

**LOCATING THE OTHER: COLONIAL MODERNITY,
MAPPILAS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF LITERARY
SPACES IN SELECT SOUTH MALABAR NARRATIVES**

Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

by

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Affiliated to the University of Calicut

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DECLARATION

I, **Abdul Samad K**, hereby declare that the thesis entitled, **Locating the Other: Colonial Modernity, Mappilas and the Construction of Literary Spaces in Select South Malabar Narratives**, submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by me, under the guidance of **Dr. Basheer Kotta**, Former Associate Professor and Head, Department of English, Farook College (Autonomous), Kozhikode, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles. The contents of the thesis have undergone plagiarism check using iThenticate software at CHMK Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI generated content.

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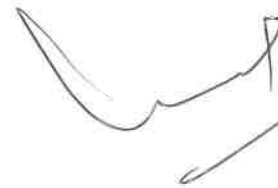

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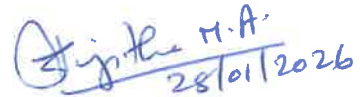
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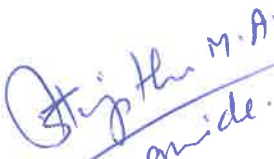
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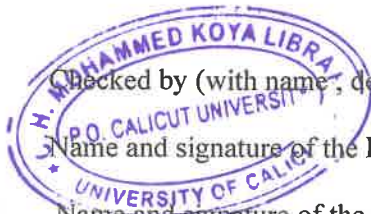
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സംഗ്രഹം

തെക്കൻ മലബാറിൽ നിന്നുള്ള അറബി-മലയാളം പടപ്പാട്ടുകളിലെയും നോവലുകളിലെയും സ്ഥലനിർമ്മിതിയിൽ അധിനിവേശാധുനികതയുടെ പങ്ക് മലബാറിലെ മാപ്പിളമാരുടെ സാഹിത്യ പ്രതിനിധാനത്തിന്റെ പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ ഈ പ്രബന്ധം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. സ്ഥലം ഒരു സാമൂഹ്യ നിർമ്മിതിയാണ് എന്ന പരികൽപന ഉപയോഗിച്ച് പ്രബല പ്രത്യയശാസ്ത്രങ്ങൾ എങ്ങനെ മനുഷ്യർ വസിക്കുന്ന ഇടങ്ങളെ സങ്കൽപിക്കുകയും, നിയന്ത്രിക്കുകയും, പ്രചരിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു എന്നത് നേരിട്ട് ബ്രിട്ടീഷ് ഭരണത്തിൻ കീഴിലുള്ള മലബാറിനെ മുൻനിർത്തിയാണ് അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നത്. അധിനിവേശ അധികാര കേന്ദ്രങ്ങളോടുള്ള മാപ്പിളമാരുടെ മനോഭാവവും സന്ധിസംഭാഷണവും സാഹിത്യകൃതികളുടെ ഉൽപാദനത്തെ എങ്ങനെ സ്വാധീനിക്കുന്നുവെന്നും പഠനം ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുന്നു. യൂറോപ്യൻ അധിനിവേശ ശക്തികളുടെ ആഗമനത്തിന് മുമ്പ് മാപ്പിളമാരും പ്രാദേശിക രാജാക്കന്മാരും ചേർന്ന് നൂറ്റാണ്ടുകളോളം എങ്ങനെ ദേശാന്തര കച്ചവട ബന്ധങ്ങൾ നിലനിർത്തിയെന്നും അതെങ്ങനെ പ്രാദേശിക സമ്പദ് വ്യവസ്ഥയെയും ബഹു-വംശീയ സംസ്കാരങ്ങളെയും അഭിവൃദ്ധിപ്പെടുത്തിയെന്നും, വൈദേശിക ശക്തികളുടെ അധിനിവേശം ദേശത്തെ അധികാരത്തിനും അടയാളത്തിനും വേണ്ടിയുള്ള സമരങ്ങളിൽ എത്തിച്ചുവെന്നും ആമുഖം വിശദീകരിക്കുന്നു. ഒന്നാം അധ്യയത്തിന്റെ ആദ്യഭാഗത്ത് സാഹിത്യ സ്ഥലനിർമ്മിതിയുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട ആശയങ്ങളും രണ്ടാം ഭാഗത്ത് മലബാറിൽ ദേശരാഷ്ട്രീയത്തെ മുൻനിർത്തി അധിനിവേശാധുനികതയോടുള്ള ഇന്ത്യൻ സമീപനം പരിശോധിക്കുന്നു. രണ്ടാം അദ്ധ്യായം പത്തൊമ്പതാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിന്റെ രണ്ടാം പകുതിയിൽ ഉയർന്ന് വന്ന പടപ്പാട്ടുകൾ എങ്ങനെ അധിനിവേശ രാഷ്ട്രത്തിന്റെ ആധിപത്യത്തെ ചെറുക്കുന്ന പാഠങ്ങളും പരിസരവും നിർമ്മിച്ചുവെന്ന് പഠന വിധേയമാക്കുന്നു. മൂന്നാം അദ്ധ്യായം കോളനി ശക്തികൾ നിർമ്മിച്ച വാർപ്പുമാതൃകളും ഏകജാതീയമായ സ്ഥലങ്ങളും പ്രാദേശിക സാഹിത്യത്തിൽ പ്രചരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നതിന്റെ രാഷ്ട്രീയം ചർച്ച ചെയ്യുന്നതിനൊപ്പം മുഖ്യധാരാ സാഹിത്യ പ്രതിനിധാനത്തിൽ മാപ്പിളമാരുടെ നില രേഖപ്പെടുത്തുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. നാലാം അദ്ധ്യായം തിരഞ്ഞെടുക്കപ്പെട്ട സാഹിത്യ കൃതികൾ ആധികാരിക അഖ്യാനങ്ങൾ സൃഷ്ടിച്ച് എങ്ങനെ മുഖ്യധാരാ സാഹിത്യം

നിർമ്മിച്ച ഏകജാതീയവും തെറ്റായതുമായ പ്രതിനിധാനങ്ങളെ വെല്ലുവിളിക്കുന്നുവെന്ന് വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു. അധികാരബന്ധങ്ങൾ സ്ഥലനിർമ്മിതിയിൽ പങ്കുകൊള്ളുന്നുവെന്നും അധികാരികമായ ആഖ്യാനങ്ങൾ ചമച്ച് സാഹിത്യ ഗ്രന്ഥാവലികളെ മാറ്റിപ്പണിയാനും മുഖ്യധാരാ സാഹിത്യത്തിന്റെ ഏകജാതീയ ശ്രമങ്ങളെ തിരുത്താൻ കഴിയുമെന്നും പ്രബന്ധം ഉപസംഹരിക്കുന്നു.

Stijtha M.A.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines select works from two genres of literature namely the Arabi-Malayalam *Padappattukal* and novels produced from South Malabar to understand the role of colonial modernity in constructing literary spaces by analysing the representations of the Mappilas of the region. It uses the idea of space as a social construct to explore the role of dominant ideologies in imagining, regulating and circulating human spaces in the context of the direct British rule in Malabar and the Mappila engagement and negotiation with the power and literary productions. The Introduction locates the changing dimension of imagining Malabar over centuries and the formation of the Mappila community on the coast mediating local kingdoms and international trade enriching the dynamic multi-ethnic communities in the port city until the European powers invaded the region and the resultant struggles for power and identity. Chapter one reviews concepts regarding the construction of literary spaces and Indian responses to the changing political situation focusing on the geo-politics of Malabar. Chapter two examines the emergence of the Arabi-Malayalam literary genre named *Padappattukal* in the second half of 19th century and how it creates textual/contextual spaces of resistance subverting the dominance of the colonial state. Chapter three examines the politics of circulating colonial stereotypes and homogenisation of textual spaces in regional literature and maps the position of the Mappilas in the mainstream literary representations from the region. Chapter four considers select novels from South Malabar as counter narratives challenging the homogenising tendencies and misrepresentation of the Mappilas in the canonical literature from south Malabar. The thesis concludes that power relations are involved in the construction of literary spaces and production of authentic counter narratives redefine canonical literatures and their homogenising tendencies.

Stiphan M.A.
10/2/2026

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Introduction

The origin and evolution of the terms 'Kerala'/'Malabar' exposes the paradoxical formulation of the geographical region of the present-day north Kerala. The term 'Kerala' was first recorded in a third BCE stone inscription left by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka referring to the king of Kerala as 'Keralaputra' meaning the son of Kerala (A.S. Menon 36). It is also traced from the word 'Keralan' meaning 'the King of Kera' which was an honorary title used to describe the kings of the Chera dynasty. The land was also mentioned in the documents of Megasthenes, the ambassador to Seleucus, who visited India during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya in the fourth BCE (21). The region was under the rule of the first and second Cholas before it was fragmented into minor kingdoms. The term Malabar on the other hand was used to describe the southwest coast of the Indian peninsula ranging from Goa to the southern tip. Though historians do not offer a common account of the origin of the name, it is believed that the word 'Malabar' is originated from the Tamil and Malayalam word for hillside (*Malainaadu*) and the Arab and Persian traders maintained the first part of the word 'mala' and added the word 'bar' meaning 'continent' in Arabic or 'country' in Persian to the word and evolved the word 'Malabar' which referred mostly to the hillside regions of the west coast of India where the traders collected spices and other hillside commodities and term became a common referent after the 12th century (More, 28).

The use of the two terms offers contrasting perspectives on the geography and culture of the region. While the first one 'Kerala' reproduced the land as part of the bigger empires of the Cholas, the second use of the term refers to the perspective

of the foreign traders who appreciated the landscape in terms of the spices it produced and feasibility of transporting them to other port cities. The exclusivity provided by the Western Ghat on the eastern side and the Arabian Sea on the west made the coastal stretch of Malabar a hotspot of international trade and the resultant mixing of cultures and people. Though a part of the subcontinent, the region was not affected by the political crisis that shaped the mainland and it stood as a premodern cosmopolitan region which hosted travellers and traders from different parts of the globe including Greece, Egypt, Persia and Arabia.

The presence of diverse communities and sects were noted on the Malabar coast as early as AD 1 to 70 with the claim that St Thomas visited the coast in AD 1 and the Jews claimed to be present in the region in AD 70. Though these claims cannot be substantiated with historical evidence, one can surely say that Jews and Christians were a prominent section of the trading community and they had significant political significance in the region (56). The Arab traders were present in the region from an early period though they became significant only after the 9th century (44). These traders negotiated with the local Hindu kings for the spices and the kings found the trade as a means of prospering the kingdom.

The naming of the land by the rulers of the subcontinent as 'Kerala' and foreign traders as 'Malabar' underscores the region's complex social, political, and geographical positioning and its negotiations with local dynasties and international trade. Though it was common among the kingdoms on the West Coast of the Indian subcontinent to forge trade links with foreign traders, the singularity of the landscape and the lasting impact of Arab traders on the coast led to the formation of

a specific community in Malabar - the Mappilas. The emergence of the Mappilas was not only a result of the monsoon winds in controlling the sailing ships, but also of the diverse socio-political situation of Malabar. First of all, the emergence of the port city of Calicut in the 12th century. The rulers of the city, the Zamorins of Calicut, encouraged Arab traders to settle on the coast (A. S. Menon 44) as the Indian Ocean trade was directed by the monsoon winds. Secondly, religious norms did not permit upper caste Hindus to get involved in the maritime trade; hence, the Zamorins required a group of native men to mediate trade negotiations (84). Thirdly, the king required a naval force to defend the city from outside attacks. The formation of the Mappila community addressed most of these concerns and they enjoyed privileged standing in the port city. The Arabs married converted local women and a matrilineal society was formed on the coast. Fourthly, groups especially women ostracised from the Hindu society also joined the new religion introduced by the Arabs- Islam. Gradually, members of the lower castes considered the new religion their way out of the rigid caste norms. This resulted in the greater presence of the Mappilas on the coastal regions. The Mappila involvement in the maritime trade, their role in the naval force of the Zamorins headed by Kunjali Marakkar and the inclusiveness of the social system they introduced made them a prominent group in the city and the kings encouraged them to settle in the country and offered them various provisions from the treasury (Miller 66; Gangadharan 18). The interrelationship between the trading community and the local king brought prosperity to the kingdom and Calicut became one of the key port cities in the Indian Ocean trade networks.

The arrival of the European colonial powers such as the Portuguese, Dutch, French and the English and their colonising tendencies reshaped the premodern social formation on the Malabar coast. The presence of the Portuguese on the coast in the 15th century disrupted the convivial relationship between the community and the kings and feudatories of the region. The Portuguese challenged the trade monopoly of the Arabs and attempted to colonise the region. The Ulema and the community maintained peaceful relations until the last quarter of the 16th century as the king Zamorin patronised trade and spiritual activities. The combined strength of the Mappila maritime forces headed by Kunjali Marakkar and the Nair troops kept the Portuguese at bay. The trade relations continued to prosper in spite of the bloody violence committed by the European power. The testament offered by Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdoom II in his pioneering work *Tuhfat-al Mujahideen* states the Muslims of Malabar and Zamorin of Calicut kept harmonious relationships. In the book, he offers a detailed history of the region and the harmonious relationship among various communities on the Malabar coast. He writes:

On the contrary, all of them are subjects of rulers who are unbelievers.

Notwithstanding this fact, the Muslims engaged themselves in hostilities against the unbelievers (the Portuguese) and spent their wealth to the extent of their means with the assistance of that friend of the Muslims, the Samuri, who also expended money on their behalf from the beginning (21).

The Portuguese aggression on the Malabar coast was challenged by the Mappila maritime force and the Ulema, traditional scholars, who understood the atrocities in the context of the Indian Ocean trade relations. They produced texts in Arabic in

which they described the Portuguese as the invaders of the region and declared holy war on them. In addition, they encouraged members of the community to fight till the end and encouraged other kings to support the Zamorins of Calicut in his fight against the Portuguese. These scripts were written in Arabic literary tradition and many misinterpreted them as xenophobic and militant. In his insightful study, historian P K Yasser Arafath examines these Arabic texts and argues that they were not mere texts inciting jihad against the Christians but on the other hand these texts encompass a triadic approach to the invasion namely pietistic, jurisprudential, and physical. According to him, these scholarly texts involve encouraging piety and self-disciplining in addition to external confrontation. This approach hints at the comprehensive perspective of the scholars towards protecting their faith as well as the region. He questions the reductive arguments of historians who foreground texts like *Tuhfat-al Mujahideen* and state that these texts incite militant confrontation and explains that these anticolonial texts should be read together. He also comments that Portuguese violence was not limited to Muslims, but rural Hindus were also victims of the attack. He cites examples from oral traditions of the region and states that:

They (rural Hindus) strongly resented the presence of the Portuguese, and their expressed anger found mention in *Vadakkan Pattukal* (Northern Ballads) of the sixteenth century. These ballads speak of Thacholy Manikkoth Otenan, a Nair hero of Kadathanadu who single handedly kills 330 *Vellakkar* (the Portuguese) who disturbed of their everyday life and spiritual activities. Similarly, the lower caste Hindus characterised the Portuguese as ‘demons’, placing their activities in the textual framework of

Pauranic stories. According to a sixteenth-century Tottam Pattu, the lyrical part of Teyyam performance, the lower caste population in Malabar imagined the Portuguese as Ravana, who emerged from the sea to abduct and sexually violate lower caste peasant women in coastal regions. (Arafath 43)

Though the texts drew strength from existing traditions of writing, they emphasised the need of challenging the Portuguese aggression and restoring peace and prosperity in the kingdom and among the local community. These textual traditions continue to shape the literary productions of the community in the following centuries. *Manqus Mawlid* (1522) by Zainuddin Makhdoom I, *Fath-al-Muin*, a classic text in Islamic jurisprudence and *Tuhfat-al-Mujahideen* (1583) by Zainuddin Makhdoom II represent three facets of Mappila literary productions. The first one is a devotional text which celebrates the glory of the Prophet Muhammed and his role as a saviour of the community without making any explicit reference to the context of Malabar. The second text is written to instruct the followers on their everyday practice of religion; this is to be read in the context of Portuguese aggression as a punishment for deviation from the right path and the third one offers the need of fighting with the invaders in order to protect themselves. These texts act as anticolonial scriptures which involve piety, strict adherence to religious practices and the external confrontations. In addition, these scholars showed willingness to work with the non-Muslims of the coast as they were also victims of the aggression.

The continuous confrontation with the Portuguese for a century had exhausted the resources of the kingdom and severed the social formation and economy of the port city. The execution of Portuguese norms on the trade networks

further estranged Arab traders and by the end of 16th century, they were forced to leave the port city. In the complex political situation that emerged, the Zamorins gradually shifted towards signing trade agreements with the Portuguese which the Mappilas continued to resist. On the one hand, the Zamorins decision to negotiate trade with the Portuguese was a result of the economic condition of the port city and the internal challenges faced by the king. On the other hand, Mappila responses to Portuguese atrocities were formulated within the wider context of the Indian Ocean trade networks. Hence, the Ulama encouraged members of the community to take part in the anticolonial struggle and also offered allegiance of the community to the ruler of the land (Muhammad 7). The Mappila responses towards the Portuguese was informed by the Portuguese violence across the South Asian littoral whereas the Zamorins were more concerned about local requirements. Hence, the Mappilas were disturbed by the trade agreement with the foreign powers and the brutal assassination of Kunjali Marakkar IV by the Portuguese with the help of the Zamorin further estranged the Mappilas on the coastal areas.

Historians of Malabar do not offer an authentic version of the Mappila responses after the fatal confrontation with the Portuguese and the resultant distrust in the kingdom. On the one hand, there are historians who argue that gradually Mappilas moved to the interior parts of Malabar and settled on the banks of the river and participated in local trades. Others, on the other hand, argue that Mappilas continued trade links even after the Arabs left the shore through other ports and the Portuguese did not succeed in disrupting their role in the trade links. The arguments posed by historians like K N Panikkar that Mappilas left the shore after the bloody

confrontation with the Portuguese is questioned by M Gangadharan. Citing the recent studies on the history of Indian Ocean trades, he argues that the thesis suggested by KN Panikkar does not stand recent historical studies and the Mappilas continued to trade with the Indian ocean community and that they have not shifted to the inlands. Quoting the works of M. N. Pearson, M Gangadharan states:

When the attempt to resist the Portuguese failed, the foreign Muslims left. But the natives, especially the Mappilas, had no choice but to resist. These people whom the Portuguese called ‘pirates’ had notable success. These native traders, bypassing the Portuguese, exported pepper by land and sea in large quantities. In the first decade of the 17th century, only about one tenth of the total production in Malabar and Kannur went to Lisbon. The rest of the trade carried on without the knowledge of the Portuguese. There is no reason to think that the situation was different in the previous century. (23)

It is hard to believe that the Mappilas continued their trade during the Portuguese invasion as the enmity between the two groups were mainly on maritime trade. In addition, existing textual evidence written in Arabic indicates that the monopoly of the Muslim trade on Malabar coast wanes after the bloody confrontation with the Portuguese. Zainuddin Makhdoom of Ponnani stated in his *Tuhfat-al-Mujahideen* that the Muslims lost their monopoly. “In course of time the Muslims grew weak owing to the depression of their trade, loss of their lives and devastation of their homes and property. This happened a number of times. Consequently, their weakness increased, their poverty and destitution became intense, and they became

powerless.” (22). In this context it is reasonable to believe that the Mappilas of the coastal region gradually moved inland due to the intense conflicts on the shore.

The steady production of early Arabic texts such as *Manqus Mawlid*, *Fath-al-Muin*, *Tuhf-at-ul Mujahiddin*, *Tahreel* point at the Muslim settlement on the Malabar coast and closer circulation of texts and practices. It is during the dislocation to the interior parts that the Muslims required a lingua franca that united members of the community of the coast and inland. Arabic was the language of the elite and the ordinary Muslims were not well versed in the language. Hence, the introduction of Arabi-Malayalam dialect and the composition of *Muhyuddin Maala* in the 17th century underscores the migration of the believers to the hinterlands where they were forced to involve themselves in agricultural activities. Though historians like K N Panikkar cite this as a reason for the backwardness of Muslims due to the absence of material resources, the massive production and circulation of Arabi-Malayalam manuscripts as well as printed texts testify the active intellectual engagement of the community. The stereotypes of ‘ignorant peasant’ and ‘wild Mappila’ are largely ideological constructs.

It is also to be remembered that the Muslims were not seriously involved in active confrontation with the Dutch and French colonial powers. The Zamorin employed a political strategy of keeping all European powers at a distance and maintained balanced trade relations with all of them without permitting them to interfere in the internal affairs of the state. The invasions of the Mysore kings, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, are the other significant political events in the region during the 18th century. The land reform and the military occupation of Malabar by Hyder Ali

and Tipu Sultan put an end to the Zamorins' reign. The defeat of Tipu Sultan at the third Anglo-Mysore war brought Malabar under the direct rule of the British.

The spatial formulations of texts produced in Arabic as well as Arabi-Malayalam in response to the Portuguese aggression require critical attention. Arabic texts like *Manqus Mawlid*, *Fath-al-Muin* and Arabi-Malayalam texts like *Muhyuddin Mala* construct a fluid spatial narrative which address the Mappilas and persuade them to follow religious beliefs more vigorously. At the same time these texts invoke the textual and political context of the Muslim world and the transnational trade. For example, the devotional text *Manqus Mawlid*, written by Zainuddin Makhdoom I, praises Prophet Mohammed and his glory without making any explicit reference to the Portuguese invasion though the author encourages the followers to recite it in times of crisis. Similarly, *Fath-al-Muin* is a classic text of Islamic jurisprudence which offers detailed instructions on the personal and social life of the believers. Though the text was written in the context of interpreting the invasion as punishment for the deviation of the believers from the righteous path, the text is still in circulation and it does not evoke temporal remarks. These texts invoke the atrocities committed by the European powers and the chaos and trouble caused by them without explicitly mentioning it in the body of the text.

The composition of *Muhyuddin Mala* is particularly relevant. It is written in Arabi-Malayalam dialect in order to address the Mappilas of the coast and inlands. It forms a community out of these fragmented members by describing the life and miracles of Sheikh Jeelani of Baghdad, Iraq. The text addresses the ordinary members of the community and encourages them to venerate the mystic in times of

crises. On the one hand, it is a text written by Qadi Muhammed of Calicut in times of the Portuguese disorder in order to strengthen Mappilas to anchor their belief in God, religion and the holy men. On the other hand, he makes no explicit reference to the Portuguese but instead describes in detail the life of a saint in Baghdad which is completely unfamiliar to the ordinary members of the community. These texts place the reader/performer in a displaced textual space in which the socio-political conditions of the time are read into the text by the reader. These spatial formations are distinctive as it is written in a hybrid language and the spatial dimensions are also hybrid in evocations. In fact, these spatial strategies were widely employed by the Mappila writers.

These texts articulate space in two different forms: the first group of texts narrates the religious themes such as piety and jurisprudence to the readers without evoking any external crisis the community faces, though they were written at a period of complete destruction. The readers of the text recognise the message that these texts encode and respond accordingly. The second group of texts explicitly narrates the region-specific atrocities the community faces and declares war in religious terms. This second group of texts places the local Mappila community at the centre of the narrative; tracing their origin on the shore and promising them with great rewards if they die in the battle. These narratives strengthen the morale of the members and help them to join with the army of the Zamorin, the ruler of Kozhikode of the time. These hybrid textual spaces are repeated in the textual spaces of Mappila literature written in Arabi-Malayalam which offers them a tradition of

literary production which articulates resistance by blending the near and far and ensures the agency of the Mappilas in the battles that followed.

The British followed the maritime trade route of the Portuguese and engaged in spice trade. In due course, they systematically engaged with the local politics and strategically aligned with the Mysore kings. The Anglo-Mysore wars enabled them to bring South India under control. In addition to the involvement in spice trade, they also planted cash crops and exploited the resources of the region. The British occupation brought significant changes in the conception of the region; the land was transformed from a fluid cultural and geographical entity into a concrete administrative entity. The pre-colonial imagination of Malabar as a vast stretch of coastal line bordered by the hills accommodating diverse forms of men and cultures ruled by small kingdoms and chieftains was replaced with a geographical area with clearly demarcated boundaries controlled by the East India Company. Initially, it was a part of the Bombay Presidency and then brought under the Madras Presidency in 1800. Still, the region comprised a vast area of land including Kannur, Palakkad, Kozhikode, Wayanad and Malappuram - present day districts of north Kerala bordered by the Western Ghat in the east and the Arabian Sea in the west. The district was further divided into North and South Malabar: the region from south Canara to Korappuzha became part of North Malabar and from Korappuzha to Cochin came under South Malabar.

The Mappilas of Malabar were concentrated in the Ernad and Valluvanad taluks of South Malabar district. Sixty percent of them belong to Ernad taluk and they were mostly peasants. They found life unbearable due to the unjust land

distribution system and they submitted petitions to the government. In response, the government set up a special commission headed by T L Strange (1852) to study the issue and he reported that the revolts were caused by “religious fanaticism” and not agrarian issues. This made matters worse as the Commission recommended a repressive policy and consequently the Moplah Outrageous Acts XXIII and XXIV of 1854 were enacted (Hardgrave 63). The special commission headed by the District Collector William Logan (1881) reported that the revolts were caused by the unjust land distribution system which misrecognised the *Janmi*, the local landlords of Malabar, as the absolute proprietor of the land and empowered him with the right to evict tenants from the land. The extensive study made by Logan pointed out that the unjust land distribution was the root cause of the peasant revolts in Malabar. The recommendations of the report were not implemented and he was directed to withdraw the suggestion from the report. This intensified the miseries of the peasants and their attempts to challenge the system. Though the oppression of the colonial rule and feudal lords was faced by members of the lower castes in general, it was the Mappilas who challenged the British exploitation.

The company extensively studied the region and brought the people and the land under its control. In his history of Malabar, William Logan uses all possible resources available at the colonial archives using his role as the District Collector and constructs the history of the region. It is interesting to see that he has defined the region under various titles namely The District, The People, History, and the Land offering a comprehensive narrative of the land singularly constructed from the colonial resources. The representation of space made by the colonial administration

played a crucial role in imagining the land after the colonial invasion. The instruments of the colonial structure such as the census, government reports were normalised in defining the land and its people. In addition, the administration introduced legal and revenue systems which disrupted socio-economic structures of precolonial time. It is ironic to see Mr. Logan reproduce some of the stereotypes created and circulated by earlier British officials, many of which contradicted his own findings in order to position himself in the colonial administration (Ansari 83).

Historians of Kerala have underscored the centrality of *Malabar Manual* in constructing the history of Kerala. The breadth and depth of his study, his accessibility to colonial archives as the District Magistrate and Collector, his understanding of regional culture and languages, his academic interests and secular nature of the narrative made him a distinctive presence in Kerala history which has not been superseded; though certain minor issues were highlighted. One of the limitations of the *Manual* was that it foregrounded caste as a category of analysis and his valorisation of Nair community due to his own subject position and his role in the colonial administration.

Logan, himself hailing from a tenant farmers' family of Scotland, expresses a high regard for the Nayars, majority of whom were tenants of Malabar, particularly in the northern part. The "central point of interest" in the history of the Malayalis, according to Logan, is the "position" the Nayar caste occupied in the civil and military organisation of the region. They acted as the "protectors of the rights of all classes" by preventing them from being curtailed and discussed. (Venu 607)

The presence of the Mappilas as a hybrid community disturbs the narrative as he struggles to describe them using the terminologies of caste which do not explain the group. The Mappilas are at times referred to as a 'race' and at other times a 'caste' (Ansari 50). Logan categorises the Arab Muslims as a superior race whose presence is very minimal on the shore and contrasts the rest of the community as primitive and wild. These stereotypes further complicated the situation and the recurrent revolts were identified as 'fanatic eruptions' which goes against his own findings in the Special Commission Report. In addition, Logan employs colonial ethnographic practices to describe the community which objectifies the community and poses them as a threat to the majority.

The production and circulation of the stereotypes set to motion by the *Manual* became a part of the collective imagination of the region: his characterisation of Tipu Sultan, the categorisation of refined and educated Arab Muslims in contrast to the ignorant, wild and fanatical Mappilas of the region gradually replaced the very image of "a heterogenous region with different religions and races, in vibrant interaction with people of various countries on account of Malabar's importance to trade routes (42). The revolt against the lords and the state further alienated them from the public sphere as they were rendered an incorrigible entity in the body of the nation. These developments in the 19th century deeply influenced the approach of the community towards modernity. The Mappilas of the south Malabar challenged the British administration and its policies on the people especially on the Mappila peasants and they rejected the attempts of the authorities to establish English schools and did not take part in the process. Instead, the

Mappilas resorted to the polyglottic Arabi-Malayalam dialect to continue their everyday discourses. This response to the atrocities committed by the British culminated in the rejection of institutions of modernity which resulted in alienating the community from the newly emerging nation states. In spite of this, the Mappilas developed a discourse of the anticolonial struggles in tune with the counter imperial movement that took shape in other parts of the world.

It is interesting to note that Logan's *Malabar Manual* does not make any significant references to the Arabi-Malayalam literary production which has been present in Malabar since the beginning of 17th century. *Muhyuddin Maala*, the first literary work in the dialect, was composed in 1607 and the author Qadi Muhammed was a contemporary of Thunchath Ramanujan Ezuthachan, the father of Malayalam language (Moulavi and Kareem 338). The Arabi-Malayalam language is credited to have a wide variety of literary expressions including *Malappattukal* (songs on the life of holy men) *Padappattukal* (battle songs), *Kissapattukal* (ballads) and *Kessupattukal* (songs of love) but none of them were mentioned in the text except a fragmentary English rendering of *Cherur Padappattu* which was placed along with the *Vadakkan Pattukal* in order to testify the talent of the people in composing ballads exaggerating events of the past. Though he identified the song's relation to the Mappilas, he does not offer any details of its author or the language it was written or the musical peculiarities of the song. He introduces the text as "[t]he common people still compose ballads in memory of passing events, and one of the most remarkable relates the circumstances attending one of the Mappila outrages, and recalls with graphic power and a great deal of exaggeration of course, the chief

incidents that occurred” (Logan 101). The Arabi-Malayalam literary tradition developed a script of its own based on Arabic and Malayalam scripts and loan words from multiple linguistic resources available on the Calicut coast during the precolonial time. The British followed the Portuguese responses towards the Mappilas and the Mysore invasion further intensified communal polarisation in Malabar. The British administration strengthened the *Janmi-Kudiyam*, the landlord-tenant, relations and demonised the Mappilas. The studies undertaken by F Fawcett¹ to study the *Padappattukal* genre of Mappila literature was a part of bringing the anticolonial struggles under British control. Hence, Mappila intellectual traditions and cultural expressions were not familiar to the administration. In addition, the insularity of the hybrid language limited the access of the public to the texts until the second half of the 20th century.

The British supremacy in Malabar not only monopolised spice trade, but also occupied the geographical boundaries, people, history and the landscape. They made systematic study of the landscape, introduced new cash crops, categorised the people and controlled the land and resources. This exercise of power brought the entire region under control and they were defined in terms of colonial interest. The geography and the people were systematically surveyed and studied and various measures were introduced to discipline them. The liaison between the lords and the state made the lives of ordinary Mappilas difficult as they shifted to the in-lands due to the violent encounters on the coast. The land-owning group dispossessed them of any right over land and most of them were converted into tenants. Most of the converts from rural Hindu society were lower caste people, mostly Ezhavas and

Dalits. The control over the land by the state and the lords was questioned by the Mappilas which resulted in the peasant revolts. Due to this political stand, the Mappilas were positioned as the other; primitive, violent and fanatic. Their claim over the land, offered by the Mysore kings, was taken back by the landlords with the support of the state. In this sense, the peasant revolts articulated a claim over the land which was denied and brutally silenced (Miller 114). The state imposed a tax regime with the help of the landlords who in turn collected the amount from the peasants made it more difficult for the peasants to survive. In this sense, the revolts could be understood as a contestation over the land.

Postcolonial critics have extensively studied the role of colonialism in conceiving colonised territories and employing strategies to control, monitor and possess land and resources². The conceptualisation of geography and people enable the coloniser to exercise power over them and this leads into imagining the land from a Eurocentric view. The British vested power with the landlord to evict tenants from their land without any provocation and they had to challenge the state and lords in order to survive. The colonial domination of the geography was challenged by the Mappilas and Arabi-Malayalam literary works played a significant role in intensifying the struggle. The hybrid nature of the Mappilas' origin and their language created spaces of resistance within the textual practices of the literary tradition. Mappila literary responses to colonial aggression were manifold; there were texts that instructed the community to follow religious prescription in letter and spirit, devotional texts and performances were also produced, and texts that venerated the martyrs and declared war on the coloniser. *Padappattukal* belongs to

the third category as they describe the heroic deeds of the rebels and the rewards for their martyrdom. They encouraged readers to fight back to the British and the lords who denied justice to the community. Though there were many compositions of the songs including the one listed by William Logan in his *Manual*. Most of these compositions were seized³ by the British government and the printing of the texts was banned. Manuscripts of some of these texts were preserved by the members of the community and some of them are in circulation today. Among the *Padappattukal* exist at present, compositions of Moyinkutty Vaidhyar deserve special attention because of the popularity of the text and their aesthetic appeal. Songs like *Badar Padappattu* (1876), *Uhud Padappattu* (1879) and *Malappuaram Padappattu* (1883) were sung by the members of the community and the wider public because of its musical quality and aesthetic novelty. Among the texts that survive, *Cherur Padappattu* (1845) is distinctive as it narrates Mappila confrontation with the British and the printing of the text got banned. Lines from the text were quoted by William Logan in his history of Malabar.

The suppression of the rebellion in the aftermath of 1921 and the attempt of the community to negotiate with modernity and its institutions gradually weakened the composition, printing and the circulation of the songs. The transition to modernity required leaving behind the burden of anticolonial history and the community disowned these literary productions. In the context of approaching modernity, Mappilas, unlike the elite Hindus who nativized the nation, found their identities an obstacle in the process of embracing modernity. Dalit scholars such as K. Satyanarayana and Pradeepan Pampirikunnu have already studied the alienation

of oppressed communities in the nation as they were required to shed their traditions and history in order to be citizens of the new nation (Satyanarayana and Tharu 13; Pampirikunnu 562). Muslims of South Malabar too had to leave their rich historical traditions in order to join the national community which was formed on shared narratives. This crisis created fierce conflicts within the community as modernity required individuals to shed their collective identities and histories to be part of the nation whereas those who follow traditions were rendered premodern and stagnant. This ambiguity of separating the individual from the community spatialised individuals without history and whose cultural identities were rendered invalid.

The rejection of modernity alienated Mappilas from the body of the nation and they were not equipped to express themselves in the idiom of the new nation. In the absence of Mappila articulations, those stereotypes set in motion by colonial discourse became a part of the nationalist discourse and it coloured public imagination. Novels, an offspring of modernity, from South Malabar reproduced these cultural constructs and they alienated the Mappilas from the textual space of the novels. Early novels in Malayalam were influenced by the 19th century British novels and Malabar offered a fertile ground for novelistic imagination. Right from the first typical novel *Indulekha*,⁴ Mappila identities were marginalised or erased from the literary imagination of the region. This literary tradition continued to exist in novels as the imagination of the writers were conditioned by colonial structures of power. Writers from South Malabar followed the stereotypical constructions although their lived experiences with the Mappilas shaped their fictional locale. This trend continued in the works of the next generation of writers from Valluvanad taluk

of South Malabar such as Uroob, C Radhakrishnan and K P Ramanunni. They constructed a heterogeneous literary spaces of the region in comparison with their counterparts in the urban spaces. This was a result of the lived experiences of the communities in the rural areas. But, the emergence of nationalism and the normalisation of the elite as natural beneficiaries of modernity shaped the consciousness of writers when they deal with the colonial period and anticolonial struggles. The continuity of modernity into the postcolonial phase of the nation structured the nationalistic imagination by incorporating Eurocentric cultural norms. Novels written by S K Pottekkatt also have continued the cultural constructs left by the colonial administration in Malabar.

In response to these novels and their otherisation of the Mappila social life, a group of novelists produced novels located in the Muslim settlement of the region and wrote back the stereotypical narratives of the mainstream literature and rendered narratives of the lived experiences of the community. Novelists such as P A Muhammed Koya, N P Muhammed, N P Hafis Muhammed offered realistic portrayals of the community which normalise Muslim identities and redefine the public imagination by exploring the transnational connections and its harmonious relations with other communities. These texts break the homogenising tendencies of the literary space and narrate a heterogeneous space in which communities co-exist and the distorted histories are rewritten.

