

**THE COUNTER NARRATIVES OF POWER AND IDENTITY  
IN COLONIAL KERALAM – A READING OF  
C.V. RAMAN PILLA’S HISTORICAL NOVELS**

*Thesis submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Vinod Chandran. K**



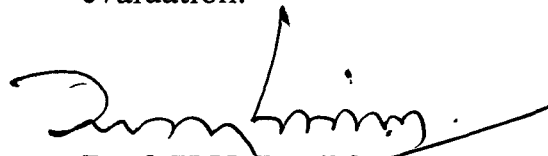
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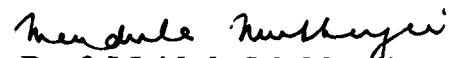
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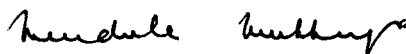
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*Dedicated to  
C.P. Sreedharan,  
My beloved father  
For Initiating me into  
the World of Thoughts  
and Engaging me to this  
Irresistible Romance with Ideas.*

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# CHAPTER – I

## INTRODUCTION

The thesis belongs to the genre of ‘cultural history’ (or the ‘history of Idea’) which attempts to bring together the heterogeneous phrase-regimens, realms of thought and modes of study of ‘culture’ and ‘history’. The dynamic engagement of these two genres which are incommensurable, problematises and transmutes both. In other words, the cultural history which is worked out here neither implicates a ‘history of culture’ nor the ‘culture in history’, but it is a heterogeneous site of reflection and a ‘heterologic’ pursuit which works on the intersections of various realms, disciplines, genres and faculties. It neither historicises ‘culture’, nor ‘culturalises’ history. Instead it works on the boundaries of both or works out a middle line between them. There happens, in short, a dynamic synthesis or ‘assemblage’ of them which intensifies and transmutes each other.

The term ‘culture’, which signifies man’s sensitivity to Idea and is defined as the end of ‘nature’ by Immanuel Kant is the object of this study. It could proceed only with the disruption of the generic laws of the hegemonic mode of history, that is the Hegelian dialectical schema of progress, because the object of reflection exceeds and defies the space-time of the cognitive, speculative and determinate modes of knowledge. The cultural practices or artifices which are interrogated here are the ‘non’- objects of a matrix of Idea and therefore could not be reduced to objects of dialectical discourses or diachronic schema of phenomena or ‘empirical selves’. These objects or instances resist the linear and horizontal programming of time carried out by history and live in a different time - a ‘sublime temporality’. In Kantian terms, they could only be held as ‘signs’ of history or progress<sup>1</sup>. The cultural history, in short, disconcerts or disturbs the orderliness,

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<sup>1</sup> The ‘sign of history’ is a radical idea of writing history developed by Jean François Lyotard by a vigorous rereading of Kantian philosophy, especially his third Critique which problematizes the issue of presenting progress. This he does in his two essays named ‘The Sign of History’. Jean Francois Lyotard, “The Sign Of History” in Andrew Benjamin ed. *The Lyotard Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 393-412; *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 166-167. Lyotard elucidates that the ‘occurrence’ of the ‘progress of man’ is irrepresentable in cognitive, descriptive or speculative genres because notion of ‘progress

regularity and certainty offered by the determinate or the discursive genre of history and revolts against its 'monotheistic' regime of knowledge and time.

The cultural history of Malayali Reform, which is attempted here, focuses on certain movements or 'manner'<sup>2</sup> of reflection that emerged in Thiruvitamcore<sup>3</sup> during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth century. The movements or cultural practices examined here, whether it is the historical romance or the philosophical or the spiritual contemplation of Sree Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru, or their associates, are found to have played a crucial role in the making of an alternative site of thinking or linking the 'Malayali'.<sup>4</sup> The thesis accredits them as the cultural actions or practices which had sensitized the Malayali minds to the occurrence of the 'sublime' or the Idea of absolute, in the 'here and now' of the people. The importance of these alternative narratives, which the thesis specifies as the 'negative' narratives,<sup>5</sup> in order to distinguish them from the hegemonic discourses of the times in the cultural annals of the Malayali people lies solely in initiating the people into a reflective matrix of Idea. Further, it is this matrix of Idea, which is traced out to have brought forth the occurrence of the feeling of Malayaliness as the 'sign' of the 'sublime'. If we minus this hidden zone of Idea then we would be left out with the cognitive or determinate community of

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is an object of an Idea which could be identified and presented only in the form of signs or hypotyposes according to Kant. The direct presentation is found invalid in such cases. The progress is inscribed in the sublime mode of feelings that occur to a people. Kant writes progress in the sublime mode of 'enthusiasm' felt by the spectators of the seismic event of the French revolution. It is this feeling which is the *begebenheit* of progress which is found not only a cause but also an index of the event of human betterment. Ibid., 166-167.

<sup>2</sup> The term as used by Kant in the context of his elucidation of reflective judgment is intended to specify the sense of indeterminacy involved in it in contrast to the determinate terms like 'mode' 'method' or 'principle' used in the cases of cognitive judgment or logical or knowledge genres. Lyotard distinguishes the term 'manner' from the terms 'method' or 'principle' in following terms.:

"However, aesthetic judgment conceals, I would suggest, a secret more important than that of doctrine, the secret of the "manner"(rather than the method) in which critical thought proceeds in general. The manner (*modus aestheticus*) possesses no standard other than the *feeling* of unity in the presentation," the method (*modus logicus*) "follows definite principles". "Fine art... has only... a manner (*modus*) and not a method". J.F. Lyotard, *The Analytic of the Sublime*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> I will be using this term instead of the established term Travancore.

<sup>4</sup> A term commonly used to refer to the people who belongs to Keralam or Malayalam. However it has got wider connotations in the political aesthetics of the historical romance.

<sup>5</sup> 'Negative' in the sense that they revolt against the generic or formal laws of the narratives.

empirical or historical 'selves' or 'subjects'— an 'imagined' horizontal community of Malayalis manufactured by the print-discourses and consumers/readers.

The movements of reflection and reform highlighted here offer radical resistance to the conditions of a colonial modern Order. They herald a 'reflective' or 'aesthetic' turn in the 'historico-political', devotional and spiritual practices of the people. If it is the idea of *Sivam*<sup>6</sup> which is repossessed by the Guru movement<sup>7</sup> as the sign of the 'absolute' it is the idea of *rajyam* which occurs as the sign of the Infinite in the historical romance. Moreover, the *rajyam* which is worshipped by the historical romance is revealed to be pulsating with the *Vaishnavic* idea of the absolute, though it proceeds in tense coordination with the *saivic*, *saktheyic* and other indigenous modes of devotion and contemplation. The present thesis however, registers the culmination of these movements in the aesthetic politics of the historical romance, the historical novels of C.V<sup>8</sup> placed as its nucleus.

The modernist historians who had usually been haunted by the 'otherness' of the aesthetic texts or artifacts had either exorcised them from their procedures of knowledge or judgment or co-opted them as mere documents or cultural products especially in their 'documentary' modes of histories. The 'culture' is relegated to the status of mere contexts or backgrounds of certain important events in the political or social histories. Its function or duty is held to 'reflect' or 'represent' the social or historical 'realities' of any specific period. The objects of culture are reduced to the transparent units of communication or messages suppressing their 'figural'<sup>9</sup> opacity. The 'cultural' or 'aesthetic' ~~phrases~~, in short, had remained

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<sup>6</sup> The phrase *Sivam* denotes the ultimate state of self-realisation according to the *Vedantic*, the *Saiva Siddhantic*, and the *Saivaadvaitic* traditions of thought.

<sup>7</sup> The movement of reform in Keralam as initiated by Sree Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru which might be distinguished from the institutional and textual networks sprouted around them.

<sup>8</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla is one of the eminent novelists and cultural figures in Keralam, who lived during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth century.

<sup>9</sup> The 'figural' is a Lyotardian term which refers to the matrix of desire contesting the regime of textuality or consciousness: The figural is an unspeakable other necessarily at work within and against discourse, disrupting the rule of representation. It is not opposed to discourse, but is the point at which the oppositions by which discourse works are opened to a radical heterogeneity or singularity. As such, the figural is the resistant or irreconcilable trace of a space or time that is radically incommensurable with that of discursive meaning: variously evoked throughout Lyotard's writing as the visible (figure/ground), the rhetorical (figural/literal), the work, the Unconscious, the event, post modern anachronism, the sublime effect or the thing. Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London:

'affect'-phrases or the 'differends'<sup>10</sup> submerged in the discursive network of modernity. However, the importance of the 'new' cultural history, proposed here, lies in its act of bearing witness to these 'differends' and letting loose these 'differends' as 'differends'.

The Second Chapter of the thesis traces out certain crucial shifts in the cultural history which have transmuted it into a radical genre of reflection as a radical genre of reflection. The importance of the genre derives from the dynamic linkage or the synthesis of heterogeneous phrases, genres and realms brought out by them without inflicting violence on any of them. The insights provided by the scholars like Mikhail Bakhtin, Hayden White, Dominic La Capra, Benedict Anderson, Homi K. Babha, and others are looked into. It also brings out the dynamic engagements initiated by the researcher with the radical ideas, paradigms and 'manner' of thoughts offered by the eminent scholars of our age, like, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Deleuze, Georges Bataille and Jean Francois Lyotard and others to the 'critical theory'. The crucial impacts of the reinvention of the Kantian critique of knowledge as undertaken by the scholars like Lyotard are further elaborated. The idea of the 'sign' of history as offered by Kant and later deconstructed by Lyotard is re-invoked as an alternative to the Hegalian modes of history which are hegemonic today and which neutralise the 'others' and absorbs them in to the 'sameness' of the 'Self'.

The Third Chapter makes a re-reading of the historical novels of C.V. side by side with the text of 'Malayali Memorial' and the political essays on *Videsheeya Medhavithvom*, held to have been written by C.V. It also elucidates these texts as belonging to the ethos of the historical romance, which is a radical cultural practice or an aesthetic politics. The importance of the historical romance as an aesthetic genre accrues from the fact that it heralds an alternative narrative of reform and history or progress reworking the history of the people according to a sublime Idea. The complex and subtle processes through which the historical romance invent the

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Routledge, 1991). xxxi. See also Jean Francis Lyotard in Andrew Benjamin ed. *Lyotard Reader*, 69-107.

<sup>10</sup> A Lyotardian concept which implicates the 'wrong' done to a phrase by reducing its 'eventhood' through the means of translation/substitution or paraphrasing of it to another language which is incommensurable to it. Jean Francis Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, 1-10.

*rajyam* as a 'sign' of progress are further explored. The political, spiritual and aesthetic implications of the *rajya*-movement as initiated by the historical romance are examined against the historical context of the colonial-modern Order. The radical importance of the movement as political resistance to the colonial regime of the period is underscored. It is resituated in the universal scenario of the struggles for freedom, self-rule and *swarajyam* carried out by the national peoples of the world in the modern era. The historical insurgence of the genre of the historical romance in Keralam, especially in the context of the presentational conflicts of the period, is discussed.

The *rajya*-nationalism as inscribed by the historical romance is however distinguished from the mainstream nationalism of the period. It is the process of the 'dynamic synthesis'<sup>11</sup> or the 'coupling of differences' that characteristically takes place in the idea of the *rajyam* which is noticed to be demarcating the former from the latter. Besides this, the *praja*-democracy or the *Prajayatha* politics heralded by the *rajya*-movement is elaborated as epitomising a complex, 'paralogic' and heterogeneous mode of unity. The democratic political processes affiliated to them are esteemed to be providing new dimensions to our study of nation and democracy. The 'manner' of the 'parodic' or 'negative' worship as carried out by the historical novels and the essays of *Videseeya Medhavithom* is unravelled as implicating the dynamics of the *praja*-democracy. The cultural politics involved in such a critical mode of worship is examined further. Finally, the politics of 'Identity' or 'nationality' involved in the *rajya*-movement as initiated by the historical romance is expounded. The invention of a *Malayalarajyam* or *Aikya Keralam*, as an object of a 'sublime' Idea, is found to be the radical legacy of the movement which anticipates the later movements for 'united Keralam'.

The Fourth and Fifth Chapters contain in-depth studies of the thoughts and practices of Sri Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru and their implications on the cultural and the 'historico-political' domains of the Malayalis.

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<sup>11</sup> The dynamical synthesis (linked to the categories of relation and modality) which happens at the occasion of the judgment of the sublime, places two heterogeneous elements in a necessary unity according to Kant. Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Lessons on the analytic of the Sublime*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 89-86, 124.

The subtle differences and affinities shown by the Guru-mode of reform with the hegemonic discourses of reform initiated by the missionaries, on the one hand, and with the 'alter-*Native*' narrative of reform, produced by the historical romance, on the other, are re-examined. If the missionary narratives had launched a discursive crucifixion of the indigenous traditions treating them as the 'other' to 'civilization' and progress as represented by the Euro-Modern selves, and branded them as 'pagan' or 'savage', the Guru movement in fact re-aligned with the radical traditions of the indigenous society. The latter is seen to be representing a vibrant lineage of tradition, which contested traditions.

The Fourth Chapter involves a critical examination of the spiritual reflections and practices of Sri Chattampi Swamikal. The spiritual resurgence evoked by the reinvention of the '*Saiva-advaitic*' reflection of the world and the 'absolute' is retraced. The main works of Swamikal are examined in detail and their significant role in initiating a cultural or spiritual movement for 'self-respect' among the indigenous communities of Keralam, especially those who were treated as *Sudras* by the Brahmanical Social Order, is brought out. The dynamic reciprocation between the *Advaitic* and *Saiva siddhantic* modes of reflections that provides an ambivalence and tension to the thoughts of Swamikal is unravelled. The thesis also provides a glimpse on the radical insurgence, kindled by the *Saiva-Siddhantic* or the *Visistadvaitic* traditions, in the mode of faith and devotion and spiritual vocation of the people of Tamilakom and Keralam. Swamikal's interpretation of the *Tatvomasī* phrase, which is esteemed to be one of the *Mahavaakyas* of Upanishads, is analysed by bringing forth its *Saiva-advaitic* connotations. The rereading of the *Tatvomasī* phrase as done by Swamikal is 'deconstructed'. The *Saivic* intensities repressed in Swamikal's hermeneutics are reclaimed, and the *Mahavakyam* is deciphered as a 'sign', as a 'genre of romance' and as an 'affect-phrase' which signals the sublime 'occurrence' of an Idea of the absolute. Though Swamikal could provide a radical interpretation of tradition by rekindling the *Saivadvaaitic* traditions of devotion and reflection, he failed to provide a dynamic presentation to the *Saiva-siddhantic* reflection of the absolute. Moreover, Swamikal's failure to link his *Saivic* illuminations with the *Vaishnavic* visions of the world is also detected. This might also explain his non-orientation to



the political or worldly matrices of the people. The schism in spiritual phrases and forces has invariably imbeciled the teachings of Swamikal. As a consequence the resistance made by him against the laws of colonial modern subjectivity failed to make any linkages with the radical political reflection of the *rajyam* or Malayalam carried out by the historical romancers of the period.

The Fifth Chapter attempts a deeper interrogation of the socio-spiritual reform initiated by Sree Narayana Guru and its implications on the socio-political and cultural practices of the people of Keralam. Three phases of Guru's life are provisionally located and elaborated which would enable one to detect the crucial shifts that took place in his life and practices. The first phase commences with the descent of the Yogi into the 'worldly' plane of reality as demonstrated by the installation of Sivalingam in Aruvippuram in 1888. The second phase is marked by Guru's entry into the 'social' and institutional' practices of reform with the formation of S.N.D.P. in 1903 where after he brings forth a joint-front of socio-community reform in association with the Ezhava elite of the period. The conflicts which arouse in course of time between Guru's spiritual ideals and the 'company mode of reform', effectuated by the Yogam, are subtly unveiled. The third phase witnesses the parting of ways between Guru and the Yogam-- the final phase which presents a forlorn Guru dejected and grief-stricken. This significantly commences with the founding of the *Sanyasi Sangham* by Guru in 1928. After examining these major shifts in the life of Guru, the present work explores how Guru-phrases have become 'affect-phrases' under the discursive operation of 'translation' and 'substitution' as launched by the Ezhava elite, the media and the hegemonic narratives of modernity. The radical thrust of the reform of faith and devotion undertaken by Guru – which is mostly sidelined by the modern histories – is elucidated. The latter had exclusively privileged the institutional or organisational aspects of the Guru-movement excluding the matrix of the Idea and the aesthetic or spiritual reflection which this thesis would price as the core of the Guru movement. It is the reinvention of a sublime idea of God the absolute, as initiated by the *Saivic*, *Vaishnavic* and *Saktheyic* traditions of *Bhakti* or *Jnanam*, which is being traced out as the major contribution of the Guru 'manner' of reform to the cultural matrix of the Malayalis. The diverse readings of the famous

aphorism of Guru, “*Oru Jati, Oru Mathom, Oru Daivam Manushyanu*” are re-examined and the *Saivadvaitic* thrust of the phrase which is being suppressed in the modernistic reading is retrieved. Finally, the political disorientation of the Guru-vision of the World and God, its dissociation from the nationalist or micro-nationalist struggles fought against colonial regimes, its alienation with the ethnic politics of the *rajyam*, and its distantiation with the *Vaishnavic* vision of the world and the ‘absolute, which had radical implications on the political spirituality of the people, are detected. These are located as the weak spots of the reform movement pioneered by Sree Narayana Guru.

The first part of the Sixth Chapter seeks to make a deeper exploration of the historical novels by discovering the political aesthetics of the ‘sublime’ involved in them and their radical implication on cultural history of Keralam. It attempts to resituate the whole reflections into the problematique of ‘Idea’. The insights provided by the Lyotardian readings of Kant’s critique of the sublime are invoked to examine the radical politics of the Idea at stake in the historical romance of the *rajyam*. However, this reciprocal engagement between the philosophical reflections of the ‘aesthetics of the ‘sublime’ and the indigenous traditions of thinking the ‘absolute’ seems to bring out new vistas, new discoveries, new manners of historical enquiry and new shifts in writing the culture of people. These reflections unearth exemplary instances of the ‘dynamic synthesis’ and assemblages of the ‘heterogeneous’ which was effectively worked out by the people of Keralam. They provide us the traces of alternate selves and ‘communities without communications’ generated on behalf of a sublime idea of *Kerala rajyam* in the ‘here and now’ of the historical romance. Besides this, the chapter provides new dimensions to the quest on the issues of ‘identity’, ‘power’ and ‘culture’ of the people.

The second portion of the Sixth Chapter makes an ‘aesthetic judgment’ or a ‘judgment’ without any ‘determinate’ criteria on the impacts of these three main narratives of the Malayali reform, namely, the missionary and Guru modes of reform and the historical romance. It is the conflictual relations of these three narratives (and many others) that have determined the courses and destinies of ‘reform’ or ‘renaissance’ in Keralam. The aesthetic and spiritual expressions of

Sree Narayana Guru are brought to focus and presented as marking the radical thrust of the Guru-reform.

The concluding chapter which marks the *kalaasham* or the culmination of the repetitive progression of the whole reflections, made in the thesis also anticipates the beginning of some thing new. The title poem, cited from one of the verses of P.Kunjiraman Nair, whom the researcher would call a *veera-poet* par excellence, swears of one's commitment to the 'auspicious deity of Ideal' or the deity of auspicious 'Ideal' (*Mangalaadarsha De/vata*) for whom she would die courageously in the 'holy' battles fought for her sake. This would provide a poetic insight to the political aesthetics of the '*raajyaaraadhana*' or *viiraaradhana* involved in the historical romance.

Lyotard's, observation on the 'sublime', cited here, illumines us on the radical political implications of the 'aesthetic of the sublime' which contested the regimes of classicism, of 'beauty' or 'taste' in European literary and cultural scene. The thesis ends with a close exposition of the 'aesthetic' turn heralded by the historical romance and its radical impact on the political sensibility of the Malayali people.

An explanation regarding the title might be relevant here. The thesis in the course of its interrogation has proceeded to newer horizons and has been stretched beyond the intonations of the title used here. The term 'counter-narrative' is used in the thesis in the sense of alternative narrative. Because of the binarian implications of the term it is almost dropped from the elucidation. The question of power is widened to the problematic of generic or phrasal contestations and the critique of knowledge. The thesis actually interrogates the chief narratives of reform in Keralam specifically Tiruvitamcore. Two narratives are located as alternative narratives: the guru-narratives and the historical romance. However, the latter is held as more radical and subversive in its resistance to the colonial modern Order of the period. The title is retained though it conceals more than it reveals about the content / topic of the thesis that has out-grown the initial phases. Modifications are not attempted due to procedural constraints. The thesis in short might be read as a study of the narratives of reform and Identity that emerged in Tiruvitamcore with its focus on the historical romance.

## CHAPTER – II

### TOWARDS A NEW CULTURAL HISTORY

The questions of the nationality, identity, and progress addressed in the thesis demands a fresh reconsideration of the theoretical and paradigmatic shifts that had transmuted the cultural history into a radical genre of reflection. Mikhail Bakhtin, Hayden White, Dominic La Capra and others have demonstrated the subversive effects of the critiques of genres on disciplines like humanities, social sciences or cultural studies. The enquiry conducted here however, would make a departure from the literary, linguistic and textual preoccupation which seems to have constrained the thoughts of the above scholars.

