is sustained as surrealistic and as an effect of the narrative. It is also noteworthy that what Jithen nurtures, as seen throughout the text, is a realistic desire to produce a novel - creativity and quality writing as the polestars of peace and hope - and his vision is devoid of any element of fantasy, unlike Dasan's Velliyan Kallu and Jessica's 'madness'; in *Preface*, the fantasy breeds only in Ann Marie. Jithen's desire is not to reaggregate into the orthodox, conservative Thachanakkara, but to symbolically go back to his roots - through his writing - with an altered outlook and

carve a niche that is democratic, progressive, and individualistic severed from the negative conditioning that his birthland and family had left in him. In this sense, his narrative identity built through a unique, imaginative, subjective space carries more of an assertion of individualism in comparison to Dasan and Jessica. Despite the ambiguous ending, Ann Marie's reading of Jithen's letters, which becomes a recollection and a reconstruction of his past, actively contributes to Jithen's 'resurrection'.

The epilogue projects Jithen's state as a space of liminality as the text is left open-ended by offering a possibility of his 'second-coming.' It is the third-person narration that lifts and places him in a liminal space – between death and 'rebirth' – that performs a transition and transformation, and holds a passage of transit from one state to another, although the resultant form remains unmanifested. Unlike the liminal spaces occupied by Dasan and Jessica (persistent and prolonged liminality respectively), Jithen's liminality can be termed as a fictitious or narrative liminality, a product of Ann Marie's imagination and the narrative design of surrealism that the text offers. The liminal space here offers its occupant larger agential powers to assume an anti-structural position (which, similar to the case of Dasan and Jessica, remains unmanifested, as the text does not present Jithen's work getting actualised or materialised in reality), and Thomassen's view on artists and writers who break the bounds of 'normality' as occupying a liminal space also gains significance here ("Uses" 18). Despite the ambiguous authorship, what Jithen assumes through the course of the narration (Ann Marie's reading) is a narrative identity; the construction of identity as dual-faced and interstitial through the narrative that consists of his

letters, snippets from the diary, and parts of the incomplete novel, which merge into the third-person voice.

The operation of Jithen's agency gains significance at this point. When Jessica and Dasan resort to an open confrontation with the dominant system and send waves of shock and tremor across the society and family, Jithen's resistance is not manifested as creating a ruckus or disrupting the stability of the system but rather takes place silently and peacefully. When it comes to casteism, Jithen exerts his agency and self-will by marrying Ann Marie and thus creating a space of deviance, but he finds himself a victim to the same casteist conditioning that he had resisted in his later life. This is conspicuously marked through Jithen's statement, "Your Bible says that God made Man in his image", followed by Ann Marie's sarcastic retort, "When did it become my Bible alone?" (439), which exposes the innate, ingrained sense of divisive mindedness or casteist spirit that he possesses despite the emergence of various renaissance and progressive movements and the resultant evolution of humanity. In this sense, he presents himself as a man of contradictions. The explicitly rebellious act is nullified by the statement he produces which points out the inescapable trap that the casteist conditioning has left in all humans.

The other realm where his agency is pertinent is that of writing. Jithen's greater disgust and dissatisfaction with life is attempted to be tempered through creative writing and imagination. Similar to the letters he pens for Ann Marie, Jithen's desired novel is a piece of memory by itself. More importantly, it also becomes a memory metaphor aligning with the idea of repetition proposed by King, who considers narrative or language as one of the two forms that memory assumes