The present study analyses literatures from the city of Calicut and the Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks of South Malabar in order to understand how the colonial power structure influences literary spaces. The region is selected due to the

concentration of the Mappila community in the above-mentioned taluks and their consistent resistance to colonial rule in Malabar. In addition, the Mappilas have produced Arabic-Malayalam songs which have contributed in articulating resistance. The colonial administration suppressed the rebellion and the Mappilas were constructed as the other in the colonial discourses. The study further analyses how the colonial discourse influenced the literary spaces of mainstream novels from south Malabar and problematises the representations of Mappila identities in the literary spaces of the novels. The study contrasts these novels with a group of novels from south Malabar located in Muslim settlements and explores how the heterogeneous literary spaces of these novels challenge the homogenised identities of the mainstream novels.

The *Padappattukal* genre of *Mappilapattukal* was written in Arabic-Malayalam consisting of Dravidian, folk and Arabic music traditions and words were borrowed from many languages including Tamil, Malayalam, Persian, Arabic. Hence it was not easy for ordinary readers to understand the text's meaning but they were attracted to it due to its high musical quality. This study is based on four *Padappattukal* from Arabi-Malayalam; They are: *Cherur Padappattu* (1845) by Muhammedkutty and Muhyuddin, *Badar Padappattu* (1876), *Uhud Padappattu* (1879), and *Malappuram Padappattu* (1883) by Moyinkutty Vaidhyar. These songs were extremely popular among the Mappilas but unfamiliar to other communities and they were understood in three different ways: the first was the colonial interpretation which explored the crucial role of texts in inspiring struggles in Malabar. The second was the local scholars who interpreted the songs in the context

of the anticolonial/postcolonial literary tradition and appreciated the role of the texts in challenging British power and cultural domination. The third was the interpretation of those scholars who have not only identified the political potential of the text but also conducted literary analysis of the songs foregrounding the *Padappattukal* written by Moyinkutty Vaidhyar and bring out the literary and aesthetic aspects of the songs.

The colonial interpretation of the texts was inaugurated by F. Fawcett. After extensive ethnographic study conducted in Malabar, he published an article titled “War songs of the Mappilas of Malabar” in *The Indian Antiquary* in 1901.30: 499–508. Interestingly, two songs mentioned by Fawcett are written by Moyinkutty Vaidhyar titled “A Song of Alungal Kandi” and “The Battle of Bedr” and the authors of the other two are not mentioned. He offers selective portions of the song in order to testify his description of the Mappilas given in the beginning of the article. He narrates the brave nature of the Mappilas and also their willingness to die which he describes is in “opposition to Western feelings” (502). His article reproduces colonial power and ethnographic practices and does not provide details of the texts he rendered. Most of the colonial and elite nationalists circulated these narratives and the *Padappattukal* were misinterpreted in this fashion. He notes the belief of the Mappilas in the reality of the unseen, far off and indistinct vision that waits for those who die in fighting.

Padappattukal has been seriously studied by scholars in the context of anticolonial struggles in Malabar. These studies highlight the role of the song compositions in triggering the struggles as copies of the texts were captured from

the fighters. In addition, the British banned production, circulation and reading/performance of the songs. The study undertaken by Zainudheen Mannalamkunnu titled *Mappila Samara Charitra Padanangal* (2012) has identified *Padappattukal* as the ideological sources of the Mappila-British confrontations. In his analysis of the literary expressions of anticolonial struggles titled “Padakalil Padanja Poratta Veeryam”, A P Ahammed traces the critical role of Mappila literary expressions in strengthening the struggles. He not only studies *Padappattukal* but also other literary expressions such as the romance *Badarul Muneer Husnul Jamal* by Moyinkutty Vaidhyar and argues that the text offered a spiritual basis for the struggles to continue. Dr. P Sakeer Husain has collected some of these Arabi-Malayalam texts and translated them into Malayalam and discusses the political opposition the texts pose towards the British administration. His text *Cherur Padappattu Kanalpadhangalile Ishaljwalakal* (2018) is the first Malayalam rendering of the text. These narratives challenge existing Euro-centric historical narratives that describe the songs fanatical outbursts and posits to redefine history from the Mappila perspective. They also problematise issues of representation, othering of Mappilas in literary and cultural narratives.

The socio-cultural and aesthetic aspects of the song compositions are taken up by a group of critics who analyse the texts and explore its connections with the linguistic and cultural productions of Malabar. Though all of them have noted the politics of the songs, critics like M N Karassery, Basheer Chungathara and Bava K Palukunnu have made detailed studies on Moyinkutty Vaidhyar and grouped them with literary productions in Arab-Malayalam. In his study titled *Isal Chakravarthy*

Moinkutty Vaidyar (2010), Basheer Chungathara offers details of the life and time of Vaidhyar, nuances of his texts and the politics of representation. He has interpreted the texts from a Marxist point of view and highlighted the plurality of the poet's literary expressions and the strength of women representation. He considers texts in relation to the social contexts of Kerala and notes that *Padappattukal* are songs of liberation and they sing the aspirations of the oppressed people. The study carried out by Bava K Palukunnu *Mayinkutty Vaidyarude Krithikal Bhashayum Vyavaharavum* (2020) offers a comprehensive account of Vaidhyar's works foregrounding the stylistic, aesthetic and issues of representation.

Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu is one pioneering presence in Mappila literary studies. He located Mappila literature in the context of Dravidian and folk literary traditions and interpreted the songs as aspirations of the oppressed to liberate themselves from the hegemonic systems of power. He focussed on the syncretic cultural resonance in the songs and explored how they articulate resistance by using the song traditions of the Dravidian communities. His volumes of critical texts such as *Mappila Samskarathinte Kanapurangal* (2000), *Sthreepaksha Vayanayude Mappila Padantharangal* (2012), *Malappuram Padapattu Paadavum Padanavum* (2016), *Mappila Sahitya Padanangal* (2011), *Mahakavi Moinkutty Vaidyarude Kavyalokam* are texts which analysed the indigenous roots of Mappila literary expressions. He points at the role of the songs in narrating the survival anxieties of the race and proposes that they have a purpose that is not limited to aesthetic pleasure.

The popularity of the musical tradition and the role of the songs in inspiring struggles have drawn critical attention to the *Padappattukal* and they have been subjected to rigorous academic studies. Literary elements, politics of representation, ideological underpinnings and the relation with indigenous traditions have been established. It is interesting to note that right from the beginning of the critical enquiry, the displacement of spaces has been noted, though not seriously studied. For example, in his study of Mappila war songs, Fawcett states that the Mappilas believe in the reality of the unseen and they meet death with delight which the Westerners find strange (504). Similarly, in his analysis of *Badar Padappattu*, Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu underscores the significance of a poetic rendering of a historical event in the early days of Muslims in Medina in Arabi-Malayalam at a time when the Mappilas face challenges similar to that of Muslims in Arabia. In his study on the representation of Mappilas in literature during the colonial era, Dr Umar Tharamel observes “it is interesting to note that the history of Islamic wars is transformed into battle songs which inspire anticolonial struggles” (Sathar 311). This also points at the construction of literary spaces in *Padappattukal*, though the dimension of space was not explored further.

The negotiation with modernity is an imperative for all colonised communities. It is more so for the Muslims as colonial domination were embedded with religious conversion of Christian missionaries. Reformists from the community realised the need of appropriating modernity and the emerging nation states. The introduction of the print media and the publication of novels were part of the nationalist consciousness. But the Mappilas found themselves caught in the

struggles and they were not willing to position themselves within the discourse of modernity. The continuous production of literature and consistent opposition to the British administration till 1921 exhausted the community. The oppression of the British ended in reproducing the fanatical Mappila in the discourses of the new nation. This culminated in the production of literature, especially novels from South Malabar in which the Muslim writers did not participate and the mainstream novels demonised the Mappila identity constructed by the colonial discourse. Three novels by Uroob are taken for study: they are *Amina* (1948), *Ummachu* (1954) and *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* (1958). The novel *Oru Deshathinte Katha* (1971) translated into English *Tales from Athiranippadams* by S K Pottekkatt is also selected for study. These novels were appreciated for their epic nature, aesthetic and stylistic features, world view, realist portrayals and the engagement with the socio-political changes of the time.

Most of the critical engagement with Uroob's work is based on his poetic language, humanistic perspective and compassion, treatment of love and the polyphonic nature of the narrative. The work titled *Uroob: the Person and the Writer* (1983) by George Irumpayam is a collection of essays that feature the life and works of Uroob in which some of the greatest critics of Malayalam such as Prof. M Achuthan, K M Tharakan, K Ayyappa Panikkar have commented on the imagination, narrative strategies, his responses to historic events and view of life, and the aesthetic and political engagement of his works. Though the book does not speak about the issues of Mappila representation or the construction of literary spaces, it comments on Uroob's engagement with the 'Ponnani Kalari' and his

representation of the people and region. V C Shreejan, one of the prominent critics of Malayalam, offers the cyclic nature of the novel *Ummachu* in the book *Novel Vayanakal* (2003). He points out the stagnations of time and the cyclic nature of events. This clearly runs parallel to the observation of time and place in Indian fiction. Dr D Benjamin focuses on the interpretation of life that the novel *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* expresses at a critical time when individual life and historic events collide in his study *Novel Sahitya Padanangal* (1994). The study *Novel Padanangal* (2004), edited by Professor Padmana Ramachandran Nair, offers certain insights into the making of literary spaces in the novels *Oru Deshathinte Katha* and *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum*. In his study on the first novel, Dr N Mukundan describes the novel ‘an epic on the city of Calicut where the novelist lived’ and comments further that it is the story of the city and the region Malabar. The study identifies different layers of literary spaces that the plot is expanded and lists them on the basis of geographical distinctiveness. Though the spatial dimension is not further explored, the study has not ignored the significant contribution of plot and geography in the narrative. The novel has been criticised for the loose structure of the plot and the over-excitement of the narrator in producing episodic stories compromising the integrity of the plot. In his study on *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum*, Dr. M M Basheer observes the plot’s connection with the region and its complex political history. He traces the presence of linguistic and cultural elements of Ponnani in the novel but does not explain the shifts in plot and geographies.

One of the significant criticisms of Uroob's *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* is made by Prof. M T Ansari in his *Islam and Nationalism in India South Indian contexts* (2016) which problematises the issue of representation of identities as well as the region. In the study, Professor Ansari problematise the characterisation of Irumban Govindappilla turned Sulaiman and argues that the narrative put all the blame on the religion and people. Critics like Shaji Jacob joined the conversation and it explored the ways in which the complex history of Malabar entered into the novel and to the nation. Another significant study on the construction of imagined geography in novels is carried out by P K Rajasekaran in his *Andhanaya Daivom Malayala Novelinte Nooru Varshangal* (1999). Rajasekharan offers a comprehensive study of Malayalam novels' engagement with imagined geographies. He begins with early novels in Malayalam to Postmodernist fiction in the language. He draws insights from the Sanskrit and Tamil resources and combines them with European and American concepts in order to explore the politics of literary cartography. He deals with the realist engagement with locale and how S K Pottekkatt constructs imaginary suburbs and expresses the problems of urbanisation. According to the critic, S K's vision of a romantic tragic world limits his potential for producing dynamic literary spaces. The study does not engage with Uroob's texts. The work is notable for its theoretical framework and comprehensive grasp.

Novels from South Malabar located in Muslim settlements in the city challenge the stereotypical narratives of the mainstream novels and redefine Mappila identities in the fictional narratives. They have blended the binary constructions othering the Mappilas from the textual spaces and foreground Mappila identities and

heterogeneity of the region of Malabar. I have selected the following novels for study: *Sultanveedu* by P A Muhammed Koya, *Espathinayiram* by N P Hafis Muhammed, *Ennappadam* by N P Muhammed. In comparison to the novels mentioned above, these novels have not drawn serious attention and they were ignored in the history of Malayalam novels. Professor M Achuthan is one of the early critics to appreciate the novel *Sultanveedu* and in his 'introduction' to the 1991 edition of the novel, he has placed the novel in the heterogenous historical context of Muslim life in Malabar. Ibrahim Bevinje was one of the critics who explored Muslim representation in Malayalam. In his *Muslim Samoohika Jeevitham Malayalhil* (1996), Ibrahim Bevinje focuses on the representation of Muslims in Malayalam literature. According to him, *Ennappadam* narrates the lives of ordinary Muslims and explores their socio-cultural beliefs. It is rich with Mappila linguistic expressions and captures the aspiration and pitfalls of the community. The novel, according to him, aspires to become a history of all the people of the nation. Bevinje considers the novel *Sultanveedu* an epic on the life of the community rendering nuances of Mappila cultural life. It narrates Mappila engagement with nationalist movement, the confrontation with modernity, and the role of reformist movements in changing the religious ideas of the community. He observes that the novel was so influential that there are no novels in Malayalam which are not explicitly or implicitly influenced by it. Though the study does not consider literary spaces, it problematises the issue of Muslim representations in mainstream Malayalam novels. In *Mathilukal Iniyum Idiyamundu* (2012), Bevinje also investigates the invisibility of novels like *Sultanveedu* in the literary history of Malayalam. He questions the production, circulation and reading practices in Malayalam and explores the politics

of cultural productions. A recent study undertaken by Dr. Jameel Ahamed titled “Kuttichirayude Ithihasam”, a chapter in the book *Unmayude Udayaadakal* (2022), explores the novel’s intertextual connections with other novels in Malayalam such as *Naalukettu* highlighting the historic and literary significance of the work. He identifies the triadic spatial markings of the novel: the matrilineal household where the joint family live is separated from the places around the pond Kuttichira which acts as a space of the community. The world outside is the locale of the nation where various historical events take place. Interestingly, the study does not comment on the consequences of the introduction of modernity into the matrilineal family. The novel *Ennappadam* and the novelist N P Muhammed have drawn greater attention in the literary canon. His novel was studied on its narrative innovation, liberal representation of Muslim women and the place making of the fictional region. P K Rajasekaran has commented on the marginalised imagined locale of the novel and its relation to socio-economic background. Jamal Kochangadi studied the bold characterisation Muslim women in *Ennappadam* in his work *Muslim Samoohika Jeevitham Malayala Novelil* (1998).

The following are the major research gaps in existing studies. Firstly, colonial accounts of *Padappattukal* rendered by William Logan and F Fawcett have integrated the colonial ethnographic models of Mappila fanatics into the textual reading which discredit the aesthetic and political aspects of the songs. The anticolonial accounts, on the one hand, position the texts as political tools in triggering the revolt, obscuring the specific construction of the region in the text. Literary critics of the region, on the other hand, foreground aesthetic and stylistic

elements of the texts and offer traditional literary analysis of the text. This, in fact, ignores the dynamic textual practices of the *Padappattukal* and construction of the region in those song compositions. The right over the land and the politics of space do not gain centrality in the discussion. Secondly, the misrepresentation of the Mappilas in mainstream novels from South Malabar was not understood in relation to the anticolonial struggles they carried out. Instead of locating the texts within the historic contexts of South Malabar, these novels were appreciated on the basis of their literary merits, aesthetic appeal and the structure of the narratives. Thirdly, the engagement with modernity is imperative for the colonised subjects. The delay of the Mappilas in negotiating with modernity led to the disengagement with institutions of modernity and alienated them from the nation and disrupted the continuity of their literary productions in Arabi-Malayalam. Fourthly, literary historians/critics have not paid sufficient attention to the novels set on Mappila settlements and they were either completely ignored or drew very little critical attention. Fifthly, a comprehensive study located in South Malabar tracing the development of the literary expressions and the emergence of novel form and its engagement with the region and representation of people have not been attempted.

The study points at the need for foregrounding hybrid spaces of Mappilas in the discourses of the nation in order to render authentic narratives. It also underscores the necessity of producing minor literatures to legitimize identities othered in mainstream literature. Problematising the politics of canon formation and critically engaging with texts in order to position them within the literary tradition strengthens the dialogue towards cultural democracy.

The study employs close reading and textual analysis of literary texts written in polyglottic Arabi-Malayalam and Malayalam novels from the geographical region of South Malabar placing them along the rich historical narratives including the colonial and postcolonial accounts. The study makes use of postcolonial critical writing on colonial modernity in theorising the literary representation and exploring the politics of space-making using insights from literary spatial studies. It also engages with linguistic, musical and aesthetic analysis of texts from Arabi-Malayalam and the context of textual production, circulation and consumption. Discourse analysis of various spoken and written sources in the context of the socio-historical developments in South Malabar.

Novels from South Malabar produced by Mappilas challenge the homogenisation and othering of the lived experiences and spaces of the community, a result of the anticolonial struggles which culminated in describing Mappilas as fanatic and wild by the British, and write back the organic and authentic representation of the community by foregrounding Mappila resistance, its hybrid spatial and social formation and transnational links.

The chapter one of the thesis titled “Colonial Modernity and the Production of Literary Spaces” has two parts. The first part explores the concept of colonial modernity by analysing the origin and the development of modernity in Europe and how it is interrelated with colonialism especially in the context of South America. The chapter explains how colonial modernity was experienced in India and it influenced social formation in the country. Claims of modernity will be contrasted with lived experiences of the people and alternative modernities will be traced.

Drawing insights from Postcolonial scholarship, the study explores the introduction of colonial modernity and its institutions in Malabar and how it treated anticolonial struggles. Tapping the sources of colonial stereotypes, the study follows neo-Orientalist tendencies of the writers from South Malabar. The second part of the chapter introduces literary-spatial studies as it emerged in Europe. Drawing insights from Foucault and Lefebvre, the chapter explores the politics of space construction and the dynamic role of literary spaces in reimagining spaces. The chapter also discusses Indian concepts of spatial thinking.

The second chapter titled “Death, Graves and Memory: Articulating Spaces of Resistance in *Padappattukal*” traces the history of *Padappattukal* in Arabi-Malayalam literature and their relation with the struggles of the Mappilas. It explains the details of the textual composition and its distinctive aesthetic and political considerations. Placing these texts along the anticolonial texts in Arabic from South Malabar, the study explores the textual imagination and practices of the *Padappattukal* and the articulation of resistance. The study further explores colonial responses to the songs and how the songs challenge the domination over spaces and bodies. The chapter concludes elaborating the silencing of the struggle by the colonial administration and its role in stereotyping Mappila identities which were reflected in the public imagination.

Chapter three titled “Colonial Modernity and the Homogenisation of Spaces in Select South Malabar Novels” introduces major literary production and writers from Malabar and their engagement with the region. Three literary works from Uroob are analysed in the context of the politics of the region and trace the evolution

of Uroob's spatial imagination from *Amina* to *Sundarikalum Sunadaranmarum*. The study analyses the work *Oru Deshathinte Katha* by S K Pottekkatt and its constructions of the locale of the story. Contextualising these novels within the canon of Malayalam literature, the study investigates how the Mappila subjects are estranged from the literary spaces and the role of power in constructing an imaginary geography that aligns with the contestation of power. It also explores how colonial modernity disrupts the historical continuity of the colonised subjects.

Chapter four titled "Negotiating Modernity and the Construction of Heterogeneous Spaces in Select South Malabar Novels" traces novels from Muslim settlements in South Malabar and discusses their representations of Mappila identities. The study foregrounds Mappila engagement with modernity and the resultant spatial dislocations of the community. It explores the heterogeneity of the literary spaces and the incorporation of the transnational links, non-Mappila communities, Mappila musical traditions and the articulation of identities. The chapter is read against the homogenising tendencies of the mainstream novels.

The study outlines the continuity of space-making in South Malabar right from the British time to the independent India. It explores the spatial strategies of the *Padappattukal* and contestation over the body as a site of material space. The study identifies the influence of colonial discourse in structuring mainstream novels from South Malabar and explored the politics of misrepresentation of people and geographies. The study recognises the novels from Muslim settlements as a counter discourse which challenged the homogenisation of literary spaces and articulated authentic representations of the community.

Chapter 1

Colonial Modernity and the Production of Literary Spaces

Recent studies in Spatial-literary studies have explained the role of power in constructing literary spaces. Spaces are not neutral entities, but rather they are consciously shaped and produced by the socio-economic forces. Extensive studies have been carried out on how capitalism and its institutions structure our perception of contemporary urban spaces. Our experiences of spaces are ideologically mediated and all forms of spaces are constructed whether they are perceived, conceived or lived spaces. Human spaces are imagined by power and they are circulated through discourses. Engagement with the production of spaces and producing spaces of resistance are necessary for humans as none of us are free from the struggle over geography. Spatial literary studies have analysed how literature produces textual spaces and how it influences readers' engagement with imaginary geographies. This study focuses on literary productions from South Malabar during the second half of 19th and 20th centuries when colonialism was the most influential structure of power in the region. Drawing insights from the postcolonial engagement with imaginative geography, this study considers literature as a representational space and examining how colonialism and modernity construct literary spaces and how these spaces are contested and redefined by anticolonial forces. It also discusses the role of colonialism in introducing modernity in Malabar and how the legacy of colonial modernity actively structures postcolonial literary productions and the role of minor literature in contesting the domination over spaces.

This chapter offers the theoretical framework of the study in two distinct parts by explaining central concepts of spatial literary studies and colonial modernity. The first part traces the origin and development of spatial literary studies and the second part examines the relationship between colonialism and modernity and its role in imagining spaces in the context of British colonialism in India.

Literature and the Production of Space

The beginning of ‘spatial turn’ in humanities and social sciences cannot be traced to a particular moment in history, though Michel Foucault’s speech in 1967 is often credited with declaring the present as an “epoch of space” (1). The concept of ‘chronotopes’ was introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin in his literary studies which analysed the organic connection between time and space in narratives. The term “chronotope” is derived from the Greek words “khronos” meaning ‘time’ and “topos” meaning ‘space’ and he considered it “as a metaphor to denote the intrinsic interconnectedness of space and time in literary works” (Ramakrishnan 105). Bakhtin’s notion of chronotope was influenced by Immanuel Kant who proposed the centrality of time and space in human cognition and Albert Einstein who rejected the notion of absolute time and space arguing that they are relational. Bakhtin introduced the term to describe the role of literature in rendering time and space as concrete material presence in literature which enables the reader to experience the socio-historical and political context of literary works. He theorised the term as a meeting point of time, place and genre of literature forming a complete whole. Bakhtin not only imagined chronotopes as literary devices but “also “bridges” that engage with parallel space-time frames in the real world” (Lawson 385). Though

historical or realist novels may bring the literary and real world chronotopes closer, all chronotopes throw light on the real world. This engagement with literary spaces positions Bakhtin in the forefront of literary spatial studies.

In his essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel”, Bakhtin maps fictions from Greek romance to the present and identifies different types of chronotopes. On the one hand, he examines Greek romances and identifies the adventure novels of ordeal and observes that their chronotopes are alien and static which characterise abstract space and unchanging characters. On the other hand, he describes the adventure novels of everyday life as alien and static though they present the hero’s transformative journey in familiar settings. The space of idyllic fiction is native and familiar and the time is repetitive and cyclical; the space of chivalric romances is alien and miraculous and time is subjective and elastic. The space of picaresque fiction is native and episodic whereas the Rabelaisian fictional chronotope is native and dynamic. Bakhtin also identifies chronotopes of the road, the castle, parlours and salons, provincial town and the threshold and these minor chronotopes may get integrated with other chronotopes (Ramakrishnan 106).

Bakhtin’s formulations on the origin and development of the bildungsroman draws attention as it is the most widely used and adaptable genre in literary history. Novels from South Malabar selected for this study include bildungsroman novels and they chronicle the integration of individual aspirations during the colonial and postcolonial time. They narrate the hero’s formation, upbringing, education and experience from childhood to maturity. They are the most developed forms of biographical novels in which time is linear and the space is realistic and detailed.

Bakhtin had identified five types of bildungsroman novels: the cyclical, the novel of emergence from youthful idealism and fantasies to mature sobriety and practicality, the biographical, the didactic-pedagogical novel, the realist novel of emergence. The first type presents novels which capture the life of the hero from childhood to old age and death. The second type considers life and the world as a school which equips the hero with experience, maturity and wisdom. In the third type, the emergence of the hero happens in biographical time and the protagonist goes through unique and unrepeatable stages of life. Bakhtin foregrounded the realist novel of emergence as it combined individual aspirations with historical demands. In the fourth type, education becomes the central theme and the hero's progression is described in detail. Bakhtin treats the fifth type as the most significant in which emergence of the individual parallels with the emergence of a new social order (108). Most of the early novels in Indian languages belong to the fifth category as they were produced at a critical time when the young Indians were aspiring to produce a new social order. Bakhtin's engagement with the novel explored the dynamic relationship between time and space in narrative. His engagement with the role of space in narrative was a significant departure from literary analysis of the time.

Literary spaces encompass both human thoughts and feelings. Chronotopes mediate between the abstract and concrete nature of time and place in literature so that they are intelligible to the reader. While Bakhtin focuses on the significance of space as a socio- historical and ideological entity which shapes genres and world view of the work, Gaston Bachelard, the French philosopher, has offered an enticing

version of human engagement with spaces. He has taken the metaphor of the home and the world to explore the intricate connection between humans with physical and psychological locations. His phenomenological approach provides insights into the making of subjective spaces and the emotional connection between characters and the worlds they inhabit. This is particularly useful in the context of novels which depict humans in crisis with the world around them.

These early engagements with literary spaces were not part of a comprehensive scheme of analysing the spatiality of literature. Though Bakhtin examined spatiality in connection with the temporal and Bachelard explored the affective domain of space, spatiality did not become a central concern in literary studies until the 1970s. Theoreticians such as Micheal Foucault and Henry Lefebvre transformed the understanding of space in humanities and social sciences. Scholars like Edward Soja, Edward Said, Homi K Bhaba and David Harvey have further studied the relation between colonialism and capitalism on the production of space and the need of strengthening dialogues on spatial justice. In the following part of the chapter, major concepts regarding the production of space and the role of power relations in constructing literary spaces in the context of colonial modernity in South Malabar are examined.

Foucault has foregrounded the significance of spaces in his critique of modernity. He questioned the focus on temporality in human sciences and theorised that space is not a neutral entity but is reflective of power relations. He points at the centrality of space in communal life and exercise of power. He states “space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of

power” (Foucault). In *The Birth of the Clinic* and *Discipline and Punish*, he has pointed at the role of spatialisation in facilitating observation and gaining of knowledge. Foucault has made extensive studies on social spaces such as schools, prisons and their role in disciplining bodies. Similarly, the prison model panopticon by Bentham has been invoked to explain the way power operates by placing itself invisible but subjecting the prisoners to consistent surveillance. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, he identifies the spatialisation and spatial techniques as central to medical discourse and explores how spatialisation isolates an object from the social environment so that it can be subject to scientific enquiry.

His ideas on space are further explored in the 1967 lecture titled “Of Other Spaces” in which he declares the spatial turn and introduces the concept of ‘heterotopia’. The term is a combination of the Greek words ‘hetero’ meaning ‘other’ or ‘different’ and ‘topos’ meaning ‘place’. Though the term has been criticised for being slippery, incomplete or all-encompassing, it has been widely used in literary and cultural analysis. Foucault has described the term in contrast to ‘utopias’ which are “sites without any place” (“Other Spaces” 3). According to him,

Heterotopias are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other 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. (3-4)

This points at the subversive potential of heterotopias as they are real heterogenous spaces and represent, contest and invert real places.

Critics have been enticed by the concept and they are applied to indicate not only spaces of affirmation of difference but also as medium for resistance and defiance (Bentahar and Guerroudj 99) and considering various entities such as art, body and domestic spaces as heterotopic. Drawing insights from poststructuralism, literary critics have analysed the nature of literature as a discursive practice and its role in imagining, producing and circulating spaces. Foucault's idea that "where there is power, there is resistance" (Lawlor and Nale 432) also points at the role of literature in challenging spaces of domination and reimagining spaces of liberation. He further observes that spaces do not liberate by themselves and that liberty is a practice which requires consistent engagement with the production of spaces.

I do not think that there is anything that is functionally – by its very nature – absolutely liberating. Liberty is a *practice*. So, there may, in fact, always be a certain number of projects whose aim is to modify some constraints, to loosen, or even to break them, but none of these projects can, simply by its nature, assure that people will have liberty automatically, that it will be established by the project itself. ("Space Knowledge and Power" 4)

Literary critics analyse how space is constructed and represented in literary texts and how these spatial representations are linked to power, knowledge and social control. They also examine disciplinary spaces such as prisons and schools in fiction and how those spaces discipline and control social order. The role of heterotopias in reflecting and disrupting social spaces are also analysed.

Henri Lefebvre, the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist was one of the pioneers of spatial thinking who offered a comprehensive view on the production

of spaces. His works *The Production of Space* (1974), *Critique of Everyday Life* (1987) and *The Urban Revolution* (1970) lay the foundation for spatial thinking. He has theorised that spaces are socially produced and they are the product and the means of production. As a Marxist, he has explored the way capitalism appropriated social spaces and the role of various social agencies such as the state, technocrats and the town planners in dominating and privatising spaces. Lefebvre analysed the nature of urban spaces and conceptualised space as a site of contestation.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre introduced his theory of spatial triad which became the focal point of spatial engagement in academics. He has identified three dimensions of space: they are the physical (spatial practice), mental (representations of space) and social (representational space) spaces. The first one, spatial practice, produces social spaces through dialectical interaction and it refers to “a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure)” (38). The second, representations of space, is the conceptualised space by scientists, town planners, engineers which is a dominant space in every society and is linked to power and knowledge. The third, representational spaces, are those spaces which are dominated and passively experienced. It is the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ “which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (39).

The central argument proposed by Lefebvre is that space is not a given but is continuously produced by social actions, relations, and modes of production. This implies that every society and modes of production produce its own specific spaces.

He further elaborates that space is both a production and a means of production as a result, spaces act as a tool for action and thought, at the same time they are means of domination, control and power. According to him, the productive nature of space is concealed by a double illusion: the 'transparency illusion' and the 'realistic illusion'. He traces the evolution of space over historical periods: the first is absolute spaces which were of religious and political nature. It did not disappear but functions as a bedrock of historical space and the basis for representational spaces. The second, abstract spaces, emerged with the decline of absolute space under capitalism. It is the space of power, the state and that of the commodities. These spaces appear homogenous, but they are multiform and fraught with contradictions. The third, differential spaces, are those spaces which are carried within abstract spaces which accentuate differences and restore unity to fragmented social practices. It acts as seeds of a new kind of space which resist the homogenising tendencies of abstract spaces making it impossible to produce new spaces.

Lefebvre's ideas on space have been immensely influential in spatial literary studies. First of all, he considers space as a social construction and it is both a product and means of production. This positions literature not only as a representation of space but also an agent actively participating in the production of space. Secondly, his conceptual triad has enabled critics to analyse multiple layers of textual spaces. Thirdly, his critique of space has revealed the interconnectedness of space, ideology and power which is crucial in literary analysis of representation of dominant and resistant spaces. Fourthly, his focus on urban spaces have influenced the interpretation of modernist and postmodernist literatures.

Lefebvre's ideas on the homogenisation tendencies of abstract spaces produced by capitalism and state have been widely used in urban studies. He describes the inherent violence of these spaces and the imposition of abstraction on nature. They act as tools of domination, control and power. He narrates "its (abstract spaces) intrinsic repressiveness may be manifested alternately through reduction, through (functional) localization, through the imposition of hierarchy and segregation - or through art" (318). The concept of representational spaces is significant in the context of domination and resistance. According to Lefebvre, representational spaces "need to obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness. Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have their source in history - in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that People" (41). These spaces include art, action, and lived situations. They resist the rationalized, homogenized, and functionalized inscriptions of abstract space. The potential of lived spaces in resisting the logic of abstract spaces intensifies the struggles over spatial configuration. The conception of differential space also points at the possibility of other spaces within the body of abstract spaces which make it possible to produce multidimensional space challenging the predominance of the visual logic of spaces.

The centrality of the body in the production of space is a significant element of Lefebvre's conceptualisation of space. His insights on the critical role of the body as producer and product of space have influenced human geographers to explore further the spatiality of the body and its mediation between spaces. Human geographers such as Edward Soja, David Harvey, Michel de Certeau have engaged

with the body as an entity in space. Lefebvre positioned the body in a network of spatial relations. He observes:

[T]here is an immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the body's deployment in space and its occupation of space. Before producing effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before producing itself by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before reproducing itself by generating other bodies, each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space. This is a truly remarkable relationship: the body with the energies at its disposal, the living body, creates or produces its own space; conversely, the laws of space, which is to say the laws of discrimination in space, also govern the living body and the deployment of its energies. (171)

These formulations on the production of space by body also inscribe it with the politics of resistance as dominant spaces impose abstraction on the body and restoration implies the restoration of the sensory-sensuous energy of the body. He further discusses the possibility of reappropriating the body into space. The conceptualisation of the body is significant in the discussion of Arabi-Malayalam literary productions especially that of *Padappattukal* which narrate the confrontation between the Mappilas and the colonial forces in Malabar. The revolutionaries challenged the regime and were killed in the battle. Their bodies were seized by the colonial military and burned fearing the Mappilas worship of the martyrs. But the rebels started composing songs invoking detailed descriptions of the bodily performances of the rebels triggering further anticolonial struggles in the region. The

concept of counter-spaces also offers significant insights into the analysis of the song compositions.

Edward Soja took up the spatial triad introduced by Lefebvre and developed his idea of third space in the context of his study of the urban geography of Los Angeles. According to Soja, spatiality is to be seen as a third dimension of existence after historicity and sociality. The first space is the physical, material and empirically measurable space and the second is the mental or conceived space which is the realm of plans and representation and the third space is the lived space which is a combination of the physical and mental spaces. The third space is described as a fluid, hybrid and multiple space which is the site of resistance and imagination. He describes third space as “a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings” (2). It represents a radically open perspective in which the logic of binary is challenged and a third dimension is accommodated. Soja explains thirding as othering

Thirthing introduces a critical "other-than" choice that speaks and critiques through its otherness. That is to say, it does not derive simply from an additive combination of its binary antecedents but rather from a disordering, deconstruction, and tentative reconstitution of their presumed totalization producing an open alternative that is both similar and strikingly different.

(61)

Soja redefines Lefebvre's idea of representational space or the lived space into a more encompassing idea termed as third space in which all binary logics are

incorporated. It is a meeting place of subjective and objective, abstract and concrete, knowable and unimaginable, mind and body and everyday life and history without getting fragmented into specialised or exclusive domains. It is considered as a space of political choice, struggle, liberation and emancipation for marginalised and “othered” subjects. His theorisations underscore the emancipatory potential of the third space.

Postcolonial critics have analysed the role of geographical imagination in the colonial process. The rise of modernity in Europe created an identity for Europeans by othering the non-Western societies. The practice of orientalists created an imagined non-Europe’s in binary terms and Europe was privileged in the narrative. Edward Said, a foundational figure in postcolonial studies, explored the politics of geography in his *Orientalism* in which he argued that orientalism has split the world into two: the orient and the occident. The traits of the orient were constructed in contrast to the occident. These monolithic renderings of the occident had two significant issues:

First, Europeans projected a single culture into the space of the ‘Orient’ at odds with the diversity of peoples, cultures and environments contained in this geographical area, and second, this space was defined by texts and not by people from the Orient itself. These texts preceded experience, so empirical evidence was included but fitted into the categories that were already constructed. (Sharp 18)

Said has built a systematic critique of the geographical imagination of orientalists by placing it in the historical context of colonialism. Drawing insights from

poststructuralism, Said foregrounded the contestation over geographies stating that “none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings” (*Culture and Imperialism* 38). He has further elaborated on the role of literature as a powerful political tool in constructing historical narratives and imaginative geographies. In his groundbreaking work *Orientalism*, he has demonstrated the crucial role played by western power in creating an imaginary region, the orient, in order to serve the interests of imperialism. Said challenged the binary asymmetrical spatial configurations of colonialism in which certain spaces were described as civilised and others were required of domestication. He has undertaken rigorous examination of colonial texts and explored the presence of non-European territories within the textual spaces of British canonical literature.

In his seminal text *The Location of Culture*, Homi K Bhabha challenges the idea of fixing culture into a single stable location and argues that the culture is a complex fluid entity and readers have to look for it in between lines. Bhabha rejects the essentialist view of culture either completely located to the colonial or colonised locations, instead he encourages readers to examine the ‘liminal’ or ‘in-between’ spaces. He identifies these spaces as sites of resistance. He has formulated the idea of ‘third space’ as a site of cultural encounter and negotiation and describes that meaning and symbols of culture have no unity or fixity and they are always open to appropriation. He describes “Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and

symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (37). He further demonstrates the hybrid nature of postcolonial spaces which erodes unambiguous borders around nations and people and emphasises that all identities are fragmented, hybrid and unstable.