#### *1. Mikhail Bakhtin*

Initiating what we would call a ‘novelistic turn’ in cultural history, Bakhtin rediscovers the ‘polyphony’ in the novels of Dostoevsky<sup>1</sup> and witnesses to the ‘carnavalesque’ laughter raised by Rabelais.<sup>2</sup> These are celebrated as the radical occasions of people’s resistance to the ‘monologic’ regimes of modern states, the ‘official seriousness’ and the formalities of the hegemonic culture and the sensibility produced by the ruling order of the times. The vibrant history of the novel as a self-critical genre, which radically rewrites and exceeds itself, and critically attacks the hegemonic and conventional rules of the classical or feudal regimes of discourses, is brought forth in his path-breaking works.<sup>3</sup> The dialogic interaction and inter-animation of heterogeneous voices, phrases, and genres that takes place in novel, what Bakhtin would call the instances of ‘heteroglossia’, are reinvented as epitomizing a phrasal democracy, which resists and subverts the regimes of the ‘high’ culture and higher classes. More over, the novels of Rabelais

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<sup>1</sup> Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 242.

<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans . Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 198-276.

<sup>3</sup> Another important work of Bakhtin is *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

and others are found to be resurrecting people's laughter, which carnivalises the language and prose, thus signaling a creative revolt or a generic resistance to the authoritarian modes of presentation and linking. Bakhtin valorizes this 'novelistic revolution' in the micro-history of genres retraced by him, and offers valuable insight on the politics of genres and phrases.

## 2. *Hayden White and Dominic La Capra*

One has to acknowledge the remarkable works done by Hayden White and Dominic La Capra that bring forth the self-reflexive thrust of the 'new cultural history'. They have opened up new vistas to approach the cultural artifacts and practices as well as new challenges to the existing rules and conventions of social sciences, including history, ethnography, cultural study etc.:

"The challenge that, this 'White-La Capra-perspective' brings to contemporary historians thus concerns the complex problem of opening the essentially 19<sup>th</sup> century historiographical paradigm of reality and representation to the critical insights that have transformed 19<sup>th</sup> century attitudes in varied approach to literature, art, critical theory, and science.

The call for a more varied approach to history carries the influence of European tradition that evolves from Frederick - Nietzsche into the recent work of Michel Foucault or Jacques Derrida and examines critically the founding assumptions of knowledge. This tradition which many historians distrust or dislike stresses that critical theorists should recover those lost or repressed strands of Western culture that might challenge the reigning epistemological and ontological orthodoxies of our time."<sup>4</sup>

Hayden White problematises the presentational modes of modern human sciences by bringing out the crucial role played by tropes or rhetorical devices in positioning the object and subject of knowledge and determining the 'form' of reflection and representation. The modern historians, Hayden White, are 'locked in an ironic perspective', which is affiliated to the rhetorical conventions of the Nineteenth century realistic novels.

"...When applied to the past, irony enables historians to take a realistic or superior view of the people and events that they discuss, because people always lack the perspective in their own time to see

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<sup>4</sup> Lloyd. S. Cramer.in Lynn Hunt. Ed., *The New Cultural History* (London: University of California Press, 1989), 100.

the disjunction between their words and experience as clearly as historians see it in retrospect. 'Irony pre-supposes the occupation of a realistic perspective on reality (i.e., the historians), from which a non-figurative representation of the world of experience might be provided.'<sup>5</sup>

The historiography, in general is shown to be still clinging to the Nineteenth century mode of representation characteristic to realistic novel and positivistic science, 'while the creative writers have moved onto experiment with multiple-perspective narratives and scientists have begun to ask new questions about nature of science'.<sup>6</sup> Hayden White who worked out the Foucauldian insights on the figurative strategies deployed by human sciences illumines the historians of the presentational constraints faced by them.<sup>7</sup> He urges them to switch on to experimentation of new modes of presentation, 'to regain multiple perspectives' in knowing and linking and to abandon the 'rhetorical cliché' of the realistic novels.

Dominic La Capra has made further advancement in the interrogation of idea and texts whose 'rethinking of intellectual history'<sup>8</sup> has also been a radical tract on the rethinking history as a discipline. La Capra's contestation with the genres of 'social history' and the school of 'new historicism' illumines the historians of the urgent need to liberate themselves from the representational regime of modern historiography and to be receptive to the self-critical interrogation of the language, texts and knowledge as unleashed by the critical theories of the post-structuralist and post-modernist scholars of our times. The valorization of the 'social' as the privileged or determinant instance of human life as projected by the social historian is attacked by La Capra:

In any case, the often concealed metaphysical belief that society is the ultimate ground of all historical research has atleast been rendered more flexible by an awareness of the role of the symbolic systems and signifying practices in the formation of society itself. And narrative has been rehabilitated as a way of representing the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.,104.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 72-83.

<sup>8</sup> Dominick La Capra, *Rethinking Intellectual History, Texts, contexts, Language* (London: Cornell University Press, 1983), 23-64.

past.<sup>9</sup>

Though the new trends in historiography like that of the 'Annales' School has revised certain absolutistic notions and dogmas concerning the 'social', La Capra reminds us that the social historians in general still hold on to their deterministic notions of 'society'. He identifies stigmas of social history' as follows:

.... a basically documentary conception of literature as part of the historical record; a suspicion of self-reflection as injurious to the historian's craft; and an unproblematic idea of the historian's use of language that avoids or represses significant aspects of an exchange with the past, including the role of 'internally dialogized' styles in history that involve self-questioning, humour, stylization, irony, parody, and self parody.<sup>10</sup>

La Capra develops a distinctive methodology of 'cultural' history by imbibing the crucial insights on the genre of novel, provided by Bakthin and Jacques Derrida on the language and critical knowledge.:

What I take to be especially valuable in the approaches to textuality, developed by Heidegger and Derrida is critical enquiry, that tries to avoid a somnambulistic replication of the excesses of a historical tradition, by rehabilitating what is submerged or repressed in it and centring the submerged or repressed elements in a more even-handed 'contest' with tendencies that are damaging in their dominant forms.<sup>11</sup>

The 'new cultural history' or the 'textual' history as La Capra would call it, basically complicates the simplistic and absolutistic notions of 'reality' and 'objectivity' and the oppositional concepts like text Vs context as held by modern historians. It retraces the "figurative processes already proceeding or operating on these concepts and categories". The 'reality' reaches us through the mediation of textuality or it is already textualised before it is grasped as 'reality'. "The context itself is a text of sorts; it calls not for stereotypical, ideological, 'descriptions' but

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<sup>9</sup> Dominick La Capra, *History and Criticism* (London: Cornell university press, 1985), 118-119.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>11</sup> Lacapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*, 29.

for interpretation and informed criticism.<sup>12</sup> The past as Lacapra depicts it “arrives in the form of texts and textualised remainders—memoirs, reports, published writings, archives, monuments, and so forth”.<sup>13</sup>

La Capra resurrects the radical findings of Bakhtin on the ‘dialogic’ and ‘carnavalesque’ thrust of novel, not only for rereading the ‘canonic’ or exemplary texts but also for a critical interrogation and transmutation of historian’s craft, his mode of presentation as well as manner of enquiry. The Bakhtinian insights are elaborated to work out a critical reading praxis within the History retrieving the ‘contestatory’ and transformative voices and forces mostly submerged in the ‘historicistic’ and deterministic modes of reading the (exemplary) texts.:

Bakhtin’s emphasis upon dialogization directed attention to the more ambivalent or un-decidable dimensions of the texts, such as the double or multiple voicing of utterances in free indirect style. ... Dialogization highlighted the importance of the border or the threshold where seeming opposites entered into an exchange and possibly co-existed, often in tensely charged relationships.<sup>14</sup>

La Capra brings out on the implication of the idea of ‘dialogization’ or ‘dialogical imagination’ on historian’s craft. It leads historians towards an intense and hazardous course of self-criticism and problematizes the language or rhetoric used by them.

...This dialogical relation between the historian or the historical text and the ‘object’ of study raises the question of the role of selection, judgment, stylisation, irony, parody, self-parody, and polemic in the historian’s own use of language—in brief, the question of how the historian’s use of language is mediated by critical factors that cannot be reduced to factual predication or direct authorial assertion about historical ‘reality’.<sup>15</sup>

‘The most intriguing of the historical uses of language’, according to La Capra is ‘that form of imaginative world-play that appears in ‘carnavalesque’ social

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>13</sup> Lacapra, *History and Criticism*, 128.

<sup>14</sup> Lacapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History*, 313.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 25.



practices and in the carnivalesque styles of many great novels”<sup>16</sup> ‘To Bakhtin, carnivalization is the most creative form of ‘dialogized heteroglossia’.<sup>17</sup>:

In its larger sense, ‘carnivalization’ is an engaging process of interaction through which seeming opposites—body and spirit, work and play, positive and negative, high and low, seriousness and laughter—are related to each other in an ambivalent, contestatory interchange that is both literally and figuratively ‘re-creative’.<sup>18</sup>

The carnival attitude generates an ambivalent interaction between all basic opposites in language and life—a jolly [or cheerful] relativity” in which poles are taken from their ‘pure binarism’ and made to touch and know one another.<sup>19</sup>

La Capra thus attempts to sketch out a critical reading practice which could potentially reengage or replay the text as a dynamic force-field of contestatory or transformative voices and forces, a ‘secular’ altar of the dialogic or carnivalesque engagement of genres and phrases.:

In the novel we had a proliferation of experimental interventions in narration as well as in the combination of narration with self-reflexive theory, displaced religious quest, direct or indirect social criticism, grotesque realism, montage, interior monologue, disrupted or syncopated dialogue, and so forth. Especially noteworthy in the mutations of narrative has been a complex and varied exploration of repetitive temporality (often interpreted reductively as ‘spatial’ form)...Indeed, the modern novel has brought to a high point—perhaps to the breaking point—the heterogeneous, polyphonous and carnivalised interaction of voices that Mikhail Bakhtin considered the criterion of the entire tradition of the novel as a self-contestatory and self-renewing genre.<sup>20</sup>

Novel resists all sorts of narrative closures; it unsettles the regulation of ‘meaning’ and postpones finalisation. This is how it ‘makes challenging contact with ‘reality’ and ‘history’:

One way, a novel makes challenging contact with ‘reality’ and ‘history’ is precisely by resisting full concordant narrative closure (prominently including that provided by conventional well-made plot), for this mode of resistance inhibits compensatory catharsis

<sup>16</sup> Llyod. S.Kramer, op.cit., 120.

<sup>17</sup> Lacapra, op.cit., *Rethinking Intellectual History*, 315.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

and satisfying ‘meaning’ on the level of imagination and throws the reader back upon the need to come to terms with the unresolved problems the novel helps to disclose.<sup>21</sup>

Instead of a linear horizontal progression of time, generally used by the historians, La Capra prioritizes the Derridean notion of ‘repetitive temporality’—the repetition of history or time with difference—in tracing out the textual as well as historical progression of time, the ‘differential recurrence’ of the time of progress.

### 3. *Benedict Anderson*

The recent spurt in the study of nationalism, nationality or ethnicity also has from another ground brought forth the importance of the novel in conditioning the precipitation of the political sensibility among people. It has also helped us to reread novels to decipher social processes from it.

The emergence of the political rationality of the nation as a form of narrative—textual strategies, metaphoric dis-placements, sub-texts and figurative stratagems— has its own history. It is suggested by Benedict Anderson’s view of the space and time of the modern nation as embodied in the narrative culture of the realist novel and explored in Tom Narain’s reading of Enoch Powell’s post imperial racism. ...To study the nation through its narrative address does not merely draw our attention to its language and rhetoric it also attempts to alter the conceptual object-itself.<sup>22</sup>

Benedict Anderson, in his well-acclaimed work on the history of modern ‘nationalisms’, draws our attention to the determinant role played by novels, side by side with the media, in conjuring up these ‘imagined communities’.<sup>23</sup>

Anderson elaborates the dynamic interplay of five instances in the historical emergence of nationalism:

- 1 - the capitalist mode and relation of production
- 2 - the Protestant revolution
- 3 - the Print-technology.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>22</sup> Homi K.Bhabha ed. *Nation and Narration* (Routledge: London, 1990), 1-8.

<sup>23</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities—Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism* (Verso: London, 1983), 20.

- 4- the vernacularisation and modernization of language and –
- 5 - the new cultural artifices (also marketable commodities of capitalism) mainly Newspaper, book and novel.

However, it is the cultural or the so called ‘super-structural’ phenomena i.e., the sensibility created by the literary artifacts, texts and cultural practices which is traced out and elaborated by Anderson as a constituent factor of the national ‘imagination’. Therefore, he focuses on the relations of communication or the experiences evoked by reading and discards the notions of the legal, juridical, political and sociologic determination of nation that have a hegemony in modern historiography. Anderson, thus, effects a crucial shift in the perspective of historiography that privileged and prioritized the modes of production over the instances of culture and aesthetic by giving focus on the latter. However he never abandons the laws of the diachronic and materialist progression of history though he locates and evokes the antinomies, gaps and black spots in the ‘synthesis’ made by the modern historians. The live linkages made by him with the so called ‘base’ and the ‘superstructure’, the economic, political and cultural realms turn subversive when they disrupt the halo of certainty and determinacy that shroud those privileged instances. Although he spots out the affect-phrases, the ‘differends’ submerged in the mega-history of nationalism, he subsumes them in the historical saga of print-nationalism sung by him.

It is, the resurgence of a new mode of imagining which is being traced out by Anderson as the most crucial and determinant instance that brings forth the community of modern nationalism. According to him, this implicates a drastic rupture in the people’s experience of time, in the linguistic practices of linking phrases, in the forms of presentation and in the procedures of knowledge. It marks a re-formation of time, language, faith and also space. Though the shift to the notion of ‘imagining’ marks a diversion from the conceptual determinacy and certainty of the modernist paradigms, Anderson’s elucidation of this ‘imaginings’ seems to betray the symptoms of technological or linguistic determinism.

### *3.1 Time*

Anderson unravels how the horizontal and linear time of the nation, 'the simultaneous empty time' is conjured up by the print-media, and novel, and the new mode of reading called forth by them. The reading of news paper or the Book epitomizes a 'mass' ceremony both in its religious as well as material implications. It is a secular prayer or 'mass' performed in the silent privacy of the reader and in the 'lair of skull' which brings forth a new sort of 'public'. It is this imagined public sphere, a 'publicity' generated at the privacy of individuals or subjects, which is traced out by him as the nucleus of the national community.:

... it is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion.<sup>24</sup>

Anderson discovers this silent privacy in 'the lair of skull' as the crucial site of the imagination of the modern nation. And the nation as a community is born out of the synthesis of abstract identities brought out by this process of reading which is tantamount to imagining. It is a horizontally signified community of empty, 'arbitrary signs' which incessantly expels or subordinates the 'vertical' instances of time. This loss of the materiality and sensuality of the 'public' also implicates the selective detention of the faculty of 'seeing', 'sensing' and the act of intense reflection involved in the process of reading. This abstraction is effectuated through prioritising the 'audible', the 'intelligible', the 'textual' and the sensation of hearing, at the expense of other sensations and faculties pertaining to knowledge. The 'ear' overpowers the eye, the 'intelligible' subordinates the 'conceivable', the textual or the 'discursive' overwhelms the 'figural' if we explain it in terms of the Lyotardian critique of 'textuality'. Perhaps this could be located as the 'original' (?) moment of the psychotic split of the modern self, which also marks the historical moment of the traumatic separation between history and cosmology or epic<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid,39.

<sup>25</sup> Lyotard traces out this crucial moment of split in man's presentation at the juncture of the emergence of history as a genre severing itself from the sensibility of the epic, as it happened

The imagination which is traced out by Anderson as producing the experience of a horizontal homogenous community refers to a knowledge process of abstraction. The synthesis brought by it is based on the verbally thought out 'experience' or 'consciousness' already arrived by the cognitive or descriptive linking. It is a sort of linking marked by its arbitrariness in the inclusion or juxtaposition of events as in the case of the news in journals. The imagination here means a programmed movement of sensation or synthesising brought forth by the 'calendrical' coincidence or the steady onward clocking of homogeneous 'empty time'.<sup>26</sup> It is in short, the product of a sensibility evoked by the peculiar sorts of cultural artefacts like newspaper, which have dual lives in the form of books as well as the products of the market. It is an abstraction of thinking called forth by a technological necessity. And it is the print-technology and the new relations and 're-presentations' brought forth by it which is held to be the 'subject' or the chief actor in this process of imagining. Imagination thus marks an ex-'traction' of thought, a sort of thinking inseparably bound to the laws of language, or signification detaining the primeval sensations of 'desiring' and 'seeing'. It is something which disallows or goes counter to the pure 'disinterested' reflection.

However, this abstract self-experience of the 'secular, historically clocked, imagined community, establishes its social visibility in every-day-life'. Its 'reality' is effectuated by the 'fictitious' assurance or confidence instilled by its simultaneous occurrence among the multitudes of people. "Continuous re-assurance' is provided to the readers who are the subjects of this 'community-in-anonymity', on the simultaneous consumption of these artefacts by the people of the 'subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours'.<sup>27</sup>

The reading of the print artefacts especially the newspaper as an exemplary instance, actually reconstitutes the self of the reader, as the member of a community-in-anonymity brought-forth by the imagination it induced. Therefore the nation as an imagined community of people is thus formed out of a community of readers, an anonymous association of consumers of print-artifices-- the abstract,

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in the case of Greece. Jean Francois Lyotard, "Figure Foreclosed" in Andrew Benjamin ed. *The Lyotard Reader*. op.cit.,77-78.

<sup>26</sup> Benedict Anderson, op.cit.,37-38

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

anonymous, substitutable and exchangeable selves conjured up by the laws of cultural market.

Anderson explores how the 'realistic social novel' consolidates the national community by providing 'visibility' to this new 'experience' of simultaneous empty time' which makes 'nation' possible. The 'causal progression of the 'narrative' from the 'interior time of the novel to the 'exterior time of the readers every day life gives a hypnotic confirmation of the solidity of a single community, embracing characters, author and readers, moving onward through calendrical time'.<sup>28</sup> The novel conjures up a 'sociological landscape' the solidity of which is assured by plurals, and 'comparables' and the horizon of which is clearly bounded'.

This new sort of imagination marks a rupture, a breach in the experience or reflection of time undergone by man in the modern era. The homogeneous and horizontal time of the consumption of the print-artifices or the historical time of linear calendrical progression dethrones the 'Messianic' time of the 'medieval religious society'. Anderson, thus, reminds us of another sort of simultaneous time, which may be found alien to modern experience of time, the 'other' time which threatens the modern self with its 'otherness' and which is incessantly exorcised by the print-nationalism: "a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present".

Such an idea of simultaneity is wholly alien to our own. It views time as something close to what Benjamin calls Messianic time, a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present. In such a view of things, the word 'meanwhile' cannot be of real significance.<sup>29</sup>

The medieval conception of the 'simultaneity-along-time' is replaced by an idea of 'homogeneous empty time'-- the time of 'capital', print or market; the time of the consumption of the text— which characterises the 'national' time..<sup>30</sup> This, in fact, implicates the 'monotheistic' time of history, the 'de-figured', 'emasculated' time of the modern selves which is marked by their ascetic disavowal of desire.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 33.

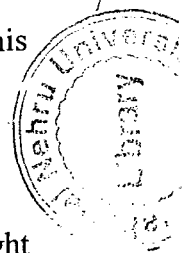
<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 30.

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Consequently this 'transverse, cross-time is characterised by the absence of 'prefiguring and fulfilment'.

Further more, Anderson unravels a crucial operation launched by the regime of modern selves, to compensate the 'loss' of the Messianic time—the 'paradise lost' i.e., 'the timeless time' of the Infinite. It makes strategic attempts to transform the 'fatality' to 'continuity', contingency to 'meaning' and 'chance to destiny'. The torment of the breach in the experience of time is consoled by the invention of a new sort of continuity.<sup>31</sup> A new paradise is invented as a compensation for the lost one. The teleology is re-established, an 'end' is given to the endless progression of the simultaneous empty time, a meaning and a finality is given to this experience of 'emptiness'. And it is the 'magical' unity of nationalism as effectuated through the narrative strategies of social-realistic novels which turned the 'chance into destiny' providing secular 'finality' or 'teleology' for this 'abstract imagination'.



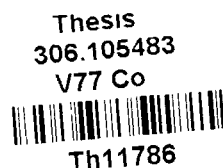
### 3.2 *Language or signification*

This 'violent' rupture in time, this temporal re-structuring which brought forth the 'national time' and the 'simultaneous empty time' of the 'meanwhile', was possible only through a crucial change in the practice of signification, a re-formation of language and linkage of phrases. And this is inseparably related to the milieu of protestant revolution that historically triggered off drastic alterations in the faith, the life practices and the linguistic transactions of the people in Europe, and later in their colonies in the Eastern and Southern countries of the world.

The print-revolution which produced the new reading public had provided the essential condition for the emergence of nationally 'imagined' community. However, it is the protestant operation on faith and language that might be held as its constituent force. This operation entails the discursive or textual appropriation of the matrix of language, the conversion of the phrases in to arbitrary sign' and deportation of the 'figural' zones of language.