in its manifestation (25). Even though he raises claims that he is unproductive and regrets the loss of his creativity, his individualism and self-worth are reflected through recollecting the excerpts of the novel and the poems he had penned, which aids him in generating a sense of self-rejuvenation. Writing and imagination can also be categorised as a lived space, them being active, subjective spaces defined by dreams, symbols, and desires. Ann Marie's dream of a third-person narrator engaged in the production of the creative work that Jithen had intensely desired opens a way to constitute his selfhood positively contrary to the earlier pessimistic projections. The completed novel, *A Preface to Man*, projected as a fictitious solution, therefore reveals itself as a thirdspace by its real-and-imagined existence and bordered positioning, and also by the generation of a counterspace against the repression that the social space and life in its entirety pose for Jithen by offering an abatement to the alienation, self-hatred, and diffidence that he undergoes as he confronts life; it serves as Jithen's attempt to resolve the conflict of creativity he has faced throughout his life. Also, the thirdspace that functions on epiphanies and revelations produces Jithen's epiphanic, creative thoughts that are conspicuously anti-structural.

There is no explicit manifestation of a transformational or revisionist agency here, as an open revolution as in the case of Dasan remains absent, but the novel on Thachanakkara that consists of Jithen's a comprehensive outlook on man, his observations, critique, and comments on social issues, and other realisations and corrective inputs, appears as an entity that is capable of effectuating a transformative wave across the society he had been a part of. This conspicuously marks the agential potential of the subject within a symbolic, metaphorical, and fictional framework. Jessica and Jithen converge on the ground of narrative identity: Jessica's act of narration is materialised through her speech or story-telling, whereas Jithen's

narration is manifested through his writing. If Jessica resorts to narrating her life-story in the psychiatric centre which itself becomes a materialisation of her agency to a certain extent, Jithen's agency is not materialised but remains suspended in the state of in-betweenness. Even though it is the act of narration that serves as a key factor for determining the identity of both the protagonists, the real-imagined nature of agency in the case of Jithen makes him less of an agent compared to Jessica, despite the possibility of his 'rebirth' conferring a certain agential potential on him. Nevertheless, the study through the lenses of memory and space helps one situate the text as extending a pleasant beginning beyond the grim, hollow, and pessimistic take on life projected till then and enables one to think beyond and subvert the mere victimised, passive subjectivity of Jithen that the existing readings presuppose.

An exemplar of postmodernism, *Preface* entices its readers with the profundity, intricacy, and subtlety of its content and vision. The dynamic and fluid identities that postmodernism cultivates in the text set the ground for a vast arena of interpretations and analyses. As evident from the study, the notions of memory and space shed new light on the identity of Jithen by traversing beyond the explicit and direct planes of meaning that the text provides. Exhibiting both similarities with and differences from *On the banks* and *Litanies* in terms of the manifestation of identity and operation of agency in the case of the protagonists, *Preface* emerges as a brilliant example of the integral roles that memory, narrative, and space play in constructing and reconstructing the identity of an individual in the postmodern world.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The analysis of *On the banks* by Mukundan, *Litanies* by Madhavan, and *Preface* by Chandran through the lenses of Spatial Studies, Memory Studies, and select identity theories that link place and identity establishes the intricacy and interconnectedness between memory, space, and identity of the protagonists and/or narrators of the texts. A triadic theoretical framework formed using various concepts from Humanistic Geography (such as topophilia and topophobia developed by Tuan, and topophrenia developed by Tally), Environmental Psychology (such as place-identity, geographical self, and sense of place developed by Proshansky, Casey, and Cresswell respectively), spatial theories of Lefebvre, Soja, and Foucault (such as lived space, thirdspace, and heterotopia respectively), Memory Studies (such as collective memory propounded by Halbwachs, cultural and communicative memory formulated by Jan and Aleida Assmann, episodic memories coined by Tulving, and postmemory conceptualised by Hirsch), Turner's theory of liminality and also the identity-theory of Leach, throws new light on the identity-construction of the chosen characters and offers a revision of their agential status by reading beyond the explicit endings of the texts that place the characters in a victimised, powerless, and tragic state.