The spatial turn has reconceptualised space in many ways. Traditionally, space was understood as a container but spatial studies consider spaces as products and means of productions of social interactions. It is also demonstrated that space has revolved over a period of historical time and power relations shapes human spaces. Spaces act as means of control and domination in the hands of state and capitalism. Human spaces are multilayered and power centres render them in abstract terms making them reductive and homogenised. It is interesting to note that all theoreticians discussed above agree that spaces can be contested and social forces can resist dominations over spaces/geography. Concepts such as representational spaces, third space, differential space point at the possibility for transforming spaces of domination into emancipatory spaces. These insights over the production and deployment of spaces and the ways to resist them offers significant conceptual clarity in the present study.

The present study focuses on literary works namely battle songs (*Padappattukal*) composed during the British colonial rule and novels produced from South Malabar. The *Padappattukal* genre of *Mappilappattu* reconfigures the spaces dominated by the British authorities and problematises the spatiality of the body. The canonical novels reproduce colonial construction of spaces and novels

from Muslim settlements construct literary spaces that challenge them. Modernity powered by colonialism was the single most influential force in Malabar during the 19th and 20th centuries. The following section of the chapter analyses the socio-economic and cultural implications of colonial modernity and its role in shaping the consciousness of the people of the region.

Colonial Modernity and Social Spaces

The term modernity generally refers to the production of social and cultural changes in reaction to the process of modernisation which is demonstrated in terms of the advent of new ways of thinking and the emergence of new technology. The term is not located to any particular event and it has been used to refer to 14 periods in history since 5th century AD. Its origin is often traced from the renaissance, reformation, scientific revolution to the Enlightenment. In the general use of the term, “it tends to refer to the period also known as the Victorian era, particularly the latter half, i.e. from the 1870s onwards” (Buchanan 325). Scholars have attempted to locate the term with various historical developments: on the one hand, scholars from South America have located the emergence of modernity with the European explorations of the continent and its role in shaping the identity formation of Europeans in the 16th century. On the other hand, European scholars such as David Harvey have explained modernity as a cultural manifestation of the early twentieth century capitalism (D. Menon “Religion Colonial Modernity” 1662). Scholars have also identified the term by focusing on certain distinctive features of the phenomenon such as humanism, secularism, individualism, rationalism, capitalism and nation states. These ambiguous historical developments make it a complex

process and historians have questioned the very idea of using modernity as a category of analysis. As historian Dilip Menon explains: “it is precisely because the term modernity appears to be neither temporally or geographically grounded that there is an increasing suspicion towards its relevance as a term for understanding historical change” (1662). In spite of all these dialogues, modernity and its connection with colonialism have been widely discussed in postcolonial studies as the socio-political and cultural influence of modernity still shape the lives of the colonised.

One of the issues that postcolonial critics have raised is the dual nature of modernity: its theoretical frameworks are formed in Europe but its experiences are located in the colonies. The universal claims made by European modernity often conceal the historical context of its emergence and impose it as pattern for all the countries in the world. Tracing the evolution of modernity, Peter Wagner traces the evolution of the concept in the context of the religious wars of 16th century. The reformist movement had shattered the religious cosmology with shared values and knowledge and the knowledge system of the time is based on these shared values. In the absence of shared human values to anchor knowledge, Descartes and Hobbes theorised that the individual could be the source of human knowledge.

In political terms, the consequence was that one could not rely any longer on shared values and principles. The profound doubts about having anything in common with others led Descartes and Hobbes to resort to the individual as the only source of certainty, in epistemic terms, and as the only immediate holder of rights, in political terms. (Wagner 159)

It is ironic to see that the idea of modernity was created out of a rupture in Europe in the 16th century and the formulation of human agency was a response to the crisis that European society faced. The second significant fact was the European encounter with indigenous communities of the South Americas. The European explorers encounter with humans of the other parts of the world required them to define themselves in contrast to the new humans they met. This significantly altered their identity formation. These two crises in history provided the context of the modernity in which a world view was formulated centered on a rational human who have the agency to understand the world and is capable of making progress of human society. Though various forms modernity formed in different parts of the world, the human agency and mastery of instruments made European modernity the most dominant form of political power by the 19th century. The abstract theories of modernity as a rational formulation conceals the conflicts within modernity and assumes a universal model for the rest of the world to follow. Narratives of modernity never brought the colonial experiences into the discussion making it an organic development within the west towards human progress.

The theoretical formation of modernity had inherent contradictions within itself. European thinkers of the 19th and 20th century made significant criticism of the emerging bureaucratic tendencies, class conflicts and the discontent of modernity though the structure of modernity survived all these critical enterprises. In addition, alternative sources of modernity have been explored by thinkers like ⁵ Eisenstadt who proposed that modernity is not monolithic, but instead it has different sources of origin and western modernity has the claim of precedence. These developments

have thrown light into the historical context of modernity and its Euro-centric formulations and scholars underscore that “Western patterns of modernity are not the only "authentic" modernities, though they enjoy historical precedence and continue to be a basic reference point for others.” (SN Eisenstadt 3). These theories have invigorated postcolonial critics to engage with modernity. One of the fundamental questions that postcolonial thinkers pose is the role of colonialism in introducing modernity in the colonies. Though European powers have discredited all non-European cultures for not following the patterns of modernity as it is formed in the west, colonialism practically make it practically make it impossible for the colonised to experience the ‘progress’ modernity promised to deliver. There has been significant critique of modernity by decolonial and postcolonial critics challenging the assumptions of modernity and its introduction in the colonies.

The term ‘colonial modernity’ has been used to refer the experiences of modernity in the colonies. The secular, rational and progressive rhetoric of modernity was introduced by maintaining the interests of the colonial administration. This made the colonial exploitation invisible in the narratives of modernity and it continued to articulate modernity masking its capital interests. The term is defined as:

Colonial modernity sometimes, referred to as Eurocentrism is a discursive term/ concept, that is, it is not only about modernity experienced in the colony or in the period of colonialism but it is the way ideas, ideologies and knowledge systems were organised to refract and invisibilise the ‘modern’

contours of everyday experience of the people who are colonised as that being non-modern. (Patel 127)

The introduction of modernity has created schisms in the cultural productions of the colonised. Historically, modernity was born out of conflict between religion and the secular and the European patterns of thinking were imposed on non-European cultural productions which resulted in a schizophrenic split of the colonised identities. Modernity defined cultures, identities geographies in binary oppositions and the European thought was privileged. Modernity assumed as secular, progressive, anti-traditional, rational and scientific entity and non-Europe assumed other traits such as religious, stagnant, traditional, irrational and emotional; in their responses to life. This was an ideological construct and all non-European societies were forced to transform themselves into the models of modernity. The responses from colonised people of various categories varied significantly based on their historical experiences.

Postcolonial critics have challenged the assumptions of modernity in colonial and postcolonial societies. Edward Said and his *Orientalism* (1978) was one of the most rigorous critical enterprises in scrutinising the dangers of colonial interpretation of the colonised. He has extensively studied the construction of the orient in western literature and culture in general and explored how the modernity has created an orient in opposition to occident. The first is associated with stagnant and repetitive identity in which the historic progression modernity is absent and the occident is imagined as ideal space of modernity. These constructions were ideological so that they did not address the lived realities of the colonised and

foregrounded the cultural hegemony of the coloniser. The discursive analysis Said has made demonstrated the assumptions of modernity and its colonial interests in the colonies. His *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) dig further into the role of imperialism in constructing the literary spaces in European literature in which the experiences of the colonies are absent yet invoked.

Postcolonial historians have problematised colonial historiography and its Euro-centric assumptions. Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued that though European thought is indispensable for understanding political modernity in places like India, they are inadequate by themselves and are required to be provincialized. This implies that modernity is to be placed against the historical development in the West and they need to be localised for the requirements of the colonies. His ideas do not completely reject European notions of modernity such as liberal values, rationality and human rights, but they are to be located in the context of South Asia. His critical engagement questions the universal claims of Europe and explores the possibilities for plural histories and epistemologies. He also identifies two versions of history namely History 1 and History 2: the first refers to “the universal and necessary history we associate with capital” (*Provincializing Europe* 63) and the latter refers to histories that “does not belong to capital’s life process” (64). He further explains that these two histories constantly intersect and history 1 influences history 2 but it does not fully control the latter. Though his critical engagement does not attempt a radical shift in approach to modernity, *Provincializing Europe* (2000) is highly critical of the discourses of modernity.

Indian responses to modernity were built on the colonial experience and adapted an ambiguous position which neither fully rejected or accepted the modalities of modernity. It drew strength from Indian critical traditions. Instead of following the European models, this enquiry opened up possibilities for negotiations and reimaginations. Critics such as Dipesh Chakrabarty theorised the inadequacy of western modernity in interpreting the colonial experience and advocated to devise a strategy to selectively appropriate modernity for Indian context. Partha Chatterjee also proposed that while certain universal qualities might be ascribed to modernity, there are significant differences and modifications on how modernity is experienced and understood by people across the world. He has further studied the way different sections of Indian society approached modernity. In his *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (1993), Partha Chatterjee records the responses of various groups such as the nationalist elite, peasants, women, and the outcaste and demonstrates their engagement with the nation. He has explained in details how the nationalist elite split the personal and public spheres of life accommodating tenets of modernity in the public space and spirituality in the personal space. Thus, they developed a secular public life and traditional religious personal life. The book also talks about the peasants, women and outcastes who were marginalised and their roles were redefined under modernity.

The reaction to modernity by decolonial thinkers differs from Indian context; they have foregrounded the question of race in the discussion of modernity and considered modernity inseparable from the violence introduced by the coloniser through conquest, slavery, genocide, and dispossession. They have attempted to

formulate a comprehensive critique of colonialism and its racial prejudices and argues that delinking from Euro-centric conceptual frames work is a necessity for the analysis of the colonial experience. Their radical critique of modernity draws strength from the indigenous knowledges and alternative cosmologies. They explore the epistemic violence European explorers have shown to the indigenous communities by erasing traits of their traditions and cultures⁶. European colonisers have described people of Latin America as people without history because of the absence of alphabetic writing. “The notion of history and of people without history, which, if not hegemonic, was certainly substantial during the 16th century, developed from a philosophy of language built on the experience of alphabetic writing” (Mignolo 12). European colonialists introduced modernity in racial terms so that the painful experiences of the Americas influence their approach to modernity. They have integrating indigenous critical traditions in their criticism of modernity which make it authentic and radical. Though Indian responses addressed specific historic situations, they followed European models of thinking whereas the Latin American thinkers dug deep into their indigenous resources and made radical critique of modernity which offered a larger framework to discuss coloniality. While Indian critique of modernity and nationalism was structured by Western modalities and it focussed largely on the upper classes who appropriated modernity to its benefits, minor identities such as peasants, women and outcastes were not accommodated in the framework of modernity and the nation. Those identities continued to exist on the outskirts of modernity.

The concept of nation, born out of a relationship between modernity and capitalism, is the most influential institutions of modernity which shaped the experiences of colonies during and after colonialism. The colonial state introduced a highly filtered form of modernity in the colonies in order to serve their capital interests. Though the state promised benefits of modernity to the colonial subjects such as liberty, progress and rights, these were never materialised in the colonies. The 'Minutes on Education' by Lord Macaulay testifies the intention of colonial administration in implementing English education in India. He states:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, -a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (8)

This statement of Lord Macaulay points at two central concerns of nationalism in India. First of all, the British introduced the education system in order to create a group of people who are Indians in blood and colour but English in tastes, opinion, morals and intellect who were created to mediate between the colonial state and the subjects. This is in contrast with the promises of modernity of progress, rationality and technological advancement and highlights the nature of modernity as it introduced in the colonies. The second is that the British intended to create a group of elite Indians who will be educated in the English schools and they are entitled

with the spread of modern education among the great mass of population. The introduction of the education system provided exposure to European knowledge and cultural productions which resulted in the formation of nationalism in the country. This political context of the emergence of nationalism placed the elites, which is normally the upper castes, at the forefront of the nationalist movement and effectively excluded a large number of people from the nationalist movement that emerged. The nationalism that formed was described as a ‘derivative discourse’ as it indicates an adaptation of European nationalist models rather than an organic development in India. These models accommodated the upper class elite into the structure of nation and all other sections such as women, peasants and outcastes were incompatible into the framework of the nation.

The educated elite were caught in a complex political situation: they have to accommodate the European models in interpreting Indian experience so that their engagement with colonial power will not be disturbed, at the same time they may continue to follow their traditional spiritual identities. This was achieved

by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the “outside” of the economy and of the statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed.... the spiritual, on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity. (Chatterjee *Nation Fragments* 6)

This division enabled the nationalist elite to maintain an anticolonial nationalism without compromising their political position within the institutions of modernity. This ambiguous political position necessitated two antithetical engagements with Indian past. The first one is to celebrate by reviving a glorious past of ancient India which was destroyed by the Muslims. This produced an idealised Hindu past for the country and the Muslims were othered in the discourse of the nation. The second is to create a modern identity by accepting certain essential distinctions between the West and the East but to argue for progress and reform within. Though this position successfully articulated elite responses to nationalism, vulnerable groups were often left out of the pantheon of the nation. The identity of women was associated with the spiritual domain so that they were considered as guardians of traditions. Similarly, peasants were mobilised for the cause of the nation but were not considered as active agents with their own consciousness. The nationalistic imagination of the elite cast out these groups and their causes were not resolved in the discourse of nationalism. This incompatibility renders their identities in premodern terms.

Benedict Anderson has redefined the concept of nation as an imagined community in which members 'imagine' fellow members of the nation and it is limited by geographical boundaries and vested with sovereignty. According to him, the nation was born after the decline of transnational religious communities and the dynastic realm. He underscores the role of print capitalism and two of its most popular products – the newspaper and the novel- in providing the technical means of representing the solid community of the nation. The print technology provided “a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity

so central to the subjective idea of the nation” (4). This highlights the significance of the novel as a literary form in narrating and sustaining the national community. One of the consequences of print culture was the disappearance of a tradition of performance based on memory and ritual. It not only produced an author but also contributed in to the making of a public and movements such as reformation and renaissance have drawn strength from texts and translations published using the print technology. Printed texts have transformed the way humans shared knowledge and the introduction of print reduced human experiences to the visual signs on the page. The multi-sensory transmission of manuscripts was lost and the standardised printed texts were circulated among the community.

The origin and development of novel in England in 18th century and its corresponding emergence in India in the 19th century shares certain commonalities. The “formal realist” novel was a product of various socio-political and philosophic development in the West; namely the spread of literacy, popularity of print culture, the emergence of the middle classes and the individualism supported by modernity. These novels were different from the earlier novels for its focus on the realist narration, originality of plot, individualised characters and specific time and place. One of the defining features of the novel was its engagement with two distinctive types of spaces: the European centre and the non-European periphery. In addition, the realist novel was structured by the values of enlightenment. The realist novels of 19th century too were structured by the imperial mission. The interconnectedness between colonialism and the novel form is established by postcolonial critics. In

other words, the structure of novel reflects the imperial ideology. As Edward Said observes:

The novel, as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other. Of all the literary forms, the novel is the most recent, its emergence the most datable, its occurrence the most Western, its normative pattern of social authority the most structured; imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible, I would argue, to read one without in some way dealing with the other. (*Culture Imperialism* 111)

It is worth analysing the novels written in India in the light of the observations made by Edward Said. The origin of novels in English in the 19th century owes a great deal to the European form though the historical context is different. In the European setting, the novel reflects the life and values of the bourgeois middle classes in the metropolis but the plot either explicitly or implicitly informs colonial locations. These locations bring critical turn in the fictional space. Most of the early novels in India were adaptations of British novels and they were written by the English educated middle classes for instructions and reforms. On the one hand, these novelists have to address the vernacular reading public and their nationalist aspirations and on the other hand they have to work with the literary form of British novels. This complex political situation encouraged writers to translate Indian experiences into the framework of European models. These novels were extremely popular and often readers defended them from criticism⁷ as it narrated the conflicts faced by the educated upper classes during the colonial period. The novel enjoys

significant attention as it chronicles the contestation and negotiation between colonial modernity and anticolonial nationalism. The polyphonic structure of the novel made it the most appropriate form of literary expression to narrate the ambivalent engagement with modernity.

The content of the novel was determined by the conflicts and consensus between colonial modernity and the rising national consciousness. The dialogic system of the novel was not formed within the language but within the contesting world of ideas. The medium of the novel gained wide acceptance because it accommodated the ambivalence of national intellectuals. (Ramakrishnan *Achadi Muthal* 12)

The similarity of the emergence of novel in Europe and India is striking. While the “formal realist” novel narrated the anxieties of the middle classes in the 18th and 19th centuries during a period of rapid change, the introduction of novel in India enabled the nationalist intellectuals to narrate their deep-rooted ambivalence towards modernity without fully accepting or rejecting them. These reformist novels often centred on women’s lives and their role in the new social order.

Generally, these novels are located in the context of anticolonial nationalism and the novel acts as a tool for articulating Indian experiences. The ideological context of the emergence of novel is worth considering. Unlike the European model, the novel in India was intrinsically connected with nationalism and the novel took either reformist or revivalist turn. The novel was a medium of the nationalist elite who have to counter the European description of backwardness of Indian culture and

civilisation. Hence, the novelists constructed narrative of the past in which a view of a glorious civilisation of ancient India was brought forth; this narrative also required to present the medieval period as a period of degradation. In this way, the early novels revived a celebrated Hindu past and the Muslim rulers of the medieval period were depicted as 'other'. This construct of a mythic past is informed in most of the early novels which is also coloured in the nationalistic imagination. The second type of novels intended to reform the backwardness of the Indian cultural form which is largely in the "inner" domain of culture. One of the significant concerns of the reformist novels was the question of women. In the backdrop of colonial modernity, women's position in society needed to be reformed. The early novels presented women as title characters and those novels were named after the central characters. The women question was not posed as radical question, instead women were presented as guardians of Indian traditions and their role is readjusted in the inner domain of social action. Women were not given access into the domain of the public. In this way, early novels in India develops its own ideological contexts which is different from the European origin.

Social groups such as the peasants, women, outcastes did not have access to English education and they were not part of the nationalist narratives as well. Their consciousness does not fit into the frames of modernity as a result they were absent in discussions of the nation and narration. These groups were identified not as active social agents and their traditions were not accommodated into the spiritual domain of anticolonial nationalist discourse. Though nationalist scholars have explained the formation of the spiritual domain as strategic negotiation with modernity so that

benefits of modernity are accessible without compromising traditions and spirituality, writers from lower castes often find colonial modernity offering a path of liberation whereas the traditional scriptures limit mobility of the lower castes. The negotiation with modernity as narrated by Partha Chatterjee does not resolve the issues the lower castes face in India and modernity offers them the possibility of getting English education provided by the missionaries which enables them to enjoy certain civic rights which were otherwise not available to them.

The origin and development of novels from Kerala presents a curious case in literary history as there were many early novels written by lower caste writers in Malayalam which were not given serious attention in the literary canon of Malayalam (Pampirikunnu 563; Irumpayam 66). These novels were intended not only to reform the community towards modernity but also to liberate it from constraints of Indian traditions. The realm of spirituality in which traditions are preserved does not resolve the issues faced by the lower castes. In this sense, the novels written by lower caste writers narrates the journey of their protagonists from the oppression of the caste system into the spaces of modernity where they are protected by the colonial administration (D. Menon 310). Discussing the inadequacies of the nationalist narratives to accommodate the experiences of lower caste, Dilip Menon demonstrates the difference in the approaches of lower and upper caste members towards modernity. He writes:

Saraswativijayam was a radical novel for its time with its fierce critique of the injustice of caste and the emancipatory message of education for lower castes. The stagnation and iniquity of traditional society is contrasted with

the promise of equality and freedom brought about by colonialism and the missionary presence. (“Saraswativijayam” 302)

This explains that approaches to modernity is structured by the lived experiences of the communities and the elite nationalist narratives cannot be considered as a common trope in which all communities have to follow. The title of the novel *Saraswativijayam* means the victory of knowledge and it celebrates the victory of lower caste castes like ‘Tiyas’⁸ when they pursue modern education. The history of circulation of two novels written in Malayalam namely *Indulekha* (1889) and *Saraswativijayam* (1892) will help us to understand the relation between Indian novels and its connection with elite nationalism. It also explores the aesthetic and political underpinning of Malayalam literary canon. Though the first novel written in Malayalam was Appu Nedungadi’s *Kundalata*, the first novel in Malayalam, centres on an unrealistic setting and written as a harmless entertainer, *Indulekha* was described as the first typical novel because of its engagement with modernity and upper caste traditions. The novel depicts the conflict between modernity and tradition and expresses the ambivalence of the novelist. On the one hand, the novelist presents hero and heroine who are English educated and stands for individual rights and support social reform. On the other hand, the novelist rejects European intervention in the traditional practices of the Nair caste. This positioning of the novel within modernity and tradition, enables the novel to evoke traditional aesthetics and modern subjectivity. The novel *Saraswativijayam* embraces modernity and rejects the spheres of tradition because traditions do not offer mobility and liberation to the lower castes. While *Indulekha* was celebrated as a

canonical text in Malayalam, *Saraswativijayam* did not get sufficient critical attention. All these points at the interconnections between novel and the nationalist elite's ambivalence towards modernity and the exclusive nature of Malayalam literary canon which includes texts that satisfy the upper caste literary sensibility.

The historical context of communities regulates their interaction with modernity and nationalism. The Mappilas of Malabar has a long tradition of confrontation with the European colonial forces. The struggles against the Portuguese invasion on the Malabar coast resulted in the decline of the maritime trade of the community and they shifted to the interior parts of the region. The British administration in Malabar introduced a land distribution system in which feudal lords were the owners of the land and the Mappila tenants were evacuated from their land. The Mappilas fought against the British forces demanding right over land and the British narrated the events as fanatical eruptions thereby defining the Mappilas as wild and primitive. The imposition of a premodern identity on the Mappilas placed them as antithetical to the feudal lords and the state. In the due course, the Mappila subjectivity was reduced to aggression and they were excluded from the discourses of nationalism and modernity. The nationalist discourse powered by European modernity excluded the peasants and their struggles from the discourses of the nation. Their involvement was the prime reason for incompatibility and their consciousness were not inclusive of the models of modernity. As a result, the British colonial forces as well as the elite nationalists did not recognise the agency of the tenant farmers in the nation making process. The British defined the subjectivity of the Mappilas as “[T]he band which takes the initiative is composed of

men who have, through continuous religious devotions, assumed an attitude of mind in which the ordinary functions of the brain are stayed by religious ecstasy” (Fawcett “War Songs” 500). This description constructs an image of the Mappilas as deeply religious and incapable of being identified as secular rational subject. This narration continued to circulate in the nationalist imagination and this was not unique of the Mappila peasant but of most of the peasants across the country whose role as political agents was not recognised and their struggles were described in religious terms. The colonial and nationalist imagination foregrounded the incompatibility of the peasant subject in the framework of modernity. The nationalist politics assigned them to an inferior domain of politics where the peasants maintain their beliefs, actions and forms of agitation which was not integrated into the abstract modes of nationalism.

One of the reasons for the estrangement of the peasants from the body of nation was its sense of community based on shared oppression. Unlike the nationalistic engagement with nation, the peasants resist all forms of oppression including the colonial powers. This concern keeps them out of the patterns of nationalism that functioned in India. The Mappila peasants were also viewed from a colonial perspective in which their religious beliefs were explained as the reason for the backwardness of the community. Fawcett, a colonial anthropologist, comments that religious beliefs are central concern of the Mappilas.

It is supposed that his devotion to religious teaching is a drag on his advancement in secular education -that so long as he retains it, he will remain behind in the general struggle for advancement in a country ordinarily well-

ordered and peaceful; but with this I do not at all agree. It is much to his credit that he will have that which he feels with every fibre of his body to be the Word of God before everything else, and will not submit to have anything substituted for it. He is only too glad to have proper secular teaching after a certain portion of the day has been devoted to the Qorán.

(504)

The history of Malabar opens up a specific historical moment where the struggling Mappilas were fighting against the feudal lords and the colonial state. Both these authorities exercised power over the group of rebellious Mappilas which resulted in the rejection of colonial education. The anticolonial nationalist movement to which they were a part, abandoned them citing the violent resistance they put up with the colonial state. The Mappila confrontation with Portuguese culminated in the formation of a hybrid language, Arabi-Malayalam, which the community took to express their cultural productions. In continuation with anticolonial struggles, the Mappilas did not take part in the emergence of the vernacular press and the language based national community and marginalised them from the narratives of the nation-the novel. The elite nationalists imagined a territory within which fictional characters mapped the geography of the nation and the Mappila community was either misrepresented or made invisible. The anticolonial struggles of the Mappilas were central in their participation in the nationalist discourse.

The construction of Malabar as a fictional locale is to be analysed in the context of these struggles⁹. The nationalistic imagination always followed the territorial boundaries of nation and ignored the oceans which played a significant

role in the evolution of pre-modern India especially the port cities on the West coast of India. The social -political developments in Malabar is interconnected with the maritime trade networks and circulations of texts, people and commodities. The disconnection of the land from oceans disrupted the historical connections of the Mappila community and their pre-modern experiences were ignored in the nation's narratives due to the elitist and territorial engagement of the nation state and the novel. Canonical novels from south Malabar ignore the heterogeneous nature of textual connections and followed the homogenising tendencies of modernity in the representation of the Mappila community. The chapter that follows maps the Mappila engagement with fiction and explore how the oceanic relations re-represent their identities and challenge the elitist narrations imposed on the community.

Chapter 2

Death, Graves and Memory: Articulating Spaces of**Resistance in *Padappattukal***

The chapter discusses the origin and evolution of Arabi-Malayalam literature and its role in constructing inclusive literary spaces that accommodated the multi-ethnic culture of pre-modern Malabar and how its hybridity evolves as a space of resistance during the anticolonial struggles in south Malabar. Tracing the emergence of *Padappattukal* genre of literature that emerged in the second half of the 19th century, the chapter further explores the role of the song compositions in creating spaces of resistance and resilience. Decoding the politics of colonial discourse, the chapter analyses how body and graves occupy cultural spaces in Malabar and how the literary texts inscribe the body and memories of the rebellious Mappilas.

Mappila identity was always transgressive which refuses to fall into the categories of colonial administration. In his description of the community, William Logan describes them as ‘race’ at time and a ‘caste’ at other times which point at the hybrid nature of the community which also reflects in the literary productions. The first identified literary text in Arabi-Malayalam dialect was the song *Muhyuddin Mala* (1607) written by Qadi Muhammed in response to the Portuguese aggression on the Malabar coast did not make any explicit reference of the violent encounter but encouraged his followers to stick to the path of a venerable saint from Jeelani, a location in Iraq. The text sung of the miracles performed by the saint, his closeness to God, and also the reward his followers are entitled to get. The textual space is a totally unfamiliar landscape to the readers/listeners of the text but the text was

widely circulated, byhearted, transmitted orally and was instrumental in forming community bonds among the Mappilas of the shore and of the interior. Another significant work *Kappappattu* by Kunhayin Musliyar expresses his view of life through the metaphor of a ship and the sea as life and the navigation through the sea to the final destination. Both these foundational texts reveal two dimensions of Mappila literary texts; invoking regional spaces by describing the far-off places and the significance of the ocean in imagining the Mappila social spaces.

These texts were born into a dynamic community of pre-modern era and the construction of a space encompassing the near and the far is a common practice of the Mappila literary tradition. This is highly significant in the context of Malabar: firstly, the Mappilas emerged in the port city and their engagement with the ocean was crucial in the formation of the community. Secondly, the British administration in Malabar regulated the geography of the region and the Mappila articulation of resistance was possible by invoking hybrid spaces that accommodated contradictory spaces such as the near and the far, the secular and the spiritual. Thirdly, the land was controlled by the Hindu landlords in the interior parts of Malabar which alienated the tenant Mappilas from the land and the hybrid spaces of the literary texts provided spaces that connected them with the wider networks of the community through the recitation and performances of the songs. Hence, Arabi-Malayalam literary expressions were crucial in maintaining community ties among the Mappilas of Malabar.

The song compositions of the Mappilas named *Mappilappattu* was a syncretic form in which the composers integrated Dravidian musical traditions with

Arabic rhythm and borrowed words from many languages including Malayalam, Tamil, Persian, Arabic and they were extremely popular among the community. The songs addressed various aspects of the everyday lives of the community such as *Malappattukal* (songs of veneration), *Padappattukal* (songs of battles) *Kalyanappattukal* (songs of marriage), *Kissappattukal* (episodic narration of stories) and they intricately narrate the lived experiences of the community. Critics have considered the selection of Arabic-Malayalam language for artistic expression a reason for insularity of the music tradition from the public sphere and the delay in addressing modernity (Karassery). But recent studies have highlighted that the polyglottic language was a political choice made by the Mappilas due to the ideological position of the scholars. “It can be understood that the ideological positionality of Muslim writers in Malabar kept them away from the script and the visibility of Manipravala- language texts” (Aboobacker and Ihsan Ul-Ihthisam 102). The literary tradition continued to flourish till the early decades of 20th century and the introduction of the vernacular national Malayalam mediated the Mappila engagement with modernity.

Padappattukal is a genre of the song tradition of the Mappilas – *Mappilppattu*- which commemorates battles from Islamic history as well as regional events. Most of the early battle songs were of Islamic wars attended by prophet Muhammed and his followers. later on, songs were composed on anticolonial struggles against the British and a few songs were purely imaginative. Most of the songs dealt with anticolonial struggles in various parts of south Malabar were confiscated and destroyed. It became a dominant form of literary expression in the

second half of 19th century given the number of incidents where the rebels fought with the administration. Interestingly, these songs were printed and they were meant for private reading and public performance named *padipparayal*¹⁰. These texts drew inspiration from various sources especially from the literary traditions of the Indian ocean communities. Four compositions namely *Badar Padappattu*, *Uhud Padappattu*, *Malappuram Padappattu* and *Cherur Padappattu* are selected for study in order to analyse the texts, contexts and the emplacement of the songs and their role in locating the rebel fighters in the context of the social life in Malabar and the Islamic tradition of fighting with the aggressor. Among the four texts selected for study, the first two i.e., *Badar Padappattu* and *Uhud Padappattu*, are completely based on the life of prophet Muhammed and his followers in Arabia. The first one text describes in the form of a ballad the heroic acts of the prophet and his followers and their faith and bravery in defeating the mighty Quraish who were the majority armed with power and wealth and the second one narrates the second battle Uhud in which the Muslims could not win the fight with the enemy. The third and fourth songs deal with Mappila fights with feudal lords and the British respectively. All the four songs follow the historic context of the war, the exaggerated descriptions of the valorous deeds and the success of the Muslims when they stick together and failure when distracted. These narratives have created significant influence on the formation of identity and responses to colonial administration in Malabar.

The *Badar Padappattu* published in 1876 by Moyinkutty Vaidyar narrates the first war of Muslims with the Quraish in a locality between Mecca and Medina. It is a poetic rendering of the history of the battle of Badr and as it was one of the

early battles, Muslims were fewer in number and resources. Due to the torture of the enemies, they migrated from Mecca to Medina. The prophet and the followers were setting an Islamic society in Medina. The battle of Badr was one of the most decisive wars in the history of Islam as the defeat in the battle will wipe the entire community out of Arabia. Led by prophet Muhammed, a small group of Muslims comprising 313 members fought with the Quraish who were more than a thousand. The poet offers detailed descriptions of the battle in which the brave prophet and his followers challenged a mighty army of the Meccan force and eventually succeeded. In the process, many Muslims were also martyred and they were promised of great reward in the other world. The success in the battle enabled the community of Muslims to settle in Medina. Though the song does not make any explicit reference to the context of Malabar, the reader/listener of the song equated the early days of Medina to that of the Malabar under the British rule. The organisation of the community of early Muslims of Medina resembled the Mappilas as many of them were converted from the lower caste Hindu society. The success of a battle led by a small group of people and their triumph inspired the Mappilas to fight against the British in spite of the huge difference in their wealth and strength. The rewards offered to the martyrs were highlighted in the context of the miserable life of the peasants in the region. The integration of the early Muslim community of Arabia with that of the Malabar made a huge impact on the people as it was performed in different parts of Malabar. The extensive use of Dravidian song tradition and the perfection of the craft made the text unparalleled in the canon of Arabi-Malayalam literary productions. A large number of people attended the performance of the song and the artists interpreted the texts for the audience making the complex textual

references accessible to the ordinary members of the society. These narrations also helped to locate the distant lands of the text in the region of Malabar.

Uhud Padappattu by Moyinkutty Vaidyar was a significant song as it narrated the second battle in Arabia. The huge success the Muslims had won in the first battle did not repeat here and the Muslims were disheartened to see that a greater number of them were killed in the battle comparing of the earlier one and the prophet was injured. One of the reasons of the failure was the negligence of the instructions given by the prophet by a group of his followers. The battle of Uhud did not attract the poets like the way the Badar did and “it might be due to the bitter experiences in the battle of Uhud that the battle of Uhud has not received sufficient attention in Mappila literary thought” (Vallikkunnu 157). Vaidyar’s musical rendering is unmatched in the canon of Arabi-Malayalam literature. Textual references were identical with that of Malabar where the Mappila peasants were finding it difficult to survive. The annoyance of the reverberated among the members of the community and strict adherence to the religious instruction were highlighted. It is the only text in which Vaidyar has included a complete verse from the Quran reminding people that success as well failures is from God and the believers have to follow the prophet and maintain patience in times of crisis. The inclusion of certain Kerala musical instruments in the *Padappattu* was noted by many critics.

Malappuram Padappattu is the only *Padappattu* by Moyinkutty Vaidyar which is based on a historical event in Malabar. The theme of the poem is based on a historical confrontation between Mappilas and Paranambi, a feudal lord, in

Malappuram in 1732 and the song was quoted in the study of F Fawcett. It is interesting to note that poet composed a poem in 1885, almost after 160 years of the incident, might be due to the complex relation between the Kondotty Thangal, the patron of the poet, and the British in Malabar. While the Mappilas in general were anticolonial in their attitude, Kondotty Thangal recognised the British authorities and was given the right to collect taxes from the province. Hence, the composition of a poem which directly narrate a confrontation between the Mappilas and the British might disturb the patron and the poet explores the history of confrontation between a local feudatory and the Mappilas but invokes the spirit of the fight. It is reported that among the *padappattukal* composed by Vaidyar, it is *Malappuram Padappattu* that the British banned.

The British ban on the singing and interpretation of the song might be because they recognised the influence of the song. Other *Padappattukal* by the poet did not face any such restrictions. It is also reported that when the bodies of some of the rebels killed in the struggles of 1921 were examined, copies of the song were found tucked into their belt. (Palukunnu 238)

This points at a paradoxical situation in which a poetic form of a historical incident occurred a century ago influences the rebels in 19th and 20th century and the British banned the public performance of the text. In the textual making of the text, only a detailed narrative the incidents occurred in Malappuram was recounted but brings an immediacy into the context and inspires the rebels to fight with the colonial administration.

The poet employs the song to establish the arrival of Islam in India and how the Muslims maintained harmonious relationship with other communities. The song narrates the incidents in Malappuram in which a feudal lord Paranambi attacked the Muslims because of a conflict between one of the tax collectors named Alimarakkar and the feudal lord. Historical account of the conflict is available and it is believed that the poet collected all the necessary details required for the song by himself from people of the region and composed the verses. The conflict between the feudal lord and Alimarakkar takes a communal tone as the lord seek help to suppress the Mappilas of the region. He sends soldiers and they set fire to a mosque in Malappuram which eventually forces the Mappilas to fight with feudal lord. The poet captures the brave Mappilas fighting with the soldiers and finally all of them were killed, attaining the status of shahids. This rendering of a local incident inspires to recount the history of Mappilas in Malabar making it one of the earliest literary texts dealing with the history of the region. Though critics vary in their response to the song regarding the selection and composition, it provides certain insight into the collective life of the Mappilas. It is interesting to note that the Mappilas offers all their wealth and possessions in order to prevent the mosque bring burnt and their willingness to die is inspired by religious convictions than poverty or any other concerns. The Mappila women in the song requests the feudal lord and his army to spare the mosque for all the jewelleries they had. In analysing the agency of women in the song, Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu describes: “The mothers submitted their request in front of Paranambi. They promised to hand over all the jewelleries they have if he spares the mosque. They disowned the activities of Alimarakkar but Nambi did not accept their request and the mothers returned hopelessly”

(*Malappuram Padappattu* 25). Critics like Basheer Chungathara have analysed the politics of selection of historical materials for the composition. According to him, there are two significant omissions in the song. The first is there are different versions of the incident and the poet has consciously ignored the part of history in which the feudal lord Paranambi regrets his actions and requested the Muslims to return to Malappuram and rebuild the mosque. The second is the role of a goldsmith in defending the mosque and got killed in the fight (114). But the poet has ignored this aspect of the incident and focusses only on the Mappila engagement with the feudal lord. Though various accounts of explanations are given, this might be a result of Vaidyar's engagement with the anticolonial struggles in Malabar and he was providing ideological support to the rebels and the exclusions enables him to frame the conflict within the contemporary Mappila engagement with the British. This selection of the historical incident itself points at Vaidyar's strategic selection of historic incidents as the Malappuram conflict happened in pre-British time so that the colonial administration did not recognise the potential of the song till the end of the century and later on its performances were censored but still the texts were safely kept.