The coalition-between Protestantism and print-capitalism has not only 'shaken the Church to its core', but also the political foundations of the 'old

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 19.



dynastic states'.<sup>32</sup> What differentiates the national community from the classical society is its discursive or textual thrust, its belief in the 'substitutability' and interchangeability of phrases, languages or faiths. The nationalism comes into being as the historical fulfilment of capitalism's irresistible urge for the infinite reproduction or duplication of 'forms'. If the 'sacred silent' languages were the media through which the great global communities of the past were imagined', the nationalist imaginations rose out of the secular and vernacular operation of the conversion of the matrix of language into 'arbitrary signs'.<sup>33</sup>

The 'self-consciousness' of the nationally imagined community which Anderson demarcates from the 'unself-conscious' coherence of the 'religiously-imagined communities' of the middle ages also suggests this replacing of the 'libidinal', the 'figural' or the 'religious' (which joined together the old communities) by the determinate laws of discourses or textual experiences, the 'consciousness' of the subject. And consequently there happens the eventual breaking up of 'history' from 'cosmology'.<sup>34</sup>

The disruption of these 'interlinked certainties' of the medieval religious faith by the historical events that followed the Lutheran revolution kindled the search for new ways of linking fraternity, power and time. And 'print-capitalism precipitated this search by making it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.' 'History', tearing itself apart from the cosmology and its presentational ethos rose into dominance offering a new teleology in itself.

Another important feature which distinguishes the new national community brought forth by the print-capitalism was that it was a monoglot unlike the multilingual communities of the medieval age. To Anderson, it was the 'fatality' of 'human linguistic diversity, in its interaction with capitalism and print that called forth this monoglot, monologic vernacular society, its monotheistic regime of single language'.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 46.



Therefore, it is the 'encounter of capitalism with two of its tenacious adversaries namely, death and language marked by their association with the irreducible and irreversible principle of fatality', that became determinant in the formation of the 'monoglot nationalism'.<sup>36</sup>

It is through this strategic operation of the assemblage of diverse tongues and the conversion of the language into arbitrary signs, the substitutable and saleable units, that the print-languages are formed and marketed. The history of nationalism, thus, commences with the capitalistic enterprise of the mechanical reproduction of language.<sup>37</sup>

The print-languages laid the base for national consciousness in three distinct ways. First and foremost it created 'unified fields of exchange and communications below Latin, and above the spoken vernaculars'. It is the fellowship felt by readers belonging to particular language fields connected by print, in its 'secular particular, visible invisibility' which thus became the embryo of the nationally-imagined community. Secondly, it gave a new 'fixity to language which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of nation'.

A technology of language, time and power, which was thus perfected out of the historical experiences of the emergent nationalisms of Europe has now become available which could be pirated and smuggled out to the colonies by the protestant missionaries who could be held as the first entrepreneurs of the cultural artifice called print-nationalism in the colonies. The language became the generator of power in the sense that it generated new procedures and disciplines of knowledge decisive in the political conquest and hegemony of the colonial regimes. The crucial role played by the Language -studies in the resurgence of new modes of knowledge and new epistemology especially related to human sciences like philology, linguistics, lexicography, ethnography etc is elaborated by Anderson. They boosted up the growth of the disciplines like history sociology, anthropology. All of them were redefined and resituated by the structural principles unearthed by

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

the language studies which Eric Hobsbawm signifies as ‘the first science which regarded evolution as its core’.

In due course, discovery and conquest also caused a revolution in European ideas about language. From the earliest days, Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish seamen, missionaries, merchants and soldiers had, for practical reasons—navigation, conversion, commerce and war—gathered word-lists of non-European languages to be assembled in simple lexicons. But it was only in the later eighteenth century that the scientific comparative study of languages really got under way. Out of the English conquest of Bengal came William Jones’ pioneering investigations of Sanskrit (1786). Out of Napoleons Egyptian expedition came Jean Champollion’s decipherment of hieroglyphics (1835)... Once again, geneologies were being conceived which could only be accommodated by homogeneous, empty time. ...Out of these discoveries came philology, with its studies of comparative grammar, classification of languages into families, and reconstruction by scientific reasoning of ‘proto-languages’ out of oblivion. As Hobsbawm rightly observes, here was ‘the first science which regarded evolution as its very core.’<sup>38</sup>

The language-studies and the affiliated disciplines thus propelled the resurgent imagination of the new nation and the colonial movement of the implantation of it into colonies.

The lexicographers, grammarians, philologists, and litterateurs, the ‘professional intellectuals’ of the times thus played a ‘central role to the shaping of 19<sup>th</sup> century European Nationalisms.’<sup>39</sup>

The lexicographic revolution according to Anderson marks an important stage in the revolution which culminated in the formation of the monoglot nationalism. The ‘writers, teachers, pastors and lawyers’ were the leaders of the nationalist movement as exemplified in the case of Finnish nationalism.<sup>40</sup>

These ‘intellectuals’ were producers for the print market and were linked, *via* that silent bazaar, to consuming publics. The reading classes, the consumers of these artifices, were mostly comprised of people of ‘some power’ or the emergent bourgeois class.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 73.

Anderson observes that Bourgeoisie was the only class which was constituted fully of literate and could first achieve solidarities on an essentially imagined basis, i.e., through the consumption of print-artifices.<sup>42</sup> The events like French Revolutions are converted into 'moments' or 'things' and are incessantly textualised. The events and their experiences are reduced by millions of printed words into a 'concept' and in due course into models which could be smuggled or pirated into the new colonies.<sup>43</sup> This is how events are turned into texts, models or blue-prints by the accumulating memory of print. "By the second decade of the Nineteenth century a 'model for the independent national state was available for pirating.'" 'As a known model it imposed certain 'standard' from which too-marked deviations were impermissible.'<sup>44</sup>

### *3.3 A Critique of the Andersonian Imagination of Nation*

After delineating the process by which the nation came to be imagined modelled and pirated into new countries Anderson raises the crucial question which Renan and other prominent thinkers of nationalism have raised earlier as to the fundamental factor behind the energetic of nation. Though he makes certain insightful observations, regarding the intensity of the 'attachment that people feel for their inventions of imagination the explanations provided by him contest the technological or linguistic determinism in-laid in his own propositions regarding the emergence of nation. The thesis now brings open the 'affect-phrases', the 'uncertain' and 'indeterminate' instances marginalised by the modernist discourses of nationalism including the treatise provided by Anderson.<sup>45</sup>

Nation which is defined as a solidarity of consumers or the readers of the print-commodities or as a market of letters integrated and conjured up by the print-capitalists has something intriguing which Anderson admits as unexplainable by his earlier assumptions. Anderson now comes closer to Renan's famous statement defining nation as a sentimental unity. He torches light on the political eros that radiates and binds national communities implicating 'the disinterested zone of love

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 74-75.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 129.

which goes beyond the principles of capitalist market. “Nations”, he says, “inspires love, the self-sacrificing love”. However he talks of this sensibility in the reductive concepts of ‘forms of consciousness’, or inventions of imaginations, haunted by the determinate paradigms of modernity. Anyway he turns away from his preoccupation with the newspaper and realistic novel and print-language, towards the aesthetic zone, the creative expressions of national people like poetry, prose, fiction, music, plastic arts etc. He locates the traces of this political love in their thousands of forms and styles which he reductively terms as cultural products. A subtle differentiation is made between the principles of patriotism and racialism. Nation, to him, is more associated with the former than with the latter.

To explain the political love of the nation one has to take recourse into the vocabulary of the kinship or home. Nation-ness is thus ‘assimilated to skin-colour, gender, parentage, and birth-era - all those things one can not help. Notably there takes place a shift from the determinate realm of imaginings— the verbal, rational or speculative mode of experiencing engaged by the consumer readers of the print-artifices — to the uncertainties and the intensities of the ‘natural’ the ‘clannish’, the ‘familial’ or the ‘unchosen’ zones of disinterestedness. Here we enter into a ‘figural’ or libidinal zone which runs counter to the laws and interests of the capitalist regime and its relations of market and profit. This un-premeditated political tie has nothing to do with the laws and conditions of market, the consumer’s imagination of empty simultaneous time and the language of power characteristic of print- nationalism. The regimes of language, book, market or power are now supplemented by some thing which exceeds them and which has been placed oppositional to them formerly.

Anderson counters the conventional modernist thesis on family which usually explains it exclusively in terms of articulate power-structure. The idea of ultimate sacrifice cannot come from the arbitrary solidarities of power-structures, or the interests of consumer’s. Anderson reminds us of the paradox involved in the term ‘national interest’ as mostly used by the historians, diplomats, politicians and social scientists and reveals us that nation as the people understands it is ‘interest - less’. It is the idea of ‘purity through fatality’ inlaid in the concept of nation which enable it to call forth ultimate sacrifices from their subject. The idea of sacrifice

comes only with the idea of purity derived out of the sense of fatality. This insightful observation of Anderson reminds us of the principle of 'loss' as expounded by Bataille though he does not seem to be pursuing the point further.

Anderson retrieves the 'other' time and the 'otherness' of language which had been reprimanded in the print-language and which according to him has been the force that conjured up nation. According to Anderson it is the 'primordialness' of language, that effectively connects us with the past, to the dead. The ghostly intimation of simultaneity across homogeneous, empty time as conveyed by this language-play is detected by him as being detained from the horizontal time of the print-nation.

Here we may usefully return once more to language. First, one notes the primordialness of languages, even those known to be modern. No one can give the date for the birth of any language. Each looms up imperceptibly out of a horizonless past... Languages thus appear rooted beyond almost anything else in contemporary societies. At the same time, nothing connects us effectively to the dead more than language. If English-speakers hear the words 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust'—created almost four and a half centuries ago they get a ghostly intimation of simultaneity across homogeneous, empty time. The weight of the words derives only in part from their solemn meaning; it comes from an as-it-were ancestral 'Englishness'.<sup>46</sup>

Anderson thus traces out language as the primal instance which brings forth this disinterested nature of patriotic or political love of nation. Though he again comes back to the 'language' for explaining the political energetic of nation this time he brings out the doubleness of language which vacillates between the 'primordial' and 'modern', the 'dead' and 'living', 'contemporary' and 'ancestry,' the 'historical' or 'a historical'. Language defies any sort of diachronic marking of origin and it 'looms up imperceptibly out of a horizonless past'. This 'imperceptibility' denotes the figural or the libidinal dimensions of language which could not be historicised. The vertical movement of phrases and times brings out a simultaneity across the empty time of the print-community which elevates nation into a sacred zone evoking a readiness among its subjects to make sacrifices. Anderson, however, is silent on the clash that takes place between these two mode

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 132.

of linking times and phrases. He fails to notice the discord or dissonance inflicted on the determinate national time by the idea of 'simultaneity across time'. The synthesis made by Anderson withholds the crucial factor that the subversive time of the 'figural', which erupts in the national sensibility could in fact disrupt the horizontal linear time conjured up by the print-artifices.

Anderson calls this sensation of simultaneity and contemporaneity as conjured up by creative or artistic forms of language mainly poetry and songs as 'unisonance'. Instead of pursuing the figural or aesthetic zone of language he slips back into the determinate forms of language and the processes of 'imagining' evoked by them. He talks on another sort of arbitrary signs, like national anthems or emblems and significantly uses the term 'unisonance' in order to indicate the synchronous time of nation created by them. The term which implicates the experience of audible imagining, as evoked by music and other art forms also betrays Anderson's slant towards the textual or discursive zone of imagination. From the arbitrary empty signs he now proceeds to another sort of images, sound images, audible signs, which produces a synthesis evoking vertical associations of 'simultaneity across time' and an imagined 'contemporaneity'. However, here also what Anderson focuses on is the images or arbitrary signs though they may belong to the 'sound' songs or poems especially national anthems, and emblems. Instead of delving deep in to the aesthetic core of this vertical unities the writer approaches them only when those occurrences are settled and neutralised into 'signs' (one should distinguish the meaning of the sign used here from the Kantian notions of the term). The fact that this 'unisonance' of the national time is established by the textual operation of the expulsion of the 'other', the heterogeneous or dissonant sounds or voices, escapes the notice of the writer.<sup>47</sup>

The unisonance invoked by the national anthems in spite of the banality and mediocrity of their forms, is found to be echoing the physical realization of the imagined community. However, this physical realisation implicates only an abstract process of imagining which does not arise from the 'material' or 'natural' ties. Thus this 'unisonance' implicates only an abstract unity of experiences or an experience of a unity in abstraction. Anderson's leanings on the pedagogic or

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 132-133.

official forms of nationalism are revealed by the images, and examples deployed and the mode of synthesis followed by him.

Anderson brings to our notice the paradoxical nature of nation which presents itself as simultaneously opened and closed. It does not confine itself to a process of exclusion but also opens itself to the processes of inclusion. The fatality that shrouds the 'nationalness' is according to Anderson a fatality embedded in history not in 'nature' or 'blood'. It is this historical embeddedness which makes it open towards the others. "One could be invited to this imagined community" provided the historical conditions allow this. It is these strains of historical fatality and the imagination provided by language which is traced out by Anderson as distinguishing the national communities from the classically or religiously imagined communities of the earlier period. However his enquiry stumbles upon language. He never ventures out to go beyond the determinate structure of language. The figural zone of language, or the reflective matrix of Idea which might be considered as the energetics behind the cohesive feeling of radical nationalism are either deported from or subordinated to the official reflection of National language.<sup>48</sup>

There are certain occasions however, when Anderson makes a glance towards the 'figural' or the libidinal core of the 'national language'. Language at such rare occasions is viewed by him as the romantic eye of nation. He resurrects the romance which is being reprimanded by the textual regime of print-nationalism contesting his own thesis.<sup>49</sup>

To the patriot 'language is the eye of desire'; it is the object as well as the subject of desire. It is through this desirous eye (or an object of desire) that the pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined and futures dreamed. The dissonance of this erotic zone of language with the textual regime of print-discourses where the 'ear' of text subordinates the 'eye' of desire to use the Lyotardian terms,<sup>50</sup> is overlooked by Anderson. However, this eye of the lover, not merely suggests desire but the 'disinterestedness, characteristic to the matrix of Idea that evokes

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>50</sup> *The Lyotard reader*, 68-107.

love. The crucial difference of the language of the text from the 'negative' language of 'figure', desire or Idea is erased in the synthesis forged out to produce the national unisonance'. And with this the difference between the pedagogic or official nationalism and the radical occurrence of the vibrant and alternate-nationalism of people is also blurred. And the forced synthesis of these two heterogeneous instances which are incommensurable thus in effect provide legitimacy to the determinate modes of official mode of the 'print'-nationalism or the 'textual' nationalism. The dialectical synthesis worked out by Anderson thus reiterates the Hegelian resolution of history which co-opts the 'other' into the regime of the same. The historicism, the linguistic or technological determinism in laid in the thesis of Anderson prevents it from exploring the 'figural', the indeterminate and dissonant instances within the national language.

#### **4. Nation and Narration**

A deeper, more critical and self-reflexive interrogation of the complex relationship between the 'Nation and Narration' has been carried out by the recent scholars like Homi K. Babha. Perhaps, the most passionate, radically innovative and theoretically compelling study on the narrative underpinnings of nation in recent times would be that of Homi K. Babha in 'Nation and Narration' edited by himself. The work makes a critical examination or a de-construction of the modernist theories and conceptualizations on 'Nation and Novel'. He attempts a radical rereading or reinvention of the pioneering works of Mikhail Bakhtin, Walter Benjamin, Benedict Anderson and others on the issue and attempts to provide a 'differential' or 'inter-disciplinary' theory and new paradigms associated with it. Moreover, the paradigmatic shift effected by the radical thinkers like Freud, Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Edward Said is critically retraced. The insights provided by them are reworked for bringing out a 'heterological' perspective to deconstruct the 'pedagogic text' of nation. The deterministic and functionalist definitions of nation are contested leaving open the characteristic ambivalence of the nation as a narrative.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Homi K. Babha, *op.cit.*,292.



Babha questions the 'historicistic' and 'essentialistic' theories of nation held by the modernist scholars and spots out the narrative closure effectuated by the 'pedagogic' versions of nation the so called mega-narratives of nation. The phrases of the 'others' or the 'other' phrases repressed by the modernist discourses are retrieved in the alternative narration of nation done by Babha. It is against the 'historical certainty and settled nature of the term (nation) against which he writes "the western nation as an obscure and ubiquitous form of living the *locality* of culture". This is an alternate locality which is 'more 'temporal' than 'historicistic', more 'symbolic' than the 'social' , more 'mythological' than 'ideological' more 'rhetorical' than the 'reason of the state', more 'collective' than 'the 'subject', more 'psychic' than 'civility', and more 'hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences' and 'identifications'. This 'locality' of culture could not be represented in terms of a 'hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism'. Instead, the cultural differences and identifications which characterises this locality of nation could be articulated only in terms of a principle of 'hybridity'.<sup>52</sup>

The ambivalent narrative of nation rediscovered by Babha draws on the symbolic or affective sources of cultural identification. The displacement and repetition of terms that characteristically happen in this ambivalent narrative brings out the fact that the nation is the 'measure of the liminality of cultural modernity'.

Babha deconstructs the Andersonian thesis of nation and criticises its privileging of the homogenous and the 'unisonant' time of the print-nationalism. He detects how Anderson 'fails to locate the alienating time of the arbitrary sign in his naturalized, nationalized space of the imagined community'. Though the notion of the 'homogeneous empty time' of national narrative is adopted from Walter Benjamin Anderson fails to read the 'profound ambivalence' inlaid in Benjamin's phrases.

Anderson fails to locate the alienating time of the arbitrary sign in his naturalized, nationalized space of the imagined community. Although he borrows his notion of the homogeneous empty time of the nation's modern narrative from Walter Benjamin, he fails to read that profound ambivalence that Benjamin places deep within the utterance of the narrative of modernity. Here, as the pedagogies of life and will contest the perplexed histories of the living people,

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 292.

their cultures of survival and resistance, Benjamin introduces a non-synchronous, incommensurable gap in the midst of storytelling. From this split in the utterance, from the unbeguiled, belated novelist there emerges an ambivalence in the narration of modern society that repeats, uncounselled and unconsolable, in the midst of plenitude.<sup>53</sup>

What Benjamin finds as the radical thrust of novel is its vocation of carrying 'the incommensurable to extremes in the representation of human life'. The novel in his view 'gives evidence of the profound perplexity of living in the midst of life's fullness, and through the representation of its fullness'. In novel one encounters the question of cultural difference as the 'perplexity of living, and writing, the nation'. It differs from the synchronous time of the realist novel or the media which gives birth to the homogenous empty time of the print-nationalism. The novel here refers to the non-synchronous non linear narratives which riot against the rules of discourses. Or in other sense they follow the only rule of novel that is to contest and go beyond its own generic rules. It is those radical novelistic narratives which write nation in its fullness in its difference and dissonance.

Babha illumines us how the Nation speaks its disjunctive narrative from this 'incommensurability, in the midst of the every day'.

It is from this incommensurability in the midst of the everyday that the nation speaks its disjunctive narrative. It begins, if that's the word, from that anterior space within the arbitrary sign which disturbs the homogenizing myth of cultural anonymity. From the margins of modernity, at the insurmountable extremes of story telling, we encounter the question of cultural difference as the perplexity of living, and writing, the nation.<sup>54</sup>

The national narrative "begins, from that anterior space within the arbitrary sign which disturbs the homogenizing myth of 'cultural anonymity'". Babha traces out the issue of cultural difference at the 'margins of modernity, at the insurmountable extremes of story telling'.

The idea of "cultural difference" as put forward by Babha marks that "intermittent time, and interstitial space, that emerges as a structure of undecidability at the frontiers of cultural hybridity". It attempts 'to discover the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 311.

uncanny moment of cultural difference that emerges in the process of enunciation’.:

Babha alerts us that the idea of ‘cultural difference’ must not be understood as ‘the free play of polarities and pluralities in the homogeneous empty time of the national community’.<sup>55</sup> “It addresses the jarring of meanings and values generated in-between the variety and diversity associated with cultural plenitude. What it represents is the ‘process of cultural interpretation formed in the perplexity of living, in the disjunctive, liminal space of national society.’<sup>56</sup>

The analytic of ‘cultural difference’ in the words of Babha intervenes to transform the scenario of articulation. “It changes the position of enunciation and relations of address within it”.

The aim of cultural difference is to re-articulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying *singularity* of the ‘other’ that resists totalization—the repetition that will not return as the same, the minus-in-origin that results in political and discursive strategies where adding-*to* does not add-up but serves to disturb the calculation of power and knowledge, producing other spaces of subaltern signification.”<sup>57</sup>

The principle of ‘cultural difference’ as Babha puts forward it, “introduces into the process of cultural judgment and interpretation that sudden shock of the successive, non synchronic time of signification, or the interruption of the supplementary question”.<sup>58</sup>

The theories of the ‘cultural difference’, minoritarian discourses, and ‘interdisciplinarity’ as offered by Babha widen the horizon of the cultural history of nation. He employs the Derridean principle of ‘supplementarity’, in his re-examination of nation and its narrative, re-discovers Benjamin’s concept of the ‘foreignness of language’ and Strauss’s understanding of the ethnographic practice (which enables us to coincide with forms of activity which are both *at once ours and other*, practices affiliated to ‘the ethnic unconscious’). He charts out the blue-

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 313.

print of a 'minoritarian' discourse of nation which incessantly deconstruct the 'pedagogic' versions of nation.