On a humanistic, existential level, the dialogue of the protagonists and/or narrators with various micro-spaces within the respective macro-spaces exhibits a constant shift between the love for a space gained through one-to-one identification with it (topophilia) and fear, hatred, anxiety, and desire to sever from the same

(topophobia) due to ideological differences or other disagreements, and this constructs their identity as interstitial and in-between; it is the collective, cultural, episodic, autobiographical, and self-defining memories that facilitate the activation of these opposing sentiments. The peculiar construction of the self that the characters carry out by alternately attaching to or building intimacy with and detaching or distancing from all the spaces they interact with confers agency on them even as they encounter adverse circumstances and are cast into despair, dilemma, and turmoil. Memories play a vital role in locating/placing the subjects/characters in the macro-space, in aiding them to interact with the micro-spaces within the macro-spaces, and in assisting them to attain stability, security, and intimacy lost during the times they encounter various crises, including the most important crisis of permanent detachment from the macro-space that they experience during the course of their journey. The characters reach a state of existential dilemma as the stories come to a finality – they are ousted from the macro-space and remain isolated, which thereby becomes the first phase of separation in the tripartite model of liminality as Turner designs it - and certain memories activated at this stage facilitate their placement at a strategic position; the remembrances transpose them to a liminal space of in-betweenness. In Turner's postulation, the liminal state is anti-structural and it provides its occupants with freedom from all restrictions along with certain agential powers. The liminal offers the protagonists a platform or a possibility to restore their topophilia with the macro-space by obliterating their alienated condition, which remains crucial for them to preserve their identities as interstitial, and this also becomes a case of resistance directed against the dominant structures. This possibility for a return to the place of origin, for reaggregating into

the respective societies projected through liminality - reaggregation being the phase after liminality in the tripartite model - is manifested through various ways that differ from text to text. The liminal spaces also attain the status as that of a thirdspace (Soja's concept which refers to the hybrid sites that destabilise the binary spatial consciousness and that also serve as counter-sites) and a lived space (the idea proposed by Lefebvre to denote the lived, social space where imagination works through symbols, projections, and utopias proclaiming change, resistance, and revolution) as the particular imaginary spatial practices actuated through the memories of the characters generate counterspaces of resistance.

Mukundan's *On the banks*, a text that depicts the transition of Mayyazhi from a French colony to a liberated state through the efforts of Dasan, the protagonist, and other anti-colonial revolutionaries, stages spaces such as the familial space (constituting his parents and grandmother), the religious-mythical space (consisting of myths and oral narratives on religious practices and rituals of the place), the social space (consisting of the public colonial order and the political realm), and an intimate space driven by a romantic affair, and Dasan's identity emerges as one lying between absolute identification with and permanent separation from each of these spaces. As the alienated Dasan confronts death, which is depicted through his image as a dragonfly on Velliyan Kallu, various symbolic associations that the space assumes confer an agential possibility on the figure who is otherwise crafted as tragic, fragile, and powerless. Velliyan Kallu, the myth that holds that all children of Mayyazhi are dragonflies on Velliyan Kallu before they take birth in Mayyazhi, is sustained by the notion of memory – it is a site of memory suspended between death and rebirth - and Dasan's projection of the memory of the myth

grants him the agency to reaggregate into the macro-space of Mayyazhi (to rebuild ‘topophilic’ sentiments), which is essential to continue constructing his identity as interstitial. The space also becomes a liminal space (here, Dasan attains persistent liminality, where the liminal state continues without meeting the third phase of reaggregation), a thirdspace, and a lived space – all carrying the status of a counterspace that confers a certain agential potency on the occupant to combat the dominant structures - through which Dasan tries to register his protest against the macro-space that cast him into an alienated position.