The fourth text *Cherur Padappattu* is different from all the earlier texts. It deals with a contemporary incident in which a group of seven Mappilas led by Mamburam Thangal fought against the British. It was written by two locals named Muhyiddin and Mammadkutty in 1845 and the British were very sensitive of the influences of the text and its printing was banned and the copies seized. It was not as literary as the *padappattukal* by Moyinkutty vaidyar, but the text was highly in

circulation and a part of it was included in the *Malabar Manual* by William Logan. The struggle was provoked by religious conversion. The song narrates the influence of Mamburam Thangal in the region and six people out of which three men and three women visits the venerable Thangal and get converted to Islam. Once they came back to their locality, the land lord Krishnan Adhikri feels furious to see that his tenants are converted to another religion and they do not obey his orders to remove religious signs. Finally, four Mappilas arrive at Cherur and murders the landlord which results in a confrontation in which Mappilas are killed by the British army. The enmity between the upper caste Hindus and the converted Mappilas are narrated in the song in a highly exaggerated manner using existing patterns of music traditions.

One of the significant aspects of the songs was its treatment of life and death. These songs begin with the Muslims fight with the enemy and there are battles where they succeed and in other, they die in the battle. The texts offer detailed description of the exciting rewards they martyrs are gifted once they die. All battle songs present the willingness of the Mappilas/ Muslims to die for their faith and give up all their worldly possessions. These texts treat life and death from theological point of view in which death and the life after death promise more than what the material world do. Those songs based on Arabia as well as those located in Malabar imagine a sacred space where the material constrains of the worldly life do not enter. In his ethnographic study on the war songs of Mappilas of Malabar, F Fawcett wonders at the way the Mappilas respond to death and this makes him to describe them foolish, ignorant and fanatic. He describes: “To the western mind this devotion

to death, which combines tender longing with fiendish fury is altogether incomprehensible. How is it that the severest of all punishments has no effect in preventing one outburst succeeding the other? in none of which a Mappila has ever been taken unwounded” (Fawcett 500). This attitude towards death was drawn from various sources including the Arabian battles as well as the indigenous sources like *Vadakkanpattukal* which celebrates the rise and fall of heroes in the battlefields and songs were composed of their bravery in life and death. Both colonialist and nationalist narratives have considered the Mappila peasant revolt as a product of ignorance and fanaticism (Ansari 64). In his interpretation of the peasant revolts in Malabar, M T Ansari presents a different perspective:

Working against the idea of the natural stupidity of a peasant, I would interpret “martyrdom” as a religio-political strategy. It was, after all, not an easy task to risk an insurrection against a well-armed adversary. Having everything to lose yet confronted with the sheer impossibility of continuing as before, the peasant-insurgents had to be aware of the implications of their deed. Once the peasants’ decision to become “martyrs” is reconfigured as a political choice, it is possible to see how such a decision is a strategic choice, taken after careful consideration of available options. (82)

In spite of the modern perspective on death and decay, this need to be understood in the wider context of European and non-European perspective on life, death and the burial ground as their position in culture influences our perspective on the rebels. The British administration treated the songs as a source of inciting violence, the graves as a place where the memories of the martyrs are kept alive and death as an

end of the material world. In the next part of the chapter, I outline how the evolution of the concepts of death and grave have been discussed in Europe and how it reflects the world view of the Enlightenment. A comprehensive look at the evolution of graves in Europe will help us to understand how the materiality of Enlightenment has influenced the Western view of death and graves and how these entities function in Mappila world view. While Enlightenment pushes the graves and graveyards to the city suburbs, they occupy the centre of Mappila world view in the 19th and early 20th century. In the absence of the public performances associated with the dead, the texts of battle songs act as graves where the memories of the deceased are kept alive. The *padipparrayal* of songs becomes a symbolic act of visiting the graves. The bodies buried by the British takes eternal life in them. In this sense, compositions of the songs are a metaphoric way of bringing them back to life.

Cemeteries with tombstones are crisis heterotopias in many ways. They are sacred places in which the physical and the metaphysical meet and serve distinctive purposes in various societies. They accommodate incompatible spaces within themselves and are linked with heterochronies¹¹. In his discussion of heterotopias, Michael Foucault points at the spatial relocations of cemeteries in Europe. According to him, until the 19th century, a cemetery with tombstones was placed at the centre of the city, next to the church and the body remains were not given importance as people believed in the resurrection of bodies and immortality of the soul. During the 19th century, cemeteries were gradually shifted towards the suburbs and death was reconceptualized as illness. “[i]n correlation with the individualization of death and the bourgeois appropriation of the cemetery, there

arises an obsession with death as ‘illness’” (Foucault 9). This spatial alignment of graveyards in the west has made graves bereft of all the sacred and immortal significations and reduced them to dark resting places. Though graveyards in general break away from the traditional time and they encompass various slices of time within themselves; the displacement of cemeteries from the heart of the city to other of the city- the suburb- is a significant dislocation.

Graves, like museums, do accumulate time in an immobile place which is inaccessible to the present. Though the premodern prime position of the cemetery was challenged by 19th century thought, it is true that graveyards share many features of libraries or museums. Libraries and museums are heterotopias in the sense that they perpetually and indefinitely accumulate time and archive everything in place which is out of time and place. The archival of time in place through institutions such as libraries and museums is central in the formation of western modernity. In this context, it is worth analysing the spatio-temporal significance of graveyards- which have fallen out of grace- in European and non-European cultures. This is particularly relevant in the case of postcolonial societies in which graves still constitute the sacred and sublime functions. Graveyards thus become sites of discursive battles and act as a platform of articulating non-modern existence. This chapter analyses European tryst with the semiotic spaces of graves and how far the heterotopia of graveyard has contributed in articulating spaces of counter cultural discourses in the backdrop of anticolonial struggles in Malabar.

Graveyards begin with strange heterochrony. One gains entry into a grave with the loss of life and it offers eternity to the soul when the body disappears in the

graveyard. They are spaces connected with all the sites of the city, state, society and village and everyone is connected with them. They stand for human mediation with eternity but they occupy physical spaces which are inaccessible to the present. The Enlightened reformers of the 19th century severely criticised the church for being concerned with the soul but not with the body and argued for burial reforms which resulted in managing the dead away from the heart of the city. Conceptualised as a dangerous source of disease, liberalism advocated security and freedom in order to produce the least exposure to dangers of the dead.

The liberal burial reformers demean traditional ways of disposing of the dead; idealise middle class sanitary ways of disposal, introduce administrative procedures that split any link or proximity between the living and the dead and introduce a modern regime of regulation and surveillance.

(Johnson)

In his fascinating history of the changing spaces of death, Aries rightly observes that the modern attitude to death is in many ways unhealthy. Until the 19th century, cemeteries were of highly heterogeneous spaces which acted as resting place for the elderly, playground for children, meeting spot for lovers and a place to conduct business as well as to dance, gamble and socialise (Johnson). These heterogeneous spaces have been interrogated by the values of Enlightenment and replaced by utopian designs which cutoff the social linkages of the burial ground with the social groups outside. Thus, Enlightenment has rendered graveyards as a mundane space where all sacred functions and heterogeneity cease to perform. This fear of the dead

and illness associated with it disrupts the continuity that existed between the dead and the living.

It is interesting to note that the graves which are believed to be the house of the dead often provided means of living and it offered a distinctive space that claimed to have metaphysical dimensions and influenced the world of the living. Creative writers were the first to realise this distinctiveness of the grave and they made use of them to articulate narrative voices that otherwise would be left unsaid. Writers from distinctive social groups such as diasporic communities and Dalits have identified the complex subversive potential of divinity and grave in challenging hegemony. They have a complex relation with the grave as a site of the sacred and the mundane. Unlike the 19th century ideas of death as illness, oppressed sections often imagine the sacred graves as a ‘nowhere place’ unscripted by the existing power relations. Thus, these places form subversive spaces in which resistance to power can be articulated.

The paradoxical treatment of death and grave in Dalit writing across India testifies this. In the debut novel of Meena Kandaswamy, *The Gypsy Goddess*, communist revolutionaries are denied access to any social space to organise people and challenge the hegemony of upper caste landlords in a remote village in Tamil Nadu, south India. “Those were the days when the party’s secret meetings were held in cremation grounds. We used to get away with it because the informers dismissed the light of our torches as the fire-breathing tongue of the *Kollivaai Pisaasu* (59-60). The divinity of the cremation land and the belief in the evil spirit named *Kollivaai Pisaasu* erase the inscriptions of power and render it a site of

subversive politics. This act of erasing the power relations is dramatic in the writings of Dalits. In the story titled *Gold from the Grave* by Anna Bahu Sathe, the unemployed Dalit man in the story visits graves in the night and collects ornaments buried with the dead. His urge for survival conquers his fear of the dead and digs gold from the grave and finds sustenance for life. Confused by the course of events, he wonders at the paradoxes of life and death and retorts to his discouraging wife “This city of Bombay itself is a colony of ghosts. The spectres live in houses and the dead one rot in the graves. Monsters breed in the city, not in the jungle” (Dangle, 212). Here the writer juxtaposes the spatial significations of the city and the grave and realises the connections between life rendering graves and deadness of life in the city in the fashion of the modernist criticism of the urban spaces. The story eventually establishes the continuity between life and death and the burial ground as a source of life.

Graves in Precolonial Malabar

The significance of the *Padappattukal* texts will be revealed once they are understood in the wider context of Mappila culture and its interconnectedness with graves. The presence of graves has a distinctive cultural meaning for the precolonial South Asian diasporic communities. Calicut, an active port city in precolonial Malabar, was a centre of commerce and business and housed the diasporic communities of the Indian ocean. Until the western colonial powers monopolised trade on the western coast of India, traders from various parts of the world such as Arabs, Persians, Phoenicians had active trade links with the port city under the zamorins of Calicut. These trade networks covered the entire Indian ocean and they

largely depended on the monsoon winds to sail through the oceanic spaces. Every sea voyage spanned months of travel in the sea and the traders gradually formulated a cosmopolitan port city on the Malabar coast. The transnational community often had diverse places of origin and their death in fact marked their presence for the descendants. Focusing on the diaspora of Hadrami Sayyids of Hadramawt, Engseng Ho recounts the semiotic representation of graves among the Indian ocean communities.

Graves, while they are endpoints for migrants, are beginnings for their descendants, marking the truth of their presence in a land. For many diasporas, then, graves are significant places. Abroad, migrants who could no longer be close to their parents can be visited by their own children. Graves provide a ready point of return in a world where origins keep moving on. (3)

In this view, graves are a semiotic complex and they enter into discourse when a visitor reads the inscriptions on the tombstone. The graves of saints and other significant people have a greater role to play in the life of the people; at times, they become the site of political confrontations. These cultures view graves as sites of pilgrimage and they lie within the circuits of movements of people and texts. It is interesting to note that the history of graves in Europe presents them as a meeting place of social interactions, the non-European communities have kept the sacredness of the graves and made it a multiple spatial entity which promotes social relations, trade networks and sharing of scholarship. In his extensive studies on the graves of Tarim, Engseng Ho describes the way the graves of Hadramawt sayyids enter into discourse, become agents of socio-political conflicts and form a part of movements

of persons and texts. The inscriptions on the tombstones bring the dead back to the discourses of the living. As he describes

Writing enables visitors to greet the dead by name. Here, inscription acts as an agent of transformation. Writing is a visual signifier; itself silent, it can provoke meaningful speech. Present on the surface of the tombstone at one end of a chain of signification, it enables the dead and silent person within the grave to be launched into discourse. (25)

A contrast of the history of graves in Europe and non-European societies helps us to understand the dynamics of graves and their role in configuring the present. Though graves were spaces of multiple dimensions in both societies, one cannot miss the social orientation of cemeteries in Europe until the 19th century and the later shifting of graveyards to the city suburbs imagining them as a site of disease. On the other hand, in non-European, especially the South Asian, communities, graves continued to exercise their sacred religious function and they cling to the collective memory of the people; they were able to connect with the descendants and acted as interlocutors of social transformation. One of the striking features of these graves was their role in acting as centres of socio-politics and scholarly interactions. This offers the dead visibility far beyond the narrow confines of their graves.

The trade relations of Calicut with the Indian ocean trading communities continued to exist until the bloody confrontations of the Zamorins of Calicut with the European colonial forces in the 16th century. Like all premodern communities, social relations were in a flux in Malabar and the Indian Ocean trading communities settled in the coastal regions and forged family relations with the natives. This

eventually led to the spread of Monsoon Islam and the cultural values of the traders made their presence among the local community. The Hadrami sayyids of Hadramawt were also present among the trading groups and they spread Islam with the help of the local kings. The idea of graves as a sacred space existed in most of the premodern societies and the diasporic notion of graves as a site of meeting point of past and present and circulation of people and texts entered in forming the notion of grave in the Malabar coast. Thus, a syncretic culture was formed in which graves were engraved with greater semiotic significance and they act as springboards launching socio-political confrontations.

The presence of graves of saints with tombstones was a distinctive cultural construct in Malabar especially in South Malabar. Upper caste Hindus usually burnt their dead bodies and deposited the ash in the holy river. The powerless sections of the society buried their dead in insignificant graves without leaving any visible traits among the living. It is true that all of them continued to believe in the souls of the dead and observed various rites for the wellbeing of the dead. They have also formulated detailed ritual performances and offerings to please the dead and request them for favours. It is a common sight among Hindus of Kerala to have annual local festivals to celebrate heroes, deities of the past for their heroic or divine activities. But the tombs with inscriptions stood a particular sight among the local community and these spaces gradually became spaces of syncretic cultural forms.

The heterotopic space of the grave and its networks of relationship was a unique experience in South Malabar as the dead continued to exert power on the living and the tombstone gave a physical spatial dimension to it. Though the deities

of the premodern society possess transcendental spaces they do not ascribe physicality to them. In addition, the tombs of the saints and their holy men construct a social space that seamlessly connects the community surrounding it with the age-old traditions and scholarships with them. The tombs on the west coast of the Indian subcontinent were an essential part of the trade route through which scholars, traders and occasional travellers pass throughout the years giving life to the memories of ancestors, legends, kinship and a vast treasure of scholarly resources. Often there were regional centres of Muslim pilgrimages on the coast lines such as *Ponnani* which is described as the ‘Mecca of Malabar’ where the graves of scholar saints housed scholars from various parts of the world and constructed social spaces where transnational communities gather and disperse. The shrines of saints stood for peace and prosperity against the violence of the time and occupied a central role in the life of ordinary Muslims.

A significant change occurred when the graves of martyrs who fought against the British colonial forces in Malabar were elevated to the level of the shrines of saints and prayers offered in their presence were believed to be accepted by God. This enabled ordinary people from Malabar who hail from various segments of caste society to be revered as martyrs and the religious heads interpreted the religious texts in the context of the anti-colonial struggles in Malabar. The cult of the rebellious martyr and the annual rituals associated with it gained popular attention as the *Ulama*, the ‘traditional intellectuals’,¹² were actively involved in the liberation of the Malabar coast.

The widespread presence of dargahs/maqbara in Muslim dwellings is a sign of this transformation of ordinary mortals into divine inspired/shahids whose life and memory are part of the collective memory of the community. These places are a collective sight of social interaction and memory and inspire rebels to fight against oppression. The shrine of the rebels facilitated social gathering of the Mappila community and offered a place which was deprived of the power inscriptions of the colonial regime. It is interesting to see that the graves of martyrs spread across the Malabar region bred more acts of resistance. The 19th century attitude of the European Enlightenment towards graves as sight of illness and decay have helped the rebels to generate their strategies of resistance in the oddity of the grave; in other words what the rebels find as 'sacred space' was a location of disease for the western powers. This aspect of the grave is fundamental in articulating resistance against the domination of the colonisers as spaces are just like any other construct of power relations in a society.

The boundaries between the sacred and the mundane were flexibly drawn making it possible for the believers to offer the inner part of the mosque as sacred and the verandas outside are places of ordinary business. Traders of the Indian ocean considered mosques as places of worship, centre of gathering and a site of business transactions and qadi acted as translator for the traders. The Ulama were vested with authority to interpret texts, mediate the social interactions and were respected by the kings. During the confrontation with the Portuguese, the Ulama encouraged believers to fight against atrocities of the coloniser through their writings as well as

religious speeches. They have succeeded in mobilising people and inscribing divinity and sacredness to the rebellious acts of the common people.

The dead bodies of the rebels and the resultant graves were counter sites from which further confrontations would emerge. The British administration in Malabar was not aware of the symbolic and ritual significance of the graves and the associated ritual called *uroos/nercha* as the Enlightenment dismissed the dead as disease stricken. They assumed that the counter movements in Malabar were evoked by the presence of the Ulama, especially Sayyid Alawi and his son Sayyid Fadl and took measures to banish them from Malabar. Eventually Sayyid Alawi died in 1845 and his son Sayyid Fadl was forced to leave the country with his family in 1852. Still, disturbances continued to emerge and the exiled Mappila leader exerted power even in their absence. It is also to be noted that the first *Padappattu* titled *Cherur Padappattu* was published in 1845. The physical absence and memories of the leaders were invoked in the annual ritual social gathering called *nercha/uroos* and the grave mediates the communication among the dead, exiled and the living. As Stephen S Dale explains:

The ceremony alluded to was undoubtedly the annual *nercca* which would have taken place sometime late in March or in early April. Just as *nerccas* in Malappuram and elsewhere perpetuated the memories of *shahids*, so the fact that the festival was being held annually at Mampuram made it certain that Conolly's goal would never be realised. The Mampuram *nercca* helped to perpetuate the memories and doctrines of both Sayyid Alawi and Sayyid

Fadl and the festival has continued to perform this function in the late twentieth century. (526)

Though many historians have described the veneration of saint or shahids at their shrines an imitation of the local traditions, the annual *nercha* was not only an agrarian festival, but also a ritualised ceremony in which the local community assembled in the shrines of the saint/martyr and share memories of the community. These racial memories empower members to resist oppression and the physical absence of the dead is replaced by the rituals performed. Most of the people visited the graves of the martyrs days before they prepared to fight with the British troops and die. Thus, the graves produced a counter-site which acted as a launchpad of anti-colonial struggles in Malabar to the extent that the authorities were afraid to hand over the dead body of the people killed in the conflicts. Historians of Malabar are often polemic when it comes to understanding the cultural implications of the graves; a group of historians¹³ understood the *jaram* and *uroos* as a source of legitimising the rebels act and the other group found them as breeding ground for Mappila fanaticism in tune with the desire for an Islamic state.

The religious and ritualistic elements in the preparation had two important implications. First, the Mappilas needed legitimization from the world of religious ideology in which they were strongly enclosed. They derived it, even if indirectly, through the pilgrimage to a *jaram* or the blessings of a Thangal. A direct sanction or blessing for their indented action was indeed not needed, that they prayed at the *jaram* or met a Thangal was itself sufficient to make such a construction in their mind. Secondly, rituals played

an affirmative role by heightening religiosity and keeping the rebels in a continuous state of frenzy-hal elakkam in the local parlance. (Panikkar, K N. 88)

Though the ritual and religious function of the space is mentioned, the narrative continues to describe the act of the rebels as driven out of poverty and the sacred nature of the graves are unattended. The religious and ritual implications of the *Jarams* were exclusively recorded by historians like Stephen S Dale in tune with western ethnographic practices and at times blown out of the complex politics of Malabar. Others have simply explained the *Jarams* as a Dravidian edifice corrupting the purity of Arabian Islam. The systematic attempt of the British state to erase the graves and memories engraved in them testifies the heterotopic properties of the place as a site of resistance. By the end of the 19th century, graves of holy men and martyrs became the central space of Mappila resistance to British rule. One of the prime reasons that the British empire succeeded to maintain power over the colonised was their engagement with socio-cultural life. They penetrated into the cultural spaces and always ensured that anticolonial activities are not supported by the religious practices.

Annihilation of Body and Afterlife

Placing the heterotopic implications of graves in the context of the complex history of Malabar offers certain insights into the making of the spatial construction of the region. It is interesting to note that the British authorities in Malabar gradually became aware of the semiotic and subversive potential of the graves and introduced severe measures to defend the colonial state by exploiting the cultural codes of the

local communities. In his extensive study on the legal rule in colonial India, Mark Condos examines the history of legal regime in India especially the draconian 'Murderous Outrages Act' and the 'Moplah Outrages Act' and states that the state permitted to execute any form of punishment in order to bring the counter violences reported from the west frontier of India under control. In a striking parallel, the authorities considered these outbreaks as diseases and recommended strong measures to curb them. Tracing the formation of legal measures, Condos details the discussions on burning the dead bodies of the rebels and reports most of the officials consulted during the drafting phase of the law opposed it. Instances of burning the dead bodies of the rebels were a common practice in colonial times as it exploited the belief of the local community that if dead bodies are burned, the soul of the martyr will not enter heaven, denying him the reward of his activity. In this sense, the annihilation of the body nullifies the afterlife of the rebel. It is intriguing to see that the colonial state has made effective use of the subjugated peoples' cultural resources and executed ruthless laws to exterminate opponents. The practice of burning acts as a collective punishment to the community for their inability to bury the dead. In addition, it erases the memories associated with the physicality of the rebel. "...the destruction of the body also had another benefit in that it would prevent the grave of the convicted from being converted into a ziarat (shrine) and becoming a site of reverence and inspiration for similar fanatical acts" (Condos, 29). Thus, the colonial regime obliterated the desire of the rebel and the community.

The contest for power over body and memory is a significant part of the colonial process in Malabar as in other parts of India. The physical destruction of the

body of the rebel denied the community the opportunity to perform ritual burial and the resultant memories associated with it. The colonial regime obliterated the body and memory of the community which in due course prepared the ground for colonial modernity. Thus, the burial of the body is legitimised by the 19th century treatment of dead bodies and the colonial understanding of cultural codes of the colonised. The contest for power over memory was a significant concern in the struggles in Malabar and the British administration took every measure possible to monitor the ritualistic and religious performances of the Mappilas and various repressive apparatus were used to suppress the cultural memories of the people.

Mappila social life is characterised by closely knit community ties and collective memory plays an important role in activating anti-colonial struggles. They lived in close quarters and like other pre-modern communities, Mappilas too found themselves incompatible with the modernist project introduced by the imperial powers with citizenship of the modern state. The colonial regime was sensitive to the potential of the collective group and introduced various measures to abhor community ties, thus disabling collective resistance. Graves were one of the most haunted sites of the Mappilas as they visited the shrines of the saints and the graves of martyrs. The *ziyara* and the rituals performances at the grave site often breeds more disturbances as the graveyard is a place that has social, cultural, religious and political overtones. In times of struggles, these places are transformed into potent political spaces charged with religious ideologies. Though the British officials initially dismissed the complex formations of communities of the region and the history of its political confrontations, especially its transnational roots, they were

quick to realise the intricacies of community and the struggles. As M T Ansari rightly observes the incompatibility of Islamic communities within the frame of the idea of nation(p-40), they did imagine the Mappilas as other to the European colonial self and sought to dissolve political tension with state aggression. The burning of bodies, banning of literary texts and the prohibition to visit the graves of the martyrs were meticulously executed in order to break community linkages and hence transform the ‘Mappila fanatics’ into citizens of modernity.

In the absence of political power to claim geographical places of memories, the Mappilas sought refuge in various cultural resources to reclaim their hold on collective memory. The evolution of *Mappilappattu*, especially its *Padappattu* variant, in the second half of the 19th century substituted alternative ways to establish community relations. Here, literature serves a crucial political purpose at a time when the British authorities have imposed draconian laws on the Mappilas which restrict their social and cultural mobility. These literary productions were articulating a symbolic cultural space in which the community continued to exchange its collective memories and thus effectively counter the propaganda of the colonial regime. It is interesting to note that the *Padappattukal* created a textual space in which the collective beliefs and the rituals of the community were performed. Though the Arabi-Malayalam dialect effectively hid the subversive nature of the text, its effect on the rebels were observed by the officials which resulted in banning the printed texts as well as its performances among the people. The tangled history of textual reproduction of Cherur struggle will illustrate the subversive nature of literary texts as a source of counter cultural discourses. Though

the text titled *Cherur Padappattu* (1945) composed by Muhammed Kutty and Muhyidheen from Cherur is the first literary reproduction of a local historical event in *Mappilappattu*, there were a series of such literary reproductions in the second half of 19th century. The government was quick to realise its impact on the people and destroyed copies of the text, banned its performance and also denied visiting the graves of martyrs. In this sense, the *Padappattu* was treated as subversive as the graves of the martyrs and visiting/performing them was interpreted by the state as unlawful. This proves that the war song tradition has effectively become urns that keep the ashes of the dead inside and engravings outside. Their strange inscriptions violated the existing power relations and mediated performances of community rituals. Like the graves, songs enter into social discourse and initiate dialogues with members of the community without being subject to surveillance by the state machinery though there were attempts to map and render the war songs into the language of the coloniser. The texts survived state censoring and reached out into the community. These songs were a semiotic representation of religious performances. For example, Moyinkutty Vaidyar, the greatest of *Mappilappattu* poets since the 19th century, composed *Badar Padappattu* and *Malappuram Padappattu* during the heydays of colonial aggression without explicitly confronting the state. He has selected the history of an Arabian war Badrul Kubra for the first song and a regional conflict predating British invasion for the second. Interestingly, both these histories have no direct connections with anti-British struggles in Malabar but they prepare the community to take up arms against the injustices meted out by them.

The composers of *Padappattukal* consider the act of composing the song as devotional practice and the text of the song is the grave of the martyr holding collective memories of their sacrifices and process of writing the poem is a ritual act of showing reverence. The composers of *Cherur Padappattu* and *Malappuram Padappattu* offer the song as an obligation to the community expecting rewards from the God. In the final part of *Cherur Padappattu*, the composers add a confessional note informing the readers/listeners of their incompetencies and asking forgiveness from God. In *Malappuram Padappattu*, the poet urges the readers to understand the glory of the martyrs and states that the act of composition is a religious ritual equal to observing the *nercha* of the martyrs.

...Kushangum marlaalum adaavathalum

Kudukkum idukkam kanmalakkathaalum

Ushalum thalath ore vilifork allah

Udan isthijabath eenth edirkkunn ellaam

Nisham uttavarbarthanavilvan uthay

Nercha fadinan korth idthammathay... (Vaidyar, 265)

(If those who suffer the agonies of the world caused by diseases and enmity appeal God with the blessing of the martyrs, their prayers will be answered and divine aid sent; I have composed this *nercha* song by weaving tidings of their divine acts)

This testifies the ritual and symbolic significance of the war songs and their role in transforming the text as a subtle performance of collective memory. A detailed

account of the consumption, production and circulation of the war songs throws light on the influence of the songs on preparing the martyrs. The circulation of the text, with its linguistic and cultural complexity, was done through performance known as *paadiparayaal*. These singers narrated the songs and added textual comments and made it accessible to the common people. While the state and the elite preferred the Sanskritised Malayalam literary productions, these texts created an alternative linguistic idiom which denied access to outsiders but offered a rich cultural resource for the members of the community.

The *Mappilappattu* battle songs have effectively served two significant political functions; the first is, it established the origin and development of Mappilas in South India especially in Kerala and their long history of coexistence with the local community in a hybrid language that was inaccessible to the colonial regime. This process of historicization was a powerful cultural tool in defining the cultural identity of the Mappilas in the wake of the systematic efforts of the colonial regime to a-historicise the community as ‘fanatics. Though this labelling is pretty common in colonial archives, the Mappila battle songs presented the historical claims of the people among the members of the community. In the beginning of the *Malappuram Padappattu*, Moyinkutty Vaidhyar narrates the origin and development of the community on the Kerala coast articulating the long tolerant history of the community in Kerala. He links the Mappilas with the Muslim community in ‘Medina’ and traces the journey of the Muslims across the Indian ocean to the southern part of India. It is interesting to see that the composer knits the story in such a way that the Muslims are endowed with a history of their own and this is

being sung and performed among the Mappilas while the British constructed a discourse in which the Mappilas were fanatics, aggressive and irrational. The second is one of spatial dimensions. The spatial orientation of the community and its ways of defining sacred spaces is already mentioned. The battle songs emerged as powerful forms of cultural expressions in the second half of the 19th century especially when the anticolonial confrontations gained momentum. As already mentioned, colonial powers-imposed restrictions on community spaces such as graves of martyrs, community rituals, and public performances related to the anti-colonial struggles which are crucial in the formation of community relations.

The hybrid nature of the Arabi-Malayalam dialect and its links with Dravidian cultural resources have created a cultural space which could evade the surveillance of the state and create subtle textual spaces which violate the power inscriptions of the colonial regime. This can be explained better in the light of the *Cherur Padappattu*. Many accounts of the confrontation testify to the burning of the bodies of the rebels in order to erase memories associated with the conflict.

Soldiers brought the dead bodies of the Cherur martyrs to Tirurangadi and burned them using petrol in a place close to present day Tirurangadi hospital premise. Mappilas have forcefully recovered the dead bodies of the martyrs of Muttiyara from the place where the army had buried them and then buried them in Muttiyara. The British army burned the bodies in order to prevent this from happening to the Cherur martyrs. (Moulavi and Kareem 181)

The government also forbade visiting the site of the place where the martyrs fell. Later on, a song was composed by two natives glorifying the valorous acts of the

rebels and their attempt to counter the British army in Cherur. In the absence of physical access to the sacred site, the song becomes a textual and performative offering in which the memories of the martyrs are engraved. In this sense, the text creates a virtual space in which the rebels occupy a sacred existence which the authorities could not enter because of the complex cultural coding of the text. This includes the simultaneous existence of textual and performance of the genre. The presence of the text usually makes the presence of mediators unnecessary; the cultural and linguistic signification of the text requires mediators who sing and narrate the song offerings resulting in a combination of textual and oral rendering of the text. The tradition of *Paadiparayat* intervenes in contextualising the text in the troubled politics of Malabar. Hence, the imagined community of print media is supplemented by the presence of community members and the history is framed within the battle song and the song within the narrative of the performers. This practice eventually spatialises the historical events within the spaces of the community. In addition, composers juxtapose spaces of Muslim social life in Medina with that of the region. Though the theme of the battle song *Badar Padappattu* is taken from Islamic history of the 7th century and the text is produced and performed in colonial Malabar in 1876, the long span of time passed between the historic events and the production is filled by juxtaposing the socio-political life of Medina with that of Malabar by textual references and performances of the music composition. In the initial stage, the hybrid nature of the texts succeeded in guarding the texts from the surveillance of the regime but authorities gradually became aware of the subversive potential of the texts and banned both texts and performances (463). It is interesting to note that the printing and circulation of the battle song

Cherur Padappattu (1845) which dealt with Cherur struggle and the performance of *Badar Padappattu* (1876) which had no reference to actual historical events in Malabar were banned. This testifies that the performance of the latter succeeded to implicate the regional spaces while it explicitly dealt with historical incidents from the early days of Islam. A detailed analysis of the battle songs by Moyinkutty Viadyar would illustrate the role of art in the conception, production and circulation of subversive spaces.

The Mappila outbreaks of the second half of 19th century have inspired poets of the community to compose battle songs which portray details of the battle and the rewards offered to the martyrs. These songs were instrumental in triggering further revolts as they eulogised the martyrs and kindled the anticolonial tradition of the Mappilas in the collective unconsciousness of the community. The British authorities made enquiries into the making of these texts and assigned scholars to translate them into English. For instance, an overview of the *Cherur Padappattu* was offered by Willian Logan in his *Malabar Manual* and F Fawcett wrote about war songs and popular *Mappila* songs. Most of these songs were banned by the government because of its explicit reference to the Mappila-British confrontations and their role in fuelling more instances of revolts. Battle songs such as *Manjakkulam Maala*, *Manjery Padappattu*, *Cherur Padappattu* belong to this category. The *Padappattukal* by Moyinkutty Vaidyar skilfully escaped state scrutiny but invoked strong sentiments against British rule without making any explicit reference to Mappila-British confrontations. The writing and presentation of Vaidyar's *Padappattukal* requires special attention in this context.

Among the battle songs composed by Moyinkutty Vaidyar, three are specifically significant in the context of Malabar. They are *Badar Padappattu*, *Uhud Padappattu*, and *Malappuram Padappattu*; the first one deals with the first battle in Islamic history in which Muslims had historic triumph and the second narrates the history of a battle in which Muslims met with serious setbacks and the third is based on an 18th century event from Kerala history in which Mappila men fought with a local lord Paranambi. The first two depict the history of battles in Arabia and the third one occurred in pre-colonial Malabar. None of these songs deal with any actual or historic confrontation between Mappilas and the British but it is reported that copies of *Malappuram Padappattu* were recovered from the bodies of the rebels. Though these battle songs described some remote historical events in highly glorified manner in a hybrid language, the authorities could not get into the nuances of the text which saved it from being banned by the British. But these texts open their subversive potential when it is being read/heard by members of the Mappila community. This unique placing of the textual meaning enabled them to survive British surveillance and at the same time equipped them to appeal to the desires of the masses.

The British authorities could not figure out the role performed by the battle songs of Moyinkutty Vaidyar in the Mappila society till his death. They realised the subversive potential of the text in triggering anti colonial struggles only in 1899. The studies made by F. Fawcett was the result of this realisation. The authorities were shocked to see the text of *Malappuram*

Padappattu in the corner of the clothes of the rebels. The ban on the song-narration (*padiparaya*) was issued in this context. (Abdul Sathar, 22)

William Logan's *Malabar Manual* testifies that the British authorities were aware of the miserable socio-political conditions of the Mappilas and often the colonial regime appointed committees to study the agrarian crisis of the region. Due to the complex networks of land-tenant relations and the influence enjoyed by the landlords, the measures recommended and executed by the commissions did not bring any change in the social life of the people and the authorities ignored the resentment of the people as the Mappilas were largely agricultural labourers in the 19th century. In addition, the colonial government joined the upper caste landlords to subjugate the people and resources and did everything possible to revert anticolonial struggles. The colonial government meticulously monitored every attempt made by the colonised to resist the regime by studying their culture and interpreting them as per colonial interests. In spite of all military domination and interpellations, the Mappilas of Malabar continued to resist the landlord-British alliance and there were a series of outbreaks throughout the 19th and early 20th century and these were fuelled by the battle songs composed immediately after the revolts which were sung by wandering minstrels and groups. This has succeeded to keep the memories of anticolonial struggles in the collective consciousness of the community. The British were quick to realise this and did everything possible to limit circulation and performance of the songs. Though most of these battle songs were banned, Vaidyar's texts survived because of an interplay of textual place and

time. Moyinkutty Vaidyar was aware of the surveillance of the state in the real and imagined life of his community in the second half of the 19th century.

These textual innovations and cultural subversiveness should be seen in the context of the interpellation tendencies of the colonial state which exploited the resources of the colonised and exercised power over the subjective consciousness. In his texts, Vaidyar gives vent to counter cultural aspirations of the Mappilas against the British empire without being caught by the colonial machinery. This subversive potential of the text is largely a product of spatio-temporal configuration of the text in its production and circulation. The subtlety that Vaidyar achieves in his textual compositions are drawn out of three important devices in narratives; the first one is the timing of the release/presentation of the text, and the second is juxtaposition of time and place and the third is group performance of the text.

In the first case, Vaidyar presented/released his battle songs at crucial historical moments in Malabar. For example, the Badar and Uhud battle songs of Vaidyar were released in 1876 and 1879. The first is based on the historic triumph of a small group of early Muslims and the latter deals with the battle in which Prophet Muhammed and his followers face setbacks and get closer to failure. Though there are so many literary productions available on the battle of Badar, songs on the battle of Uhud are very few. The *Uhud Padappattu* deals with the Arabian battle and the textual space is juxtaposed with contemporary Malabar and helps the rebels to identify with martyrs of the early Muslim society. Vaidyar brings out the song at a time when Mappila confrontations with the British were bloodier than before and uses too many Arabic words to create a textual space where the rebelling community

will be transported from colonial Malabar to the Arabian centre. In this sense, the contemporary appeal of the text is invoked out of the historic contingency which appeals to the reader/listeners is implied without any explicit textual references.