Babha's reformulation of nation however, fails to go beyond the frontiers of the textuality or language. The disjunction or the dissonance in the national narrative or time is explained in a 'minoritarian' point of view which does not abandon the principles of 'spatiality', 'horizontality' and 'linearity' of time and language professed by the modernist narratives. The 'heterological' linkage of interdisciplinary theories worked out by Babha however never confronts the 'otherness' of the language, what Lyotard would call the 'figural', which exceeds the determinacy and certainty of the zone of language. By bringing out the textual ambivalence of the national narrative, Babha could hit at the 'deterministic', 'historicistic' and 'essentialistic' thrust of the 'pedagogic' narratives of nation. The ambivalence of the national text as highlighted by him implicates just the unevenness of the textual meaning prevailing between the 'pedagogical' and 'performative'. It, just denotes an oscillation from one pole to the other in the horizontal linear plane of language or text and it does not carry the vertical intonations of the 'figural'. Babha's conceptual modifications do not reach to the level of a radical critique of knowledge demanded by the National question. It is his inability to go beyond the zone of text or language which blocks Babha from proceeding to the reflective matrix of Idea without which a nation could not possibly occur as a radical feeling. Thus the radical feeling of a higher unity of national people remains an 'affect-phrase' in his rewriting of the 'nation' as an ambivalent narrative.

## **5. The 'Aesthetic Turn'**

The insights provided by the above mentioned thinkers have of course guided the interrogation of the 'nation and narration' undertaken here. However, the thesis makes a crucial shift from these theories, a shift, which has not only been decisive in the history of the philosophical self-reflection of the west but also crucial in the progress of the enquiry done here. And this was a shift demanded by the objects of our study, the historical novels and the 'political aesthetics' of the sublime reinvented by it. This might perhaps be called an 'aesthetic turn', aesthetic

in its philosophical sense, which focuses on a radically different manner of reflection, or aesthetic judgment. The glimmering of such an alternate mode of reflection would be found in the critique of the 'sublime' produced by Immanuel Kant.

### *5.1 The 'Sign' of History*

A brief examination of the Kantian idea of the 'sign' of history as reinvented by Lyotard would be provided here. This would mark a crucial turn in the mutation of cultural history introducing a radical mode of 'historico-political' reflection.

The idea of the 'sign' of history as proposed by Kant is reworked by Lyotard as an alternate 'manner' of writing 'history' 'culture' or 'progress'. It is through a vigorous rereading of the Kantian philosophy, especially his 'third Critique' which focuses on the reflective judgment, that Lyotard reinvents the idea of the 'sign' of history. He has elaborated the idea in two essays with the same title 'sign of history'.<sup>59</sup> It bombards the claims of the hegemonic discourses and disciplines regarding their supremacy over heterogeneous other genres. It raises crucial questions regarding the 'manners' of reflection, presentation, and self-legitimation as followed by genres of knowledge and makes judgment without any determinate criteria on the transitions of phrases and genres. It demands a serious self-critical introspection of the objects and modes of study or in short a critique of knowledge on the part of the historians and thinkers. Moreover, Lyotard moves away from the 'textualistic' structure of the narrative towards deciphering the phrase regimens and genres with their specific rule of linking phrases and unearths their hidden but crucial politics of phrases or genres that transform the sensibility of people. He contests the hegemony of the 'cognitive' or 'descriptive' phrases which reinforces the laws of 'capital', profit, productivity, and 'performativity' as dictated by the present World Order over the heterogeneous phrase-regimens of prose. The 'truth'-claims of the systems of knowledge and genres of sciences and

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<sup>59</sup> Jean Francis Lyotard, "The Sign of History" in Andrew Benjamin ed., *The Lyotard Reader*, 393-412 ; *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 166-167.

social sciences are questioned. The Kantian reflections on the sublime' is reinvented and offered as a clue to the radical occurrence of a tribunal of justice which bears witness to the conflict of heterogeneous phrase-universes and genres. They offer the cultural historians a radical 'manner' of thinking, linking and 'synthesising' and ultimately judging 'progress' in the 'here' and 'now' of the people.

The importance of the reflections on the 'beautiful' and the 'sublime' in the first part of the third *Critique* lies both in the 'de-realization of the object of aesthetic feelings', and in the absence of a real aesthetic faculty of knowing'.

The importance of the philosophy of the beautiful and the sublime in the first part of the third *Critique* lies both in the de-realization of the object of aesthetic feelings, and in the absence of a real aesthetic faculty of knowing. The same thing holds, perhaps even more radically, for the historico-political object, which as such has no reality, and for any political faculty of knowing, which must remain in-existent. The only things that *are* real (i.e. that for the concept of which intuitions can be presented) are phenomena, all of them conditioned and conditioning. The series of these phenomena, which makes up the history of humanity (and not even its natural history, only its cosmological history), is never itself given. This series is not given, but is the object of an Idea and, insofar as it is a human world, comes under the same antithetics as the cosmological series in general.<sup>60</sup>

According to Kant, the non-objects of Idea could be identified and presented only in the form of 'signs' or 'hypotyposes'. The direct presentation is found invalid in such cases. The progress is inscribed not in any events, or heroic deeds of history but in the occurrence of sublime feeling among the spectators of these events. Kant writes progress in the sublime mode of 'enthusiasm' felt by the spectators of the seismic event of the French revolution. It is this feeling which is traced out as the *begebenheit* of progress and it is recognised not as 'a cause but an index of the event of human betterment'. Lyotard expounds his notion of the 'sign of history' in the following words:

The expression, *sign of history*, used in ... the *Conflict of the Philosophy Faculty with the Faculty of Law* (1795) introduces a further degree of complexity into the 'passages' needed to phrase the historico-political. The question raised (against the Faculty of

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<sup>60</sup> *The Lyotard reader*, 398-399.

Law, therefore) is whether it can be affirmed that the human race is constantly progressing toward the better, and if so, how this is possible. The difficulties proliferate: the ‘better’, ‘progress’, and the human race are objects of Ideas, with no possible direct presentation. Furthermore, we are dealing with a phrase whose referent is a part of human history that is still to come, a phrase therefore of *Voehersagung*, of anticipation or prediction. Kant distinguishes this phrase from the phrase of the *Weissagar* (of the soothsayer, by recalling that there can be (according to the rules for cognitive) no direct presentation of the object of this phrase, since it bears upon future.<sup>61</sup>

Kant’s paper on the *Conflict of the Philosophy Faculty with the Faculty of Law* published in 1795 raises this fundamental question: whether it can be affirmed that the human race is constantly progressing toward the better, and if so, how this is possible. The question complicates and disrupts the assurances given by the cognitive or dialectical genres of knowledge. It aggravates the difficulties in two ways. Firstly the ‘phrases like better, progress, and the human race are objects of Ideas, with no possible direct presentation’. ‘Furthermore, we are dealing with a phrase whose referent is a part of human history that is still to come, a phrase therefore of anticipation and prediction. Therefore the cognitive or dialectical genres could not make a judgment on this phrase. At the same time Kant reminds us that this is a phrase which is different from the soothsayers phrases in the sense that there is no direct presentation of the object of this phrase, ‘since it bears upon future according to the rules of cognitive’.<sup>62</sup>

The *Begebenheit* (the ‘event’) which signals progress ‘is not an ‘intuitive given’, a ‘proof’, ‘example’, a ‘type’ but an ‘event’ or ‘act of delivering itself which would also be an act of deliverance’, a *deal*’. ‘This event would merely indicate and not prove that humanity is capable of being both cause and author of its progress’. It should also indicate a cause (of progress) such that the occurrence of its effect remains undetermined with respect to time. Kant recognises in this rule ‘the clause stating the independence of causality by freedom from the diachronic series of the mechanical world’. Thus the time of progress according to Kant

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<sup>61</sup> *The Differend*, 164.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

belongs to a non-linear or indeterminate temporality which defies the ‘diachronic serial time of the mechanical world’.

The *Begebenheit* is a sign that ‘recalls, shows, and anticipates’. The term ‘sign’ used in the Kantian critique of knowledge might be seen as radically in variance with the usual meaning it has in the modernist discourses which mostly follow the rules of the Hegelian dialectics. The task of this sought-for *Begebenheit* is to ‘present’ free causality according to the three temporal directions of past, present, and future.<sup>63</sup>

It is not a ‘momentous deal which should be considered as the *Begebenheit*,’ the ‘sought-for deal, that attests to the power of free causality’. The “momentous” deed, however, is only a given one, an equivocal object which may be grasped indifferently by one phrase or the other. The exigency of the critical judge goes further than simple conciliation, to the point of appearing paradoxical’. It is not sufficient for him to dismiss both the advocate of determinism and that of freedom or finality through a satisfactory arrangement, but rather he constrains them together and positively to exercise joint sovereignty over the sought-for event. The term joint sovereignty implicates the dynamic synthesis of the heterogeneous genres that advocate determinism on the one hand and ‘freedom’ or ‘finality’ on the other.

Given *in* experience, or ‘delivered’, the *Begebenheit* ought to be a probative index of the Idea of free causality. With the ‘occurrence’ of this synthesis, the ‘rims of the abyss to be crossed over between mechanism, and freedom, or finality, between the realm of the sensory world, and the super-sensible field are almost closed’. This is achieved without however suppressing the abyss between them. It is at this minute gaping that the status of the ‘historico-political’ is fixed. Though this status might be indeterminate or inconsistent, it is ‘sayable’ and even ‘probative’ according to Kant. The status of the historico-political is therefore situated by him in the paradoxical middle point of the dynamic synthesis of (the ‘mechanism’ and ‘freedom’ or finality, or the realm of the ‘sensible’ and ‘super-sensible’ world).

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 164.



The *Begebenheit* thus signals progress by proving that ‘humanity’s natural predisposition to make use of speculative reason can indeed be realized, and that a constant progress toward the better can be anticipated in its history, without fear of error’.

The event of French revolution traced out by Kant as the *Begebenheit* of progress which satisfies the ‘givens of the problem’ is neither a ‘momentous deed nor revolution’. Instead, it is located in the ‘mode of thinking of the spectators which betrays itself publicly in this game of great upheavals such as revolutions’. Further, it ‘manifests such a universal yet disinterested sympathy for the players on one side against those on the other, even at the risk that this partiality could become very disadvantageous for them if discovered’.<sup>64</sup> ‘Owing to its universality, this mode of thinking demonstrates a character of the human race at large and all at once’. The ‘disinterestedness shown in the sympathetic acts, in spite of the risks involved, indicates a moral character of humanity, at least in its pre-disposition’. Consequently, this character, ‘not only permits people to hope for progress toward the better, but is already itself progress’.

Kant now examines specifically the event of French revolution and finds in the hearts of all the spectators, who are not engaged in this game themselves, ‘a wishful *participation* that borders closely on enthusiasm’. This ‘sympathy the very expression of which is fraught with danger’ can have no other cause than a moral predisposition in the human race’. It is not the ‘failure or success of the movement, the miseries or atrocities effected by such an event which attracts the attention of the critical thinker but the feeling it has aroused in the hearts of the witnesses’. This ‘enthusiastic’ and ‘disinterested’ sympathy which leads the spectators even to dangerous tasks testifies to a moral predisposition in the human race’.<sup>65</sup>“The imagination tries to supply a direct, sensible presentation for an Idea of reason. “It does not succeed and it thereby feels its impotence, but at the same time, it discovers its destination, which is to bring itself into harmony with the Ideas of reason through an appropriate presentation”. “The result of this obstructed relation is that instead of experiencing a feeling for the object, we experience, on the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 164-165.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 165.

occasion of that object, a feeling 'for the Idea of humanity in our subject'. The sublime feeling entails a 'subreption', which implicates the substitution of a reconciliation between the faculties within a subject for a reconciliation between an object and a subject. In other words, the sublime feeling directs us from the object which induced it into the 'subject' for a dynamic reconciliation between the faculties within. Yet, as Lyotard reminds us in the course of his radical rereading of Kant this 'internal reconciliation is a non-reconciliation' in the case of the sublime.

The paradoxes or 'paralogues' abound in the elucidation of the reflection of the sublime. "The sublime entails the 'finality' of a 'non-finality' and the pleasure of a non-pleasure in contrast to taste or beauty which entails simple pleasure". "The displeasure arises due to the necessary extension of the imagination for accordance with that which is unbounded in our faculty of reason, viz. the idea of the absolute whole'.

"Consequently it marks the non-finality, the non affinity, the incommensurability in terms of the goal, of the power of imagination for the Ideas of reason, and the arousing of these ideas. The pain arises from the fact that 'even the most extensive imagination cannot manage to present an object which could validate or 'realize' the Idea'. However, there also arises joy from the discovery of an affinity in this accord: even what is presented as being very big in nature (including in human nature and in the natural history of man, such as a great revolution) is still and will always be 'small compared with the ideas of reason'. The judgment of the sublime thus evokes 'a joy which is only made possible by the mediation of pain'.

Even the most extensive imagination cannot manage to present an object which could validate or 'realize' the Idea. Whence the pain: from the inability to present. What is the joy which, nonetheless, is grafted on to this pain? It comes from the discovery of an affinity in this accord: even what is presented as being very big in nature (including in human nature and in the natural history of man, such as a great revolution) is still and will always be 'small compared with the ideas of reason'. What is discovered is not only the infinite scope of Ideas, which are incommensurable with any presentation, but also, the calling of the subject, 'our' calling., which is that of having to supply a presentation for the unrepresentable and thus, in

terms of Ideas, to go beyond anything that can be presented.<sup>66</sup> Enthusiasm is “an extreme form of the sublime feeling”. Moreover, ‘the attempt to provide a presentation not only fails, thus giving rise to the tension, but also, is reversed or inverted so as to provide a supremely paradoxical presentation’. Kant calls it negative presentation’, which he characterises as a ‘presentation of the infinite’.<sup>67</sup>

Enthusiasm as a feeling is the most inconsistent of all ‘transitions’. It is a ‘blind alley’. The example provided by Kant is the commandment in the Old Testament which prohibits the presentation of God, the Infinite, in images or other, worldly forms. This commandment according to Kant is the most sublime of the passages of the Old Testament only which could explain the enthusiasm that the Jewish people, in its flourishing phases, felt for its religion when it compared itself with other peoples, or the ‘pride inspired by the Mahometan religion’. The same is the case, he says ‘with the representation of the moral law and the disposition to morality within us’. The Imagination should ‘unlimit’ itself in order to be competent for this ‘abstract presentation which presents nothingness’.<sup>68</sup>

This ‘extreme painful delight called enthusiasm is an *Affekt*, a powerful affection’. Consequently it is blind and thus cannot, ‘serve as a satisfaction for reason.’ It is even a *dementia*, a *Wahnsinn*, in which the imagination is ‘unleashed’. As such, it remains of course preferable to the *Schwarmerei*, to the tumult of exaltation, which is a *Wahnwitz*, an *insanitas*, a ‘disorder’ of the imagination, an ‘illness deeply rooted in the soul’. Enthusiasm in contrast is a ‘passing accident which can affect the most healthy understanding’. The *Schwarmerei* gives rise to an illusion to ‘seeing something beyond all limits of sensibility’, i.e. ‘to thinking that there is a presentation when there is not’. It makes a ‘non-critical transition which is comparable to the transcendental illusion (the illusion of knowing something beyond all the limits of knowledge)’. Enthusiasm on the other hand, “sees nothing, or rather sees *the* nothing and refers it to the unrepresentable”. Although it is to be condemned ethically as pathological, ‘it is aesthetically sublime since it is a tension of forces due to Ideas’. It “gives the soul

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<sup>66</sup> *The Lyotard Reader*, 402-403.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 403-404.

an *elan* which acts much more powerfully and durably than the impulsion given by sensory representations". The 'historico-political' enthusiasm which borders on dementia might be seen as a pathological attack. As such, it has in itself no ethical validity. This is because 'ethics requires one to be free of all motivating pathos, allowing only the apathetic pathos which accompanies obligation and which is called respect, and not the *Affektlosigkeit* which is still too sublime'.<sup>69</sup>

'The pathos of enthusiasm in its episodic outbursts' however, 'retains an aesthetic validity'. It is an 'energetical sign, a tensor of the *Wunsch*'. The infinite nature of the Idea draws all other capacities (i.e. all the other faculties) to itself, and produces an affect 'of the vigorous type', which is characteristic of the 'sublime'. The 'transition', then, does not take place; it is a 'transition' in transit, and its transiting, its movement, is a sort of agitation on the spot, in the blind alley of incommensurability, above the abyss, a 'shaking', 'that is the rapid succession of repulsion and attraction for the same object'. This is traced out as marking the state of the *Gemut* of the spectators of the French Revolution.

Kant invents this enthusiasm as the *Begebenheit* looked for in the historical experience of humanity in order to validate the phrase of human progress. Significantly, it is not the historical event, the revolution, a phenomena or object of a dialectical genre, but a feeling of the sublime, a pathological affect (which at the same time has an aesthetic validity), that is traced out as the 'sign' of progress. Lyotard makes a crucial rediscovery regarding the issue of progress or change in history by resituating (which is also a 'de-situating') the 'historico-political' as the object of an Idea. It is not any historical event or any object of the cognitive or dialectical genres, but the powerful affect of 'sublime' like enthusiasm bursting out from the reflection of Idea which radically redefines progress in the 'historico-political'.<sup>70</sup>

"Great changes such as the French Revolution are not in principle sublime in themselves. It is not the event but the feeling evoked by the event which is the 'sublime'. "As objects, they are like those spectacles of physical nature on the occasion of which the spectator feels the sublime". 'It is rather in its chaos and its

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 404.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 404.

disorder (if grandeur and force manifest themselves) in its wildest and most unbridled devastation, that nature best provokes Ideas of the sublime.’ What determines the ‘sublime’ is this indeterminacy. The sublime of nature can be as if without form or figure.’; ‘no particular form of nature is represented therein.’ It is, in short, the principle of indeterminacy which rules the ‘occurrence’ of the sublime. What is achieved here is the de-realisation or de-determination of the empirical status of the object or the ‘real’. The object of the ‘sublime’ has no particular form or figure. The object is deformed and it is the human mind in its catastrophic junctures of reflective judgment which is identified by Kant as the ‘subject’ and theatre of this ‘occurrence’. “The revolutions or great historical upheavals are the formless and figureless in historical human nature”. “Ethically there is nothing valid about them”. Instead, the critical judgment would view it as arising from a confusion (which is the political illusion itself) between the direct presentation of the *Gemeine Wesen* and the analogical presentation of the Idea of a Republican contract’.

Kant, as reread by Lyotard, de-historicises the ‘event’ and ‘deconstructs’ the text of ‘revolution’. He examines how revolution, as represented by cognitive or dialectical discourses, is reduced into an event, the residue of a data. Revolution is seen as the remainder “made up of singularities and existences waiting for a teleological phrase, once the cognitive phrase has taken charge of what belongs to it in the intuitions it can subsume under regularities, in the mode of the presentation of examples”.

As an event in the historical nature of mankind, the Revolution belongs to the residue of data, the remainder made up of singularities and existences waiting for a phrase once the cognitive phrase has taken charge of what belongs to it in the intuitions it can subsume under regularities, in the mode of the presentation of examples. This remainder is waiting for the teleological phrase, and yet its lack of form looks as if it ought to cause the absolute failure of this phrase.. But in the enthusiasm aroused in the *Gemut* of the spectators by this formlessness, the failure of all possible finalization is itself finalized. The *dementia* of enthusiasm for the Revolution and the revolutionary party bears witness to the extreme tension felt by spectating mankind--a tension between the ‘nullity’ of what is presented to it and the Idea of reason-i.e. the Idea of the Republic which unites the Idea of autonomy, of the people and that

of peace between States.<sup>71</sup>

The extremity of enthusiasm as a sublime feeling ‘arises from the fact that firstly the sublime is not only a ‘disinterested’ pleasure and a ‘universal without a concept’, but also because it involves a ‘purposiveness of anti-purposiveness’ and a pleasure by pain’. And this should be seen as ‘opposed to the feeling of the beautiful, the purposiveness of which is without purpose and the pleasure of which is left to the free accord of the faculties amongst themselves’.<sup>72</sup>

Kant now makes certain crucial observations regarding the complex relation between ‘culture’ and ‘nature’. He tells us that ‘the disposition of the mind supposed by the feeling of the sublime requires the susceptibility or the sensitivity of the mind’ to Idea. ‘The judgment on the sublime in nature (of human nature too) needs a certain culture’, which does not mean that it is produced by that culture, for ‘it has its foundation in human nature’.<sup>73</sup>

‘But this allusion to culture, Lyotard writes, is clarified in the critique of teleological judgment in the paragraph dealing with the ultimate aim of nature’. Kant refutes the thesis that this goal could be the happiness of the human race, and argues that it can only be its culture. ‘To produce in a rational being the general aptitude for the aims which please him (and consequently in his freedom), that is culture.’ “Culture is the ultimate aim pursued by nature in the human race because culture is what makes men more ‘receptive to ideas’, and is the condition which opens the door to thinking the unconditioned”<sup>74</sup>.

The crucial link between the ‘historico-political’ and the cultural’ is brought out by Kant making a distinction between the ‘cultural of skill’ and ‘culture of will’ and in the former between the material and the formal culture of skill:<sup>75</sup> Kant’s definition of the ‘civil society’ and ‘State’ radically differs from the concepts of them as offered by the modernist discourses of the ‘historico-political’, the Hegalian mode of history which are hegemonic. The formal development of the culture of skill he says, requires ‘the neutralization of conflicts of free beings

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 404-405.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 406.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 406.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 406-407.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 406, 407.

on the individual scale, by means of a 'legal power in a totality called, civil society'. And 'if men get ahead of the plans of natural providence, the development of the culture of skill requires the same neutralization, but this time on the scale of the State, by means of a 'cosmopolitical totality, the federation of States'.