Madhavan’s *Litanies* is a historiographic text that explicates the socio-cultural, historical, political, artistic, and culinary tale of a real-imaginary island, Lanthan Bathery (located in Ernakulam, Kerala), during the 1950s and the 60s through the personal narrative of its female character, Jessica, who belongs to the Latin Catholic community. Jessica’s engagement with the familial space, the religious space (the Church and its rituals), the artistic space constituting the Malacca House, the theatre, and the world of stories, the Cannon ground, and the academic space (the school) showcases the dialectics of topophilia and topophobia, which constitutes her identity as interstitial. Later, when Jessica is molested by Pushpangadan Master and she exposes him as the molester in public (which ousts her from the familial and the larger socio-cultural space of the island, and also makes her end up in the mental hospital, where the question of madness as real or feigned is left ambiguous and open-ended), her alienated, passive, and victimised state gets established. On the contrary, viewed through the lens of memory, the autobiographical storytelling from the hospital facilitated by her ‘madness’ marks her agency through the active case of recollection and revisitation of the past – the

narration being a recording of autobiographical, episodic memories – and it becomes a construction of her narrative identity and also an active case of her self-assertion in the place of Lanthan Bathery. The ending of the narration in a playful tone is suggestive of Jessica merging with the island in a dynamic, flowing manner, which indicates her desire to reattach to the islandic space that has alienated and ostracised her, and it marks the continual, strategic construction of interstitial identity by the subject through the spatial dialectics. In this sense, the state of madness becomes a space of in-betweenness (between ‘normality’ and ‘abnormality’ and between real and imagined states), a liminal state characterised by a transition (here, it is a prolonged or arrested liminality, a notion proposed by Hennelly to refer to the subject reintegrating with the macro-space without surrendering his/her anti-structural stance), and also a lived space and a thirdspace facilitating resistance through the narrative act carrying self-assertion and individualism. Jessica’s agency or possibility to exercise agency is thus activated, which helps the reader think beyond the submissive and powerless image that the text extends.

Preface, a text that traces the socio-cultural, historical, political, and technological development of the twentieth-century Kerala through three generations of the Nair family of Ayyattumpilli in Thachanakkara, appears in the form of Jithen’s letters in the first-person that Ann Marie, his wife, reads after his death (which comprise a criticism of casteism and other evils of society, a defiant stance towards conventions, orthodoxy, and conservatism, his existential dilemma and concerns over the loss of his creative potential, and also snippets of the novel on Thachanakkara which he desires to write but miserably fails to finish) and narration in the third-person. It is the particular narrative order of the text or the

interconnection between the letters and the third-person narration that pronounces the alternating pattern of attachment with and detachment from the spaces of interaction, which thereby reveals Jithen's interstitial identity. Ann Marie's revisitation of Jithen's past through his letters and parts of his novel, which becomes a recording of his episodic memories – Ann Marie assumes the role of an omniscient third-person narrator here - marks his 'resurrection', and it constructs a narrative identity for him. Ann Marie's dream in the epilogue of the text, where she sees a person (whose appearance is close to that of her dead husband) gifting her the book, *A Preface to Man*, consisting of the letters and episodes of novels from her husband's diary, followed by the imminent materialisation of the dream-scenario presented in a metafictional, surrealistic mode, places Jithen on a plane of liminality – which is fictitious or narrative liminality - where he occupies a real-imaginary state and a state of in-betweenness shifting between death and rebirth. The novel that Jithen wished to write (which may or may not be the text that the readers read) emerges as an embodiment of resistance – a thirdspace and a lived space - against the repressive forces of the world he occupied, and this marks him as a potential agent within a symbolic or metaphorical framework. Similar to the case of Jessica, Jithen's proposed reaggregation into the macro-space - through the release of the novel that stands against the dominant ideologies such as casteism - is an act that takes place without surrendering his anti-structural ideals and although it remains unmanifested, it confers a certain agential potential on the otherwise fragile and desperate image of Jithen.