Secondly, Vaidyar chooses his themes from Islamic history and then employs artistic innovations to create a textual space that is filled with elaborate descriptions. Historians often differ on the poet composer's commitment to actual historic events; some find him a poet of great historic sensibility¹⁴ and others a lazy chronicler of historic events¹⁵. In spite of historic accuracy, the narrative body of his texts are charged with spatial dimensions and blend spaces of different historical periods into one. His rich descriptions often suspend time and present a visual imagery which freezes centuries and creates an urgency rooted in contemporary Malabar. His visual rendering of Arabian society of the 7th century with musical instruments and visual imagery of the 19th century creates a spatial continuity in the text. In this way, the Mappila rebels of the 19th century are fused into the spatial extension of 7th century Muslims and share the racial memories of the people. Vaidyar's exemplary talent to visualise, describe and invoke make the text spatially located in Arabia and Malabar at the same time and the reader/listener immediately sense these spatial configurations whereas the literary text does not offer any direct reference.

Thirdly, the literary productions of Moyinkutty Vaidyar were extremely popular among the masses because of its music but the textual meaning was not accessible to the common folks. His rich linguistic, poetic and rhythmic experiments require mediators who sing the songs and describe their meaning. These group

performances of the songs too have greatly contributed in contextualising the text in the troubled politics of the region. They would recite the poem and portray dramatically the context, theme and implications of the song to a group of people who assembled and this was the chief entertainment of the time. The narrative offered by these artists are coloured with regional references and eventually leads to the strengthening of collective consciousness. The banning of the song-narration practice of *Badar Padappattu* hints at the threat these groups have posed in narrating the battle songs. It is also interesting to note that the popularity enjoyed by Moyinkutty Vaidyar today is solely the result of the introduction of the printing of his words but his works were rendered in the form of oral transmission as well as printed books. Though printing is understood as a tool of colonial modernity and it silences the oral renderings by homogenising the text, Vaidyar's texts maintained both oral and printed versions maintain a curious case in the history of modernity's engagement with colonised communities. As Francis Robinson rightly points out Islamic communities across the globe were reluctant to accept printing technology and feared printing their scriptures will eventually dilute Islamic modes of knowledge transactions. In this case, the presence of the song-narrators is a curious case as they supplement the printed text, offer an oral rendering of the text, fill the absence of the speaker and integrate regional sentiments into the layers of the text. Hence, the Malabar experience blends oral and printed modes of narration and provides a new dimension into the text. Thus, the texts of Vaidyar are emplaced in the group performance and hence new spatial dimension is offered and anticolonial sentiments are enfolded into the textual implications without explicit references in the printed text. This particular spatial engagement enabled the text to carry

meanings that the shrivelling eyes could not penetrate. Thus, the battle songs of the poet continued to impart an anticolonial message till the end of the 19th century until the authorities realised the political potential of the text and performance and banned it in 1899.

The dispute over graves, tombs and grave inscriptions by the rebels and the colonial administration rose to new heights when the rebels marched to destroy the memorial of Hitchcock, the District Collector of Malabar. While the colonial government approached the dead as disease causing, graves as the source of disturbances and burned the dead bodies of rebels killed in order to prevent erection of shrines and ritual performances. This was intended to erase collective memory. In the final phase of the rebellion, key figures like Varian Kunnath Ahammed Haji were shot dead and the remains were burned with all the official records of his temporary government. In this context, the presence of the memorial statues erected by the colonial state in south Malabar was viewed by the members of the community as a spatial referent of the colonial regime and its outrageous acts. Inspired by the march song composed by Kambalath Govinda Nair, the revolutionaries marched towards the tomb situated in Valluvambram and destroyed the tomb without any sign of recognition. The contestation for space is made evident in the lines of the song as the memorial revives the suffering of the community.

Mancheri ninnacharu mile doore mongathilu

Sancharikkunnorkku kaanarakumaa nirathil

Chath poya hitchcock sahippinte smarakam

Chathane kudivecha pole aa balalin smarakam

Nammude nenchilana kallu naatti vechath

Nammalude koottarana subaru konnath. (Nair, 2)

(Travellers may see the memorial of the damned Hitchcock/ in Mongam, some five or six miles away from Mancheri/ the scoundrel's memorial like the devil's grave/ is erected on our wounded hearts/ that rascal killed the people of our community)

The march points at the spatial dimensions of the struggles as the revolutionaries met with the British forces in 1944 and it was an attempt by the rebels to erase the colonial claim over geography and reinscribe it in the backdrop of anti-colonial struggles in the country.

In the aftermath of The Malabar Rebellion of 1921, the community gradually engaged with various forms of colonial modernity including English education and entered into the public sphere of Kerala. The hybrid Arabi-Malayalam language and literary productions were ignored; though the song tradition continued to exert its influence on the community. The integration of the community into the newly formed Kerala state and the acceptance of vernacular national Malayalam language made the hybrid linguistic forms obsolete. Writers from south Malabar preferred to produce their literary productions in Malayalam. By the 1970s, the community had been integrated into the linguistic state and was on the verge of a cultural amnesia. As the writers of *The Great Mappila Literary Tradition* (1978) argue, members of the community lost their cultural identity and the book is written in order to inform members of the community to reclaim their cultural traditions. This shift into the

linguistic state and modernity have reconfigured sacred spaces of the community profane. The pre-modern spatial encoding of graves, tombs and literature have been rendered into nationalist frame which resulted them as misplaced cultural spaces. The homogenising tendencies of modernity made the language obsolete.

Chapter 3

**Colonial Modernity and the Homogenisation of Literary Spaces in
Select South Malabar Novels**

Novel as a literary form is deeply connected with literary cartography (Tally 2). The origin of realist fiction in the 18th century was a product of individualism, modernity and nationalism. The historical context required a medium to narrate the complex life of the individuals positioned at the centre of the new world and the form of novel was a particular innovation to meet these requirements. The early novels narrated the life of European individuals in alien territories and gradually by the turn of the century, novel became the most accepted form of literary expression owing its engagement with the rising middle class, the circulation of printed texts and the colonial expedition. The novel offered a vision of the world that reflected the everyday spaces of the readers (Watt 78).

Novels were introduced in India in the confrontation between colonial modernity and anticolonial nationalism (Ramakrishnan 12). As product of colonial modernity, it was structured by the European form but its experiences were Indian. As mentioned in chapter 1, novels were an essential part of nation making as the wide circulation of novels and newspapers have contributed in imagining a country like India, which has diverse social, political, cultural and geographical feature, into a unified nation and enabled them to integrate with the body of the nation. Novels originated from different parts of British India such as Bengal, Marathi and Malayalam have enabled the middle class to imagine themselves into the

imaginative community of India. In this sense, the novel and print capitalism have played a significant role in the process of narrating nations (75).

In his insightful readings on the first novel in Indian English *Rajmohan's Wife*, Markhand Paranjpe quotes Sri Aurobindo to argue that the novels of Bankinchandra Chatterjee have contributed in imagining the nation. As he says "Sri Aurobindo made such an interpretation in the essays that he wrote as early as 1894.... arguing that what Bankim was trying to create was nothing short of a language, a literature and a nation." (Mukherjee *Early Novels* 144). The novelistic imagination of the nation was a prominent theme of the early Indian novels which defended Indian traditions and at the same time introduced reforms as well. One of the significant tropes of early novels was the journeys of the disheartened protagonist through colonial India and form a national consciousness. Early novels such as *Indulekha* in Malayalam portrays the hero leaving his region into various parts of India and make alliances with other upper castes and return to the homeland. Anticolonial nationalism failed to substantively integrate social groups such as peasants, minorities and women into its core model instead regarding them merely as contributing entities to the nation (Chatterjee *Nation and Fragments* 112, 137, 160). In her analysis of the first typical novel of Malayalam, Anita Devasia observes the way the upper caste elites entered the nation through the narratives of the novels:

He (Chandu Menon) is also proposing new inter-regional or national connections between the martial Nairs and the "official" (Bengali-Bihari-Hindu) Indians. There is a confident programme here of subject-formation,

class-consolidation, region and nation building. A confidence that a Dalit or a feminist today should find chilling and challenging. (11)

The journey of the protagonist of *Indulekha* through the fictional space of the nation enables the reading public to imagine the geography of a nation that they have not seen but felt in the pages of the novels. The newspaper enables them to imagine themselves simultaneous to other communities in India.

It is to be remembered that the Indian thought always engaged with spaces and identified the role of narratives in imagining spaces. *Sthalapuranas*, a kind of narratives which recounts the story of a place, its history, origin and myths associated with them, were extremely popular form of storytelling in India and there were attempts by writers like Raja Rao to construct novels in the form of these traditional storytelling practices. As he says in the preface to the novel *Kanthapura*, his story of the village is modelled in the form of *Sthalapurana*. He describes “There is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich sthala-purana, or legendary history, of its own” (i). In the novel, he adapts structure of European realistic novel to narrate the diversity of India and fuses the concrete temporal and spatial indicators of European novel with the cyclic and episodic nature of time and space in the novel. A large number of early Indian novels followed the pattern of telling the stories of regions that redefines the regional spaces into the territories of the nation.

The construction of space in early Malayalam novels is very distinctive. The plot of early novels such as *Kundalatha* is located in imaginary spaces which are far away from the geography of Kerala and the author confesses “If readers find some

customs and traditions which are not familiar in Kerala (in the novel), they should remember that this story is told as if it happened in a foreign land faraway from Kerala and the customs and traditions belong to that place” (Rajasekaran 122). These novels could not imagine Kerala as regional space which could contain their stories. These novels do not address the spatio-temporal signification of the region and do not engage in imagining a narrative of the region. In the following years, both writers from lower castes and upper castes attempted to write novels. On the one hand, novels published by lower caste writers imagined the secular spaces of colonial modernity as a path to liberation and rejected religious spaces which restrict their mobility and upward movement. On the other hand, upper caste writers such as Chandu Menon constructed spaces which include both spaces of modernity and traditions. One of the significant aspects of literary spaces of upper caste novels were the encoding of spaces with upper caste social and political values. In his critical study of early Malayalam novels, Dilip Menon describes the contradictory construction of spaces in the novel *Saraswativijayam* thus: “The central difference in their conceptions is that of the Nambudiri’s move through a sacred geography from Malabar to Kashi while Marathan experiences both spatial and social mobility traversing the secular geography of colonial towns” (*Saraswativijayam* 310). The conflict between modernity and nationalism takes a significant turn here. The lower castes consider modernity as a space which offers them education and mobility whereas Indian traditions keep them under caste hierarchy. Hence, the vernacular national imagination of the literary spaces of the region projects an elite and upper caste centred narrative within which the novels articulate spaces of domination and marginalised sections of the region are either misrepresented or made invisible. In a

detailed analysis of the novel *Indulekha* by Chandu Menon, M. T Ansari talks about the misrepresentation of Muslims in the fictional space. The novel, described as the first typical novel in Malayalam because of its position in the canon of Malayalam literature, is located in Malabar imagines a literary space which places a Nair *tharavad* at the centre of the text and presents Muslims as the other. He writes that in the novel *Indulekha*, Muslims are dislocated from the cultural geography but instead creates an image of Muslims that the discourse of the novel constructs. “As against the cultural geography of the character, where a Mappila would have been appropriate, or the narrative logic, where a Pathan would have been appropriate, *Indulekha* is made to dream up a Muslim in order to set in the process of cultural translation and national belonging” (146). The analysis further explores the construction of a literary space in which the upper caste society is at the locus of nationalist imagination and the absence of Muslims from their cultural geography continues in the mainstream novels from south Malabar.

In the next part of the chapter, I analyse the influence of stereotypes constructed by the colonial administration in mainstream novels from south Malabar and explore the role of the politics of representation in constructing literary spaces. I have selected S K Pottekatt and Uroob, two prominent novelists from the region, to examine their engagement with literary spaces in the context of Mappilas of Malabar. I have focussed on the emergence of novel and how the Mappilas, a hybrid community born out of the Arab traders’ presence on the Malabar coast, are subject to novelistic imagination as they were in the forefront of maritime trade in Calicut and the succeeding anticolonial struggles against the Portuguese and British. In

relation to their involvement in the peasant revolts against the landlords and the British state, they were considered as troubling subjects in the colonial narratives which had influenced the public imagination.

The Mappila engagement with space is also very distinctive. While the upper caste landlords engaged with territory of land, the Mappilas were deeply connected with the ocean. They began as a community of maritime traders and their relations to social spaces were largely based on the fluidity of the ocean (Hussain *Kappappattu* 29). Though the European powers landed in India by the sea, they gradually engaged with the territory of the country. Mapping, surveying and regulating of geographical territories were a part of the colonising mission. The interconnections of modernity, nation and narration made geographical domination a part of imagining the nation. In this context, the physical and imaginative aspects of the nation came to prominence. All nations were imagined as geographical territories within borders and the seas held a particular position as they cause the formation of certain national consciousness (Anderson 188). The remoteness of the sea was associated with isolation and the community of Mappilas found themselves alien within the imaginative space of the nation.

It is commonplace in postcolonial studies that both modernity and nationalism are ideological structures and they function in the logic of binary opposition. Hence the logic of modernity required to produce an 'other' in contrast to the rational, individualistic and refined forms of European subjects. The 'other' subject is irrational, religious, collective and uncivilised. The modern European man required an 'other' from the colonies who is traditional, superstitious, collective,

immobile, irrational and needs to be civilised. The encounter with the racial other created a conflicting frontier as the other possessed a cosmology of its own. It was credited with its own history, culture and social formation. The systematic degradation of the other was a part of the project of modernity as it ensnared the identity formation of the coloniser. Hence, the European invaders of Latin America, for example, had to invalidate all the cultural treasures of the native population in order to render them into the stereotypical roles' modernity has assigned to them. This was particularly true in the case of the Latin American countries which had a language form without alphabets in the European sense of the term and the invaders immediately narrated them as people without history and it was the responsibility of the invader to create a narrative for the native population. In a detailed study on the complex question of colonialism in South America, Walter Mignolo points at the language policy of the Spanish invaders and how the policy rendered most of the cultural resources of Latin America underdeveloped and the people illiterate. The assumption of the 'lack' of the native tongue and the attempt to tame it to western fashion is of high ideological implication.

There is an understandable paradox, but a paradox nevertheless, between the assertion that a language lacks a given number of letters in relation to an alphabet created for a non-related language and the urge to pronounce it correctly. Of course, the American language did not lack letters but implied different ones, namely those that were not within the sound system of the Romance languages. (Mignolo, 47)

This erasure and misrecognition of difference is a common practice of the colonisers as it facilitates defining the natives' lives and cultures 'uncivilised' and the need of the coloniser to offer an authentic version of modernity to these people. The invalidation of language also invalidates all the cultural resources including the rich tapestry of historical narratives which intimidates the colonised into the stereotypical representation of European narratives.

In the context of Malabar, the Mappila identity was normalised as the 'other' in the colonial imagination. As described in chapter two, the Mappilas were highly collective, their language Arabi-Malayalam and their cultural identity were hybrid which refuses to accept the monolithic assumptions of modernity, the presence of a highly oral literary traditions and the refusal to accept the caste norms as well as the Eurocentric notions of civilisation made them an inferior group in the discourse of modernity. The devotion to religious teachings is commonly understood as the reason for the drag of the Mappilas from advancement in secular education (Fawcett 502). The histories of the colonised people were largely maintained in oral rendering and the introduction of writing in the colonies not only brought a new language but also new orientation towards the organisation of knowledge and interpretation. This enabled the colonists to present the written form of writing as an authentic form of historiography and discredit the oral traditions. The colonial regime found the presence of a robust historical source a threat to their Eurocentric notions and did everything possible to bring them under western ideas of episteme. Thus, the well-preserved pictorial representation of Latin American history was ignored because it did not fall in line with the European idea of written language and history.

The erasure or distortion of history is an integral part of the colonial process which can only justify the violence on the episteme, people and the region by the aggressive colonial mission. The history of Malabar written by William Logan titled *Malabar Manual* is a perfect case of how the colonial regime and officers were involved in the historiography of the colonised and how the colonial categories influence the writing process of the texts. *Malabar Manual* (1887) records the life of 19th century Kerala and presents a comprehensive picture of the region and people. The book is divided into four chapters titled 'The District', 'The People', 'History' and 'The Land'. It is a comprehensive narrative of the region from the Chera dynasty to the 19th century. Logan's initiative is appreciated by historians of Kerala as a foundational work and its influence is still felt in the historiography of present-day Kerala. "The 'monograph stage' of its (Kerala history) development is taking so slow and an imbalanced course that the process of inclusion and supersession of Logan's work has not been logically completed. What we still find is 'Loganism' persisting with its positive and negative" (Venu, 2). This also refers to the continuation of the historical imagination and colonial stereotypes that William Logan set into discourse. Hence, a detailed look at the making of *Malabar Manual* will help us to understand the historical origin of the erasure or distortion of regional history and how the literary narratives located in South Malabar reproduce these colonial constructs in their fictional world.

The subjectivity and power positions of historians have a significant role in the writing and compiling of historical texts. *Malabar Manual* was primarily prepared in order to inform the imperial power centres the day-to-day activities of

the presidencies of the colony. The officers in charge were assigned to report various developments in the districts and explain the course they have taken with regard to the events recorded. There are multiple motives that define Logan's writing of the *Manual*. The first and the foremost is his role in the colonial regime. As the Collector of the district of Malabar, he was expected to reproduce the colonial perspective in order to render his account of the region in line with the existing corpus of colonial archives. This enabled the colonial administration to implement effective strategies to serve its interests primarily revenue collection, land management and legal codification. In addition, his history was coloured with colonial ethnographic practices. This resulted in presenting the region and the people immobile, static and exotic till the arrival of the colonisers and the progress of the people and their history beginning with the British rule. Secondly, Logan's interest in recording history is also evident. His involvement in the writing of *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Other Papers of Importance Relating to British Affairs in Malabar* in 1879, and *The Report on the Malabar Land Tenures*, submitted to the Madras Government in 1882 amply testifies his interest in writing the history of the region and his reliance on colonial archives as a source historiography. His writing is distinctive in comparison with other colonial officers as he has attempted to include multiple sources and maintained objectivity though marred by other interests. Though his interests as historian and colonial officer create paradoxes within the narrative, the overarching presence of colonial records is explicit in the production of the *Malabar Manual*.

In regard to the later periods of foreign influence and intervention, I have drawn nearly all my information from the district records. The earliest of these, in my office at Calicut, go back to the seventeenth century, and from the year 1725 an almost unbroken series of very ponderous manuscript volumes records, in the most minute detail, the doings of the Honourable East India Company's Factories on the coast down to the time (1792) when the Honourable Company's "merchants" and "writers" laid aside day-book and ledger and assumed the sword and sceptre of the land. (Logan, vi)

This confidence in the credibility of the records limits his perspective towards native sources and his presentation of the people falls in line with the colonial modes of writing. Thirdly, though in a limited sense, his roots in the Scottish tenant's family also have influenced his vision. He regards the Nayers as "central point of interest" (iii) in Malayali history and describes them as protectors of the rights of all classes. In addition, he remarks that their position would have continued if the foreign invasions had not happened. This idealisation of the past is attributed to his Scottish tenant family connections.

Logan's initiation to the history of Malabar opens up the role of historical narratives in the process of colonisation. Though Logan is aware of the rich historical context of the region, he begins complaining that the people of Malabar do not have a history of their own and it is a burden on him to inaugurate the field of historiography. At the same time, a careful reading of the preface of the *Malabar Manual* illustrates that he was not able to include the rich historical resources of the region. This paradoxical approach to history opens up his deep engagement with

colonialism and the reproduction of the oriental stereotypes. In the beginning of the preface, Logan observes that pre-colonial Malabar was changeless, inactive and traditional and for him, the history of the region begins with the presence of the foreigners. In other words, it is the confrontation with colonial forces that the region confronted with history and he also states that there were no historians in Kerala because there was nothing worth to be recorded.

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

The preface of the book is built on the paradox of getting excited with ‘fascinating vistas of knowledge’ obtained during the preparation of the text and writing history of a people who has little or no history to write about. His desire for tracing further into the histories of the people is admitted when he informs his inability to get access into the regional historical resources and the role of local historians to explore them for greater understanding.

I believe that if one were to search the length and breadth of the Peninsula it would be found difficult to select another Province in which research is likely to yield a more abundant store of highly interesting and important information. To do the subject full justice however that harvest should be reaped, that store should be accumulated, by a native of the soil. (v)

This again reveals his desire to bring out the rich historical resources of the region and the role of the historians ‘of the native of the soil’ in accumulating them. At the same time towards the end of the preface, he states that “Subsequently to 1792 also, the records of my office contain nearly everything that is required to furnish an account of the province down to the present day (vi). This conflict in approaching the history of Malabar opens up the task of historians and the interests of the colonial regime in rendering the colonised histories through the perspectives of European positivism. Logan has to initiate the history writing of Malabar at the same time he has to ‘invent’ history for a people who have no history at all. Hence, Malabar appears to him a region which has a kind of historicity which will not be useful for his purpose and he is aware of the presence of historical resources which invalidate some of his claims. Though the region was credited with ‘[an] abundant store of highly interesting and important information’ he states that the people do not have a history worth recording. In his highly insightful study on the construction of ‘fanatics’ in the British narratives of Malabar, M T Ansari observes:

The 700-odd pages of the history he compiles from diverse sources in the first volume and the 400-odd pages of appendices in the second volume underline the fact that historical resources, in fact, histories, did exist. What

Logan laments, then, is the lack of a usable/readable past, where a specific consciousness amasses information and orders it into readily accessible data, a past that would lend itself to the processes of colonization/ modernization (75).

This points at the historicity of Malabar which entices the historian to dig further into it and at the same time refuses to render itself into the mould of colonial historiography without 'ordering' the region into legible forms and othering the rest is a significant aspect of Malabar's past. The paradoxes that Logan finds himself in the history of Malabar in the context of colonialism continues to influence even in the historical writing of the postcolonial era. The rendering of the region in terms of colonial ethnographic categories and modernity made the history of Malabar a troublesome enterprise and any attempt to open up the past trigger fresh debates. This is prevalent not only in historical narratives but also all cultural narratives of the people and region. The imposition of colonial interpretations has contributed into the making of the nation state and the communities othered in the process continue to break the stereotypes imposed on them by those narratives sanctioned by the colonial archives and categories. These stereotypes and categories have coloured public discourses and become a part of the literary imagination of the locale.

The *Malabar Manual* offers a comprehensive history of the district, land, people and history of Malabar. The inhabitants of the place were largely Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Logan has made it clear that the Christians who fall into four main sects of Syrians, Romo Syrians, Roman Catholics, and Protestants of all domination. According to Logan they did not play any significant role in the local

affairs. Of the remaining two, Hindus are described as divided on caste lines into various groups. Brahmins had a monopoly on learning and had commanding influence in the region. They maintained a high level of civilisation but gradually deteriorated into rigid caste norms and customs and states that these norms will be removed when the British evokes freedom and create a nation out of these conflicting tribal and caste groups. In contrast to the Hindu community, the Mappilas, the indigenous Muslims are a well-knit group and they are described as “frugal, thrifty and industrious”. Logan continues to describe the Mappilas in stronger Euro-centric ethnographic terms and distinguishes the Malayali Arabs from the local Muslims. The Malayali Arabs are described as highly educated, having profound knowledge in their books of science and history and maintain great regard for truth. In contrast, the local Muslims called Mappilas are described as thrifty, industrious, serviceable in ordinary occasions, and reliable in emergencies. According to him, “they show attachments when treated kindly and considerately and are illiterate, ignorant and easily exploited by designed people” (119).

Logan, a moderate voice among the British officers, foregrounded the religious identity to define the Mappilas and reproduced the construct of the ‘fanatic’ used by the military offices to describe the Mappila rebels though his narrative points at the poor material conditions of the Mappila peasants and provide sufficient evidences to prove that the Mappila revolt was a direct response to unequal land distribution system and the right of the landlord to evict the tenant from the land without any justification. The construct of ‘fanatic’ was repeatedly

produced in colonial discourse and gradually became a part of the public imagination. The metaphor of the fanatic is

commonly employed, like that of “outbreak,” “outrage,” “fanatical eruptions,” “madness” (the latter two from Gandhi 19), conjure up the picture of an uncontrollable violence and an extreme irrationality on the part of the individual. Insofar as these metaphors are employed in order to master the people, they also testify to the lack of control on the part of the state over the peasant body (Ansari 85).

The construct of a ‘fanatic’ as a controllable, irrational and violent individual who requires to be disciplined by power legitimises the violence inherent in the colonial process and also conceal the failure of the administration to address the grievances of the peasants and execute a just land distribution system. In addition, the construct is associated with excessive religiosity and hence positioned in contrast to the idea of modernity which stands for secularism and progression. The image of the ‘fanatic’ “looks backward to the “heathen,” or the “pagan,” one who believes in a different and “primitive” religion; s/he was to have been educated. The figure of the “fanatic” also looks forward to the “fundamentalist” or the “terrorist”; s/he can only be confined or killed” (74). Terms like ‘fanatic’, ‘pagan’ or ‘terrorist’ stand at odds with modernity. All violence used to discipline them is justified as part of the civilising mission.

The construct was produced in order to cover up some of the shortcomings of the colonial administration in Malabar which later on found currency in the nationalist discourse as well. These ethnographic categories and narratives have

complicated the social relationship among the communities in Malabar. Any attempt to revisit the historical formation of the region during the colonial period invokes communal tension. Though historians have explored various aspects of the history of Malabar, the literary expressions of the colonial period have greatly influenced public imagination and any discussion on colonial Malabar triggers fresh debates. In the following part of the essay, I explore how novels from south Malabar, comprising largely the present districts of Malappuram and Calicut, construct the region in fiction. It will also discuss how the historical contexts trouble the narrative structure and how various writers appropriate the narrative and how far the colonial construct has influenced literary imagination. This analysis is carried out in order to study the nature of fictional spaces influenced by colonial modernity in south Malabar.

The significance of distorting or erasing histories of the colonised societies by the colonisers is already mentioned. A close reading of *Malabar Manual* reveals the picture of a heterogenous region with different religions and races. The region also accommodated vibrant interaction between peoples of various countries as it was an important centre of international trade. The presence of colonial powers on the coast and their efforts to monopolise trade turned the region into a battle ground. In this sense, the continuity and flexibility of pre-colonial life and social relations were broken and by the time the British left, the region had turned out to be a region where various communities competed to take part in the emerging nation states. This was not the case of Malabar alone, the policies and measures executed by the colonial regime had serious consequences in the formation of the nation as a whole.

Policies such as divide and rule exaggerated existing differences among communities. The colonial regime fostered alliances with certain groups and pitted them against others to prevent a united front against British rule. In addition, the government had implemented rigorous methods to map and categorise the subjects. The introduction of practices like the census, survey and categorisation of land effectively erased pre-existing spaces and inscribed them with universal terms (Luria 149). This resulted in the production of rigid, mutually exclusive spaces in Malabar under the British rule.

Among the methods employed, the reinterpretation of history and patronage and appeasement of certain groups was explicit in the colonial practices in Malabar. In his initiation of history in Malabar, Logan has categorised the communities such as the Nayars and Mappilas who fought together against the foreign invasion into different categories and has patronised the Nayars as the most refined group. On the one hand, he has grouped the Hindus as a community, though acknowledges the divided nature, and idolised the Brahmin scholarship and civility (85) and erased all traces of caste violence into a willing submission. On the other hand, the Mappilas who formed a well-knit community have been divided into the highly civilised Malayali Arabs and the ordinary followers of the religion. The first almost equals the Europeans in terms of civility whereas the converted Mappilas are described as ignorant, violent and fanatic (197). These kinds of interpretations of the past and the categorisation of the communities have resulted in creating communal tensions among the people of the region who were having the tradition of tolerance and acceptance in the past. Though Logan has described the Mappilas as illiterate,

ignorant and fanatic, sufficient historical materials are available to prove that the local Mappilas had a dialect of Malayalam called Arabi Malayalam and literary productions were available in that language as early as 1607. Logan's polemic rendering of the Nayars and Mappilas as opponents have undermined the tolerant and mutually supportive alliances of the communities. In addition, The British government offered patronage and appeased the land owning *Janmis* who took the chance to exploit the Mappila tenants from their land further alienated the communities (Gangadharan 32). Hence, the communal tension existing in the region was largely a result of the colonial interpretation of history and discriminate patronising of certain groups.

Though the region is credited to have a rich treasure of historical resources ranging from the early history of Malabar by Zainuddin Maqdoom titled *Tuhfat al-Mujahidin* written in Arabic, the colonial rendering was far more influencing than any other narrative because of its close affinity with the concepts and categories of colonial modernity and the emerging nation states. The historical consciousness of modernity dominated the nation states and all other narratives were sidelined by the nationalist elite who have appropriated modernity to their benefit and excluded all other subjectivities. This in effect solidified and homogenised the fluid, localised, and multi-layered identities and caught the public imagination. Literary writings were influenced by the overarching constructs of colonial modernity and thus produced identities caught in history (Ramakrishnan *Achadi Muthal* 75). It is to be noted that some of these writers were aware of the fluidity of these historical subjects, but their rendering them into the structure of novels necessitated to erase or

distort or silence the historical realities they knew about. Thus, the influence of colonial modernity and structure of novels reproduced constructs which were historically false but aesthetically pleasing.

It is worth noting that the epistemological categories established by colonial knowledge systems continue to exist in the postcolonial societies as the transition to modernity required indigenous knowledge systems to fall in line with Eurocentric notions. Though colonial systems produced concepts, categories and institutions in order to establish western domination over the non-western territories, the colonised have to either appropriate colonial modernity or to get themselves sidelined from the discourses of nationalism. As nations are narrations, literary narratives have a significant role in articulating the discourses of modernity. Like nation, the genre of novel too was born out of the encounter between the west and the colonised (74).

The introduction of novels in Malabar was highly informed of the colonial context as it is a product of modernity and empire. The rise of the bourgeois, individualism and capitalism were key features of modernity which prevented communities from the lower strata to take part in the discourse of modernity and the print media including the novel played a significant role in the formation of the nation via various modes of narratives. The elite communities from the colonies found it easy to position themselves at the vantage point whereas the lower sections had to give up their traditions to access modernity (78). This eventually led to the consolidation of the elite as the national community and vulnerable groups such as women, peasants, tribals and minorities could not participate in the narratives of the

nation. Thus, the colonial stereotypes were reproduced in the print narratives even after independence.

The structure of the realist novel and its focus on the life of the bourgeois middle class made the novel the most accessible form of narrative for the upper and middle classes in Malabar. As the novel form requires identity formation and power positioning, the lower classes and colonial others could not render themselves in novel form whereas aided by colonial education and religious reforms enabled the upper classes to synchronise with the emerging nation states. Thus, their political and cultural identities were kept intact. In the context of the Malabar, the early novels were set on the life of the upper class/caste life and given the complicated history of the region, the Mappilas relied on the dialect of Malayalam particularly developed for the transmission of their socio, cultural and religious life. In addition, due to their continuous struggles with the colonial administration, they refused to take part in English education and the rich cultural resources were not narrated in the newly formed Malayalam. The reluctance to engage with the national community resulted in their isolation from the institutions of modernity and colonial stereotypes were reproduced in the new narratives. The distinctive cultural and historical roots of the Mappilas and the peasant uprisings further alienated them from the newly formed nation.

One of the most distinctive features of the Mappilas of south Malabar was their interactions with the international trade community of the Indian ocean. Their ancestry is traced back to the Arab traders or settlers and converts to Islam from the native population and the Arab link is dated to the 4th century AD (Miller 56). As a

mixed race of the natives and the Arab traders, the Mappilas emerged as mediators of international trade and the Zamorins of Calicut encouraged the fishing community to bring up one of their children as a Mappila in order to strengthen the trade of the port city (67). Thus, the Mappilas enjoyed power and influence in the kingdom due to their links to the king Cheraman Perumal and their role in the trade. The long tradition of Arab trading with Calicut fostered a community which was highly plural and tolerant. The presence of European powers such the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English on the Malabar and their attempt to monopolise trade with Calicut created centuries long rivalry between Arabs and the western powers which gradually affected the Zamorins as well the Mappilas. These bloody confrontations with European powers shaped the Mappila anticolonial position which fought to liberate the kingdom from the invading Europeans powers. Hence, the European powers systematically alienated Mappilas from the region and established the company rule in the region. These confrontations have resulted in misrepresentation of the community in the colonial recordings and these were later naturalised as ‘objective history’. Interestingly, the European colonial powers distinguished the Arab Malayalees from the native converts and labelled them using terms like ‘fanatic’, mad, ‘jungle Mappila’ and their cultural, social and economic life were erased turning them to spatialised objects without histories of their own . These constructs were reproduced more rigidly in the novels from South Malabar.

In the following part of the chapter, I analyse the novels by Uroob, SK Pottekkatt in order to bring out how the popular narratives of history makes its troubling presence in the novel which often goes against the author's own lived

experience. These narratives will be contrasted with the existing historical record and explore how colonial modernity constructs homogeneous spaces and objectification of the subjects continue to reproduce even after colonialism.

Uroob (PC Kuttikrishnan) is a novelist and short story writer from Ponnani, Malappuram district of Kerala. His novels were noted for their characterisation, socio political descriptions, psychological insights, poetic prose and the deep affiliation to the life of the region. His early novels were located in the countryside which usually narrated the simple lives of its inhabitants. Uroob's works were appreciated for their bold portrayal of progressive ideas and his love of life. He presented ordinary humans in their organic setting, fusing humour and pathos without being judgemental of their action. Though systematic study was not conducted on the spatial dimension of Uroob's literary works, it is explicit that works in the late 1950s shifts from the countryside to the city and portray the socio-political situations which narrate political issues such as conflicts between capitalism and trade unionism, alienation and unemployment. His humanistic stories treated with humour and pathos in a highly poetic prose make him one of the best novelists in Malayalam.

His early novels depict the life of the country; the simple and flexible life and warm human relations. Novels like *Amina* (1948), *Kunjammayum Koottukarum* (1952) present life in the village of Ponnani and human relationship is very warm. They are episodic in structure and time and place are stagnant. The socio-political issues of the world outside do not affect the characters' everyday lives and serious issues such as religious conversion and poverty do not create any serious obstacles

in the course of their love. Characters who belong to various castes and religions behave considerately and their social identities do not interfere with their love of life and other humans. For example, in *Kunjammayum Koottukarum*, characters from various castes do not interfere with inter-caste marriage of Kunjamma and Chathappan and also approve the conversion of Choyunni into Islam. All people irrespective of their identities join the march towards humanity. These novels imagine the region of Ponnani as a plural multi-layered society which idealises the humanity of the characters in spite of their differences. The narrative resembles fables of an ideal society which unites all the human beings excluded from the world outside which is fragmented by political conflicts.

Uroob's representation of the region is double fold: on the one hand, he narrates stories located in the countryside of Ponnani which a world in itself, and the socio-political world outside does not influence the course of the life of characters. For example, the novel *Kunjammayum Koottukarum* narrates the life of a group of villagers who live independent of any external influence and resolve social tension within themselves. In certain other texts such as *Amina*, the novel is anchored in the idyllic village in which a character named Hameed shares his terrible experiences to his doctor friend Nair who empathises with the horrifying experiences. While the character Hameed gives vent to his journey to West Bengal during the days partition in which he witnesses Hindu-Muslim communal riots, Dr Nair's mind wanders into the countryside and his love for a Muslim girl who later becomes the wife of Hameed. The character holds on to the beautiful countryside and the violence of the nation formation and wounds of partition do not disturb his life in the village. The

violence of India-Pakistan was one of the most tragic events in the history of the nation and the character Hameed is narrating the traumatic experiences of his train journey from Kerala to Bengal. In the journey, there were many occasions when the life of the character was threatened, and his wife was killed. The dialogues of the character express an urgency so that he will be relieved of the traumatic days passed. But doctor pretends to be listening but does not seriously attend him as the story turns to *Amina* who the doctor loved. He narrates.

Hameed was telling the doctor of the night he lost his wife. he began describing in a very emotional tone. The doctor stared at Hameed. Was he listening? He kept looking at the curly hair, long nose, tired cheeks and broad forehead of Hameed and felt that Hameed was very attractive, handsome...His heart drifted away and he forgot the surrounding. The table disappeared, the chairs, the book shelf, the cigarette tin and finally Hameed too disappeared. (Uroob 22)

The heartbreaking incidents Hameed narrates do not touch the doctor's mind. he does not engage with the suffering of people as India wins freedom. His mind is in the lost love of his life and nothing holds meaning except his love. In this sense Uroob imagines the region of Ponnani in the novels where communities live peacefully and the narrator maintains the space untouched by the political turmoil that is at question. The love of the countryside develops further in novels like *Ummachu*. These early novels do not draw much critical attention as they do not reflect reality the way realistic novels are expected of representing life. In the novel

Ummachu, the novelist gradually moves away from the county to the space of everyday life.