The enthusiasm, which is publicly revealed on the occasion of the French Revolution, is thus judged by Kant as in itself, 'not merely allows us to hope for human improvement, but *is* this improvement, in so far as its scope is within reach of what is possible at present'. And he puts forward three important facts to substantiate it:

1. It is an extreme sublime feeling,
2. This feeling already requires a formal culture of skill,
3. This culture in turn has as its horizon civil and perhaps international peace.

Therefore, according to Kant only the phrase of the 'extreme sublime can provide proof that humanity is in constant progress in improvement'. 'The beautiful which is only a 'symbol of good is insufficient for it'. But the sublime is the 'affective paradox, the paradox of feeling (of feeling publicly) in common, a formlessness for which there is no image or sensory intuition'. And therefore the sublime constitutes an 'as if' presentation of the Idea of civil and even cosmopolitical society, and of the Idea of morality where however there can be no such presentation in experience. So the 'sublime feeling' in Kant's view, could only be presented in terms of a 'sign'. This sign 'does no more than indicate a free causality, but it nonetheless counts as proof for the phrase affirming progress'<sup>76</sup>

The sign 'counts also as a proof of the phrase of progress' because 'the spectating mankind must already have made progress in culture to be able to feel this feeling, or in other words to make this sign', by its 'way of thinking the Revolution'. Though the 'revolutionary ideals have not been achieved and though the civil societies are far from the Republican regime, and the States from world-wide federation, this sign implicates progress in its present state'. It is the faculty

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 407.

of judgment at work in critical philosophy which sees a sign of history in the enthusiasm of the people for the Revolution. And this sign “is a proof of the progress of the faculty of judgment in mankind as a whole as a natural species”.<sup>77</sup>

The crucial invention made by Lyotard in his reflection of the sublime’ is his attempt to link the ‘historico-political’ with the idea of a ‘sensus community’ as proposed by Kant. This idea is further elaborated by Lyotard in his later works where he talks about a ‘community without communication’. Besides, the faculty of judgment according to Lyotard appeals to the anticipated bond of the *sensus communis* in its act of judgment. “It is in feeling, that mankind judges the Revolution to be sublime, despite its lack of form”. This sign is ‘indicative when it is evaluated against the rule of presentation of the phrases of historical knowledge’. Though it is a simple *Begebenheit* among the *Gegebene* of historical data open to intuitions, in the family of the strange phrases of judgment it is a proof for the Kantian phrase which judge that there is progress. Because it is *itself* this phrase of the people, which is not ‘spoken’, to be sure, but which is publicly expressed as a feeling which can in principle be shared, on the occasion of an ‘abstract’ *datum*. Kant’s reflective phrase, ‘there is progress’ therefore judges that ‘there is progress’ of the people, and it is ‘necessarily implied in their enthusiasm’.

Kant therefore makes his crucial judgment regarding progress. He ‘predicts not like a seer, from the aspects and the precursor-signs of our times, the achievement of this end, and with it, the progressive improvement of mankind’. The phrases like anticipate, predict and forecast which Kant uses to explain the occurrence of sign might be viewed as demonstrating the ‘formless’ or ‘negative’ presentation of time, provided by the ‘sign’. This is an indeterminate time which nullifies the diachronic time of history. Kant however, distinguishes this act of anticipation from the astrological act of prediction or from the reflection of a seer. It is the reflective or aesthetic judgment carried out by the critical faculty of reason or a higher tribunal of thought which is implicated in this complex forecasting of progress. And this is a tribunal of thought which never turns its back to the ‘heterogeneous’, the ‘differend’. Consequently it disrupts the diachronic or dialectic synthesis of time achieved by the Hegalian discourses of history.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 407-408.



This is why Kant can continue rather solemnly: ‘Without the mind of a seer, I now maintain that I can predict (*vorhersagen*) from the aspects and the precursor-signs (*Vorzeichen*) of our times, the achievement (*Erreichung*) of this end, and with it, the progressive improvement of mankind, a progress which henceforth cannot be totally reversible.’ For, adds Kant, ‘a phenomenon of this kind in human history *can never be forgotten* (*vergisst sich nicht mehr*)’. No politician (the politician of politics, whom Kant calls the ‘political moralist’) would have been ‘subtle enough to extract from the previous course of things’ this capacity for improvement in human nature, discovered by enthusiasm. He adds. ‘Only nature and freedom combined within mankind in accordance with principles of right, have enabled us to forecast (to promise, *verheissen*) it; but only in non-determined fashion in terms of time, and only as a chance *Begebenheit*.’ The aspects of intemporality and fortuitousness remind us of the necessarily, determinedly indeterminate character of the ‘transition’ between nature (i.e. the Revolution and the pathological aspect of the feeling it arouses) and freedom (i.e. the tension towards the moral Idea of absolute Good which is the other, universal and disinterested, aspect of the same feeling).<sup>78</sup>

Though the time of the occurrence of the progress is indeterminate, Kant reveals that, once occurred, it becomes an irreversible phenomenon, it leaves its marks in the human mind, “it can never be forgotten”. It belongs to the time of the ‘immemorial’ which Lyotard proposes to mark those events which could ‘not be remembered and at the same time be forgotten’.

‘The ‘critical judge’ can thus legitimate his assertion that there is progress when he can present a sign to be a referent to it’. But there is indeterminacy in terms of time. “He cannot say *when* such ‘objects’ will present themselves, because historical sequences forming a series only give data to the historian (data which are at best statistically regular)—and never signs”. It is only through a catastrophic process of judgment without criteria that a critical judge or tribunal could invent the signs of progress.<sup>79</sup> The ‘historico-political’ in Kant’s view, could ‘only present itself to assertions through *cases* which operate not as examples, or schemes, but as complex hypotyposes; the most complex being the most certain’.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 408.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 408.

Lyotard associates these complex sorts of hypotyposes with the concept of *Modelle* proposed by Adorno,

The idea of the 'sign' of history as presented by Kant and reworked by Lyotard thus provides a new vista for the cultural historians in the sense that it brings to their vision of the 'abbeys to be crossed by them between the phrases of 'nature' and that of freedom' in their vocation to make judgment on progress. It also illumines them how 'to stride over these abbeys without inflicting violence on any of those phrases'. Ultimately, it provides an alternate manner of reflection on the 'historico-political' and on 'progress' which has radical implications in our 'procedures of knowledge and practices of thinking the 'nation', 'identity' and 'power'. These 'manners' of thought have of course guided the interrogation made here on the historical romance of the *rajyam*. However, the enlightenment or post-enlightenment reflections on the 'sublime' are not imported here as another super-arching theory of progress. Instead they are brought to a dynamic reciprocation with the radical traditions of indigenous reflections of the Infinite, namely the *Advaitic*, *Visishtadvaitic*, *Saivadvaitic* or *Vaishnavic* streams of thought as they are resurrected in the historical novels. A higher negotiation between the historical romance, which would mark the culmination of the western romanticism and the native's romance with the Idea of the absolute, as implicated in the reflective streams of *Bhakti*, *Siddhantic*, *Saktheyic* or *Jnanic* movements is attempted. The dynamic engagement of the 'heterogeneous' which takes place in the historical novels is supplemented in the thesis by a reciprocal interaction between these modernist and post-modernist reflections of the 'sublime', and the richer traditions of indigenous thought and art pertaining to the 'sublime'. If the former is used for cross-checking the flourishes of the latter the latter brings out new dimensions in the reflection of the sublime provided by the former. The catastrophic doubling or coupling of these heterogeneous traditions of thought in short brings out a transmutation of the cultural reflection of our times.

## CHAPTER – III

### THE *RAJYAM* AS HISTORICAL ROMANCE

This chapter begins with the hypothesis that the historical romance as reinvented by C.V. Raman Pilla in his three novels - *Marthandavarma*, *Dharmaraja*, and *Ramaraja Bahadoor*<sup>1</sup> - initiates a different mode of writing history, culture and progress. The works as such would be designated as an *alter-native* narrative of 're-form' in Malayalam which engage themselves with a radical re-phrasing of 'selfhood', 'power', and 'time'. The historical novels of C.V. might be viewed as a 'pagan'<sup>2</sup> or 'libidinal' history of the Malayali people in the sense that they retrieve the heterogeneous genres and phrases of people's desire, resurrect the radical and vibrant events of the native past, mostly repressed by the official discourses of modernism. However, it could also be noted that they go beyond the matrix of desire towards the sublimity of the Idea which is in dissonance with the drives of desire. It might be more appropriate to view them as the cultural political practices of re-working history on behalf of a sublime Idea. They invent a 'sign of history' in the historical romance of the *rajyam*. At the same time they index progress in terms of their subversion and transmutation of the phenomenological realities.

#### 3.1. *The Historical Romance as an Alter-Native Narrative of Reform*

The historical romance<sup>3</sup> (as worked out by C.V. in association with his

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<sup>1</sup> C.V. Raman Pilla, *Marthandavarma* (1891, Kottayam: Little Prince, 1983), *The Dharmaraja*, (1913, Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1999); *Ramaraja Bahadoor*, (Kottayam: D.C. Books, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> The term 'Pagan' is used in a derogatory sense by the monotheistic faith of the Hebrews in order to signify the 'other cults and cultures which did not subscribe to the 'words of the Father'. However, the term is used here to denote the libidinal thrust of the pantheistic and polytheistic or henotheistic cultures which resisted the onslaught of the monotheistic creed of Moses. Jean Francois Lyotard has brought forth the libidinal subversion of the official injunctions of monotheistic faith attempted by the pagan cults. Lyotard elaborates his idea of a 'Pagan' or 'libidinal' history in his rereading of the French Revolution in the article "Futility in Revolution". Andrew Benjamin ed. , *The Lyotard reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 185-6, 122-54, 186.

<sup>3</sup> The term 'historical romance' is used here neither merely as a literary genre and nor as a determinate mode of presentation but as a distinctive perspective, as a mode of seeing writing and living, a political sensibility striving to radically metamorphose the world and

colleagues) is not to be reduced into a mere literary genre; nor is it to be perceived as a genre of history. Paralogically it contains both and exceeds the generic laws of both. Moreover, it is viewed here as an alternative movement of re-form, a radical political practice, which is in dispute with the modernistic narratives of reform and progress as drawn out by the ‘laws of the Father,’<sup>4</sup> regimes of capital, or the rules of the market. In other words, it does not merely confine itself to the three historical novels specifically focused in the present study, but also comprises of the heterogeneous literary, political and cultural practices launched by C.V. and his colleagues. The historical romance as a literary genre is revisioned here as the continuation and culmination of those heteromorphous modes of struggles carried out by them both in generic and political planes.

The libidinal/ aesthetic politics of the *rajyam* as embarked by the historical romancers in Tiruvtamcore in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of twentieth century incidentally re-invented the *rajyam* as the historical romance and the *rajyaradhana* as a secular cult or political occult. I would distinguish the idea of the *rajyam* and the *rajya-aradhana*, re-dreamed and re-lived by the *rajya*-people of Tiruvtamcore in this historical juncture, from the concepts of the ‘state’, ‘nation’ and ‘progress’ as held and popularized by the missionary modern narratives of reforms. The historical romance reveals that the *rajyam* is neither a nation nor a state as defined by the modernist narratives, but primarily a matrix of the politico-spiritual desire of the people. The occurrence of the *rajyam* is traced out by the historical romance as the ethnic-historical substratum of an alternative stream of ‘re-form’, which would be named as the *rajya*-‘manner’ of ‘re-form’. The historical romance phrases the idea of the Malayala-*rajyam* as the

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history. Though the genre as such is inherited by C.V from the European traditions of historical romance which had been enriched by the works of Sir Walter Scott, Alexander Dumas and others, I would confine the term to the works of C.V. who is esteemed to have perfected the genre further, by assimilating the *veeragadha* traditions of the natives and reciprocating the genre with the heterogeneous phrases and forces of the people thus widening the range of the genre. The most significant factor which distinguishes the historical romance from other genres of literature and especially the novel is that there takes place an intensive reciprocation between the history and the desire of the people. This generic trait of the historical romance is revealed by the famous definition provided to it by Alezandro Manzini as ‘the mixing of history and invention.’ Alezandro Manzoni, *On the historical Novel* (University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed elaboration on the affinity between the monotheism of Mosses and the discursive and capitalistic regimes of Modern Europe, Lyotard, “Figure Foreclosed” in Andrew Benjamin ed., *Lyotard Reader*, 69-107.

ethnic 'dream/work' of the people. It does not conform to the determinate concepts of nationhood or statehood as defined by modernistic discourses. The *rajyam* is there worshipped as the most potent, primal, and decisive juncture of indigenous re-form which does not reduce itself into any moment of 'origin' and which defies the diachronic progression of time and events. Yet, at the same time, it releases energies in the hearts of the people by offering a 'non-final finality', an 'uncertain certainty' or a catastrophic temporality. It does not belong to the domain of concept but to a matrix of Idea. The *rajyaradhana* is invented as a novel, yet primeval mode of political faith; it emerges as the political worship of a sublime Idea.

If desire is taboo in the official or missionary mode of reform,<sup>5</sup> the historical romance, in contrast, has resuscitated a political matrix of desire in the problematics of 're-form'. We move on now to expound how the movement of the historical romance has eroticised, and sensualised, yet at the same time politicised the idea and praxis of reform contesting the foreclosure of desires and phrases carried out by Euro-Protestant regime of knowledge.

### ***3.2. The Crisis of Presentation***

The resurgence of the historical romance in Tiruvitamcore in the latter half of nineteenth century and the early years of twentieth century seems to coincide with the historical crisis of presentation as encountered by the people of the time - a crisis in terms of the presentation of the 'self' or self-rule, a crisis in writing (*swa*) *rajyam*. Significantly, the historical romance does not resolve this crisis of presentation by a re-presentation but it foregrounds the crisis itself. What it presents is the irrepresentability of the *rajyam*. It reveals that the *rajyam* could only be re linked or re-lived through the invention or the eruption of certain phrase-events. It invents a new genre of presentation which could reinvent the *rajyam*. The 'figural' upsurge triggered by the aesthetic phrases of the historical romance disrupts the print-language of nation and its linear and diachronic

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<sup>5</sup> An unpublished monograph of the present writer titled: "The 'Great Symbol Massacre': a Re-Reading of the Missionary Narrative of Reform" (1998) elaborates on the theme. The point is also elaborated in the conclusion of the present thesis.

histories.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the historical romance as a genre should not be considered as a reproduction or reflection of any historico-political movement or project whether taken up by C.V. himself or others; nor is it to be reductively understood as a context or background of any sort of people's resurgence. On the contrary it might be seen as the intensification and culmination of a politico-poetic movement, an event by itself, a decisive act of judgment which embraces the 'political' as well as the 'libidinal', the 'secular' as well as the 'sacred'.

We might trace out the emergence of the historical romance in Tiruvitamcore, (quite before or along with, its catastrophic occurrence as an aesthetic genre in the novels of C.V.) in the political agitations like the 'Travancore for the Travancoreans' the 'Malayali Memorial', and the literary and discursive agitations launched by G.P. Pilla, C.V. and their colleagues against *videseeyamedhavithvom* (foreign dominance) etc. These movements are not treated here as merely the context or background, but as the inseparable part of the whole corpus of forces or praxis which had possibly engendered the historical romance as a literary or aesthetic genre as well as a historico-political movement. The ethnic or aesthetic energetic of the genre of the historical romance seems to have radiated through the politics of memorials and petitioning, the social and communitarian reform, and their literary or generic experimentations with novels, satires, farces and journalistic essays- the whole practices ventured out by C.V. and his associates. It was the presentational and existential crisis of people brought about by the conditions of a colonial modern order that has led C.V and his friends to experiment, explore, and traverse across heterogeneous genres of representation or petitions, memorials, essays, journalistic articles, satires, farces and social novels. The historical novels, which are viewed here as the culmination and realization of these heterogeneous genres and phrases, however, never divorce themselves from them. On the contrary, all of them are redrawn into a 'heterologic' engagement where they reincarnate in subtle intensive and festive forms, inter-animating and

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<sup>6</sup> Benedict Anderson in his well acclaim work on Nationalism elucidates that the 'imagined community' of the nation is formed according to the horizontal solidarities conjured up by the print-market. To him, it is a solidarity of readers as consumers. See Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities-Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983) 41-49.

carnivalising each other in a *leela* (play) of metamorphosis. This is how the historical romance encounters the crisis of 'self-presentation'.

The intensity and the anguish of this crisis of identity or sensibility encountered by the people of Tiruvitamcore are well-reflected in the following statements produced by A.R. Rajarajavarma, one of the veteran critics and scholars of Malayalam of the period.:

The new and powerful fashioning has shaken the roots of our old arrangements. At the same time, in their place new arrangements have not yet been formed. A civilizational mode which is foreign has effected that much revisions and corrections amongst us - to the extent that now onwards our role would be considered as strange or peculiar in the history of the world. Things, which had been held as perfectly ideal have now become disinteresting or distasteful to us ; and now our effort is to install new things in their place. Today's Hindu is the alluring and enduring evolution of a self-preserving and self-sustaining nature which had been prevailing for thousands of years. This perpetuation of past has made him capable of confronting not only the other Blacks of Asia, but even the attacks of the White Europeans and the subversive ideas produced and disseminated by the fascinating literature of the English. Everywhere we find discordance which is infectious and destructive. Our mind is seemed to be oscillating in the waves of an ocean of doubts. In our endeavor to reach an ultimate ideal, always we run after any kind of radiance which attracts us with its rays. Yet in the end it seems that the nature of this *jyothis* is just like the final glow of an expiring light blown by the air. On the other hand, we rarely witness the benevolent, eternal and enduring glow that ensures a peaceful abode.<sup>7</sup>

The assurances given by the traditional faith and culture are broken. What was held 'as perfectly Ideal' by the people until the colonial intrusion of the western culture have now become 'disinteresting or distasteful to the people. The scholar could see only discordance every where which he feels as 'infectious and destructive'. The mind of the educated is found to be oscillating in the waves of an ocean of doubts. He laments that there is only darkness and the radiance of the new stars which lures them now and then would finally turn out to be the final glow of a lamp when its is blown by air'. "The light which guarantees a peaceful abode of rest with its beneficent rays, which is expected to be enduring and real is rarely seen even once

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<sup>7</sup> A.R.Rajaraja Varma, *A.R. Raja Raja Varmayude Tirnjedutha Prabandhangal* (Chenganasserry: Renjima Publications, 1987), 267-268.

in a while.” These words of self-reflection bring before us the chaos, doubt and the angst that tormented the minds of the emergent generations which had been witnessing the collapse of the *rajya*-rule and the ideas which sustained it. The discursive assaults on the people’s selves and phrases as launched by the colonial-modern-regime had already inflicted a sense of shame and guilt among the new subjects. The cognitive or the speculative genres of knowledge gained hegemony over the heterogeneous modes of reflection and it was the faculty of the judgment of the people which was gravely affected by the procedural violence of the new regime of knowledge. However, the historical romancers of the period who had imbibed the intensities of enlightenment ideas of liberty and human dignity invented the *veera* ethos of the *rajyam* marked by its sense of freedom and honour. They rose in revolt against the laws of the colonial modern regime of the period. The *swarajyam* was reinvented as the sign of progress, as an object of an Idea of the absolute. It was the object of a critical or negative worship. It implicated the political matrix of the sublime in the ‘here and now’ of the people which retrieved the affect-phrases, the ‘feelings’ and ‘times’ of the people victimised by the new regime of knowledge. This aesthetic-political reflection on the sublime idea of the *rajyam* instilled a wave of enthusiasm ‘touching the borders of dementia’ among the politically sensitive and enlightened youths of the period.

The immediate manifestation of this political self-reflection is found in the agitation against *Videsheeya Meddhavithvom*<sup>8</sup>—the dominance of the Marathi or Tamil Brahmins imported from outside by the British as administrators. This ‘foreign dominance’ was treated as the real enemy of the people who in their view represented or embodied the colonial regime of the period, which ruined the country economically and politically. The penchant critique of the ‘foreign dominance’ made by the essays of *Videseeyamedhavithvom* would reveals that it was not merely the foreign origin of these administrators and their corrupt practices, which are being attacked, but also the foreignness of the rule - in terms of its colonial modernistic mode of governance, bureaucratic or administrative apparatuses, and the power/knowledge network, its distantiation from the

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<sup>8</sup> This is the issue which is being expounded in the political tract written by C.V. called *Videseeyamedhavithvom*. C. V. Raman Pilla, *Videseeyamedhavithvom* (1922, Thiruvananthapuram: Department of Cultural Publications, 1994).



indigenous mode of polity and the cultural ethos of the people. Perhaps we might discern in this movement the most complex and intense mode of struggle fought by the indigenous people against the colonial modern regime of the period in India. Yet, this struggle marks only one of the multiple battlefronts fought by the historical romancers their crucial struggle being fought on the level of phrases, genres and cultural or aesthetic political actions against the laws of the representative regime of the colonial modern order.