The three texts differ in the ways the characters craft their identities and achieve agential possibilities. If Dasan attains interstitiality through the third-person

narrative voice presenting his perspective, Jessica constructs her identity as interstitial through autobiographical story-telling, which then also becomes a case of narrative identity that is elusive and that attains more of an individualism than that of Dasan, and Jithen's interstitial identity evolves through the particular narrative order of the text, which becomes more performative in nature and which also attains a metafictional quality considering the construction of narrative identity through the self-reflexive reference to the novel that the reader reads. The texts also prominently differ in the ways their liminalities are produced. The image of Dasan as a dragonfly on Velliyan Kallu, Jessica's 'madness', and Jithen's novel (a memory metaphor) reaching a state of imminent materialisation are the liminal states of existence that the characters arrive at. While Dasan's is a persistent liminal state, Jessica's is arrested or prolonged liminality, and Jithen's liminality emerges as fictitious or narrative. Memories that intersect with spaces to produce liminal states of existence become providers of agency or agential possibilities to the protagonists. Different kinds of memories manifest in this regard: in *On the banks*, it is the memory of the myth that gains importance; in *Litanies*, the exercise of episodic, autobiographical memory through the narrative act gains significance, and in *Preface*, it is Ann Marie's dream - which, more than a pronouncement of her desire, becomes the indirect memory of the past she gets from Jithen - clubbed with the particular narrative features of metafiction and surrealism that operates. This space of resistance thus moulds them as active performers and potential agents, which challenges and subverts their passive, powerless, victimised, and tragic images that the texts explicitly confer on them towards the end and that the existing lines of criticism acknowledge and reaffirm.

Memories play a vital role in emplacing the subject, in integrating the subject into her/his macro-space, and they aid one in crafting her/his identity as interstitial and dynamic by facilitating the dialectical spatial relationship of intimacy and estrangement, which gets manifested through different modes or narrative styles in each text. For the chosen characters, memories also act as saviours in times of crisis, where certain remembrances help them restore their stable, tranquil selves, and this reasserts the relationship between memory and identity. This study, which establishes the existential, experiential relationship between an individual, his/her inhabiting space, and remembrances constructing his/her interstitial identity and transforming the agential status, emerges as a testament to how novel angles of reading using the tools of memory and space alter, add to, and throw new light on the prevalent interpretations of the texts.

Recommendations

The study centres around the notions of space, memory, and identity of the protagonists and/or narrators of select Malayalam novels and emerges as a point of intervention among the existing literature by opening a novel way of approaching the formation of the characters. It throws open further possibilities of research rooted in the fields of Memory Studies and Spatial Literary Studies that can contribute new ideas to the prevalent interpretations of the texts.

How the protagonists and/or narrators are connected to other characters spatially and how this throws new light on readers' understanding and reception of the characters are significant areas of research that the study proposes to its readers. The spatial interconnection between the characters can offer valid insights into the identity-construction of the select protagonists. The thesis primarily focuses on the memories emanating from the protagonists, and therefore, the recollections of other characters in the novels remain unaddressed. The intrinsic connection that memories of other characters have with those of the select protagonists and the role of such memories in shaping and contributing to the construction of the identities of the protagonists is another possible pathway of research. The functioning of the memory of the authors is also another interesting area that the study can be expanded into. The production of the places in the texts involves in their conception a certain role of memory; Mayyazhi, Lanthanbathery, and Thachanakkara are real-imaginary constructs. Mukundan recollecting the French colonial past and independence movements of Mahe/Mayyazhi, his birth-place, Madhavan creating the island of

Lanthanbathery during the 1960s which is somewhere near the historical islands of Kochi (Kochi is his birth-place as well), and Chandran constructing Thachanakkara through the family of Ayyattumpilli centred on his birth-place can be taken as the respective writers reconstructing spaces through recollection. The transaction between the memories of the authors and historical realities, the additions, filtrations, and omissions involved in the process, and the resultant formation of the characters emerge as a separate area of research. The thesis, therefore, becomes a point of departure that proffers additional, diverse ways and lines of approaching the texts and it provides immense possibilities for further research.

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