The publication of *Ummachu* in 1954 made the writer a significant presence in Malayalam literary canon. The novel explored the psychological state of its characters with deep insights and dramatised the conflicts between human desires and social mores. Ummachu, the central character of the novel is caught in a triangular love as she was loved by Beeran and Mayan and for her part, she loved Mayan. “The portrayal of Ummachu’s mind divided by love and loyalty is presented with such a remarkable insight that there are fewer characters in Malayalam who can match with the strong female nature of Ummachu. The character was described as “Kunthi Debi¹⁶ of Malayalam” (Bevincha, 92).

It is interesting to note that Uroob traces the origin of the characters in the novel. Unlike his earlier works which had characters from different social strata who identify themselves as humans first and rejoice the pleasures of human life, characters in *Ummachu* are invested with a past which exposes a shared multi-layered, and mingled genealogy which upsets the present social position of the characters. The central characters of the novel such as Ummachu, Mayan, Beeran cannot claim a true ancestry and they are at the mercy of a historian named Ahammadunni who keeps record of the origin and development of all the families of the region. The characterisation of Ahammadunni can be understood as Uroob’s response to the rigid and solidified religious and linguistic conflicts that emerged in the 1950s.

The portrayal of the historian is significant in many ways; firstly, he challenges all the identities based on caste and creed and hints at the possibility of mixed racial origin and denies the possibility of a pure genealogy that runs through generations. This effectively invalidates claims by individuals and groups who claim to have traditions for a long period of time and establishes that all communities and ideologies are hybrid and impure. Secondly, this enables the novelist to expose communities who pose themselves as the original inhabitants of the land and define others as outsiders whereas in reality all identities are invented and these formations are done in view of the colonial process. Thirdly, Ahammadunni traces the histories of the families back to the immemorial past that brought out historical truths that confused the identity formation of the present. History, as well as the historian, thus become a contentious imperative as the past poses a threat to the present. In addition, it reveals unpleasant part of history in which slave trade, the presence of traders, and rivalry among colonial forces are revealed which threaten the existence of the ethnographic rigid categorisation of modernity.

This critical positioning of Ahammadunni and history is marked in the novels as he is described as “It seems he was born as a historian. He knows diverse stories of the families and region. Nobody knows how he learned all these. He is a martyr of learning history. History has won him not only bouquet but also bricks” (Uroob, 18). These narratives place the people of the region in their historical context and many who have invented traditions of their own find it hard to accept. According to Ahammadunni, the ancestors of the character Beeran were of mixed origin. His grandmother was a Nair woman ostracised for breaking caste norms.

These norms are trivial and the woman was rescued or stolen by a 'primitive Arab' and Beeran's father was born out of that relation. This effectively exposes the historical origin of the family which the present members are unhappy to admit. In a similar vein, the titular character Ummachu is also born into an ancestry of a Nair soldier who tricked the Portuguese and was arrested in godown. Later, he was released by an Arab and a Chinese man and the Nair soldier took part in the perfume trade and married. The father of Ummachu was born into this relationship. The third character Mayan's history is much more complicated. Unlike the other two histories, Mayan belonged to the lower caste and his ancestor Rarichan was believed to have fallen in love with an Antharjanam, a Brahmin woman, and was fired from his job. The Antharjanam was later murdered and buried by the husband Ittiravi Namboodiripadu and Rarichan got converted into Islam christened himself as Ismail. Ahammadunni held Mayan responsible for the crime of his ancestor. Angered by Ahammadunni's role in mediating Beeran's marriage with Ummachu and the accusation raised against him, Mayan beats him blue and then the historian is no longer telling stories of the past. All these histories that Ahammadunni narrates puts his life at risk and the life of those he narrates.

Uroob's characterisation of the historian, though unreliable, is a metaphoric rendering of the history of Malabar in the context of colonial modernity. The rich source of history that he unravels disrupt existing social order and hierarchies and on a similar line, the history of precolonial Malabar is appropriated by the colonial narratives. Any plunge into the past brings incompatible frames of knowledge which cannot be accommodated in the emergent nation. The novel also hints at the fluidity

of identities of the people and region and the heterogeneous nature of social formation in the pre-modern world. All these flexibilities of historical identities are homogenised by the onslaught of colonial historiography. Hence, history becomes contentious imperative; something that lurks under the social life but cannot be accommodated in the Eurocentric categories.

Uroob introduced a fable-like structure of storytelling in the early novels where all caste and religious identities are superficial but the humanistic notions dominate the life of the innocent villagers. The introduction of the historian in *Ummachu* places the region in the context of the premodern history where the presence of non-natives and fluid social formations are depicted. The second part of the novel, the part after the death of Ahammadunni and departure of Mayan, the region stabilises its social relations and the histories of the past is ignored. This also shows a change in Uroob's writing as in the novel *The Handsome and the Beautiful*, he deals with the contemporary history and erases all the fluid historical development that he was aware of and produced a textual space that is informed by the realist narratives of the present, reproducing some of the stereotypes of colonial history which surely goes out of his lived experience in the region and historical consciousness.

The representation of identity in Uroob's fiction foregrounds regional identities in a flux: the characterisation of Beeran, Mayan and Ummachu and their troubled past set the course of the novel. It is interesting to note that the character Chappunni Nair does not actively participate in the triangular love and is mostly a witness to the troubled course of life. He was born into a poor Nair family and kept a

distance from all the life around him. He is the resolver of problems, confidante of Ummachu and his past is naturalised into the region's identity. It cannot be argued that the novelist is consciously alienating the characters but the novel fixes the disinterested attitude of the Chappunni Nair at the centre of the fictional space. This is very similar to the naturalisation of the Nair tharavad in *Indulekha* where all other identities unauthentic; the Nair *tharavad*, an ancestral home, not only occupies the centre of the novel but also of the newly formed nation. While the entire plotline is depended on the unauthentic histories of Ahammadunni that forces the characters to form their identity, lineage and relationships, Chappunni Nair has no such past in spite of the fact that members of the Nair community are involved in the histories of the other characters as saviours. In the course of the novel, the character gains prominence and follows all the practices of his caste. His presence in the region is authentic and he belongs to it where as other characters struggle to perform the inheritance of their past. His personality, caste and identity are naturalised in the cultural geography of the locality. The space of the novel is not disturbed by the socio-political developments in the outside world.

The novel *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* (translated as *The Handsome and the Beautiful*) traces the life of Govindan Nair turned Sulaiman from a remote village in Valluvanad to the city of Calicut. He was forced to leave the village because a group of angry rebels took him with them and he could not return to Kunjukuttiyamma with whom he stayed with. He does not reveal his past to anyone and keeps a tense, uneasy silence which he breaks when his son Viswam comes to his present residence. At a moment when his wife blames him for forsaking his wife

and child, he bursts out in anger, frustration and sadness. This is a dramatic moment when Sulaiman reveals his past which is not only painful for himself, but for the entire region as he narrates:

I would become a betrayer, it seemed. I was among barbarians. At that time everybody was mad. Mad! Some were murdered, harmed. I was also harmed. Because I spoke about my pain and anxiety I was made to carry corpses. I was beaten up. Each one turned me into another person. What can you say to the insane? Did it stop with that? I suffered all these. But when the trials began, I became the criminal. . . . Hundreds of times I was hit with the butt of the rifle. For what? For doing nothing at all! (213-214)

In spite of all his lived experience in the countryside and the warm relationship between the Mappilas and the Hindu caste as exemplified in his earlier works, his outburst is rendered in terms of the colonial categories. Ironically, this novel won him critical attention as it rendered a narrative that fit into the discourses of modernity that emerged in Malabar. Terms such as ‘barbarians’ and ‘mad’ reproduce colonial constructs and it has found its contexts in the rich colonial resources.

The depiction of the rebellion as ‘jagala’, ‘barbaric’ and ‘mad’ is not new as these terms were frequently reproduced in the colonial archives and the newspapers published during the period. But, the absence of normal Muslim characters in the beginning part of the novel located in the countryside is odd as Uroob is credited with representing Muslim characters in their cultural context. His insights into the socio-cultural life of the Muslims enabled him to create some of the finest Muslim

characters in Malayalam. But the novel which narrated the confrontation of the feudal rural subjects with urban modernity, could not depict the syncretic cultural relations of the premodern communities. Unlike his other novels, *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* follows the typical structure of European realist novels and their linear narrative pattern. The identities of the characters are homogenised and they belong to ethnic categories. The denial of plural subjectivities and solidification of their community origin forces the writer to keep the otherwise dynamic regional history at bay and portray them within the colonialist perspective. This shift in focus is to be seen in the context of Uroob's attempt to introduce various elements of modernity in his novel. In other words, the tensed silence of Sulaiman is a necessary strategy in order to render the premodern past in the context of colonial modernity.

Interestingly, *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarun* is a turning point in the oeuvre of Uroob's writing as it ensured his position in the literary canon. The novel records the transition of the fictional space from a mythic regional fable to the realist space which actively engages with the socio-political realities of the time. As the novel travels from the feudal village to the capitalist city, the novelist sheds his earlier engagements with minor identities and shapes the plot in accordance with the expectations of the emerging national community. The novel's attraction largely comes from the portrayal of three generations of characters whose lives are interwoven with the social and cultural realities of the country.

The difficulty of Uroob's characters to articulate their past, especially that of characters from the minor subjectivities, is evolutionary and introspective. His view of the world is inclusive though the emergence of the new nation influenced his

writing to an extent that it occupied a significant force in shaping novels of the 1950s. In contrast, the writings of S K Pottekkatt carries a perspective which distorts, alienates and objectifies minor characters.

In his highly canonical texts like *Oru Deshathinte Katha* translated as *Tales from Athiranippadam*, his empathetic understanding of ordinary characters has won critical attention. His perspective is not coloured by any social or philosophical ideas and attempts to present characters in their everyday life. His acute observation, detailed humorous narration and social criticism has been appreciated widely. Prof. K M Tharakan observes the artistic vision of Pottekkatt thus:

[C]hoosing a particular region, invoke its energy and inscribe the people with all the distinctive charms is how one gets the novel form. In a novel, it is not the plot, protagonist, perspective or artistic vision that matter but the atmosphere. It is the liveliness of the literary atmosphere. Human life is also equally important; there are no stories without human life and it is impossible to have stories without life. (180)

This presentation creates a simplistic portrayal of characters in their everyday situations and humorous treatment made his fictions very popular. His eye for details is much appreciated but the ideological perspective the text carries is not as harmless as his characterisation.

The Malabar Rebellion of 1921 and before was one of the most significant events in the history of Malabar. The interpretation of the rebellion as ‘anticolonial struggle’ ‘fanaticism’ and ‘peasant uprising’ depend on the ideological position of the historians involved. It is true that the rebellion was directed against the landlords

and the colonial overlords and it challenged the British authority in Malabar. Colonial and elite/nationalist historiography narrated the rebellion as communalistic outburst as a result, though the rebellion shaped the social and cultural life in Malabar, literary productions from the region did not comprehensively deal with riot and those which narrated often followed the colonial constructs. Novels like *The Handsome and the Beautiful*, *Wounds of Spring*, *Kayar* and *Oru Deshathinte Katha* offer a glimpse of the rebellion and fail to narrate the context and development of the movement.

Oru Deshathinte Katha is an autobiographical fiction centered on the life of the protagonist Sreedharan and it unravels the tales of the people and region of Athiranippadam in Calicut. The novel offers realistic portrayal of life in the country and claims to have reproduced the atmosphere of the place without any explicit ideological moorings. But a close reading of the text reveals the colonial stereotypes reproduced in the novel. The novel offers a detailed account of the cruel inhuman activities of the rebel Mappilas without hinting at the reasons or the particular historical reasons of the rebellion. In a sense, the novelist joins hands with the colonial narratives in order to dehumanize the Mappilas and demonise them as per the distorted images transmitted into the public imagination. Interestingly, the narrator of the novel is a Member of the Parliament and his memories of the rebellion is a reflection of the public discourse at large. The narrator cancels the historical context of the Mappilas and their cultural and intellectual resources and reduces them to mere animals. The novel is blind to the violence of the British government in Malabar, but lists out the violence perpetuated by the rebels. The

rebellion is first reported in the novel not by narrating any of the inhuman violence unleashed by the British government, but by a wild gossip of the untoward incidents that happened in Malabar. As the character Kitten Writer describes:

The first step of converting kafirs to Islam is the ritual bath. Then they are made to eat beef and their heads are shaved. The circumcision is the next step. Then they are made to wear caps. If anyone objects, they will be killed not instantly. It is said that they enjoy peeling off the skin of people alive!
(78-79)

In addition, the novel presents a distorted version of the historical facts so that the narrative complies with the stereotypes already existing in the public imagination. The novelist continues the narrative by offering glimpses into the savagery of the Mappilas without shedding light to the causes of the rebellion or presenting details about attempts made by the rebels in order to stop the communal elements and efforts to stop the British government from exploiting the tenets of the region. On the one hand, the novel presents the decades long confrontation of the tenant Mappilas with the feudal landlords in order to stop eviction from the land they cultivate as communal riot harming Hindus in general and evokes the rebels as communalists. On the other hand, the narrative gives vent to the British narrative of killing the tenant Mappilas, demonising them and consolidating the authenticity of the colonial narrative. This is done in such a way that the cruelties of the British administration and unjust land ownership policies of the regime never get discussed in the novel. The cruelties committed by the rebels are described thus:

Villages of the eastern and southern parts of the district are under the rioters. They are parading everywhere by invading courts and offices, plundering the treasury, setting fire to records, attacking police stations and seizing guns and other weapons. They are marching forward calling azan and invade the ancestral house of the feudal landlords and Hindu households and plunder paddy and possessions and forcefully convert the Hindus and those that refuse to obey are killed. (84)

Though there were incidents of plundering the feudal lords and an element of communalism which the leaders of the rebellion took every measure to curb, the rebellion is considered by historians as one of the peasant rebellions took place in India against the British and even the then District Collector William Logan has explained the causes of the rebellion as the unjust distribution of land in Malabar. This aspect of the socio-economic reasons of the rebellion is not given adequate space.

One of the striking aspects of the novel is that the narrative cancels the rich history of the Mappilas and the communal tolerance existed in Malabar during the precolonial era as narrated by Mr William Logan. The narrative produced aesthetic pleasure by objectifying the Mappilas and narrating them as people without history or civilisation. They were primitive, tribal and fanatic. The narrative voice which is clearly plural describes the way the Mappilas are tortured by the British and get pleasure out of the violent act performed by the police. The narrative joins hands with the British and offers an elite/colonial version of the events and the worst

torture the helpless women and children are subject to does not evoke any humanistic sentiment in the narrator. It is narrated as:

Kunjandi said that when the British soldiers arrived, the rioters left for the forest and hid. The Mappilas left for the forest leaving behind women and children in the house. A great reap for the soldiers.

Then I saw a group of people being brought there, they were all Mappila women. It was an exciting sight to see those Mappila women moving along in the moonlight wearing white tops, scarves over their heads and shining jewelleryes. Police men push them along. There were ten or twelve women and there were girls of ten or twelve years old. (Kunjandi realised later that all these women were of the rioters' family). Some are crying aloud, some weep. The sight reminded Kunjandi of the herd of goats led to the halter...

The next day, when Kunjandi visited the place where the women were led to, it looked like a halter of the Bhagavati. There were spots of blood on the grass and the soil. (90-91)

This narrative voice does not evoke any sense of horror in the reader. The employment of phrases like “exciting sight”, “halter of the Bhagavati”, point at an unempathetic narrator who depicts the cruelty done to women and children as a sight to see and the use of the ‘Bhagavati’ and ‘halter’ render the violence in terms of a religious sacrifice legitimises the act. It is horrible to know what the innocent women and children were subjected to and it is more horrible to read the narrator’s presentation of the violence as aesthetic and casual. Though there are multiple accounts of the Malabar Rebellion exposing the colonial involvement and the

complex feudal system and land distribution. None of these are integrated into the narrative and it effectively alienate the Mappila rebels from the great historic past of the region, their commendable service to the Zamorins to fight with the European powers and the history of the Mappilas for centuries as mediators and their significant role in the prosperity of the kingdom.

The novel not only erased or distorted the history of the people as the colonial invaders did in other colonies elsewhere, but misplaced and objectified their bodies in the narratives. This objectification and spatial alienation are found right in the beginning of the narrative. Athiranippadam, the locale of the novel is excluded from Mappila presence right at the moment when Krishnan Nair, the father of the protagonist Sridharan settles in the locale. It is interesting that there was a Mappila family there and Krishnan Nair buys the land of the Mappilas and joins the community living there. The anxiety of the people is expressed thus in the novel:

“Someone has bought Moidu Mappila's house and land”. The news spread in Athiranippadam.

“Who bought that house and land?” Sawyer Raman asked Damu writer.

“A well-educated and qualified master”

“Is he a Mappila?”

“No, he belongs to our religion” (18)

They became happy. There was only one Mappila family in Athiranippadam - Moidu Mappila. Now, a decent Hindu master is coming to stay there. Good news. (18)

This spatial orientation of the locale develops with the narrative to greater alienation of the community. They appear differently in different parts of the novel: one instance is when Krishnan Nair encourages his son to donate to a Muslim shrine, the narrator, young Sridharan, asks why they donate to a mosque and it is not a temple (49). His father explains the need of respecting great men of all faiths. But the father asks Gopalan in another situation when the young Gopan requests to permit him to cut his wisp of hair, an angry Krishnan Nair responded: “He wants to get his hair shaved and live like a Mappila. Doesn’t he?” (68). This alienation of the community from the fictional space is more telling in the episode narrated by Kunjandi in which Mappila women are led by the soldiers and later raped and killed, the character looks at them and their bodies as objects of pleasure and the violence committed on them is justified by the religious terms associated with the murder committed by the soldiers. The women and the girls are dehumanised and do not invoke the horror associated with the murder of a human. This spatialisation of the characters without history or human dignity sanction the murder of the innocent women and children.

The novel’s troubled relationship with the Mappilas continues throughout the novel. Everything associated with the community is demonised: the call for prayer with the howling of the foxes (123), the women of the community as “witches who covered their heads with white shawl” (205), are examples of the way those characters have been described. The sense of alienation is further dramatised in the chapter titled “Ayisha”. The narrator has already ensured that there were no Mappilas in Athiranippadam and the name refers to a woman called ‘Archa’ whose brother, a chef in the British army camp, murdered a rich Mappila woman and

plundered all her jewelleries and kept the stolen items in the house of his sister Archa. Ironically, Archa turned Ayisha, described as speechless, violent, and holding weapons is forcefully violated in front of the public. It is evident that this was a plot by the head constable and Compounder, the violation of the Mappila woman in disguise Archa is a symbolic act of the public desire for violence and inhuman treatment of the group. In the scene described above, the policeman's gathering of the ornaments is described as: "The policeman carefully untied Archa's hands and allowed the Compounder to take hold of one hand. The other hand was taken into custody by the policeman himself. Then, ignoring Archa's pain and agony, forcefully removed bangles and jewels and tied her hands again" (113). The text's engagement with the Mappilas and the misplacing of the character exposes the reduction of the Mappila women to exotic objects and the gaze of the inhabitants on the disfigured bodies.

The systematic degradation of the colonial subject is a prerequisite for the expansion of the empire and the establishment of colonial authenticity and progress. This intent is carried forward in the colonial discourse which has seeped down to colonial modernity and finally to the nation states. The novel describes the rebels as ignorant fools who do not have the reasoning power to distinguish good from the bad and are easily exploited by the clever priests. This was an image constructed by the colonial historians such as William Logan in order to explain the resistance movement. The novel as a social document reproduces those constructs and ignores the local historical narratives which provide sufficient evidence to see that the Mappilas had produced a dialect of their own and it had literary expressions from at

least as early as the 17th century. But the construct of the violent, ignorant and idiotic figure is reproduced in the realistic novels of the 20th century. It is true that the Mappilas were largely converts from the lower castes but the religious education was carried through the Arabi-Malayalam dialect. The British were not aware of the language form and literature in the beginning, but later on, they realised the critical role of the battle songs in instigating the rebellion and attempted to translate them into English. In addition, Arabi-Malayalam had a rich treasure of resources not only of songs, though it was the most popular form, but also various forms of knowledge such as histories, biographies, interpretations of various texts and religious texts which was not accessible to the mainstream until the publication of *The Great Mappila Literary Tradition*. Due to the intense confrontation between the Mappilas and the British, the former rejected modernity which resulted in the alienation of the community and its literary productions from the public discourse. The portrayal of the Mappilas in the novel is limited to the image of the community during the intense battle with the colonisers. But the rich tradition of the Mappilas on the Malabar coast is forgotten in the process. The novel portrays the Mappilas thus:

The rebels had almost given up their desire to seize power. Most of them were ignorant and superstitious. The leaders convinced these idiots that this was the white man's attempt to destroy Islam and the mosques. They called for arms and set out for a deadly war- the mullahs in the mosque had also convinced them that if they killed the infidels, they would get heaven. When many of the leaders, who killed many, were being killed, there was no one to lead the rebellion. Scattered from the group, the rebels were stranded in the

forests- they were sure that if they surrendered or were captured, the police and the army would beat them to death. Therefore, they decided to fight till the end in the name of religion and slaughter as many infidels as possible before dying. Such was the subsequent departure and programme of the rebels. In other words, the rioters turned themselves into an Islamic militia.

(115)

The historical tradition of the Mappilas was gradually erased by the consistent reference of the ignorant, foolish and violent images of the community. The significant role of the Mappilas in Indian Ocean trade on the Malabar coast and the position they held in the Zamorin's of Calicut are distorted and the fanaticism is exaggerated out of the anticolonial resistance. Though the Mappilas were described as 'Jungle Mappilas', and innocent and foolish people of the hinterland, most of them were living on the coast involved in the spice trade until the confrontation with European powers forced them to move into the remote part of the region. The shift to the hinterland gradually resulted in the formation of the Mappila peasants who were ruthlessly exploited by the British authorities. Though people from the lower castes also converted into Islam, the spread of Islam in the hinterland is caused by the gradual dislocation of the Mappilas due to the unbearable life on the coast. This shift led to the consolidation of the community with the lower castes converts and formation of a well-knit community strengthened their desire for dignity and resistance. The British on the one hand, split the community into the Malayali Arab and native converts and described the former as scholarly and descent and the latter as ignorant fools. This division of the community enables them to create the people

of the interior land as an 'other' of the civilised coastal people. This view in effect conceals the dynamic mobility of the Arabs and their connections with the native people. The categorisation of the peasant Mappilas as the primitive and fanatic is a key element of the narratives and historians disagree whether the Mappilas of the hinterlands were people migrated from the coastal areas or due to the religious conversion of the lower castes. According to Roland E Miller, "after the Portuguese period, the growth of the Mappilas were never restored and when they turned inland in search of new livelihood, they encountered a lower caste who needed and longed for change" (93). On the other hand, M Gangadharan in his *Malabar Kalapa 1921-22* states that the argument "the Portuguese domination forced the Mappilas to abandon the profitable maritime trade and turn to inland agriculture, which "resulted in the subsequent poverty, ignorance and inwardness of the community" now require reconsideration" (24). He argues that the Mappilas on the riverbanks were converted due to the presence of the Hadhrami sayyids. A detailed study of the Mappila centres on the river banks reveal that there was the presence of centres of knowledge across the regions.

The novel also shares the interest of the colonial administration in the portrayal of the rebellion. The colonial narratives stated that the Mappilas were ignorant and vulnerable to exploitation by the clergy and their interest in the rebellion was motivated by religious fanaticism. Recent studies by subaltern scholars have identified the rebellion with the other peasant rebellions in the country and the desire to die was not only inspired by religious fanaticism but a strategy to counter the violence and suppression of the colonial regime in Malabar.

Working against the idea of the natural stupidity of a peasant, I would interpret “martyrdom” as a religio-political strategy. It was, after all, not an easy task to risk an insurrection against a well-armed adversary. Having everything to lose, yet confronted with the sheer impossibility of continuing as before, the peasant-insurgents had to be aware of the implications of their deed. Once the peasants’ decision to become “martyrs” is reconfigured as a political choice, it is possible to see how such a decision is a strategic choice, taken after careful consideration of available options. (Ansari, 81-82)

The strategy posed serious challenges to the British as the “martyrs” were celebrated by the community and inspired more people to join the struggle. In an act to defend the violent rebellion, the British introduced Mappila Outrageous Act in 1954 and 1959 which permitted the administration in Malabar to execute highly violent methods to curb the rebellion. This also includes burning of the dead bodies of the rebels so that the site of the grave will not be visited by community members and will not trigger anticolonial sentiments. These laws evoked criticism from the public as it not only introduced ruthless measures but also disrespected the dead body. The novel follows the British narrative and describes:

The fight continued. It was all over in a quarter of an hour...When the dead bodies of the Mappilas were counted, there were 234. Instead of burying the bodies of the rebel Mappilas according to Islamic law, the soldiers piled them up in a corner, doused them with petrol, set them on fire, and burned them.

Govindan Writer summed it up with a bit of sarcasm.

The Mappilas believed that if they died fighting, they would get to paradise. Now, if they die fighting with the soldiers, the path to paradise is blocked. If the body is burned to ashes, how will the Mappilas rise from their graves on the day of the judgement. (Pottekkatt, 117)

This not only points at the narrator's political position with regard to the rebellion in Malabar but also his limited access to the cultural resources of the community.

Though the martyrs were respected and worshipped by the community, burning their bodies to ashes will not restrain them getting to paradise. This exposes the extent of dehumanisation that Mappilas were subjected to and how the reduction of them into bodies without histories are constructed in the narratives.

Chapter 4

Negotiating Modernity and the Construction of Heterogeneous Spaces in Select South Malabar Novels

It is already established that the novel in India was born out of the encounter between modernity and anticolonial nationalism and all communities did not participate in the discourse of the nation. The nationalist elite appropriated modernity in its own terms by instituting material and spiritual domains: the first is the public space in which institutions of modernity operated and the latter is the private space in which traditions were accommodated. So, that the upper classes can join the public sphere of modernity by maintaining their caste practices in the private spaces. This ambivalence towards modernity privileged the upper caste elite to be both traditional and modern, refined and unrefined, and secular and religious at the same. This also led to the normalisation of upper class/caste values in the public space. Social groups such as women, peasants, minorities were out of the system as they were only considered as groups to mobilise the anticolonial nationalism without being fully given agency to act on their own. These groups maintain their own consciousness but it never gets integrated with the nationalist models. The engagement with modernity and colonialism enabled the upper castes to position themselves within the discourse of modernity and that provided them access to English education and narrations of the nation. Those groups excluded from the discourse such as Dalits and minorities were kept out of the emerging nation and its institutions.

The emergence of the Mappilas on the Malabar coast was the result of the trade relations between Malabar and Arab traders. The arrival of the Portuguese on the coast was considered by the community as a threat and the period was described as a period of *fasad*¹⁷ meaning ‘social and political disorder’ to which the Mappilas fought with all strength with the support of the local King, the Zamorins of Calicut. This confrontation with European forces shaped the Mappila responses to Western powers. As a result, the Mappilas fought with the succeeding European invasions and by the time the British invaded Malabar, they were one of the poorest communities on the coast and refused to engage with colonialism and modernity. Though the Mappilas on the coastal area were not involved in the peasant revolts and mostly lived in harmony with the British, they were sceptical of colonial modernity and English education. By the end of 19th century reformists understood that engaging with modernity defined the political life of the community in the colonies and they found spread of conversion to Christianity was alarming. Reformist movements drawing insights from non-European sources propagated English education and the transition to the vernacular nationalism, Malayalam. Mappilas employed the hybrid Arabi-Malayalam dialect to give vent to their cultural expressions but these language varieties were gradually disappearing. In this context, community reformers like Makti Thangal encouraged the community to learn standardised Malayalam and use the language to negotiate with modernity. There was no common consensus in approaching modernity and the vernacular national language as it required the community to delink its rich traditions.

There are many factors that shaped the Mappila response to modernity. Firstly, their engagement with colonial modernity and nationalism was structured by their collective memory of anticolonial struggles and the violence with which the British administration in Malabar suppressed it. Secondly, the progression projected by modernity was secular, and dominant religions have appropriated the public space into their belief system. The secular nature of modernity was not experienced in the colonies for the colonial process was embedded with Christian missionary activities and the Hindu elites had normalised their values in the public space. Though discussions about modernity normally define it secular, recent studies have pointed at the presence of religious beliefs in it. “Drawing insights from the recent historiography of Britain, Christopher Bayly has argued that we need to emphasise the commanding importance of religion in British social thought into the 20th century. The 19th century imperial state was mirrored and informed by a British Protestant spiritual empire” (D. Menon 1663). This religious implications of the colonial state made it difficult for the Mappilas to engage with Modernity as it either goes against their collective memory of anticolonial struggles or harmed their religious beliefs. The works of Makti Thangal testifies this (Moulavi and Kareem 225). In the aftermath of the rebellion of 1921, the British government introduced many schemes to encourage Mappilas to take part in the education process. Lured by the reformist movement and the helplessness after the rebellion, Mappilas gradually took to English education as well as literary productions in Malayalam.

One of the significant aspects of the transition from Mappila tradition to modernity was the gradual disowning of the Arabi-Malayalam dialect which had

preserved detailed narrations of the everyday life of the Mappilas. Since education, modernity and nationalism homogenise the cultural expressions of the subjects, it was difficult for the Mappilas to carry the literary tradition within the fold of modernity. The cultural lag the Mappilas experienced in the public sphere was caused by this rupture of modernity.

When the embrace of Malayalam introduced by him (Makti Thangal) joined with the nationalist and reformist movement, Mappilas rejected the premodern culture and world view. In brief, this resulted in the rejection of the Arabi-Malayalam dialect and the entire canon of literary productions made in that language...there was no other medium which comprehensively recorded the cultural life of the Mappilas... the right way was not lingering on Arabi-Malayalam or complete rejection of it, instead there would have been concerted efforts to include the cultural terminologies of Mappila dialect in the newly forming Malayalam language. (Aboobaker, 476-478)

The political condition of the period did not facilitate such an effort to include the cultural terminologies in to the Malayalam language as it was already influenced by the Sanskrit centred world view. The Mappila literary productions in Arabi-Malayalam dialect were of great aesthetic and political significance but they were unavailable in Malayalam and were not integrated into the canon of Malayalam literature. In the absence of literary expressions, the colonial stereotypes regarding the Mappilas as illiterate and ignorant people brought into the narrative. Literary productions of the early Malayalam literature presented Mappilas as aggressive, traditional and ignorant. The inability of the community to produce literature of their

own made them narrated by the nationalist elite which transmitted the colonial models in the newly emerging contexts. In the novel *Oru Deshthinte Katha*, S K Pottekkatt presents the case of a writer named Ibrahim who steals stories from different texts and then merge them into a new story using his imagination and practice of reading literature.

Sreedharan understood the formula of writing stories by Virippil Ibrahim. He was a tailor earlier; he uses the same technique of stitching clothes to create stories. He is not without resources- he has imagination and reading experience. He selects a plot for the story and then steals the necessary elements such as language, description and form from books written by others. He has the talent to combine them into a story. (320)

The character Virippil Ibrahim represents the helpless condition of Muslim writers in the early days Mappila entry into Malayalam literary history. Their story telling traditions were disowned and the literary expression in a new language required familiarity with the literary sensibility. The importance of novelists from south Malabar should be understood in this complex historical moment in which Mappila engagement with modernity was initiated.

In the absence of authentic narrations, cultures will be misrepresented in the mainstream literature. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, the heterogenous Mappila spaces and cultural forms were misrepresented in the novels emerged from South Malabar as they were narrated by the members of other communities who do not have access to the cultural codes of the community. In this chapter, I examine the aesthetic and political representation of three novels from south Malabar in order to

explore how these novels counter the stereotypical representations of the Mappilas in mainstream Malayalam literature. The novels are namely *Sultanveedu* by P. A. Muhammed Koya, *Espathinayiram* by Hafis Mohamad and *Ennappadam* by N P Mohammed. The writing of novel is a significant step in the formation of a community as it informs its engagement with modernity. All communities encountering modernity will negotiate with the values of modernity and appropriate it for their benefit. This chapter explores the manner in which these writers have negotiated with modernity and created counter narratives produced by the mainstream literary canon.

These novelists are in one way or another are connected with the matrilineal families of the Muslim settlement in *Kuttichira*¹⁸ where the Arab traders settled. It is worth observing that early novels in India which narrated the conflict between tradition and modernity were centred on women and most of them were named after the female characters such as *Indulekha* in Malayalam. None of these novels selected for study has placed women at the centre of the narrative reforming the community. Instead, the matrilineal system privilege women with power and possessions and the women in the novels are traditional and independent and attempts to reform them is partly successful. The historic context of the port city of Calicut and the social relationships based on that are significant in the understanding of these text as they conceive spaces and regions from distinctive experiences.

One of the distinctive features of pre modern port city of Malabar was their engagement with trade across the Indian ocean. These societies conceived spaces especially of the waterways and boundaries of countries in totally different ways

than that of the modern. The liquidity of the oceans and its essential mixing of cultures and people do not get into the form of nations with political boundaries. The cosmopolitanism that emerged in the port cities permitted a different form of social grouping and formation of spaces. The coastal regions of Malabar developed a distinctive socio-cultural setting in the premodern era in which the trading communities of diverse origin traded on the coast and formed a society which was highly plural and mixed. The formation of the new nation required people to trim their transnational connections and fit themselves into the mould of the nation state. This complex historical process rendered the emerging bourgeois middle classes of colonial India as the national community and those societies which had strong transnational connections were often rendered as others within the boundaries of the nation. The transnational relations equipped those communities to link with the international trade and form themselves into a significant member of the community. Cut off from the trade links, they find themselves alienated from the body of the nation and get marginalised. Those communities which have participated in the process of modernisation have moved to the centre of the new nation whereas other groups get into the periphery. Interestingly, the politics of the social formation of the new nation states are determined by power relations in the emerging nation states. This is to say that a homogenisation of people and culture becomes the cornerstone of the new nation. In this case, the plural and fluid social formations are replaced by the structured social practices of the bourgeois middle class. These novelists mediate between the homogenising tendencies of modernity and the heterogenous nature of premodern society and creates a fictional space which upholds certain values of the modern with the ethnic life of the community.

Among the three novels selected, *Sultanveedu* is the best narrative of the conflict between modernity and tradition. It has been described as one of the best novels in Malayalam. “If you select ten best novels in Malayalam published within the last quarter of a century, one of them will be *Sultanveedu*. It is the first and the only novel with an epic form written on the life of Muslims” (Achuthan vii). The first part of the novel was published 1974 and the second part in 1976, the novel presents the life of the *Koya* Muslims of Calicut and the transition of a matrilineal community into modernity. As they were already following mercantile capitalism, the novels pattern is different from other novels of reform. The first part provides an ethnographic account of the community and its distinctive cultural roots and the second part narrates the individual journey towards modernity. Interestingly, the novel places itself in the midst of the transition and offers deep insights into the complex negotiation with modernity. It captures the mercantile capitalist on the Malabar coast, its socio-cultural relations and institutions. Portraying the past of the locality as a cosmopolitan port city, the novel addresses various forms of modernity from an anticolonial point of view. In this process, the dynamic relations of the region with the Indian ocean trade get integrated with the nation.

The novel *Sultanveedu* is particularly relevant in the context as it deals with the emergence and transition to modernity. It captures various layers of spatial and temporal dimension. The novel narrates the story of the disintegration of a matrilineal Muslim household of Calicut during the colonial period. The novel is located in *Kuttichira*, a part of the city close to the sea, and traces the fall of the family from its graceful days to fragments and consequently a patriarchal modern

family emerges. The novel charts the successful journey of an orphan named Ummer Koya from a hapless young boy to a self-made businessman who is determined to undo the multi-storied matriarchal *tharavad* and establish a modern house with sufficient 'light and air'. The conceptualisation of the old and new house brings unmistakably to mind the novel *Nalukettu* by M T Vasudevan Nair. The fictional location of Kuttichira which refers to the region around the pond built by Zamorins of Calicut and is part of the city. The area is populated by Muslims who are usually known as *Koyas* and follow the matrilineal systems of inheritance like that of the Nair caste. The inhabitants are largely part of Indo Arab origin and constitute a very distinctive society. Though the novel chronicles a premodern society in transition to modernity, it does not follow the trope of a shift from feudalism to capitalism as the people are part of a trade community and do not have any social practices associated with feudalism. Instead, the community traditionally follows trades and trade related enterprises. Hence, the novel blends a unique position as early novels in India narrated the transition from land-based feudalism to market capitalism.