### **3.3. *Rajya-Nationality and the Mainstream Nationalism***

The *rajyabhimana* (patriotic) movement in the specific case of Tiruvitamcore was inseparably inter-twined with the movement of *atmabhimanam* (self-respect). It could be seen as closely linked to the politics of self-respect, 'justice' and social liberation that had emerged in the Deep South in heterogeneous forms and practices.<sup>9</sup> Scholars have traced out the affinities of the ideologues of the *rajya*-movement with the anti-Brahminical agitations and Dravidian movements that had sprung up in South India.<sup>10</sup> The essays of *Videsheeyamedhavithvom* show that the adherents of the *rajyam* had also been well-informed of the national movements that had just begun to emerge in the British Indian states.<sup>11</sup>

However, the *rajya*-movement of Tiruvitamcore should be seen as distinctive from both the streams of struggles which emerged in the provinces of the British India, in somewhat divergent directions: the Dravidian self-respect movement that developed especially in Southern India and the patriotic or nationalistic movement peculiar to the British Indian states as a whole. As pointed out earlier, the prominent ideals of both streams in effect seemed to have conjoined in the case of the *rajya*-movement of Tiruvitamcore in a complex form, partly due to the specific historical conditions of colonialism prevailing in a princely state and mainly because of the internal dynamics of the political tradition still remaining vibrant in the country. The soul-stirring sagas of the heroic struggles and sublime

<sup>9</sup> Sukumaran Nair, preface to *Videsheeyamedhavithvom*, Ibid., iii, ix-xiii; P.K. Parameswaran Nair, *C.V. Raman Pilla*, 336.

<sup>10</sup> Sukumaran Nair, preface to *Videsheeyamedhavithvom*, iii, ix-xiii; P.K. Parameswaran Nair, *C.V. Raman Pilla* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S., 1973), 336.

<sup>11</sup> C. V. Raman Pilla, *Videsheeyamedhavithvom*, 12,13, 40.

events inscribed in the life-blood of a *veera*-lineage avowed to the *dharmic* and the 'immemorial'<sup>12</sup> politics of the *rajyam* still inflamed the political imagination of the people. The *veera* - ethics of self-potency, valour, honour and glory (known as *veeryam*, *paurusham abhimanam* and *mahathvom*) preserved and transmitted by the folk-aesthetics (as 'affect-phrases' or 'differends' waiting for their historical resurgence) went on inspiring the adventurous and courageous ones.<sup>13</sup> The Idea of *rajyam* had still been kept alive and vigorous in the minds of the people through the subterranean channels of the folkloric genres, or the 'little narratives' of the country.<sup>14</sup>

The native's exposure to the Western ideas also was strikingly different in the case of Tiruvitamcore in contrast to that of the other regions in India. Significantly, it was under the initiation of the two Scottish professors hailed as gurus by C.V. and his colleagues<sup>15</sup> that the new generations of the educated elites

<sup>12</sup> A Lyotardian phrase referring to 'that which can neither be remembered (represented to consciousness) nor forgotten (consigned to oblivion), Bill Readings explains the term as follows: "It is that which returns uncannily. As such, the 'immemorial' acts as a kind of *figure* for consciousness and it attempts at representing itself historically... The task of not forgetting, of *amanuensis*, is the task of the avant-garde, which struggles to keep events from sinking into the oblivion of either representation (voice) or silence". Bill Readings *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1991), xxxii;xxxiii,22,58-62.

<sup>13</sup> Dr. P. Venugopalan, Introduction, C.V. Raman Pilla, *Marthandavarma* (Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1992), 34-38.

<sup>14</sup> To mention some of them: The *Marthanda Mahatmyam Kilipaattu*, *Sri Veera Marthandavarma Charitam Attakkatha*, *Thekkan Pattukal*, etc. *Ibid.*, 35-36; another one is *Diwan Vett*, cited by V. R. Parameswaran Pilla, *Raja Kesavadas* (Thiruvananthapuram: Department of Cultural Publications, Govt, of Kerala), 143-149; P.K. Parameswaran Nair, *op.cit.*, 36-44.

<sup>15</sup> Chitthira Tirunal esteems these Scottish professors as the master-tillers of the intellectual soil of Tiruvitamcore. They were held by C.V. and his colleagues as their living gurus. P.K. Parameswaran Nair, *op.cit.*, 45. *C.V. Raman Pilla* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S. 1973), 45. In 1912, thirty years after he left college, C.V. delivered a speech in the annual meeting of the '*mathruvidyalaya samajam*. He speaks in high esteem of these professors. He hails them as the 'great educationalists who had been the directors and pioneers of higher level of education and cultural reciprocation in Tiruvitamcore'. C.V. expresses his gratitude and respect towards them reaching to the level of *veeraradhana* typical to the genre of historical romance.

They have not only played the role of constitutors of the culture of character and conduct of the students they taught, they have also laid the foundation for the social progress that is now flourishing in Tiruvitamcore. Their influence was widespread; that spread over beyond the classrooms and syllabuses .... Mr. Ross was an abode of the enthusiastic virtues which could induce the love of his students while Harvey was the *kedara* of conducts which would incessantly remind *viswa dharma*—the dharma of the universe or world. Intelligence and responsibility—*kaaryabodham*—exceeded in Ross. In Harvey there shone spiritual equanimity and peace. The first one inspired the nearest ones while the second one wholly conquered. Both are people who possess the

of Thiruvananthapuram got acquaintance with the emergent ideas of national dignity, liberty and self-determination with their utmost intensity.<sup>16</sup> If the folk-

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real virtues of Christianity. Contact with them had purified our religious consciousness. He had also proved that religious preaching could be accomplished even without depending on class rooms. Ross has eliminated faithlessness. Harvey replaced it [warded it off] with a *dharmic* enthusiasm. Both are people who had sincere esteem on their career and had loved in their heart and intellect and with a fullness of mind the community of students associated with them. We did not have hats, coats or ties that you wear now. We had worn just a *mundu* and *neryathu*. Even then our European professors did not keep any distance from us. On the contrary, they aroused in us the consciousness that we are competent enough to stand shoulder to shoulder with them as the inheritors of a cultural heritage which was not in any respect behind that of them in glory and grandeur. They have not talked about our religion, and social differences and divisions not in the role of advisers or condemnors. On the contrary they spoke on them as the seekers of *thathva* — seekers of *thathva* and enlightened sages. They have always conversed about our institutions only with respect. They used to revere even the primitive superstitions, if it is found that they are resultant of sincerity and faith... The nickname given by the students to him was 'dharmaputrar'... His presence had took us into that the golden ages of the ancient times.... He was a compassionate friend of *Thiruvithamcore malayaali sabha*'. And was guru and *adhyapakaacharya*, for the *sanmaargapravarthaka sangha*. Debating society is the monument of his activities outside his profession... One thing has to be said: If all of the western teachers had followed the ideals of Harvey then the relationship of India with Great Britain would have been nothing lesser than a dharmic kind of bhakthi..., quoted in Parameswaran Nair, 47-48.

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The Maharajas College of Thiruvananthapuram has to be acknowledged as the first political *kalari* of the historical romancers of *rajyam* who were exposed to the western knowledge, its culture and civilisation, its events of renaissance, reformation and enlightenment under the brilliant guidance of these Scottish professors Ross and Harvey. The role played by the students and professors, particularly the two Scottish professors, William Harvey and John Ross of Maharajas College and the organizations and clubs brought into existence by them, in pioneering the most radical and authentic stream of Malayali reform has not yet been recognized by the modernist writers. It has been the political workshop of Tiruvithamcore which produced a new lineage of the historical romancers, rajya politicians, veera actors, social reformers of the times heralding the idea of a *Malayalarajyam* as a historical romance of the people as the political desire of the Malayalis. The '*Malayali Sabha*' perhaps, the first movement in Tiruvithamcore which had been formed on the basis of the idea or dream of a Malayali identity especially in its political and cultural implications, was actually an expanded form of the *Malayali Social Union* that functioned within the college:

It was partly the English education, and partly the guidance of Mr. Ross and Dr. Harvey which was instrumental in inculcating the thoughts regarding the political economy of the *rajya* and *samudayam*. It was the Maharajas College of Thiruvananthapuram under the president-ship of Ross which had sown the seeds of *Malayali Sabha* the earliest national organization of Kerala born out of these sorts of ideas. The wide usage of the term '*Malayali*' upholding the idea of nationality also originates from the college of Ross itself. The *Malayali Sabha* a larger association of cultural-political activists was actually evolved out of the '*Malayalee social union*' a small association which functioned within the campus under the leadership of the veteran native politicians like P.Thanupilla, C.Krishna pilla, P. Ayyappan pilla and others. It was the same institution which had provided motivation for organizing the *Malayalee Trading Company* on behalf of *Malayalee sabha*. This trading company which had been originally intended for developing a proficiency for trade among the natives by taking over the right of transactions and trade from the *paradeshees* did function for twenty five years. N. Balakrishnan Nair, *Sakshal C.V.* (Thiruvananthapuram: Kamalalaya Printing Works & Book Depot, 1951), 21-22.

sensibility of the people had sowed the seeds of the sublime feeling of the *rajyam* in the minds of them, the vital principles of the Western enlightenment imparted through the micro-national liberal visions of the Scottish romancers fostered and perfected them into a radical self-reflection. The reciprocation with the native matrix of Idea provided new dimensions to the genre of the historical romance. It was the Maharaja's College of Thiruvananthapuram, and the Malayali Social Union functioned within the campus under the inspiration of Prof. Harvey and Ross which nourished the generation of the historical romancers in Tiruvitamcore. The dialogic or the reciprocal engagement that took place between the Western and native cultures had been more subtle, complex and dynamic in the case of the historical romance of the *rajyam* in contrast to that of reformist and liberational movements of the British Indian Provinces marked by their Euro-modern orientation. This is manifested in the generic divergence between the historical romance of C.V and the social novels of O. Chandu Menon which represented 'socio-centric, pan-national movements emerged in British Malabar.'<sup>17</sup> There was nothing parochial, 'nativistic' or narcissistic in the resurgence of rajya-movement as commonly believed. On the contrary, there took place much deeper and honourable negotiations between the 'self' and 'other'<sup>18</sup> in contrast to the

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Balakrishnan Nair esteems the two Scottish professors:

The reform movement initiated by these Scottish professors has to be distinguished from that of the missionary mode of reform. It was Mr. Ross and Harvey who had first inculcated and taught among the educated youth of Tiruvitamcore the political lessons of self-respect and honour. It was these two gurus who had familiarised them with the 'Dignity of labour movement' that had just originated in Britain especially among the aristocrats or elites, and the new consciousness of political and economic independence emerged in the world following the event of the 'American war of independence', Ibid., 22.

<sup>17</sup> P.K. Balakrishnan *Chanthu Menon Oru Padhanom* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S., 1980), 82-88. My argument here runs counter to the arguments raised by P.K. Balakrishnan privileging the sensibility of Chanthu Menon over that of C.V. Raman Pilla who is being branded by him as representing the decadent feudal culture. As usually happens in the case of the modernist writers P.K. Balakrishnan fails to comprehend the radical implications of the historical romance as genre inherited from a vibrant stream of the European enlightenment in contrast to the genre of social realistic novels.

<sup>18</sup> P.K. Parameswaran Nair, depicts the scenario of the socio-cultural activities undertaken by the newly educated young men of the period:

The exposure to western education and literature had kindled an awareness of the importance of organized movements by communities for progress... The social reform activities that had emerged in British Indian provinces also might had augmented a new enthusiasm for reform and progress. Several organizations, and societies were formed in Thiruvananthapuram by the newly educated youth on the basis of certain Ideas. The

mainstream nationalism of the period emergent in the British India. The movement as such did not implicate any withdrawal symptoms of a 'closed' polity. Rather it demonstrated the vitality and confidence of a resurgent movement opened to the contemporary world, inter-animated with the heterogeneous cultures languages and temporalities. The idea of the *rajyam* in short is being reinvented by the historical romance as a 'sign of progress'. The notion of identity here implicates the invention of a second self-hood marked by its dissensus with the colonial conditions of subjectivity, or an alternate subjectivity which comes into historical existence through the cultural political renegotiation between the 'selves' and 'others', pasts presents and futures, 'the Easts' and 'the Wests', the 'sacred' and 'secular.'

The *rajya*-nationality, differed in many respects from the main-stream nationalism that emerged in the British Indian provinces as an offshoot of the colonial modern discourses and the administrative apparatuses of modern-state and which subsequently rose in contestation with the British rule. It was founded on an idea held to be 'too old' to hold on in an epoch of modernity and 'too ahead' to be comprehended by the 'public' sensibility manufactured by the print-media,

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young men who had completed their education and entered various fields of social life had worked shoulder to shoulder with the college students. They had got a sense of orientation and direction and instruction and leadership from Harvey, Ross and other great personalities of the time. There was a debating society in the college (*vaadaprathivaadasangham*), and out side there were *Sanmaargapravarthaka sangham*, (which is supposed to have been formed by the direction and inspiration provided by His Highness Visakhom Tirunaal), *Yuvajansangham*, Juvenile club, *Vidyarthini sangham*, Mutual improvement society, Philosophical Society and Students Literary circle. And it is found that finally there was formed a 'Grand Literary Union' where all these organisations and there representatives had joined together. P.K.Pameswaran Nair, op.cit.,51-52.

A diary-note of C.V. is produced by the biographer which would provide a clear picture of the debating societies and associations formed during the period. It reports on the functioning of these societies:

On 1875 August 14<sup>th</sup>, the following societies had met together at four 'O clock by the invitation of Debating society : The youngmen's society, *sanmaargapravarthaka sangham*, juvenile circle, The mutual improvement society, The infants club... On that occasion the Debating society, which had hosted the function was given the status of the Father of all the societies. Pro: Harvey had represented the Debating society. Raamalinga Nayyer, C. Krishnapilla, Narayanamenon, C.V. Ramanpilla, Ramakuruppu, Mr. Harvey, Madhavan Pilla had represented respectively the other societies. Harvey had made the inaugural speech. He had inspired all of the students gathered there, making a dynamic though short speech on the topic of '*Aikyamathyam mahaabalam*' in a beautiful language... *ibid.*, 52.

missionary agencies of education and the official discourses of the time. The political ethos of the 'little kingdoms' associated with monarchy had already been replaced by that of emergent politics of democracy and republicanism in Europe and the countries colonized by it. The erotics of the *rajyam* was pushed to the margin by the political rationality of modern nation-state which established its hegemony over the contestant native narratives and appealed much to the mind of the 'new subjects' of Tiruvitamcore. The historico-political structure and the governmental apparatuses of the princely state that survived were no more than the residues of a deformed polity, a semi colonial regime remotely regulated by the British. The *rajyam*/ the kingdom or the princely state that existed as such in its empirical or historical form, as an object of a descriptive or cognitive genre has to be distinguished from the idea of *rajyam* as presented by the historical romancers as the object of an aesthetic genre or as the non-object of an Idea. It is this generic ambivalence of the phrase '*rajyam*' which has mainly misled the modernists to brand the movement as regressive or retrogressive<sup>19</sup>.

The *rajya*-nationality was in short a movement 'too late' or 'too early' to occur in history. It was held to be an anachronism even at the moment of its historical occurrence. The present epoch reigned by the laws of capital, profit and power seemed to be an alien site, a foreign land to the historical romancers. On the contrary, the past they reinvented was a libidinal site, an aesthetic habitat of a sublime idea which they called the '*rajyam*'. It lacked any data or source materials to fall upon and it seemed to have emerged from the intractable time which Lyotard would call 'immemorial'.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to the movements for national independence that emerged in the contemporary society of the erstwhile provinces of British India, the *rajya*-movement of the Tiruvitamcore was of course confined to a limited circle of educated youth who might be called historical visionaries.

<sup>19</sup> K. Ramakrishna Pilla, 'Dharmaraja', *Atmaposhini*, Pusthakom-4, vol.2 Kunnamkulam 1913; M.P. Paul *Novel Sahithyam* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S., 1953); Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908*, (London: Sussex University Press, 1976), 157-8, 162-3, 265-8, 175; P.K. Balakrishnan, *O. Chanthu Menon Oru Padhanom* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S., 1980), 83; E.M.S. Namboothirippadu, *Rajabhakthanum Kalaakaaranum* (Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 1993), 7-9.

<sup>20</sup> Another Lyotardian phrase implying that which can neither be remembered (represented to consciousness) nor forgotten (consigned to oblivion). Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard* (London: Routledge, 1991) xxxii; xxviii, 22,58-62.

Though the circle seems to have been mostly consisted of the so called *savarna* youths especially those who were dissatisfied both with the disgraceful conditions of the colonial present, and the Brahminical regime of *varna* and caste, hegemonic in the traditional society, the movement seems to have transgressed the casteistic or communitarian interests. The resistance shown by these ideologues of the *rajyam* to the dishonourable relations of power, strictures of capital, and the mediocre sensibility of the times turned them aliens in their own land, exiles in the contemporary society at least in temporal, emotional or psychological planes. The excessive creativity, potency and politico-spiritual sensitivity possessed by them, the sense of contemporaneity or fellowship felt by them with the radical traditions of the immediate past forced the historical romancers of the *rajyam* to stride across two different worlds and epochs as sorts of cultural amphibians. It was among these mystic or aesthetic circles of the dissident youths which represented a minute, minority of the population of Tiruvitamcore that the politico-spiritual movement of the *rajyaradhana* (*rajya*-worship) found its resurgence. It was not through the 'mass' ceremonies or sermons of the consumption of the print-artefacts facilitated by the horizontal bonds of readership but through the intensive sessions of aesthetic reciprocation, reflection and communion, summoned in the privacy of the *grihasadassu* and *suhrudsadassu* of the people like C.V., Tanu Pilla and others that the political mysticism of the *rajyam* gained its momentum.<sup>21</sup> While the phrase '*rajyam*' implicated a zone of desire, a matrix of a sublime idea or a sign of progress to these historical mystics, it just evoked the image of a worn out retrogressive institution, a redundant feudal concept, the residue of a ghostly past to the educated new subjects, the newly evolved intelligentsia, the so called 'progressives' of the time. It was the radical heterogeneity and opacity of the historical romance of *rajyam* which estranged it from the readers, scholars, politicians and intellectuals subscribing to the hegemonic discourses of modernity. The movement of historical romance brought out the radical linking of heterogeneous times, phrases, realms and genres. As Alessandro Manzoni one of the pioneers of the genre in Italy has defined it, the "historical romance is history plus invention". The term romance implicates the matrix of Idea, rather than desire

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<sup>21</sup> P.K. Parameswaran Nair, op.cit., 281-4.

if we pursue the generic history of the historical romance. The diachronic, serial, schema of history is generically transgressed by the catastrophic intervention or engagement of a sublime Idea or an aesthetic judgment. There happens a ‘dynamic synthesis’ where “two genres which are heterogeneous and therefore incommensurable are linked without violating their otherness”.<sup>22</sup> As the terms like the *rajya* nationality or the *praja* democracy used by the present thesis would implicate, there took place the radical coupling or doubling of heterogeneous times or epochs, phrases, genres and practices in the *rajya* movement.

The vibrant statement made by G.P. Pilla, one of the earliest nationalists of Tiruvitamcore is cited below would demonstrate the dynamic coupling of the heterogeneous epochs that was characteristic to the historical romance of *rajyam*:

... Search through the globe, and it is doubtful whether history can pattern another nation, another race, another class of people like the Travancoreans, similarly withheld from any important share in the administration of their country, similarly deprived of their birthright, and similarly held in subjection by a class of foreigners who have not conquered them by the sword, who have not driven them to obedience at the bayonet’s end, who are not intellectually their superiors nor physically their betters, but decidedly their inferiors in hereditary political insight, who have no right to remain in the land except in the right of sufferance and who, maintain their authority mainly by a scrupulous adherence to the policy of self-love. Such is the fate of unhappy Travancore! *Travancore was for the Travancoreans, but is not, and will it ever be* (italics, researcher’s) ... Can Travancoreans never expect to rise to that personal distinction and that political influence which were the glory, the pride, the richest heritage and the brightest possession of their ancestors? Will there ever be a time when the noble and spirited deeds, the high and exalted philanthropy, the pure and virtuous ambition, the unsurpassed generosity, the admirable disinterestedness, the deep-seated devotion, the stainless honour and the *sublime* (italics, researcher’s) sense of justice of Kesava Dasas, Veluthambis, Ayyapan Marthandans and Chempakaramans will be repeated in Travancore, or is all the glory of Travancore destined to remain merely a tale of the imperishable past?<sup>23</sup>

Two epochs, namely the *rajya* epoch of the immediate past and the contemporary epoch of modernism marked by the idea of nationalism meet here in vibrant reciprocation. The ethno-cultural ethos of the *rajya* politics are vigorously

<sup>22</sup> Lyotard, *The Analytic of Sublime*, 89-86, 124.

<sup>23</sup> G.P.Pilla, *Selected Writing & Speeches of G.P.Pillai* (Trivandrum: G. P. Centenary Celebrations Committee, 1964), 101-102.



linked with the resurgent ideas of nationalism that evoked great upheavals in the contemporary world.