The construction of literary spaces in the novel is worth attending. Spatial literary studies have described the function of narrative as literary cartography which provide the reader with guidance on how to move through the narrative. As Robert Tally Jr. observes, "[I]n producing the narrative, the writer also produces a map of the space, connecting the reader to a totality formed by the narrative itself. Narrative is thus a spatially symbolic act in establishing a literary cartography for the reader" (Tally Jr.). The novel begins with a *Padippura* (threshold) in which the novelist narrator maps the city and its history. He brings a contrastive image of a city which

has lost much of its vigour and glory. The description reminds one of a heritage walk through the cityscapes introducing the history of the locale and settlement various ethnic communities and their ways of living. The journey through the city equips the reader to understand the glorious past of the city and the present condition. All the characteristics features of the port city is introduced before the reader enters into the fictional world. When the reader enters the threshold; they are met with the terrific yet dilapidated mansion named *Sultanveedu*. The narrator introduces the house as a representative of the mansions around the pond *Kuttichira* which are standing tall amidst the struggles of the nationalist movement without being affected by the struggles of the time. It is worth attending that the narrator describes the locality, house and people as passive, inert and stagnant as the waters of the still pond, unaffected by the changes of the time. It is also to be noted that the text has two times; the time of the great house and that of the emerging nation and modernity. The novelist endorses the time frame of colonial modernity and the past and traditions are rendered in a time frame that is lost and ineffective.

The construction of the social space of the novel is significant in comparison with other mainstream novels written in Malayalam. On the one hand, mainstream Malayalam novels such as *Oru Deshathinte Katha*, constructs a fictional space in which the Mappilas from the coastal areas are absent and the Mappilas from the hinterland are described as a threatening presence. On the other hand, the elite members of the *Koya* families normally consider poor people from the hinterland as secondary citizens. In the fictional world of the novel, the novelist creates an inclusive social space in which both the wealthy *Koyas* and the refugee from *Ernad*

are treated equally. Though members of the family object the inclusion of a *randan number* (the inferior one) into the family space of the matrilineal family, the protagonist considers the character Moythu Master as his mender and follows his instructions. This act of the protagonist breaks the stereotypical images of the threatening Mappila presence in the mainstream literature and also challenges the notions of elite Mappilas claim for superiority. This is particularly relevant because the character introduces reformist ideas and this breaks the colonial idea of dividing the community into two in which the Mappilas of the coast are referred to as elite and peaceful while the Mappilas of the hinterlands are fanatics and ignorant. In this way, the novels organise community spaces in Malabar by merging the Mappilas of the shore as well as of the interior regions. This effectively alters existing ideas and colonial ethnographies on Mappila community that were prevalent in the public imagination.

The structure and the publication of the novel are very significant. The novel is written in two parts: the first part published in 1974 provides a detailed account of the matrilineal family, its culture, language, customs and ritual with an objectivity that matches with that of an ethnographer and the second part published in 1976 is a narrated in linear time space in which the transition of Ummar Koya and family is presented in details. It is true that the protagonist stands for modernity and his journey from the ancestral home to the nuclear family is endorsed in the novel. But the presentation of the novel in two parts imagined and published separately places the two life views in sequence in the novel. Though the novel provides continuity of the two parts, their distinctive world views are presented in their own terms. Unlike

other novels of reform, the novelist identifies with the fictional world of the past and describes it as a history of the locality.

The construction of a multi-layered space is a significant part of the literary cartography of the novel. The characters of the novel are located in a triadic spatial configuration and the protagonist passes through these spaces in the everyday life. The family space of the matrilineal household is the inner core of the family which extends to the spatial location of the community which is the social space around the *Kuttichira* pond where issues regarding the Mappila community are discussed. This space extends to space of the nation where discussions regarding nationalism and anticolonial struggles are conducted. This triadic spatial configuration helps the narrative to maintain the insularity and the transparency of the novel. For example, the changes in the public sphere reflects in the community space which further alters the family space. This space-making process enables the community to maintain its familiar and community spaces separately from the public space. The protagonist crosses the three layers of space in his everyday life and his presence combine these rather distinctive spaces into a coherent whole.

The representation of time and space in the novel requires detailed scrutiny as the novelist has to present a house and people that has a long tradition of survival in the port city with its own history. At the same time, the realistic novels emerging from the colonies have to meet the ideals of colonial modernity such as the progression of time and the stagnant traditions of the colonised. The novelist has to follow the conventions of realistic novels and aspirations of the newly emerged without losing the nuances of the social life of the community. In order to bring a

balanced structure, the novel narrates two periods of time and spatialises the house as a unique object in the history of the nation.

One of the striking features of the early realist novels that emerged from India was that it placed a female protagonist at the centre of the narrative. The realist novels from the colonies attempted to reform existing social practices by incorporating ideas of colonial modernity which projected women to be reformed from the clutches of age-old patriarchal traditions. Many of the early novels published in the regional languages in India used female names to title the entire story as it showcased the women's journey to realisation and change. As Meenakshi Mukherjee states in her introductory remarks on early Indian novels "in some form or another, women remain central to the early novels (a surprisingly large number of these novels have women's name inscribed in the title) as characters, as possible readers but very rarely as authors" (Mukherjee, xvi). The engagement with women's cause can be understood in the emergence of early Malayalam novels and their female heroines. The emergence of the novel form in colonial India coincided with the reformist movements that stood for social change and rejected traditional social practices and most of them featured women as the harbingers of change.

The novel *Sultanveedu* does not feature a woman protagonist at the centre and does not, in a broader sense, describe the oppression women experience in the household, but instead projects the house itself as the centre of the narrative. The women's question in the early novels mostly controlled by patriarchal male members and searching for identity and freedom forms the basis of realist fiction and the men are hated for being oppressive. In *Sultanveedu*, the female characters

too form the part of the domination and discrimination as the novel deals with a matrilineal household. In addition, it is the male members who assume the leading role of the narrative and ask for equality. A similar characterisation of insecure male members demanding modernity and nuclear family is also found in *Nalukettu* which is also centred on the matrilineal family of the Nair community. Both these novels feature young male members of the matrilineal family demanding power and recognition from the *tharavad* and in the process of modernisation, dismantle the joint family household and establish a patriarchal nuclear family in its place. The focus on unwinding the story of the women in the house over a period of time is shifted toward a big mansion in which an orphan boy is subject to isolation. Hence, the narrative shifts from the multi-storeyed house onto a nuclear family space where modern individuals have settled.

The protagonist of the novel is an orphan who was accused of stealing a gold ornament and his desperate attempt to prove his innocence is highlighted in the story. Though he does not succeed to prove himself right, this is the central motif of the story for Ummar Koya to avenge the members of the family and finally dismantle the household. The selection of orphan is narrative strategy: on the one hand, the presence of an orphan informs the absence of parental figures in controlling the actions of the character. On the other hand, the cause of the orphan is a central concern in the fictional space of the novel particularly within its religious world. Readers' sympathy for the protagonist is based on his orphan childhood, though a kind hearted aunt named *Pathummeyithatha* acts as a mother for him and his young sister. The selection of an orphan as hero is a central concern in the

narrative; on the one hand, it enables the protagonist to have the reader's religious sympathy as Muslims are supposed to provide food and shelter to orphans and protection of the orphans is a central concern of the Islamic world view. On the other hand, the orphan is a child of the present and he is free of the past and traditions. Interestingly, a number of Victorian novelists have selected orphans as central character in order to free them from the limitations of ancestry, traditions and the past. Instead, orphans or foundlings of unknown origin make it easy for the novelist to narrate his ideas of the present without necessarily placing them in systems of heredity. This revelation of the past ensures that the characters are placed in the physical environment and that their material conditions shape their consciousness and not their origin. While early novels in India narrated the condition of women in patriarchal households, the characterisation of an orphan in crisis appropriates the novel form and incorporates religious concern into the narrative.

The issue of the orphan is to be seen in the context of the Enlightenment idea of humans as rational creatures and in spite of all the differences, rationality constitute the nature of the human. In the context of the novel, the absence of the father also informs the absence of the Arabs who had married women on the Calicut coast and had children in the relationship as the father leaves the children with the mother on the Kerala coast. Interestingly, the novel's absent father invokes a breaking away from the Indo-Arab relations as the emerging nation state was claiming its geographical territories and any link with external or overseas relations needed to be mediated by the nation state policies. In this regard, placing an orphan

at the centre of narrative enables the novelist to trim the premodern connections and gradually shift the textual place into the institutions of modernity. The cause of the orphan isolates the individual from the complex relationships of the matrilineal family and their affiliations with the Arabs. In addition, it marks the birth of the new nation and the breaking of the traditions in order to accommodate the call of the new nation state. The introduction of the orphan also links the novel's fictional world with the social space of the Muslims. The shelter houses for orphans (*Yatheem Khana*) is an integral part of the social and cultural life of Muslims and Calicut has one of the earliest orphan houses under the JDT Islam in Kerala. The orphan's journey through the joint family to modernity is chronicled in the novel as the nation emerges in the subcontinent.

The partition of the novel into parts of equal significance underscores the ambivalence of the novelist towards modernity. As mentioned earlier, the first and second parts were published separately. In the first part, the story of a great matrilineal house spanning the lives of five generations are recorded. It presents time in cyclic and the narrative is episodic. The second part is the journey towards modernity in which the time is linear and space is homogenous. By placing these two conceptions of time and space together, the novel links itself with the premodern traditions of the community at the same time it engages with modernity as well. Together, the novel creates a textual space that traverses from a rich premodern space that is informed by the sea and the transnational links towards modernity introduced by religious reforms and anticolonial struggles led by the Indian National Congress. Though the narrator aligns with the protagonist in the

pursuit of modernity, the placing of the two parts into a whole informs the community's ambivalence towards colonialism and modernity. The novelist places the locale of the novel within the rich historical and spatial context of the port city of Calicut. He guides the reader through various parts of the city and introduces city monuments (in an ironic tone) and unfolds history of changes in the city over a long period of time and the journey concludes at the threshold of the house *Sultanveedu*. Thus, the reader is encouraged to witness the collapse of the matrilineal house within the historic context of the city.

Novels located in south Malabar often carry the tensions of communal polarisation in the region. As mentioned earlier in chapter 3, the anticolonial struggles of the Mappilas on the shore till the 17th century and peasant revolts in the *Ernad* and *Valluvanad* taluks of south Malabar in the 19th and 20th centuries had significant impact on the community relations in Malabar. The social space of south Malabar is informed by the anticolonial struggles of the Mappila peasants against the landlords and the British state which was interpreted as communal riots by the colonial and nationalist narratives. Mappila responses to colonial education and the conflicts with various institutions of modernity have set the stereotypes in circulation. This communal tension is reflected in the literary representation from the region. As a result, the fictional representation of the Mappilas is highly derogative in these novels. Characters from Mappila social life are framed in the colonial and nationalistic ideologies which distorted the historical reality of the community. As illustrated in the previous chapter, novels like *Oru Deshathinte Katha* presents the Mappilas as threatening presence in the otherwise peaceful city

and they are viewed as spies or fanatics. In this context, it is interesting to see that the novel *Sultanveedu* imagines a social space in which people from various communities are represented. One of the significant characters of the novel is a washer man named Velu who joins the religious reformer Moythu Master in the protagonist's journey to modernity. Unlike mainstream novels located in south Malabar which narrated the stories of newly emerging suburbs as a result of urbanisation, the novel is set in a traditional predominantly Musim settlement in the city. Yet, the novel produces a social space where members of the other communities could maintain peaceful relations with the Mappilas. This making of a plural social space challenges the homogenised highly communal literary spaces in circulation.

The portrayal of anticolonial struggles in the novel is also remarkable. While those novels mentioned in the previous chapter either offer a detached portrayal of the life of the characters or trivialises episodes of the anticolonial struggles. For example, the novel *Oru Deshathinte Katha* presents a scene in which the brother of the narrator, Kunjappu, participates in picketing of a toddy shop as per the instruction by the national leaders of the congress but secretly drinks toddy. *Sultanveedu* captures the evolution of nationalistic politics and the central character sympathises with the Congress. He not only actively follows the developments of the struggle but also criticises members of the community for not becoming a part of the movement. Another striking element of the narrative is the integration of the Malabar rebellion of the 1921 into the fictional space of the novel. In his critique of the representation of the Malabar rebellion in *Oru Deshathinte Katha*, Dr K M

Sheriff points at the absence of authentic literary representations of the rebellion as it is a crucial incident in the history of Malabar and of the nation. He writes:

Malayalam literature has not produced narratives of the Malabar rebellion. It is not depicted comprehensively in any work. There are glimpses of the incident in the works Uroob's *Handsome and the Beautiful* and Thakazhi's *Kayar*. The novel *Wounds of Spring* depicts the rebellion briefly and *Oru Deshathinte Katha* is no exception to this trend. Considering the gravity and consequences of the rebellion, it is a failure of Malayalam literature that this violent episode of Kerala history has not been seriously recorded. (31)

It is true that the novel *Sultanveedu* also does not provide a comprehensive narrative of the rebellion, though its response to the rebellion is different from other novels which dealt at least partially with the incident. Comparing to the narratives of the rebellion, the novel accommodates the anticolonial politics of the fictional space of the plot. The character Moythu master has fled from Ernad taluk due to the mounting presence of the British army in the region. Though he left the village for the sake of his family, his engagement with the anticolonial politics of the Congress testifies the spirit of resistance. In addition, the protagonist celebrates the anticolonial spirit of the Mappilas and compares it with the Muslims of his locality.

Ummar Koya remembered contrasting the strength of the anticolonial struggles of the Mappilas of Ernad towards the British colonial power as they challenged the empire with the responses of the Mappilas of *Kuttichira*. Mappila leaders like Veliyankode Ummar Qazi, Fadl Pookoya Thangal,

Chebrassery Thangal, Varian Kunnath Ahammed haji, Ali Musliyar and Lavakkutty have a great tradition of fighting the coloniser.

Preachers here instruct the believers that it is obligatory for Muslims to obey the ruling king and everyone follows it. What a shame! (252)

Though the novel does not provide a detailed account of the rebellion, it is inclusive of the politics of the peasant rebellion which has been narrated as a communal and fanatic activity in the popular imagination. The novel also constitutes a space in which a member of the Ernad taluk is present. The stands with anticolonial fighters and criticises the elite Muslims for not being part of the movement. In addition, he also questions the interpretation of religious texts in the context of the struggles.

The novel opens up heterogenous spaces. Generally, it is the colonial context that introduces modernity and nationalism in the colonies. As mentioned earlier, anticolonial nationalism is a product of English education and the familiarity with newspaper and European novels. In the case of the protagonist, his entry into education and modernity is offered from the work spaces of the lower classes. He learns to read and write with the help of the workers who follows the developments of the anticolonial struggles. Mainstream literature places the upper caste *Tharavad* at the centre of the fictional locale and the engagement with colonial system is naturalised. For example, in the novel *Oru Deshathinte Katha*, the father of the narrator Krisnan Master is respected by everyone because of his upper caste upbringing and proximity to colonial officers. “Krishnan master was a teacher at a European school in the town... Though Krishnan Master was a gentleman who was born and brought up in the city, received English education and interacted with

Europeans of the town, had a special interest with the countryside and its culture’ (16). This implies at the cross proximity of elites with the British officials. The sources of modernity are strikingly different in *Sultanveedu* where the ordinary workers who are kept at the margins of the discourse of nationalism educates the orphan boy to read and right and it becomes a turning point in the life of the character. The protagonist is encouraged to read newspaper by the washerman and the religious teacher and he finds it difficult because he had attended school up to class II. His meeting with the newspaper is described in highly religiously charged context.

“Alright, read this newspaper, let me hear you”

Velu extended the Mathrubhumi newspaper while pressing the clothes.

I was embarrassed.

How can I read well without stumbling. I just want to get out of here.

“Why are you hesitating Koya? read as you can”.

“I have studied only up to class two”

I was at the brink of crying.

...

“Oh. read, if there are some mistakes, I will help you”.

Master said. I felt better.

I picked up the paper. It was the first time I had ever picked up a newspaper.

My hand was shaking, fingers trembling, and the whole body trembled.

...

I felt like the way Bivi Hajara and the baby Ismail found the source of the holy Zamzam. I will drink from this Zamzam every day to quench my thirst.

These are the ways God opens to us! (145-146)

The instruction to read the newspaper reverberates with the instruction given to prophet Muhammed by the archangel. He replied that he could not read and the angel repeated the command of God. Finally, he reads the verses of the God. This instruction and support given to the protagonist make the textual connection with the first revelation of the Quran. Here, the novelist repositions the introduction of literacy into a religious context where the orphan boy of Calicut will be related to the Prophet who too was an orphan. The change that follows the reading also strikes similarity with the experiences of Prophet Muhammed after the first reading of God's verses. The connection with the religious history goes further when he compares the discovery of literacy with that of the discovery of Zamzam by Hager and Ismail in the deserts of Arabia. In this way, the novelist introduces filtered versions of modernity into the community spaces of the Mappilas. The plot never introduces a European in the novel and the context of modernity is appropriated within the cultural context of the community. All these discussions happen within the public sphere of the novel.

Parallel to the confrontation between the community and anticolonial nationalism, the community space around the pond *Kuttichira* witnesses heated debates among the reformists and the traditional members of the community. It is interesting to note that the reformist arguments are conducted within the community

sphere which is not mediated by any other external agency. In addition, though reformism was a response to modernity, reformists do not draw their arguments directly from colonial modernity and its institutions. They have explored alternative sources of modernity from non-European sources such as the world-wide Islami movement. A review of the reformist movement may reveal the influence of European modernity in it, though it was a religious response to modernity. Like other communities, the Muslim reformist movements too is ambivalent towards modernity. On the one hand, it accepts the application of Western rationality in material things but on the other hand rejects the secular and moral values of the West. The intervention of Vakkom Moulavi was very instrumental in forming the reformist agenda.

For Vakkom Moulavi, the goal of modernization was to bring material progress, modern education, freedom of expression, elevation of the status of women, awareness about rights and responsibilities, and so on, but without causing the decline of religious faith and practices, moral and religious education, community consciousness. Modernization should empower Muslims to respond to the allegations of Christian missionaries about Islam, help Muslims to perform religious rituals fully while realizing their meaning, and free Muslims from the authority of ulama' and un-Islamic beliefs and practices. (Abraham 19)

The novel does not fully endorse the reformist ideas but mostly aligns with certain arguments they pose against traditional Islam which finds parallel with the subjective experiences of the protagonist. The heterogeneity of the realistic novel is

further developed by integrating Arabi-Malayalam literature into the social space of the novel.

Discrediting of Mappila literary production in Arabi-Malayalam is one of the criticisms in Mappila engagement with modernity. The Arabi-Malayalam dialect of the Mappilas recorded the nuances of the community and the transmission to modernity disowned them. According to K Aboobakker, there should have been concerted efforts to integrate the terminologies of Ara-Malayalam into Malayalam (478). The debate over the role of Arabi-Malayalam and its cultural productions continue even today¹⁹. P A Muhamed Koya has integrated various types of Arabi-Malayalam song compositions in the novel. They are transcribed in to Malayalam and includes a variety of Arabi-Malayalam compositions such as *The Muhyuddinmala, Pakshippattu, Oppanappattu, Burda* and lines from Pulikkottil Hyder's song supporting the British. In other words, these songs were integrated with the various stages of the community life of the Mappilas and the novelist has deployed them in the novel. In *Sultanvedu*, the narrator introduces the women of Kuttichira as an invisible yet powerful presence in the family. The matrilineal social formation does not provide the pattern of novels in India where women are rescued either by the white man or by reformers supported by modernity. The male protagonist's embracing of modernity is rejected by both men and women of the house.

The treatment of time in realist novels is usually linear and progressive and it offers descriptions of spaces of everyday experiences as well. The conception of time is significant as they featured the birth and growth of protagonists who

develops consciousness over a period of time. Indian storytelling traditions conceive time as cyclic and repetitive. In her analysis of two realist novels *Pather Panchali* and *A House for Mr Biswas*, Meenakshi Mukherjee argues that though both novels are written in realistic novel form, their idea of time and space are distinct. As she writes:

When the tradition of realism in fiction evolved in Europe in the nineteenth century, it was underpinned by the idea of the linear progression of time which made each moment unique and irrevocable. In the puranic concept, time is indivisible; it is part of the immutable rhythm of the cosmos which embraces man and the universe in a cyclical repetition. The seasons of the year are an aspect of this principle of continuous return, and the renewing of life through each generation is part of the process. (Mukherjee, 72)

The conception of time as progressive polarises the idea of time as static and linear. Realists follow the linear progression of time so that it contrasts itself on the static time as traditional and non-progressive whereas the flexible structure of Indian idea of narrative depict time as stable and consistent. Interestingly, the first part of the novel *Sultanvedu* experiences time in the traditional sense where the characters do not proceed to the progression of time; but the second part charts passage of time as progressive. The progress of time parallels the emergence of colonial modernity and the nation state. The central character and the author are disturbed by the stagnation of time and express anger and contempt at the social and political life of the people. In the preface of the novel, the novelist appears, before he puts on the fictional costume, and observes that “If you consider the pond (*Kuttichira*) as a central point,

the two-hour radius from the pond is a separate world with gate houses and vestibules.... The pond is as still as life in this area” (Koya, 23). The stillness of the pond and the people is contrasted with the progressive time of the formation of the nation state. Ummar Koya, the protagonist, is also contemptuous of the people of the household as they are unaware of the time they are living in.

It is a common trope in colonial literature that the colonised people are stagnant and spatial without having any claim for historic progression and the coloniser is entitled with the change and progression. The introduction of colonialism in non-European countries is also credited with the introduction of modernity in the colonies and hence the colonised are benefited by the colonial process. In a similar line, the novel presents the ancient house as a symbol of changelessness and rigid to the historical changes that are happening around but in reality, the history of the Malabar coast testifies continuous struggles with the Portuguese right from the beginning of the 16th century. The house is credited to have survived generations of women but the bloody confrontations with the Portuguese and the resultant socio-political changes are not narrated in the story instead the trader’s wealth and the establishment of the family house is repeated to the point of mockery. In this sense, the novel denies the historicity of the house and its relations with various power groups and presents it as a place without history and neglects the historical developments that have shaped the house and its people.

In the novel, the story of the house and its past is narrated by the matriarch of the house Kowjeyithahta whose idea of the house is both personal and familiar. She does not connect her life with the outside world and holds power over everything in

the house. Her world is defined as domestic and the outside world is unknown to her. The presence of women and their hold over the house is viewed critically in the narrative right in the beginning. As the novelist describes the pond and its surroundings in the prologue of the novel: “In this world of miracles, you may not see any child born as a girl. So, don't imagine such a race does not exist. They are there. Their presence is very strong. They are the cornerstone of everything. Everyone is behind those curtains” (Koya, 21). The novelist’s treatment of the women of the house as domestic in contrast to the public space engaged by the protagonist Ummer Koya who accuses the members of the house of not having any understanding of the modernity which was on the rise. The male protagonist aligns with the historical forces and the women who are described trapped in the house are devoid of any sense of time and progression. A close reading of the novel will reveal that a parallel sense of time also exists in the plot of the novel. Though it does not manifest itself in the external world, the matriarch of the house is aware of the time passing, her life from a young girl to the matriarch, the past of the house from her childhood to the present. In addition, she is also aware of the collapse of the matrilineal household and the fragmentation of the different groups in the house during her time. The writer as well as the protagonist of the novel points at the stagnation of the house and the region, the characters like Kowjeyithatha lingers to a different sense of time. As Ajay P Mangattu notes in the introduction of the novel: “Ummer Koya says that tradition is a stagnant and dull time inhabiting Sutan Veedu and the inmates of the house do not have any sense of time. In fact, there is no other character in the novel who has a keen sense of time as Kowjeyithatha. She experiences time in its rawest horrors. (Koya, 10). The novel holds two different

layers of time: one is the progressive time that Ummar Koya holds which has links with the external world; the other is the time that characters like Kowjeyithatha hold which has greater depths and is rooted in the past. While Ummer Koya assumes the past as trivial and vanity of the old, the matriarch experiences time in its entirety. This deeper sense of time is a distinctive feature of the novel though the protagonist's urge for embracing the present succeeds at the end.

The novel's construction of space is highly significant as it has three layers of spatial engagement. The first is the familial spaces of the house where various families coexist in different parts of the house. The novel offers detailed descriptions of the spatial arrangement of the house: the women matriarchal family has right over the house so that the bridegrooms visit them in the house and every family is assigned to rooms in the multi-storeyed house. These domestic spaces are exclusively assigned to woman and their partners. In addition to this, there are common spaces as well. It is worth attending that they are exclusive spaces for women, their bride grooms, and the visitors. The second is the space of the community which is around the pond in Kuttichira: this space is occupied by men, community reformers and traditional religious heads. This is the space where the conflicts between traditional Ulema leaderships, Ulema and social reformers and community rituals are performed. The third is the public spaces where various social forces are at work. It is the work place, the place of capital and the space of the nation.

The women of the house occupy the familial space and the men mostly interact in the community space where the protagonist and his mentors interact. It is

the domain of anticolonial struggles, the work spaces and the newspaper. These spaces overlap at moments but often come into conflict. The familial space is that of a joint family so that it does not provide any space for individual freedom. The space of the community is largely masculine and the educated individuals get engaged in religious matters in this space. Discourses of nation, freedom struggle are chronicled in the public sphere. The ancestral home *Sultanveedu* houses debates on individual freedom, freedom struggle, religious beliefs and property and inheritance. The public space emerged from the nationalist discourse is filled with the discussions on the nature of the nation, freedom. The familial space on the other hand occupies a collective life which goes against the ethos of the modernity which requires individual based existence whereas the premodern stand for a collective survival. Inspired by the debates in the public sphere of the nation, the protagonist is bound to break the joint family and structure a new type of daily system which is based on the nuclear family.

The shift from the collective to the individual, the joint family to nuclear family and the community space to the nation marks the spatial shifts of the novel. These spatial relocations are empowered by modernity which demand uniformity in the national, communal and familial spaces of the people. The joint family headed by a matriarch misaligns with the individual based patriarchal nuclear family. Hence, the fictional space of the novel gets reduced to an all ruling national society which leads to the homogenisation of the spatial formation. It is a feature of modernity to spatialise objects and people neglecting the history of their evolution. Unlike many realist novels set in the precolonial period which records the transition

from a feudal society to capitalist society, this novel portrays the transition of a capitalist society towards modernity. The economy that supports the household is based on timber business and the family is hugely dependent on business transactions. Hence, many social categories that existed in feudal Kerala do not operate within the community though certain feudal influences may be traced. Part 1 of the novel presents the plural household where women occupy a significant role in which various ethnic and cultural diversities are maintained. The familial space of the house extends to the spaces of the community where community specific debates are being held. The national community of the outside world which claims to be secular and modern gradually transforms both the domestic and communal spaces of the novel.

Drawing insights from Lefebvre, spatial literary studies argues that spaces are constructed by power. The change in the mode of production from feudalism to capitalism also alters the concept of space. The spatial understanding of premodern societies especially in the Middle Ages reflected socio-political context of the time. As capitalism gradually emerged, the construction of spaces also witnessed changes.

The first stage, market capitalism, witnessed the homogenization of space, the development of a Cartesian grid like spatial organization, a geometric space that demystified the earlier, feudal or medieval senses of space and place. Here the realist novel or realism more generally emerges as the dominant mode of novelistic discourse, as the narrative mapping project attempts to apprehend the experience of this kind of spatial formation. (Tally 47)

The emergence of the capitalism homogenised space and the earlier mystified spaces are altered by a kind of mapping and rendered a grid like space. This in effect leads to the reduction of communal and collective spaces to a homogenised universal form of spatialisation. Though the nationalist movement and the formation of the nation state have intensified the homogenisation process, it has taken all forms of traditional spaces and free flowing identities and communities has been regimented to the disciplining of the nation. Hence, the novel imbibes the structure of colonial modernity and realism and cuts colonised societies from all sorts of connections and spatialises them.

Negotiating with modernity also involves the reduction of premodern spaces and cultures. In spite of the brilliant portrayal of the house and its history, the gaze of the protagonist coloured by modernity fails him to get into the inclusive system of premodern societies. The modernist narratives of linear time often disconnected the historical past of its subjects. In the spatial deployment of the plot, the protagonist is blinded by the 'here and now' and ignores the deeper historical relations. Certain spaces in the novel are passive and historically inert. The process of constructing a realistic geographical place devoid of any historical context is both ideological and imaginative. The historical context provides the space with a past and identity of its own and the mutation of the historical connections render them inefficient and objectified. In the novel by P. A. Muhammed Koya, the matrilineal *tharavad* is cut off from its historical ties with the maritime trade links and he negotiates with modernity and constructs a heterogenous space. *Kuttichira* is located on the sea shore of Calicut and its rich history of maritime trade with international

communities are lost in the emergence of the nation. Premodernity and its plural specialities are reflected in the first part of the novel. In the second part, the novelist captures the transition towards modernity, education and nationality.

The presence of various heritage sites and places of worship in the novel is a point worthy to be analysed. Famous mosques such as *Mithkal* mosque²⁰ are a regular presence in the novel. *Muchundi* and *Mithkal* mosques are credited as the earliest mosques on the Malabar coast and they represent the glory of the premodern community on the coast. They have survived centuries as a place of worship of the Muslims of Calicut and have witnessed the troubled history of Mappila confrontation with the Portuguese on the coast. These sites of worship function as a place of communal gathering and it testifies the contributions of the community to the rulers of the region. In addition, they hosted the vast number of traders and supported the growth of the community surrounding the pond. The novel presents these historical remnants as sites of orthodoxy and places of ritualistic worship. Ironically, a detailed chapter is dedicated to describe the sectarian conflict among the members of the community based on the altercations between the *Valiya Quasi* (literally mean ‘the big Qadi’) and the *Cheriyā Quasi* (small Qadi). The humorous description of the historical site is to be contrasted within the historic context of the Mappila settlement and community formation on the Malabar coast.

The protagonist visits the mosque many times but its rich history especially that of connected with Nakuda Mithkal, a wealthy merchant on the coast, is worthy to be seen in the context of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Nakudha Mithkal was a rich Yemeni merchant settled in the city of Calicut who built the mosque which has

survived centuries to the present. Interestingly, the patron of the Mithkal mosque and the protagonist of the novel strikes similarity as both were born in poverty and captivity but gradually rise to be rich and privileged. Though the spatial representation of the mosque is a passive site in the narrative, the history of trade and the position of slaves in Islamic societies underscores the narrative's silenced spaces. Nakuda Mithkal was a slave who was assigned with the commodity of his master. Slaves were trusted with commodities of the master and they were treated like brothers in the premodern society. In addition, slaves were allowed to run their own trade activities. Nakudha Mithkal belongs to these groups of slaves who freed themselves from slavery and finally became a rich man on the Calicut coast. Unlike other traders, these slaves turned traders do not have a home to return to; hence they settle on the coast where their wealth and fame rested. In his insightful study on *Monsoon Islam*, Sebastian R Prange writes:

This lack of proper Arabic or Islamic names could indicate that the ancestors of the shipowner Mithqāl had reached the Malabar Coast as slaves. Slaves sold in Middle Eastern markets, especially those of African origins, were often given florid names such as Lu'lu' ("pearl") or Jawhar (from jawharah, "jewel"), which were otherwise not used as personal names in Arab society.....The loss of ancestral references entailed in slavery and conversion may have led this merchant to adopt a nickname, which encapsulated the basis for his economic standing that enabled him to function as a patron of Calicut's Muslim communityIt can be speculated that whereas merchants with stable kinship affiliations hedged the desire to

one day return to their ancestral home, and perhaps endow a mosque there with the profits they had made as Indian Ocean traders, for former slaves returns were more difficult to envision and effect, making them more likely to invest into their new communities. In this reading, the project of building the physical spaces of Islam in Calicut was, on an individual level, also a project of placemaking for its patrons, separated by the violence of slavery from their ancestral homes and communal affiliations, but now laying highly visible claims to prestige and authority in a place in which they had redeemed their agency and found prosperity. (136-137)

Interestingly, the trader Mithkal who built the mosque which the protagonist frequented was a slave who later on became a trader of wealth and prestige and settled on the Calicut port has symbolic connection with Ummar Koya of *Sultanveedu* as both as creating a personal space out of the complex origin they have had. These sources which stand in stark contrast with the modernity introduced by British colonialism does not feature in the novel and reduces the complex historical context of the locale Kuttichira into a multi-storeyed house where a joint family struggles to coexist.

The novel's spatial configuration erases these subtle differences and the possibility of the past opening various forms of modernities which developed independent of the modernity that was introduced as part of the colonial process. In this sense, the novel *Sultanveedu* is modelled after the realist fiction of feudal transition into modernity whereas the trader community on the Calicut shore already formed a capitalist society which was open to various avenues of modernity. For

example, members of the patriarchal household had already opened itself to forms of modern life.

The novel explores the complex responses of the community towards modernity. The protagonist and his mentor follow the politics of anticolonial nationalism whereas characters like the son-in-law Atruman puthiyapla supports the British Raj. One of the conflicts between the protagonist and the family members of the the house is based on their response to colonialism. The introduction of the Mappila song by Pulikkottil Hyder also serves this purpose. Right from the early novels such as *Indulekha* introduced the ambitious aristocracy who catered to the changing times and stood with the British and the nationalist movements respectively in order to yield the benefits of power. The novelists' attempt to create a narrative of transition from feudalism to modernity is complex in this context. In addition, the novel is caught in the genre specific conventions of fiction as a result fails to open up various sources of alternative modernity.

Modernity projects a rational, secular nation based on free individuals at the centre of its discourse. Hence, it theoretically rejects identities based on caste and creed. But the modernity that existed in the colonies was 'belated' and never met those projections and the resultant failure made colonial rule possible. Modernity operated in the colonies in an ambiguous position. It split the personal and public spheres as separate entities and the public was brought under political scrutiny but the private was allowed to be at the hands of the individual and community. The interiority of the individual was formed by various ideas related to tradition and community.

The British administration did not deal with the personal spaces and focussed all its political scanner on the public space. Modernity did not contribute to the formation of the interiority of the individuals; it was religion and caste which shaped the individual inner life and protestant Christianity involved in the transfer of lower castes into the realm of modernity. This religious aspect of modernity offers significant insights into the formation of modernity in the colonies. The ambiguous positioning of modernity in the colonies makes colonial modernity an unfinished project. While the public sphere engaged democracy, secularism and the like, the personal sphere engaged with individual and community traditions. The involvement of protestant missionaries in the self-formation of the people put the project of modernity in crisis. The placement of Protestantism with Colonialism together makes it difficult for Muslims in India to accept modernity. Religious reformers were determined to challenge religious conversion and began reforming their own belief systems in the wake of modernity. Hence, a complex set of approaches were formulated in order to balance modernity with religiosity. The Protestant missionaries focussed on superstition and inequality as the primary issues with the colonised. This led to the formation of religious reformation with certain aspects of religious superstitions while maintaining other aspects. The construction of the reformist movement seriously affected traditions while the idea of modernity remained unattainable.

The construction of sacred spaces was an integral part of pre-modern religiosity. Modernity challenged such spaces and materialised all spaces of human existence. It is an irony that the colonial administration secularised the public space

and left the personal or communal space religious or traditional. Writers from the colony made use of the personal space to keep their traditions while at the same time appearing to be modern in the public sense. This ambiguous position was exploited by the privileged classes or castes as they maintained their caste or tradition in the personal space and reaped the benefits of modernity in the public space. Most of the communities who were willing to modernise themselves negotiated with modernity and kept their traditions within the secular public space. People who hail from underprivileged sections could not posit themselves within this paradigm as they were either oppressed by the orthodox traditions or openly challenged the secular public space. This confrontation resulted in the marginalisation of those communities within the paradigm of colonial modernity as well as the emerging nation states.

Espathinayiram is an autobiographical novel written by N P Hafiz Muhammed. This novel is also located in Kuttichira of Calicut and chronicles the protagonist's life from childhood to adulthood. He is an insider of the matrilineal household and charts the life of its women especially of his grandmother and friends and other childhood adventures and eventually records the separation of his family from the joint family to a patriarchal nuclear family. Like *Sultanveedu*, this novel also captures the Muslims of Kozhikode in their transition to modernity and discusses issues such as matriliney and the emerging nuclear family, conflicts among various religious groups, position of women in the community, sexuality and traditional attitude to new ways of living. The protagonist describes the transition that happens around him without challenging the system. As the young narrator is

unaware of the complexities of the outside world, the world of his childhood gradually disappears and a new order comes into its place.

One of the striking features of novels that capture pre modern societies' transition to modernity is that the pre-modern is deprived of its rich historical traditions and pasts and spatialised as a shapeless bundle of unrecognizable objects of the past. Their contexts are removed and the journey to the promises of modernity is the only solution possible for them to progress, Thus, these societies are bereft of their dynamic nature and get objectified. The deeper sense of time and place are revoked and the transition trims their organic continuity. The episodic nature of the narrative evokes a historical sense of continuity in the narrative which foils the disruption of modernity.

The novel *Espathinayiram* is a bildungsroman which narrates the life of the young protagonist Hafis, whose name is mispronounced by his grandmother as Asif to the boy's discomfort, to his adulthood. His childhood was spent in a matrilineal household in Kuttichira. He lives with his maternal relatives, namely women of various dispositions. The novel positions itself as a journey from the traditional households into the modern nuclear family and it offers a multidimensional space of the locale Kuttichira with all its heterogeneous nature. The novel begins with the young protagonist asking the origin of the region and the matriarch of the family fuses myths and oral traditions to offer him the genesis of the place. Her narrative of the origin of the space is located immediately with the arrival of the trading community on the coast. She says:

“How long has it been since people reached thekkepuram, grandma?” I asked.

“Yes...espathinayiram years ago”

“Espathinayiram?”

“Yes, thousands of years ago, Arabs of noble origin arrived at the shore by big dhows for trade. They converted beautiful and noble women into our community by making them recite the shahada. Then they married these women and settled here. Gradually, their families grew here in large numbers. That is how the koyas and bibis of thekkepuram were born, do you understand?” (Muhammed, 10).

Unlike other narratives centred on South Malabar, the novel foregrounds the region as a cosmopolitan port city and its historical links with the transnational community. It is evident that the inhabitants are conscious of history of the region for centuries, though their temporal markers do not match with that of modernity which quantifies time and place. The narrator finds this hard to comprehend as the time frame does not make sense in the present. The word ‘espathinayiram’ puzzles him and his grandma does not provide an answer. It is his father, a writer of some repute in the city, who offers him with quantifiable spatial indicators and the history of the region. The narrative develops into a conflicting sense of space; on the one hand his maternal relatives hold to the centuries-long histories of the region as an oral tradition, but on the other his father, an outsider to the region, provides him with concrete descriptions of time and space. As the young narrator states: “I do not understand those stories told by grandma because they do not have years or days. It

is when my father took me to the seashore that I understood them” (11). The father fills the stories with concrete time and place and underscores the region’s multidimensional aspects. This is to be contrasted with the novels like *Oru Deshathinte Katha* which construct the locality in connection with the feudal social relations and erases the cosmopolitan, multidimensional place as mentioned in the former chapter. In short, the grandmother guides the boy through the community practices and its interconnections with the Indian Ocean community. She follows a cyclical sense of time which is contrasted with the progressive time represented by the father of the boy.

The novel *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* also records the transition of the feudal village into an urban modern space but the region is mostly narrated with the absence of any conflicts with regards to the nation on the wake. *Espathinayiram* on the one hand portrays the arrival of the Chinese and Arab traders and the violence committed by the white men on the shore. On the other hand, it throws light on the relationship between Muslims and the local kings. This past which upsets the nationalist narratives and introduces the muslims as members of the local kingdoms. The novel also anchors the mappila muslims into the soil and narrates the historical roots of the warm relationship between the Zamorins of Calicut and the Mappila Muslims. As the novel describes:

“Wasn’t the Mithkal mosque in Kuttichira renovated using the stones and wood obtained from the demolition of the Chaliyam Fort, dad?” Bhai asked.

“It was the Zamorin’s sweet revenge for the Portuguese Albuquerque and his men who had set fire to the Mithkal mosque and damaged it. Does anyone know all these today?”. Kunju Sahib asked. (15)

Thus, the novel upsets the time frame set by the realist novels and introduces temporality on a different axis. Time is not a concrete concept here; but a humanised idea of the past and the present. There are so many indicators of time in the novel such as the term ‘espathinayiram’ or references like “the day before the gigantic whale washed ashore” (37) points at a distinctive time that breaks from the quantified time realistic novels portray. Though the narrator of the novel is skeptical of the myths that have been told, the region is believed to have stories of origin and tolerance. The image of the sea and the recurrent references to the transnational past maintain the flexibility and plurality of the textual space. References to the palaces of the water, the foreign aggression and the wonders of the creatures of the sea put the imagined space into a dynamic locale which is shaped by the water and fluidity of water structures the narrative as well.

The novel establishes the link with the pre-modern religious spaces such as the graves and shrines. Though reformist voices challenge the practices associated with these places, they merge with the community spaces in the fiction. Another interesting aspect of the novel is its detailed description of the grave. The chapter titled ‘Qabaristhan’ offers an ethnographic detail of the grave and how the community treats the dead body. In a conversation between the narrator and his friend Koya, the novelist presents the way the graveyard is arranged and how the souls of the dead inhabit the land. The discussion proceeds to the death and afterlife

of the people and Koya narrates how burning or slicing the dead body will not prevent God from uniting the body of the dead. He explains:

“If they get converted, their bodies will not be burned...else the bodies will be set on fire” Koya said.

“If their bodies are burned to ashes, then can it be united?”. Koya covered my mouth. “Let no one listen to your nonsense, Hafis. Don't you know the power of God?”. Koya continued after a while. “Even if the dead body is exploded and broken into pieces or burned to ashes and joins the soil, Allah will bring all the parts together and make it one”. (51)

This description of the power of God to bring the torn pieces of the body into one refutes the claim of the British to burn the body of the rebels to ashes and prevent the locals from worshipping them. The same is mentioned in the novel *Oru Deshathinte Katha* as an effective way of disposing of the body in order to prevent the body entering heaven. In this sense, the novel faithfully presents the premodern society and its ethos and the historical context that make them sensible.

The attempt to present premodernity in the form of a novel necessitates certain flexibility in the novel form. It has to redefine the progressive sense of time and the linear structure of the European novel in order to accommodate the life view of the premodern communities as the time is often understood as circular and the structure episodic. The novel *Espathinyiram*, though captures the narrator's journey from childhood to adulthood, depicts the story of a community met with colonial modernity without imposing colonial assumption on the people. There are many situations in the novel where the author introduces various aspects of premodernity

without compromising the conflict of tradition with modernity. One of the striking examples is the presence of the Arabs on the Malabar coast. The intense conflict between the Arab traders and the Portuguese on the coast resulted in the failure of the Arabs and their departures from the west coast of India. Evidences of the Arab contact is felt in every part of South Malabar, though they are not visible in the literary representations. Though the novel *Ummachu* brought the Arab traders and slave trade into the narrative by the character of a historian, the digging into past troubles the characters' present disposition. The character was later killed by Mayan. In the novel *Espathinayiram*, the young narrator and his friends make an event of a visit to an Arab in the city who welcomes them and reminds them of their collective identity. In *Ummachu*, the Arab is represented as a "wild Arab" who rescues an ostracised Nair girl from the slave traders. It is historically proven that the city of Calicut was part of mercantile capitalism and the trade with foreigners played a significant role in maintaining the economy. The Arab presence has influenced the region, its architecture, culture and language though these traces are not visible in many novels located in south Malabar. Interestingly, the novel presents a scene in which the young narrator visits an Arab citizen in the city and feels excited about it. The journey to meet an Arab trader is portrayed as:

There was a security guard in white uniform outside the gate. Tahir said to him. "Aboobakkar Koya Barami's order to meet Kuwaiti".

Suddenly, he saluted us.

As they entered, Tahir said: English is more precious than Arabian gold.

.....

Room boy opened the door. Tahir greeted him and the Arab greeted him back. In front of us, the Arab reclined on a large chair like a sack filled with cotton. He slowly raised his head and sat forward. He sat like a king in his carved armchair.

.....

The Arab burst out laughing and said: “Kullum Muhammed”.

Everyone is Muhammed. That is when I realised that we were connected by an invisible thread and looked at the Arab in surprise. (131-132)

The boys immediately recognise the acceptance of English in the hotel where the Arab stay which points at the shift in power on the coast. The narrator’s realisation that all of them are united by an invisible thread is a significant moment in the novel as it hints at the community relation that the people had. The appearance of the Arab reclining on a chair looking like a king refers to the position of the Arab trader on the coast. This interaction is missing in most of the novels written in south Malabar. In the novel *Ummachu*, the historian refers to the relationship between the locals and Arab but he is presented as an unreliable historian and the narrative gets rid of him due to his recounting of the past which upsets the social relation in the present. In *Oru Deshathinte Katha* there is no reference to the Arab presence though the locale ‘Athiranippadam’ is closer to the city where the Arabs traded.

The conversation that followed the visit to the Arab reveals the complex relationship between the Arabs and Malayalis. The narrator’s excitement of seeing the Arab is immediately countered by his rationalist brother who asks in turn to the

excited narrator. “Did you go crazy after seeing the wild Arab?” (133) This question revokes the image of an aboriginal Arab, uncivilised which reduced the experience into a worthless encounter. In response to his grandmother’s question, the young narrator responds: “no, grandma, the wild Arabs come and marry women here, this is a noble Arab” (134). Though his grandma protested and justified the marriage with Arabs, the narrator’s friend P A responded that marrying an Arab makes the life of the women of Malabar miserable. This is in contrast with the story narrated in chapter one in which the grandma feels proud of their marital affiliations with the Arabs.

The distinction between the noble and uncivilised Arabs is common in south Malabar. Any affiliation with the uncivilised Arab is a marker of racial inferiority and those Arabs who marry local women are described as ‘wild Arab’. This might be due to the change in attitude towards polygamy which was a common practice among the traders and was permitted among the Muslims. A similar reference is used in *Ummachu* where the link with a wild Arab creates problems for the characters. This racial categorisation of the ‘noble’ and ‘uncivilised’ and the association of marriage with the latter is a part of the colonial notion racial superiority.

In a similar vein, the novel portrays the relationship between the narrator’s grandmother and grandfather. The grandfather stays away from the home and is critical of grandma’s attitude to him. This female assertion of their preferences is a part of the matrilineal system which privileges women with inheritance. Though the reformist movements found matriliney as un-Islamic practice and challenged it, the

role of women in the family challenged patriarchal authority. The story concludes when the narrator's family too finally leaves the matrilineal ancestral house for a nuclear family. Although the narrator aligns himself with reformist movement- preferring patriarchal system while remaining critical of some of the practices- the novel's structure allows sufficient space for the portrayal of premodern social system. The episodic structure and circular time frame enable the novelist to voice the stories of the traditions and exposes the conflicting social formation in literary imagination.

Espathinayiram narrates the disintegration of the matrilineal household and the gradual shift towards nuclear family. The very title of the novel invokes a sense of time that goes beyond the definitive nature of time as experienced in the modern times. 'Espathinayiram' refers to an indefinite sense of time that cannot be precisely measured, pointing towards the deeper sense of time experienced within premodernity. The structure and the episodic nature of the narrative unfold the life of a community with the rich traditional fabric. It details the complicated networks of connections among members of the community, its myths and beliefs, community practices and rituals without losing the greater context of the matrilineal system. The novel captures the dynamic role of women in defining the family ethos and the organisation of the everyday life of the family.

The novel places the house in its historical context and provides insights into the making of the social system. The protagonist chronicles various incidents happening to the characters without providing any moral judgement on their actions. One of the striking moments of the novel is the point the protagonist and his friend

meet an Arab man in a hotel in the city. The dynamic trade relations of the Arab with Calicut are immediately contrasted with the distant presence of the man in the hotel.

In a similar vein, graves and other sacred places are overlooked in the narrative of the *Sultanveedu*. In *Espathinayiram*, such places are viewed ambiguously. The narrator identifies himself with modernity and its religious reforms but emotionally connected with the religious relevance of the sites. It is worth noting that the protagonist aligns himself with reformism and at the same time acknowledges the cultural roots associated with the community. The blessings received by Hafis at the grave of a holy man in *Espathinayiram* is to contrast Ummar Koya's detachment and scepticism towards the premodern places of worship and beliefs. The latter's world view is formulated in the logic of modernity and hence he maintains a rational outlook at traditions though subscribing to the reformist ideas of religion.

The homogenisation that modernity imposes mostly, though writers and intellectuals often find alternative modernities in the colonised cultures, is evident in the second part of the novel. It is dedicated to the onslaught of modernity, the narratives progress dismantling the matrilineal system, marrying his sister off to a man named Basheer, which is unusual in matrilineal families as women own the house and men have to visit women in their houses. They finally move to a small house outside the tharavad where the rest of the family continue to live. The narrator Ummar Koya insists on his wife Haleema to wear sari as the traditional dress specific to the community (*Kachi and thattam*) is distasteful to the eyes of the

narrator. She finds it awkward to wear a dress that does not fit into the taste of the community but the narrator takes it his mission to impose the dress out of love. In addition, he also asks her to remove her elaborate earrings as well as both the dress and the earrings act as a mark of communal identity. These choices are imposed by the male protagonist on the female members who have very limited agency in the new system of family that the narrative at the end of the novel. The choice of the dress and the ornaments are exclusively made by the male hero whose financial position keeps the female members silent. The protagonist seems to have a discussion with his partner, the dialogues are precise, logical and instructive.

‘Won't you listen to my words, Hallema?’

‘Yes, I will.’

‘Don't wear this *kachi* and *thattam*, Haleema.’

‘Ayye, won't people make fun of me if I don't wear *kachi* and *thattam*?’

‘Ayye, you fool! That's not what I mean. You should wear a sari instead of *Kachi* and *thattam*’

‘What! a sari?’

‘Chela, chela!’

‘Ayye, do muslims wear sari? Is it permitted?’

‘Where is it said that women should not wear sari?’

She didn't speak for a while.

‘Are you ashamed of wearing a chela?’

‘Everyone will make fun of me’

‘Let them do what they like. They will do it for a while and then they will stop it.’

(Koya 442)

This dialogue between Ummar Koya and Hallema takes place on their wedding night. The narrative informs the reader that she is an illiterate; a shy young girl married to the protagonist who is rich and affluent. She is a distant relative of the protagonist and belongs to a very poor family. Marriage is her family’s only way out of poverty. At a critical juncture, Ummar Koya asks her whether she would listen to his words is an authoritarian question which she cannot reject. The silence in the dialogue hints at the unwillingness of Haleema to fall in line with his instructions, though she is not in a position to refuse him. The entire narrative is built on the power and magnanimity of the hero whose choices are hailed as reformatory and his power is the power of modernity which traditions cannot resist. In this context, it is clear that the space that the hero builds in the story is very reductive and patriarchal. The new house he plans to build is a place with sufficient light and air; it also has got an interior which is filled with power and affluence. His desire for power and revenge is only possible in a household where women do not hold power over the property and the life of the women is formed on the basis of the instructions he gives. His desire for unquestioned power and destruction of tradition is both ideological and personal. On the one hand, his insecure life in the matrilineal *tharavad* encourages him to build a house where his choices and authority will be established, On the other hand, his ideas of reform and nationalism give this deep-rooted desire a reformist cover. His articulation of politics, religion and reform are

based on his individual longing for security and power. In the last part of the novel, there is a reckless destruction of the land by a bulldozer. Ummar koya enjoys the sight in which the machine is uprooting all the vegetation and levelling the land in order to build the house he wishes for his nuclear family. The description of the levelling of the land invokes a kind of vengeful destruction. As the narrator describes: “The bulldozer levels the ground crushing the rocks stuck to the ground like bugs, mounts of stone and soil and plant buds to dust. Everything should be shaken off. Everything should be levelled. Nothing can be built on uneven ground...how many changes have been brought about by the bulldozers of history” (466). The destruction of the vegetation pleases the hero as he enjoys the way everything is levelled by the bulldozer. History too is imagined as a leveller like the machine. Ummar Koya’s idea of modernity and reform finally leads to the complete forceful eviction of traditions that in the context of the novel were a lot more supportive to the women. In addition, the bulldozing of history cuts off all the historic ties with the premodern world and barren ground is created in its stead. The protagonist prepares the ground for building a new house for a nuclear family which will be supported by capital. Informed by the nation on the wake, the new house establishes a new order which is rooted in the authority of the man of the house.

The fictional space of the novel *Ennappadam* by N P Muhammed is a slum inhabited by lower class Muslims. An imaginary fictional locale, it is to be contrasted with the settings of novels like *Sultanveedu* and *Espathinayiram* which are the dwelling place of the upper-class Muslims. Interestingly, the plot of the

novel is episodic in nature and every chapter in the novel is a distinct story so that they can be mixed and read as a novel.

This construction of the lower caste Muslims who actively engage in social life and face every day struggles of life is a counter narrative of the story of *Oru Deshathinte Katha* in which Muslim identities are defined by the religiosity of the characters. The representation of women in *Ennappadam* is a strikingly different mould. They are the moving force of the slum and the social life of the locality is controlled by them. These women do not hide in the kitchen and they challenge systems of exploitation including religion.

Most of the novels from South Malabar project the religious identity of the Mappilas all their social exchanges are understood in their religious practices. In the novel the locale named Ennappadam meaning 'oil fields' in English is a dirty slum in which poor Muslims live in huts but their social mobility and the role of women are far more flexible than that of the novels discussed earlier.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate the role of colonial modernity in constructing spaces in literatures from South Malabar by pursuing the textual spaces of Arabi-Malayalam *Padappattukal* and novels from the region. The two genres namely the song compositions named *Padappattukal* and the novel are of two distinctive literary media and they represent two distinct cultural experiences. The songs are written in Arabi- Malayalam which are a cultural product of the Mappilas of Malabar and it is intricately connected with anticolonial politics of the group. The history of anticolonial struggles is reflected in the song compositions and the literary responses are influenced by the historical context. Whereas the novel form is a product of colonial modernity and English education and narrate the tension between modernity and the anticolonial nationalism. The novel narrated the anxieties of the educated class and their negotiation with modernity. The complex history of the region during premodern and colonial periods presents an interesting case for cultural analysis of the construction of spaces. It also provided cultural context for the construction and contestation of power.

The study presented in this thesis was conducted to address the gap in the study of literatures from South Malabar. First of all, the colonial studies defined the songs as an expression of the fanatical Mappilas in order to incite violence. Colonial ethnographers analysed the texts as a political treaty providing insights into the mindset of the Mappilas. Mappila literary studies explored the stylistic and rhetorical elements and the anticolonial politics of the songs by analysing works by major writers. Their focus on the rhetoric of the text and relations with the cultural context neglected the deep connections of the texts with resistant spaces. The present study considered texts by both major and minor writers and examined the construction of spaces of resistance in the text/context and performance of the songs. Secondly, the song compositions as well as the novels were considered as isolated

entities. Writers and critics were not aware of the hybrid literary productions in Arab-Malayalam and its revolutionary aesthetics. In the aftermath of the rebellion, the community disowned the hybrid language (Aboobaker 267). The novels were appreciated on the basis of their aesthetic appeal, literary merit and the structure of the narratives. The humanistic ideas and response to nationalism brought writers to public attention. The reading public mostly ignored the ideological implications of cultural representation. The homogenization and misrepresentation of literary spaces in novels from South Malabar were not seriously considered and they were not studied in the wider context of the historical developments specifically the anticolonial struggles. Thirdly, the absence of the Mappilas in the public sphere was interpreted as cultural lag in mainstream literature. Its implications were not understood in the background of the Mappila disengagement with modernity which disrupted the continuity of the Mappila literary expressions. Fourthly, the exclusive nature of canon formation underappreciated those novels set in the Mappila settlements challenging the homogenization of spaces and identities in the mainstream literature. These novels foregrounded authentic representation of the community but the stakeholders involved in the canon formation did not include them into the canon. Fifthly, the neglect suffered by minor narratives in the canon is not understood in the aesthetic priorities of the nationalist elite and mainstream got appreciated when they reproduced social hierarchies. Finally, a comprehensive study was not conducted on the evolution of the spatial imagination of the region encompassing diverse social groups and interests and its reflection on the literary productions.

The study analysed texts written in Arabi-Malayalam and Malayalam languages. The structure of the Arabi-Malayalam texts supported both individual reading and public performances. The subversive nature of the texts derived from the public performances as well. The novels were centred on definite localities of the region and the authors employed regional dialect to narrate specific cultural practices. The novels were deeply connected with

historical developments of South Malabar. Hence, a combined methodology of close reading and discourse analysis encompassing linguistic, musical and aesthetic analysis were employed. Insights from postcolonial studies and spatial literary studies were used to locate the texts in their historic contexts.

The collective textual evidences demonstrate that literary spaces are constructed and contested by power relations and colonial modernity actively involves in the construction of spaces in literatures produced from South Malabar. They also point at the possibilities of creating spaces of resistance and negotiation. Analysis of mainstream novels in chapter three revealed that realist novels were structured by the context of colonial modernity and novels drew attention from literary circles when they dealt with the public imaginations of the time. The chapter examined the evolution of social space in the works of Uroob which testified that there was a transition in his spatial engagement: from an idyllic rural countryside in to the urban spaces. The textual spaces of *Amina* and *Ummachu* brought forth the two conflicting spaces: the idyllic villages life on the one side and the territory of the nation on the other. His award winning novel *Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum* narrated the anxieties of the anticolonial struggles, the emergence of industrialists and formation of the working classes. These novels drew public attention as it shared the dominant themes of the time and such reproduced social hierarchies. These novels constructed homogenized Mappila social spaces and identities discarding the heterogenous spatial formation of precolonial past. The chapter revealed that the context of the emergence of novel and its connections with colonialism and modernity. The homogenization of spaces and identities was a necessary prerequisite for modernity to operate. The analysis in the chapter also pointed at the fact that the exclusion or misrepresentation of certain groups of people from the fictional locale was an ideological choice powered by institutions of modernity. These exclusions were caused by the conflict of interest between the colonial administration and the resisting groups. The textual analysis of the novel *Oru Deshathinte Katha* further

demonstrated that the textual world was influenced by the images and imaginations set in motion by the colonial administration and the writers reproduced colonial interpretation of communities in literatures written after colonialism due to the continuing power excreted by colonialism. Set in the suburb of the city of Calicut inhabited mostly by labourers, the novel imagined a fictional locale in which the Mappilas were systematically alienated. The analysis also proved that imagination of the region repeats the ideological construct created by colonialism and the novel neglects the premodern past of the port city and its dynamic multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society.

The textual analysis of chapter two provided evidences for the possibility of literature to construct spaces of resistance. The close reading of the texts of *Padappattu* revealed that anticolonial groups can articulate spaces of resistance by deploying narrative strategies that escapes the surveillance of the colonial administration. Though literary critics considered the texts as musical compositions and analysed the patterns and rhythm of the texts, analysis of the text and context of *Padappattukal* such as *Badar Padappattu*, *Uhud Padappattu* and *Malappuram Padappattu* revealed that they could construct spaces contesting power without literally detailing actual confrontation with the British in Malabar. It also highlighted that literature has the potential to invoke spaces without explicitly narrating them but by invoking contextual references and performances of the texts and the ban on production, circulation, publication and performances of the songs proved their role in struggling over geography. In the case of the Mappilas of Malabar, their hybrid social formation and evolution of a hybrid linguistic form named Arabi-Malayalam offered them various forms of spaces that subvert the exertion of power. The chapter also revealed that resistant spaces can be carved out of unique cultural signs such as graves or shrines and the resistant potential of the text formed from the cultural difference. The chapter also demonstrated that performances of literary texts named *padipparayal* provided more subversive potential than individualized reading. It highlighted the importance of

maintaining culture specific expressions of lived experiences of communities in crisis with authority

Chapter four specifically revealed that the resistant groups could appropriate the form of novel in spite of the fact that it was born into the context of colonialism and create counter narratives to challenge existing exclusions, misrepresentation and stereotypes. Novelists from the Muslim settlement in the city employed the structure of the novel to express their lived experiences and integrated the fragmented groups into the community. The critical reading of the novel *Sultanveedu* underscored the spatial alignment of Mappila society such as the domain of family, community and the public spaces. The strategy of the novel in constructing identity specific spaces provided spaces of mediation with community and the nation. The community space of the novel around the *Kuttichira* pond acted as a space of mediations between family and nation; this space resembled the ‘spiritual’ domain of upper castes in which they maintained their traditions protecting from the colonial surveillance. The critical study brought forth the significance of placing identities and spaces in their historic setting and in the case of Malabar, normalization of premodern relations and transnational trade links created heterogenous fictional spaces. The analysis further explained that integrating traditional culture with structures of modernity materialized abstract spaces of colonialism to lived experiences of the community. Close analysis of the novel revealed that these novels discussed and debated the implications of modernity in their community space and sought to discover non-European sources of modernity. Analysis of the chapter also revealed that novels like *Ennappadam* and *Espathinayiram* successfully imagined reformist spaces for women without colonial mediations. The spatial configuration of the novel *Ennappadam* constructed an imaginary fictional locale of the lower-class Muslims whose dynamic gender relations and social mobility testified the heterogeneity of the space.

A synthesis of the findings confirms that the central argument of the thesis that the anticolonial struggles of the Mappilas from the 16th century to the 20th structured the community's responses to European colonial forces. They actively involved in the anticolonial struggles challenging the Portuguese as well as the British invasion and refusing to accommodate European intellectual and aesthetic models. This unwillingness to appropriate colonial modernity and the composition of *Padappattukal*, fighting the feudal lords and the British state further alienated them from the public space and the discourses of modernity. This resulted in the homogenization and misrepresentation of the Mappila spaces and identities in the mainstream novels. Novelists from the Muslim settlement of the Calicut city produced novels that challenged the homogenizing tendencies of the canonical novel and created authentic counter narratives that constructed heterogenous social spaces of the community. The research findings provide a multi-layered answer to the primary research questions posed at the beginning of the study.

The most significant contribution of the present study is the application spatial literary studies and postcolonial critique of modernity to the study of literary productions from South Malabar. Spatial literary studies generally focus on urban spaces or literary works centered on urban life and their focus is on the role of capital in shaping human geographies. Though there were efforts to bring together postcolonial and spatial theories, the conceptualization of land in postcolonial studies differed significantly from the postmodern approaches of space. While spatial studies focused more on architecture, urban geography, mobilization and the influence on transnational capital, a large chunk postcolonial criticism still dealt with modernity and its institutions of power in the lived experiences of the people from the colonies. This study combines the views of both the theoretical formulations to understand changes in the construction of literary spaces in South Malabar caused by colonial modernity. Though there were studies by scholars on the

formation of the city of Calicut, none of them primarily focused on the literary spaces from the city as well as from the hinterlands of South Malabar.

Methodologically, the selected texts for study from two different genres and dialects of Malayalam require a combination of analytical methodologies. In addition to close analysis of literary texts, the distinctive features of the genres and specificity of the dialects require to apply discourse analysis of various written, oral texts and performances. The study of Mappila literature necessitate application of an analytical frame that brings out the interconnectedness of manuscripts texts, printed version, oral transmission and public performances of the songs. Hence, methodologies of linguistic studies have been employed to examine the distinctive features of Arabi-Malayalam dialect and the regional versions of vernacular Malayalam used in South Malabar. The Mappila literatures is well known in Kerala as a popular musical form with its own aesthetics and the study incorporated insights from aesthetic and music studies as well.

The study enriches the present academic discussions on the literature of the Dalits, tribals and minorities and demonstrate that the ‘cultural lag’ of those communities needed to be understood in the context of socio-political developments and their attitude to dominant power structures. It also underscores the need of academic engagement with various dialect of the vernacular languages and examine the literary works preserved in those languages. The study further promotes the dialogues for cultural democracy as it places the literatures from Arabi-Malayalam dialect with that of the vernacular Malayalam and explored their aesthetic and political signification without categorizing the texts on the basis of social hierarchies. The study also points at the need of continuous engagement with cultural narratives and exploring their politics.

From the point of view of literary studies, the present investigation reveals the dynamics of canon formation in the context of South Malabar and unearths the underlying

aesthetic and political assumption of literary canons. The neglect of the novels from the Mappila settlement with their authentic cultural expressions in the literary history and the canon demonstrate the need of consistent review of canon formations and consider the engagement with canonical literatures and the politics of canon formation an essential part of literary studies.

While the present study provides significant insights into the literary works from South Malabar and their spatial representations, its findings are based only two dialects of Malayalam namely the vernacular national Malayalam and the Arabi-Malayalam dialects. A large variety of dialects existed in Kerala till the vernacular national Malayalam emerged in the 17th century and most of these dialects have a large repository of cultural resource which belongs to various groups of socially marginalized sections. A detailed study of those dialects and its literary representations will help us to see the wider context of cultural exchanges among the communities in Kerala. This study is conducted on two distinctive genres of literary expressions from Malabar and genres are closely connected with the socio-political situations of the communities concerned. In the context of Malabar, the genre of *Padappattukal* is understood in connection with *Vadakkan Pattukal* and other Dravidian musical traditions whereas the novel form is influenced not only by European novels but also by regional traditions of storytelling. Hence, care should be taken to understand the cultural dimensions of the texts from different genres and cultures.

Texts included in this are from the geographical region of South Malabar and especially those regions including the Ernad, *Valluvanad* and the city of Calicut. These texts are selected based on the location of the textual productions and their engagement with the constructions of literary spaces in relation to colonial modernity. Hence, caution should be taken when applying the insights of the study to other parts of Malabar. The framework of

the study promotes comparative literary analysis and similar studies may further extend the dialogue for cultural democracy.

The thesis concludes that the present study has offered significant insights into the representation of literary spaces in the narratives from South Malabar which has not been seriously explored. It also provides a model for analysis of literatures preserved in various regional dialects by bringing them along the canonical works and examine their aesthetic and political implications.

Recommendations

The present study “Locating the Other: Colonial Modernity, Mappilas and the Construction of Literary Spaces in Select South Malabar Narratives” is concerned with literary productions from the geographical area of South Malabar. The term ‘Malabar’ was used to refer the West Coast of India from Goa to Kanyakumari and later on it referred to Kerala coast in particular. During the British colonial period, it became a term to describe the broad geographies of the entire North Kerala and finally the British defined the District of Malabar and later split it further into North and South Malabar. Further, the deployment of the administrative policies in the two parts of the district was also very different. The region, people, geography and culture of South Malabar differed significantly from the North Malabar. The presence of the Mappilas on the shore and the hinterlands is a decisive factor in the composition of the region of South Malabar whereas North Malabar is known for the trade union movements. The combined attack of the Zamorins of Calicut and the Mappilas against the Portuguese, the invasion of Malabar by the Mysore kings and the peasant revolts against the feudal lords and the colonial state are crucial moments in the formation of the region of Malabar. The present study traces the development of literary productions during the second half of the 19th and 20th centuries. Literary productions from other periods of Malabar history are unexplored. A comparative study of literatures of various periods and their construction of literary spaces is an area to be explored further.

This study has considered only texts written by writers from the geographical boundaries of South Malabar. Literary spaces are imaginative spaces and writers from different parts of the world including diasporic writers from Malabar like have recreated the region in their literary works. The writings of those who have lived experiences in the region differ from those who observe the locality from outside. Examining the textual

spaces of works from by expatriate or writers from different cultures contribute into the study of Malabar literature.

The present study deals with novels written in Malayalam and song composition from the hybrid Arabi-Malayalam dialects. The standardization of the vernacular Malayalam occurred in the 17th century and many dialects existed in Malabar constituted by various social groups. All these dialects preserve archives of expressions of those communities and studies focused on them will help us to understand the dynamic social formation within those cultures. Hence, further studies applying linguistic and literary methodologies are required to explore the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural past of Malabar.

The rationale of selecting literary texts for this study is the representation of Mappilas in the novels and novels from the Muslim settlements are contrasted with canonical literature in Malayalam. The writings from various socio-political milieu will reveal the politics of their social interactions and their position in the canon. Evidences from the study testify that significant literary works like *Sultanveedu* are not seriously considered in the literary history and productions and circulation of those books are often restricted. Further studies are required to examine the formation of Malayalam literary canon and exclusion of certain texts and people from it.

Most of the literary criticism included in the study consider aesthetics as the defining category of literary analysis and do not reflect on the role of socio-political factors in defining the values of the canonical literature. Traditional literary critics consider socio-political analysis of literary works offensive as it places the text in continuation of social debates. In this context, consistent review of the canon formation and its inclusion and exclusion of literary texts needed further consideration. Future studies may focus on this as well.

The present study is restricted to the print and performance mediums of literary texts. *Padappattukal* are both written and performed whereas novels are written for personal reading. The first addresses the requirement of a community in crisis and the latter addresses the need of a society in transition and they are hugely in circulation even today. The representation of the region in other discourses such as news media and cinema provide new dynamics of representation. Hence, the representation of the geographical space in non-literary productions are also worth studying.

Notes

¹ F Fawcett was appointed by the British government to study *Padappattukal* and their impact on the public. He published “A Popular Mopla Song” and “War Songs of the Mappilas of Malabar” in *The Indian Antiquary; A Journal of Oriental Research* in 1899 and 1901 respectively.

² Refer to the introduction given by Edward Soja to *Postcolonial Spaces: The Politics of Place in Contemporary Culture* edited by Andrew Teverson and Sara Upstone to locate the role of geography in Postcolonial studies. The relation between colonialism and space will be discussed in detail in chapter 1.

³ See Dr. P Sakeer Husain’s “Cherur Padappattu : History, Politics and Protest” in *Cherur Padappattukal: Kanal Padhangalile Ishaljwalakal* published by IPB books, Calicut. Also see the article “The Unsung Annals of Mappilas: A Study of Arabi-Malayalam Literature” by Shibila in *Ishal Paithrkam*. The issue will be further discussed in Chapter 1.

⁴ See the “Introduction to a New Translation of Chandumenon's Indulekha (1889) by Anita Devasia to read a discussion on how modernity shapes novelistic imagination and the locale Malabar is imagined

⁵ See the work *Multiple Modernities* by SN Eisenstadt, “Modernity” by Peter Wagner in *Cambridge Handbook of Social Theory* and *Liquid Modernity* by Zygmunt Bauman.

⁶ See the works by thinkers like Walter D Mignolo and Achille Mbembe to engage with discussions on decoloniality and its political formulations.

⁷ See the article “Englishing *Indulekha* Translation, the Novel and History” by Anitha Devasia and Susie Tharu.

⁸ a prominent lower caste community in Kerala. The novel narrates a Tiyya young man’s journey to modernity.

⁹ see the work *Islam and Nationalism in India South Indian Context* by M T Ansari

¹⁰ A Mappila cultural performance in which a singer-narrator sings and explain the song. The subversive potential of the song is derived from the text and the contextual interpretations offered by the performers. As the texts do not explicitly state it, the colonial administration could not locate the source of resistance. Later, the performance was also banned.

¹¹According to Foucault, heterochrony refers to "slices in time" and the "absolute rupture" with conventional time that allows heterotopias (real-world "other spaces") to function.

¹² The Gramscian term 'traditional intellectual' was used by K N Panikkar to refer to the *Ulama* who guided the anti-colonial struggles in Malabar in his book *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921*. Panikkar was one of the early historians to identify the relation between religion and peasant uprising and to locate the role of the ulama in resisting the colonial regime.

¹³ The Malabar rebellion has been extensively studied by Mappila, Marxist, Subaltern and Colonial historians. In Marxist histories narrated by Conrad Wood and KN Panikkar, the agrarian crisis in colonial Malabar is highlighted. Historians such as Stephen S Dale have produced historical narratives on the religiosity and fanaticism of the rebels.

¹⁴ See the Introduction Given by Dr. K K Muhammed Abdul Sathar to the book *Malappuram Padappattu* by Balakrishnan Vallikkunnu.

¹⁵ See the chapter "Uhud Padappattu" in *Mahakavi Moyinkutty Vaidyarude Kavya Lokam*.

¹⁶ A prominent character in the *Mahabharata*. The comparison is made to reveal the inner strength of the female character.

¹⁷ See the article titled “Malabar Ulema in the Shafiite Cosmopolis: Fitna, Piety and Resistance in the Age of Fasad’ by P K Yasser Arafath in which he uses three interrelated words *fasad*, *fitna* and *jihad* to describe Mappila responses to the Portuguese aggression.

¹⁸ A Muslim settlement in the city of Calicut from the early days of Arab relations in the port city. The place is preserved as a heritage site by the local government. Early mosques built by the traders are located here.

¹⁹ See the article titled “Arabi-Malayalathiml ninnu Arabi Islamilekku” by Dr Jameel Ahamed in *Arabi-Malayala Sahitya Padanangal*

²⁰ An ancient mosque on the Malabar coast built by a slave turned trader named Nakuda Mithkal

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