The *Videsheeya Medhavithvom* a collection of essays written by C.V., critiquing the mis-rule of the 'foreign Brahmin' administrators likewise places the *rajya*-politics and its battle for self-determination in the wide spectrum of the international political scene. The struggle for *swarajyam* fought by the *rajya* - people of Tiruvitamcore is recognised as inspired by the same motives which drove the historical struggles of liberation and emancipation fought by various peoples of the world. :

In each segment of the British Empire - the ideal model for us in terms of administration - the natives of the respective countries achieve their freedom of power from their rulers, through agitations, strife, wars, and by shedding pools of blood. The great nation of United States gained its independence, at the same juncture when our small country was entering into a treaty with the British. Just the process of the granting of self-rule to its colonies, prompted by this great incident, has weakened the earth-shaking force of the British Empire. We are informed, by the horrific news reaching us today, as to how the constitution of the English is being shaken by the long - drawn struggles of the Irish people with their courage and strength. What kinds of thankless adventurism are being undertaken by our British Indian brothers, the associates of the cleverer ones who endeavour to enslave us here, for gaining freedom from the British dominance which had actually rescued them from the nails of tragic destinies and blinding darkness! The principle that 'one' has only oneself as to rely on' has gained strength in almost all of the parts of the world. It was because of the vigilant prohibition on the entrance of the foreigners to their motherland that the Chinese Empire could excel the world with their skills in handi-craft and other areas, and thus gain abundant wealth and glorious fame.<sup>24</sup>

This should be acknowledged as the first tract on the idea of identity and the politics of self-respect and self-determination of the natives to appear in the historical annals of the *Malayali* people. The native agitations that sprung up against *Videsheeyamedhavithvom* and for the self-determination of the *rajya*-people in Tiruvitamcore have been provided here with historical legitimacy by citing the emergent movements of national liberation and struggles for self-rule launched by the various peoples of the world. The author enlightens the authorities

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<sup>24</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla, *The Videseeya Medhavithvom*, 39-40.

on the universal resurgence of the progressive ideas of self-rule and self reliance among the nations of the world. He proclaims that the current history of the world is the history of freedom struggles. “The natives of each colony attempt to achieve their independence from the grip of the imperial powers, through agitations, strife, wars, and at times even by shedding pools of blood.” The author reminds that it was particularly at the memorable historical juncture when the United States, the former colony of Britain, was winning its war of freedom from the latter that Tiruvidyamcore was entering into a treaty with the British (which should be held as the initial move of intervention made by the British leading to the colonial occupation of Tiruvidyamcore). The *rajya* politicians in short were politically aware of the affinities of their movement with the national liberations struggles that took place in Europe and various parts of the contemporary world. The writer brings to the attention of the native kingdom, the lessons of the national struggles of the Irish people who could ‘pose a great challenge even to the constitutional stability of Great Britain by their courage and perseverance.

However, the dynamic assimilation of these resurgent ideas of national liberation never distantiates the narrator of *VidesheeyaMedhavithvom* from the cultural and political ethos of the *Vanchirajyam*. More over, he traces out the glorious and sublime events and struggles occurred in the previous epochs of Marthanda Varma and the Dharmaraja as not only anticipating the national liberation movements of the present but also offering politico-spiritual dimensions to them. He situates them as the ethnic and historical substratum of the emergent movements in the country. The sublime principles involved in the ideas of *Trippadiddhanam*, the *bhadradeepaprathishta* and the *vanchi dharmam*<sup>25</sup> are re-invoked by the author in the preface as the chief pillars on which the whole concepts of national rule and self-determination of people are founded. And the last part of these essays as the writer reveals himself is made in the form of a charter of petition or request offered before the holy feet of the raja for finding out a relief for his inner anguish.<sup>26</sup> However, it is in the historical novels of C.V. where we find the aesthetic and political culmination of this dynamic engagement

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., xxxvi.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., xxxvi.

between two different epochs and modes of politics, without nullifying the singularity of each.

### 3.4. *The Prajayatha Politics*

Another important instance of this 'dynamic synthesis' or the 'coupling of differences' characteristic to the *rajya* politics would be seen in the idea and the practice of the *prajayatha* (the rule of *prajas*) politics<sup>27</sup> or *praja*-democracy upheld by the historical romancers. Its subtle variance with the principles of the representative mode of democracy known as *janayatha* on the one hand and those of the monarchic or autocratic mode of kingship known as *Rajaytha* would reveal this.<sup>28</sup> A historical examination of the 'paralogic 'manner' of democratisation initiated by the *rajya*-movement and its implications in the 'historico-political' sphere of Tiruvitamcore is attempted below.

#### 1- **The Malayali Memorial**

The Malayali Memorial, submitted on January 1 1891, before the King, with the signatures of about 10037 persons representing the '*praja* people' of Tiruvitamcore<sup>29</sup> would mark the initial expressions of the *prajayatha-democracy* in the political history of Keralam. It might also be viewed as an event which marks the eruption of the historical romance of the *rajyam* in the historico-political realm of the Malayali people. However, the historical romance as a genre as well as a political or cultural practice is here found displaced or diffused due to its collision with the representative genre of the petition or memorandum.

The memorandum, as it is reported, was submitted before the king by K.P. Sankara Menon, an advocate in Madras High court.<sup>30</sup> A delegation consisting of G.P. Pilla (then editor of *The Madras Standard*), Nidheery Vakil, M.K. Padmanbha Pilla, Sivan Pilla, and Kavalam Neelakanta Pilla submitted the memorandum to

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<sup>27</sup> N. Balakrishnan Nair, op.cit., 135-6.

<sup>28</sup> It is doubtful whether even the biographers of C.V were capable of comprehending this subtle variance of the movement. They remain apologetic and defensive when they explain these so-called deviances shown by C.V the historical romancer with the accepted syllabi of reform; some of them even reiterate the charges raised by the modernists against C.V as an obscurantist, opportunist or conservative in order to show their impartiality towards C.V, the object of their worship, See for example P.K. Parameshwaran Nair, op.cit.,150-152.

<sup>29</sup> It should here be noted that the signature in those times meant total conviction, involvement and commitment. It amounted to a politico-spiritual act of pledge-*prathijna*.

<sup>30</sup> P.K.Parameshwaran Nair, op.cit.,130.

Divan in July 2 as instructed by the King in his reply to the memorial. The speeches made by G.P.Pilla, in huge meetings convened in various places of Tiruvitamcore, to gain popular support to the movement are reported to have made great impact on the minds of the people. While Dr. Palpu led the campaign in Madras<sup>31</sup>, the prominent persons of the country like Sivan Pilla, Kavalam Neelakanta Pilla, M.R. Neelakanta Pilla and others actively organised the agitation in Southern and Northern parts of Tiruvitamcore<sup>32</sup>. C.V. and C. Krishna Pilla, who were the government servants silently worked behind the scene. However, they are held to be the people who engineered the whole campaign from behind providing it a popular base.<sup>33</sup> Meetings were held at various parts of Tiruvitamcore as part of the campaign to mobilise and conscientise the people and to ensure their support and participation irrespective of their caste and religion.

The active role played by C.V. in the drafting and presentation of the memorial is brought out by his biographers<sup>34</sup>. The initial draft of the memorial is said to have been prepared by C.V,<sup>35</sup> which was later put to the scrutiny of Norton, a prominent advocate of Madras who seemed to have suggested certain legal amendments to it. C.V. had enthusiastically been immersed in the campaign who, it is said, had even sold his wife's jewels to finance it<sup>36</sup>. He also played an active role in the strenuous task of mobilising the signatures for the campaign. When Nidheerikal Kathanar withdrew his signature from the memorial, it was C.V. who resolved the crisis by obtaining the signature of Nidheeri Vakil by utilising the contact and rapport he had with the people of the various communities of the Northern parts of Travancore.<sup>37</sup>

The agitation of the *Malayali Memorial* was acclaimed by the journalistic

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<sup>31</sup> Robin Jeffrey, op.cit.,167.

<sup>32</sup> P.K.Parameshwaran Nair, op.cit.,130-1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.,130-1.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 103,131,132.

<sup>35</sup> In the view of P.K.Parameshwaran Nair, it was during C.V's stay at Madras for the purpose of appearing for Law examination that the attention of Sankaramenon and G.P. was drawn to this issue of agitation. ibid., 103,132; it is also reported that it was with the return of C.V to Thiruvananthapuram that the actual propaganda for the memorial was begun and got activated. .131, 134; Also see, Robin Jeffrey, op.cit., 166.

<sup>36</sup> Robin Jeffrey, op.cit., 167.

<sup>37</sup> P.K.Parameshwaran Nair, op.cit., 134.

media of the time as a grand step in the democratisation of the polity of Tiruvitamcore. The movement which succeeded to a great extent in gaining public support triggered off a wave of political enthusiasm among the people. The Newspapers like *The Madras Mail*, *The Madras Times*, *The Statesman*, *The Morning Post* of Calcutta, *The Punjab Patriot*, *The Englishman*, wrote leader articles highlighting the political significance of the agitation.<sup>38</sup>

The petition, as its preamble claims, was signed by about ten thousand “*prajas* of the maharajah comprising of various castes, classes and positions, like Namboothiris, Nairs, Syrian Christians, Nadar Christians, East Indians or Eurasians, *janmis* (land-lords) and merchants, officials and others.”<sup>39</sup> The supplement of the petition is signed by the officials belonging to various departments, the prominent advocates of Thiruvananthapuram, Aleppey, Quilon, Parur and other places, some of the prominent *janmis* hailing from the communities of Nairs, *Nanchinaattu sudras*, Syrian Christians, and the representatives of well-known *tharavadus*, Christian Kathanars, and priests; the number of graduates among these is reported to be fifty.<sup>40</sup>

The *Memorial* specifically mentioned the unjust and the uneven policies followed not only in matters of *Circar* service but also in the field of education. Apart from an appeal to withdraw the prohibitions imposed on the admission of the lower caste communities in schools, there was also a paragraph in the memorial which brought into notice the grievances of the Ezhava community. It apprised the authorities on the discrimination shown to the Ezhavas who are totally excluded from the service in Tiruvitamcore while the members of the same caste could gain higher positions in civil service in British Malabar.

The memorial most importantly, brought out the disastrous policy of plundering and misappropriation of the indigenous wealth as embarked by the foreign administrators for a pretty long period. It brings into the notice of the king ‘the extremity of injustice shown to *swadesies* by the authorities especially in the appointment to the higher grades of service’. The text reveals that the major posts

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 138-139.

<sup>39</sup> P.Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Nootandile Keralam* (Thrissur: Kerala Sahithya Akademi, 1988), 756.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 756.

in the service are misappropriated by the *paradieses* — the ‘foreigners’.

The grievance which affects the most important classes of your highness’s subjects in Travancore and which we, as some members there of, beg leave to press on your Highness’s kind attention is the denial to them of a fair share in the government of their country and their systematic exclusion from the higher grades of its service.<sup>41</sup>

The grievance was basically political—the denial of the *prajas* “a fair share in the government of the country.” Moreover, this denial and this systematic exclusion of certain groups and communities from the higher grades of government service were recognised as the part of political project launched by the regime of the *Videsheeyamedhavithvom* (foreign dominance). The *Memorial* established the grievance in terms of an excellent statistical analysis of the ‘most up to date census report’. It embarked on a discursive contest, a statistical battle. Of course, the petition provisionally accepted or used the determinate concepts and phrases of subjectivity sanctioned by the cognitive genres and official discourses of colonial modernity. This provisional conformity with a knowledge regime which redefined and reconstituted the *praja*-people into an abstract phenomena of population - divided and classified in to caste-community identities – foreshadowed the romance of *rajyam* which energised the whole movement.

The injustice committed by the ‘foreign rule’ towards the natives as the text of the memorial testified to us had two dimensions. Firstly, the *paradesi* had got great advantage over the *swadesies* in matters of power and appointment to government service. Secondly, the ascension of the *paradesi* Brahmins as a class into a predominant position in the administration of the country implicated a new form of Brahminical dominance which is found to be more disastrous to the unity of the indigenous people than the former one.

Paradoxically the ‘foreign Dominance’ here does not implicate the British rule in its direct form, but the dominance of the new officialdom, the bureaucracy, or the network of power constituted by the Dewans or administrators appointed by the British, mostly Tamil or Marathi Brahmins. The neo-Brahmanism as imported by the colonial administration is seen as totally different in its implications from

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<sup>41</sup> From the extract of Malayali Memorial as included in the *Selected Writing & Speeches of G.P.Pillai*, 103.

the Brahminical power that prevailed in Tiruvitamcore earlier. The latter according to the ideologues of the *rajyam* had been politically overpowered by the *rajya*-force from the times of the Marthanda Varma onwards.

The historical romance of the *rajyam* working hidden within the subterranean layers of the text, invoked the fraternal ties between different communities bringing out the honourable role played by each of them in procuring the well-being of the *rajyam*. There did not yet appear any kind of mutual rivalry, or jealousy, typically found between the modern subjectivity. Even though the differences were acknowledged, these heterogeneous communities are vertically linked to the matrix of *rajyam* and are co-ordinated unified by their identity with it as its legitimate *prajas*. The rhetoric of the *Memorial*, reverberated the ethos of mutual self respect and sense of honour still prevailed in the interrelationship between the *praja*-communities.

The 'we', or the 'us' thus speaking out in the draft of *The Malayali Memorial*, actually implicates a collective body of the *prajas* of the *rajyam*, which is comprised of the representatives of different castes, classes and communities. It embodies, in short, the *praja mandalam* of the Tiruvitamcore *rajyam*. However, the idea of a united *praja*-hood invariably exceeds the conditions of caste-identities ascribed to these various sections of society. The phrase *praja* is torn in between in the clash of two genres, one that of the historical romance and the other, that of representation or memorandum. The *Praja*-phrase for instance in terms of the representative genre of memorandum, signifies an empirical caste community subject identifiable in a horizontal plane, a statistised phenomena in a serial schema of population constructed by the census, survey and official registers<sup>42</sup>. However, in the generic matrix of the historical romance, *praja* turns out to be the object of an Idea. Even though it is the latter which animates and energetises the text as well as the movement as a whole, whereby lifting them to the higher planes of an Idea, it is strategically and pragmatically pushed off to the margin of the text. The representational form of memorial as indicated by Robin Jeffrey, somewhat subscribes to the same generic and political conventions of the genteel petitions

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<sup>42</sup> The object of an idea has to be differentiated from the object of a statistical or discursive phrase-game. Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in dispute*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 164-165.

typically followed by the early parliamentarians and the chartists of British history.<sup>43</sup> The Memorialists while drafting the text were in fact transcribing the historical romance of the *rajyam* into a representational genre as a pragmatic move demanded by the contingency of a political agitation. Consequently the historical romance was dispersed into the margins of the text unnoticeable to the modernistic regime of reading which viewed the text exclusively as a representative genre.

It would be quite unfair to reduce the movement of the Memorial as an agitation launched by the caste-subjects merely for the sake of gaining more appointments in the service. On the contrary, it has to be accredited as the eventful upsurge of a politics of self-determination, self-honour or identity perhaps the first of its kind in the political history of Keralam. The cry for a native *Dewan* is not to be heard as a cry for mere higher positions in service. What is being gesticulated in the demand for native *Dewans* is the political desire of the *rajya* people to retrieve the right to *mantri*-hood upheld by them as one of the most important force-instances of the *rajya*-polity which is founded on the reciprocal coalition of the tripartite instances of the *raja praja* and *mantri*.<sup>44</sup> The post of the *Dewan* did not merely signify the function of an official, an administrator, or a bureaucrat as it was held commonly by most of the scholars who viewed it in a colonial modern perspective. In the political aesthetics of the *rajya*-romance, the *Dewan* was ranked as the *mantri*, the champion or political executor of the native desire of the *rajyam*. He was the hero, the *veera-praja* par excellence, who has been avowed to sacrifice his life for the cause of the *rajyam* as it was exemplified in the cases of Raja Kesavadas and others. The *mantri* in short was regarded by the *rajya*-people as the romancer par excellence of a sublime Idea. He epitomises *praja*-people's will to force, will to self-rule.

The petitioners name themselves in the end of the memorandum as the

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<sup>43</sup> Robin Jeffrey, op.cit., 167.

<sup>44</sup> It could be argued that it is the worship of the *mantri* rather than that of *raja* which constitute the core of the historical novels of C.V. As C.V himself reveals the novels *Dharma Raja* and *Ramarajabahadoor* were actually written for the purpose of worshipping Raja Keshavadas, acclaimed to be the *Mantri mandala Divakaran* (The sun of the sphere of the ministers) of Tiruvitamcore. "See, this is the *pooja* I am offering to that great leader, who rescued our *rajyam* from the demon of Mysore. Perhaps, you young men would write better than this. Yet I am proud of the fact that it was I myself who has heralded this genre. If you people take up these sorts of outstanding works then it would console me in my grave". K.R. Parameswaran Pilla, op.cit., 9, 10.



*dasas*, *prajas* or *bhaktas* of the king: “We submit ourselves begging your concern, the *prajas* of your highness who are your devotees and *dasas*.”<sup>45</sup> The *praja* as it was pointed out earlier was the object of an Idea of *rajyam* viewed through the perspective of the historical romance which operates in the interstices of the representative genre that overpowers the text. By the proclamation of their identity as *prajas*, *dasas*, or *bhaktas* of the King, the Memorialists were legitimating their act of petitioning by assuring the king that it belonged to the genre of worship sanctioned by the tradition of the historical romance that pulsed the *rajya*-polity. It silently assured the king that, by submitting the petition before the king, the *prajas* were just exercising their right to worship him. However, the right to worship in the case of the *rajya*-cult meant the right to praise as well as mock, parody or, criticise the king because of the radical and ethnic manner of democratisation involved in the mode of the *rajya* worship especially in the relationship between the deity and the devotee. The petitioning thus assumed the strategic act of ‘parodic’ worship typical of the historical romance of the *rajya-aradhana*. It was his ultimate commitment and devotion in the worship of the idea of the *rajyam* which imparted the *praja* the right to parody, to criticise or to petition the king. The act of petitioning thus implicates the ‘pagan’ politics of parodic worship. Subsequently, the *Memorial* requests, petitions, counsels, criticises mocks and persuades the king; it tells the King of the bitter and the disgraceful fact that straight under his reign the *praja*-force of the *rajyam* is being dismantled. It alerts that the *raja-praja* relation has been deteriorated due to the ascendance of the ‘foreigners’ in administration leading to the collapse of the *rajyam*. Moreover, it unmaskes the unjustifiable complacency shown by the present day *Rajas* to a foreign rule which had led to the victimisation of the devout *prajas*. The king is reminded that this is a deviation from the *dharmic* norms of the *rajya* politics, an act which is unwarranted by the kingly traditions of Tiruvitamcore. The *Memorial* also indirectly hints that the king at present is not exercising his political sovereignty and power as is required for the sustenance and the survival of the *rajyam*. In short, it counsels the king to retrieve the honour of the *raja* himself and the *rajyam* by protecting the rights of the *prajas* and the sovereignty of the

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<sup>45</sup> P.Bhaskaranunni, op.cit., 765.

*rajyam*. This is the critical thrust of the *Memorial* which would provide us with an insight into the aesthetic politics of the historical romance as well as the internal dynamics of the *praja* - democracy inlaid in it.

As a rejoinder to the submission of *The Malayali Memorial*, there was submitted a counter-memorial as forged out by the so-called foreign lobbies, with a secret design of tarnishing the former.<sup>46</sup> This was so effective an operation that it could evoke doubt and mistrust among the fellow castes men against one another. It seemed to have been instrumental in stirring up the deprived communities of the Ezhavas and the native Christians against the Nairs and thus crush the fraternity and unity of *prajas* that prevailed during the time of the *Memorial*. The Memorial was in short misrepresented as a Nair Memorial. The allegations against the regime of Foreign dominance was strategically countered and reversed by the fabrication of the notion of a Nair-dominance which was mischievously detected as the culprits behind the plight of the Ezhavas and Christians who enjoyed lower levels of representation in the native rule. The caste-spirit took over the fraternal feeling prevalent between the *praja*-people, and the emergent generations of Nairs also began to look at their brethren of other communities as their arch-rivals. There took place a universal tendency of narrowing down of the notion of identities and unities towards casteistic and communitarian ties. The caste-wars or caste-riots begun to be seen as legitimate modes of progressive reformist, practices soon became quite fashionable and appreciable. The crucial role played by the foreign Brahmin lobby in instigating and legitimising caste antagonisms in Tiruvitamcore has not yet been taken into account by the historians of Keralam<sup>47</sup>. The ground for caste riots and inter-community wars had already been laid down by the missionary mode of reform which instigated the new subjects against traditional and vertical affinities, and loyalties that unified together heterogeneous communities, as epitomised in the politics of *rajyam*. The assaults on the political and the spiritual faiths of the people as carried out by the missionary project of reform together with the divisive strategies and intrigues forged out by the foreign Brahmanical regime fuelled the war of identities and inter-caste feuds that sickened

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<sup>46</sup> P.K.Parameshwaran Nair, *op.cit.*, 133; N. Balakrishnan Nair, *op.cit.*, 107.

<sup>47</sup> C.V, himself has suggested of the role played by the foreign Brahmin lobby in instigating caste-antagonism in Tiruvitamcore in his essay *Videsheeyamedhavithvom*, 22, 28.

the body politic of Keralam in the later times.

The counter-memorial was followed by the *Eezhava Memorial*, a representation of the plights and grievances of the Eezhavas submitted by Palpu and others. The wider perspective of *The Malayali Memorial* which had brought forth a united front of heterogeneous castes and communities on behalf of the idea of the *rajyam* is found to have been abandoned by the movements which succeeded it. The intimacy and the intensity of the Nair - Eezhava affinity that prevailed among the *rajya*-romancers would be testified by the significant role played by leaders like G. P. Pilla in bringing out the plight of the Ezhavas especially in the Ninth Indian National Social Conference held at Poona in 1895 and in the British parliament in 1897.<sup>48</sup> The Nair-Eezhava amity which thrived in the earlier period of *The Malayali Memorial*, soon faded out into a fairy tale. The Nairs were held as the arch enemies of the Ezhava and Christian communities who began to fight jointly against their former ally. The out break of the Nair - Ezhava feuds and the abstention movements show the deviance taken by the later movements from the political erotics of the '*rajyam*', heralded by the historical romance which cut across the factional unities of class caste and creed. The democratic and nationalistic movements that sprouted in Keralam later on were basically affiliated to the horizontal solidarities of castes, communities or nation-state reconstituted by the colonial-modernistic regime of the period. The broader alliances and heterogeneous affinities of native communities as initiated by the Memorialists between the prominent communities like the Nairs, Ezhavas and Syrian Christians, rarely reappear in the history of Keralam or Tiruvitamcore with the same intensity and vertical reciprocity.

Though the ideals of a resurgent *rajyam* ignited by the Malayali Memorial could not be realised in the immediate future, it could produce awareness among the people and administrators of the necessity for providing the natives more share in administration. The memorial at least evoked a positive response on the part of the King as testified by the appointment of Sankara Subbaiyer, a native of Travancore as Dewan, and subsequent measures which favoured for the time being, the native demand for more share in the service. However, the divisive

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<sup>48</sup> G.P.Pillai, op.cit., 111-114,117-118.

strategies deployed by the counter memorialists, or the so called 'foreign' lobby could create suspicion and mistrust among the people belonging to various communities and castes against each other and create a crevice in the solidarity of the *praja* - people. The government officials who supported the *Memorial* had to face official displeasure and vindictive actions. C. Krishna Pilla was transferred to Quilon and C.V was demoted in service.<sup>49</sup> The dream for creating a *praja*-lineage of native Dewans or *Mantris* in Tiruvitamcore did not come to fruition in Tiruvitamcore in its real sense<sup>50</sup>. The modernist modes of agitation, representation and litigation were found ineffective in making any substantial progress in working out the political ideals of the *rajyam*<sup>51</sup>. With the sudden and unexpected death of Thanu Pilla, the promising statesman who was the stalwart of the politics of the *rajyam*, the expectation for a native, Dewan was finally crushed. The growing trends of factionalism and casteism began to make crevices even within the Malayali Nair Sabha, the platform used by C.V. and his colleagues for effectuating reform within the community. The historical romancers like C.V., G.P. Pilla, Tanu Pilla had to lose much in terms of their career and social positions.

The generic ambiguity characteristic to the *Memorial*, soon led to misapprehension of the identities and ideas inscribed by the text. The contest of two different genres / which provided an ambiguity to the text of the Memorial ambiguous also blurred the identity of the petitioners themselves. The memorialist's attempt to deploy the genre of representation drawing the data and evidences from the cognitive or descriptive discourses like the census, survey and statistics to present their case had its after-effects. It was mistook to be a provisional sanction to the consolidation of the caste or community identities as manufactured by the modernist mode of state and its administrative procedures and discourses. The terms or categories used by the Memorialists like 'Hindu *Sudras*', '*Malayali Hindus*', all had the effect of confirming such reified forms of identities which somewhat neutralised the wider sense of unity and affiliations offered by the

<sup>49</sup> P.K.Parameshwaran Nair, *op.cit.*, 135.

<sup>50</sup> N.Balakrishnan Nair, *op.cit.*, 101.

<sup>51</sup> It is this failure of the conventional political practices in redeeming the cause of the historical romance of *rajyam* that C.V switched over to the generic or narrative struggles for the re-invention of the *rajyam* in an aestheticised or libidinalised zone of past. N.Balakrishnan Nair, *op.cit.*, 107-112.

political aesthetics of the Malayala - *rajyam*. The Nair identity as projected by the memorial, and also by the historical novels of C.V implicated the 'sign' of an ideal *praja* - hood, an indeterminate object of the sublime idea of the *rajyam* or a *veera* lineage of the *rajyam* with its vertical association. However, the term 'Nair' is misread as an empirical determinate instance of caste-subjectivity classifiable in a schemata of population constructed according to the laws of the cognitive or speculative genres and consolidated by the administrative procedures of the modern nation state. The ethnic term 'Nair' was actually used to evoke the Malayali Dravidian heritage of the community in a strategic move to affirm its self respect and honour as it would be seen in the case of the practices of socio-spiritual reform carried out by Sree Chattampi Swamikal. This strategic affirmation of a nair identity on the part of Swamikal and his disciples could be seen as a bold resistance against the laws of *chaturvarnya* and the Brahminical traditions.<sup>52</sup> In the case of the memorial, and, the historical romance, that vibrates behind it, and the novels of C.V., this identification implied an assertion of the self-honour of the native community that was crushed under the colonial regime of the foreign Brahmin lobbies now ruled over the country. Moreover, it linked the present subjects with the ethnic lineages of the past in a much broader deeper affinity, which is also vertical in its nature, with the ethnic lineages of the past. However, the ethnic and vertical intonations of the terms like 'Nair', Ezhava etc. were soon overarched by the casteist or communitarian implications conveyed by the 'representative' genres. The modernistic regimes of reading, which were genetically insensitive to the genre of the historical romance, have, in fact, pumped the life-blood of Idea to the text of the memorial misread it to be the 'memorial' of a caste-community politics. Perhaps, it is the same sort of generic clash in terms of reform that might have generated an internal split within the movement of Nair reform of the times.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See the second chapter of the thesis where the present researcher has elaborated on the point.

<sup>53</sup> The split that occurred within the Nair Sabha, between the one headed by C. Krishna Pilla and other by C.V Raman Pilla might only be explained only in terms of the generic contestation that took place between the historical romancers of *rajyam* and the community reformers who subscribed to the missionary modern mode of reform. If the latter has conceptualised the Nair as a denominator of the horizontal unity of the caste or community subjectivities mobilized in the modern lines the former has presented the Nair as a *veera* or *praja* (subject), a historical romancer devoted to the idea of *dharmarajyam*. The Nairs, as it

The basic ideas of self-rule and *praja* democracy inscribed in the text of the Malayali Memorial displaced through the generic mediation of representation or petition, appear in a negative and indirect presentation in *Marthandavarma*, the publication of which almost coincides with the movement.<sup>54</sup> Mankoyikkal Kurup, the peasant Guru there, provides the King Marthandavarma certain political instructions on the crucial principles of self-determination, even at the cost of provoking anger and distress in the mind of the King.:

Kurup: “Thirumeni, Don’t have displeasure. The alien army that camps at Poothappandi wishes only for the removal of your holiness. Your holiness would be held as a golden pot until the *karuvalam* — the breast (implicating royal treasury also) — remain fully filled with milk. Once its is empty, then you would be treated just as a vile cow that is incapable of secreting milk. When there still burns the fire in one’s own hearth, then, why should one beg for fire in the neighborhood. Was it wiser enough to ally with a group that come from somewhere else deviating from the conventions instead of organizing an army by convening and training the *kudis* who eats the food and salt provided by Thirumeni’.<sup>55</sup>

... the face of the yuvaraja turned purpled when Kuruppu expressed such an opinion of his with courage. Mankoyikkal Kurup did not know the method of talking to the wishes of superiors. Kuruppu who was not affected by any bit of civilized manners did never think that his words would have evoked a dislike in Yuvaraja against him. Even though Yuvaraja was not pleased with the words of Kuruppu, he said suppressing his displeasure: “What Kurup says is correct. Leave the stories of past. Evidently the defect is not mine. Anyway I would do as suggested by Kurup. Don’t suspect. To depend on people who are fortune-seekers, who serves just for the immediate gains, and the ones who do not inherently have the love towards the rajyam and its rulers would be like turning into adultery denouncing even one’s wife whose wedding was witnessed by fire.<sup>56</sup>

The young king could not at first digest the rude manner in which an ordinary peasant *praja* hailing from the village criticizing and imparting advice to

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is exemplified in the political aesthetics of *rajyam* produced by C.V are re-inscribed as the *veera* warriors of the Idea of *rajyam*, as a vertical ethnic lineage of the people, an indeterminate community of selves bound by a libidinal or idealistic affinity. N.Balakrishnan Nair, op.cit., 27-31, 149-170, 245-248; P.K.Parameshwaran Nair, op.cit.,65-74,178-188, 245-253, 325-342.

<sup>54</sup> K.Ayyappanicker, *C.V.Raman Pilla* (Tiruvananthapuram: Department of Publications, 1993), 34,35.

<sup>55</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla, *Marthanda Varma*, 97.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 97.

him in prime matters of political affairs, governmental policies and strategies. However the pressures of the time and the sincerity and the intense loyalty and political commitment shown by the Kurup makes king receptive to his advices even though this violation of the protocols or the royal etiquette, momentarily arouses a displeasure in him. It invokes the in the mind of the king the *dharmic* wisdom that 'to ally with the foreign power and to abandon the hearty support given by the *prajas* mean adultery' which he realizes himself as guilty of. Raja is married to *praja* as his legitimate bride in the testimony of sacred fire. To embrace an alien people or power and to forsake one's real bride means nothing lesser than political adultery according to the dharmic law of the *rajyam*. *Praja* to raja is an object of romance, a bride chosen in the presence of sacred fire of Idea. This would implicate the fundamental principle of the *rajya*-nationality and the energetic involved in the politics of the *praja* democracy.

Mankkoyikkal Kuruppu who is fully confident and enlightened of the *praja*-rights to criticize and counsel the King, again embarrasses him in another occasion when he frankly advises him not to be seduced by excessive praise:

Yuvaraja again praised Kurup. It was a strange new experience for Kurup. He replied like this: I am fortunate to hear your highness's admiration towards me for committing my duties. Yet, your highness should abstain from excessive flattery and too much indulgence in listening to them. Then only your highness would attain good fame and reign.

Hearing these words, both Parameswara Pilla and the king smiled; the former thinking that the peasant Nairs, however excellent they are, would be highly ignorant about the protocols observed in the presence of king and the latter because of real delight.

Yuvaraja: Today onwards I accept Kurup as my *guru*. You can advise me with full freedom. Don't hesitate.<sup>57</sup>

The *pati*-image of the king is transgressed and ultimately supplemented by the guru-image of the *prajas*. Though there is an initial embarrassment in the mind of the King towards the rude and aggressive manner of advising done by Kurup, foregoing all protocols and etiquettes, the king soon regains his composure, smiling on his embarrassment, proclaims Mankoyikkal Kurup as his Guru who is thereby bestowed with the absolute right of a *praja* to criticize and advice the king

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 99.

in political matters. These are the subtle and intensive manners by which the historical novel rewrites the *rajayatha* into the *Prajayatha*, thus transmuting the kingdom into a *praja* - kingdom with the fullest vigour of a *prajayatha* democracy. As the scholars of C.V. had rightly pointed out, these sorts of novelistic episodes could be held as pedagogic or rhetoric devices used by the narrator to negotiate with and the king Sree Mulam Tirunal who ruled the country at the time, and to enlighten him on the emergent political principles of the *praja*-democracy.

### 3.5. *The Videsheeya Medhavithvom*

The *rajya*-movement upholding the politics of *praja*-democracy did not recede from the political scene of Tiruvitamcore even though it suffered a short set back with the waning out of the ethno-national fervour generated by the agitation of the Malayali Memorial. The movement however, gets resurgence again in new forms with renewed vigour. The historical romancers never withdrew their struggle against the misrule of the 'foreigners', a struggle which actually implicated a battle for the political affirmation of the democratic rights of the *praja*-people. They advanced the struggle along new modes of agitations, which could be called cultural or discursive contestations, mainly comprised of writing critical articles and essays in the journals of Madras and Tiruvitamcore. The genres of satire, or *prahasanas* (farces)<sup>58</sup> and social novel<sup>59</sup> were also experimentally deployed by C.V. as the genres of laughter<sup>60</sup>, as poignant weapons against the foreign rule and the emergent trend of the Anglicization of the societal, familial and cultural life-practices of the newly educated middle class. We may however, find the recurrence and the dialogical interplay of all of these genres of criticism namely the satire, novel farce and historical romance in their subtle and inter-twined forms in *Videseeyamedhavithvom*, under the generic mediation of the essay. The political faith of the *rajyam* as a *dharmic-prajayatha*-polity is re-affirmed and vindicated and the historico-political operation of the foreign dominance is traced out and

<sup>58</sup> Nine of the important farces of C.V are collected and published under the name *Prahasanamala*. C.V.Raman Pilla, *Prahasanamala* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S.,1973).

<sup>59</sup> *Premamrutham* is a social novel written by C.V. Raman Pilla. *Premamrutham* (1914, Kottayam: S.P.C.S).

<sup>60</sup> P.K.Parameshwaran Nair , op.cit., 269-276.



judged in the leader-essays written by C.V. from 1920 to 1921 in *Mithabhashi*, a political journal published from Thiruvananthapuram. Compiled into a book these were later published in 1922 with the title the '*Videseeyamedhavithvom*. The work not only puts forward the sublime ideals of the *Prajayatha*- mode of democracy but also exemplifies itself in exercising these avowed rights of the *prajas* in the contemporary political situation.

Indicating the political significance of the *Videsheeyamedhavithvom* E.V. Krishna Pilla signified it as the '*Rashtreeya Raghuvamsa* of Tiruvitamcore.<sup>61</sup> The work makes a subtle critique of the administrative policies of the ministers of Tiruvitamcore from Sir T. Madhava Rao to Mr. Raghavayya. It unmasks the disastrous consequences of their rule which is called the *Videsheeyamedhavithvom*. The essays thus trace out the paradoxical presence of an internal colonialism functioning within the semi colonial structure of the princely state, a colonialism of the Raos and Iyers, imported from Maharashtra and Madras as *Dewans* or administrative officials in Tiruvitamcore service.

Unlike The *Malayali Memorial* which marks the early phase of the representative politics in Tiruvitamcore, the *Videsiyamedhavithvom* makes it clear that it is not contended merely with the gaining of more representation in jobs. The *praja*-hood upheld by the latter, affirms its dissensus with the hegemonic modes of subjectivity produced by laws of market and modernistic discourses exclusively in casteist, communitarian or consumerist lines. It dissociates itself from the sectarian caste-or community identities reinforced by the administrative devices of census and survey by means of statistical schematisation of the population. It focuses more vigorously and persistently than it is attempted by the Malayali Memorial, on the political primacy and urgency of the ascendance of a native *mantri*-hood into power for safeguarding the sovereignty of the *rajyam*. What it demanded was not an administrative post of Dewanship for the natives but the retrieval of the ideal *mantri*-hood embodying the *Prajayatha* principle of the *rajya* politics. And more importantly it launched, perhaps for the first time, in the history of Keralam, a radical political critique of the colonial modern order that devoured the country and deformed the *rajya*-polity unravelling its complex and disastrous

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 326.

machinations. The political campaign for retrieving the native *mantrihood* might be detected as a strategic attempt to regain the people's right to self-determination or self-rule and to empower the *rajya*-polity to carry on its resistance to the colonial order. The work pronounces the political judgment of the *praja*-people on the devastating impact of the rule of the neo-Brahmanical colonial regime of the 'Foreign Diwans' and administrators implanted by the British in Tiruvitamcore:

Portraits of fifteen Dewanjis hang on the walls of the reception hall in Bhaktivilasam. It has been attempted in these essays to examine whether these fifteen ministers have served the country according to the dictum of Vanchirajyam. These Dewans, all fifteen of them, have had the admiring attention of the Madras government; it has showered upon them, with the exception of one or two, all the high honours that were available. They also gained compliments from the kings who cursed them deep down.

Exempting the period of the reign of two of them, one a native and the other a semi-native, latches of rupees were drained out of this country within the span of forty-six years, which in turn got multiplied elsewhere. Even a courageous native would faint if he estimates the magnitude of wealth that flowed through the *upamoorthis* - the sub-deities - installed by these Dewans. This sort of drain of wealth itself is enough to weaken the life force of a *rajyam* pushing it into the precincts of death. The *poorva paurusham* of the people, the power and authority they had possessed formerly in their affairs and the sense of enthusiasm and vitality shown by them in matters of execution have just been lost, and their *janmabhoomi*—motherland—has become a '*vandavan kalari*—a *kalari* of intruders.<sup>62</sup>

This is a historical-political verdict on the reign of the fifteen ministers who had been found guilty of installing a worse form of internal-colonialism, monitored by the neo-Brahminical officialdom of 'aliens' within India; it has "sucked the life-blood of the native people and has torn apart the sacred bonds of the *rajyam*". "The drain of wealth inflicted by this neo-Brahminical rule had been enough to weaken the life-force of the *rajyam* leading into its sudden demise." The essayist here seems to be unravelling the regime of history fought or vindicated in the historical romance. It unearths the contemporary history which is aesthetically subverted in the historical romance, as an interpretation of dream would retrieve the regime of the 'real', disrupted and transgressed by a dream-

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<sup>62</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla, *The Videseeya Medhavithvom*, 39.

work.<sup>63</sup> The paramount political questions of the times which were at stake in the aesthetic genre of the historical novels of C.V. are brought to light by these ‘historico-political’ tracts. It dramatically contrasts two modes of selves, the colonial subjectivity of the present and the *praja*-sensibility of the rajya-epoch. The former is distinguished from the latter by its sense of impotency its attitude of conformity. The loss of *paurusham*, or valour which the essayist detects to be defining the new subject is found to be as fatal as the loss of wealth of the country. The new subjects in his view are thus divested of the valour the power and authority formerly enjoyed by the people in their own affairs — the *poorvapaurusham* — and the sense of enthusiasm and vitality shown by them in matters of the execution of their will. The essayist thus reinvents the traces of a vertical lineage, of alternate subjects marked by the sublime qualities of *paurusham*, *atmabhimanam*, and *veeryam* (valour, self-pride, and potency), which are ultimately worshipped and celebrated in the historical novels as the signs of progress. It is lamented that the mother land (*mathrurajyam*) has been turned out to be a *vandavankalari* — the *kalari* of the foreign intruders—where the natives are robbed off their space, and transformed into exiles in their own country. This is the historical reality of the *rajyam* against which the historical romance has launched its battle of ‘loss’ in an apparently losing one.

The essayist legitimises the cry for self-determination and native *mantrihood* by situating it in the contemporary political situation in India marked by the nationalist fervour and struggle for self-rule. He reveals the double game played by the advocates of foreign dominance, who have now begun to fight for “self-rule, *swarajyam* or responsible rule in the British India while they oppose the same sorts of struggles fought in Tiruvidyamcore.”

We pronounce the same desire of the people that is not satisfied with the reforms initiated by Lord Curson and continued by Montague and King George’s kind royal proclamation. We do not understand why an idea that is upheld as just, opportune and legitimate in other countries is considered as poisonous in Tiruvidyamcore.<sup>64</sup> When a society has many lion-hearted men in

<sup>63</sup> *The Lyotard Reader*, 21-51.

<sup>64</sup> Here, C.V seems to mock the double-play of the Dewans like Sir T. Madhava Rao, V. P. Madhava Rao and others who were associated with Indian National Congress and were involved in the national struggle against the British. The charge against them is that while

whom qualities like intelligence, wealth, valour and patriotism are integrated, it is natural that the hatred towards the 'foreign dominance' is on the ascent there; in this respect Tiruvidyamcore is in no way different from the states in British India. We do not refer to the imperial power that is in alliance with Maharaja by the term *vitesheeya*.<sup>65</sup> At the moment we use this term to refer to that class of administrators in the service of certain prominent groups in Madras who had set out to Tiruvidyamcore as fortune seekers and either would vanish after plundering its wealth through administrative measures or leave the state after robbing off its auspicious prosperity.<sup>66</sup>

The term *Videsheeyamedhavithvom* is precisely explained here as not denoting the British colonial power which is still considered to be in alliance with the Maharajah, but the regime of *videsis* within India, the Tamil or Marathi Brahmins appointed by the British government of Madras as Dewans and other high officials in Tiruvidyamcore service. It does not mean that the essayist absolves the British from its role as the founder of this evil regime. He traces out the initial role played by the colonial authorities in Madras, in the imposition of this *rao - pattar* regime on the country and their secret designs of destabilising and weakening the indigenous polity behind that. However, the latter is judged to be the crucial enemy because it has posed the most immediate threat to the political sovereignty of the rajyam. It is detected as the evil embodiment of the colonial Order of the period in the 'historico-political' existence of the people. There is an ironic pun in the usage of the term *videseeya*, which implicates the foreignness as well as the immoral traits which notoriously stained the character of these alien administrators.

We might also detect here the inner agitation of the genre of the historical romance within the text which comes to the forefront when the author emphasizes the need for a radical *praja*-hood, for the resurgence of a genuine movement for countering the regime of *Videsheeyamedhavithvom*. He stipulates the need for a drastic change in the level of subjectivity. The colonial mode of subjectivity is

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they were raising the slogan of self-determination and independence for the sake of the people of the British India they were denouncing the same rights for the people of Tiruvidyamcore.

<sup>65</sup> The reader should notice the satirical usage of *videseeya* or the 'foreign' here which plays a pun on the term *vita* connoting both foreign and immoral.

<sup>66</sup> C.V. Raman Pilla, *Videseeya Medhavithvom*, 12-13.

urged to be replaced by a *veera* 'manner' of self-hood, a *veerapurushamandalam* (a matrix of the heroes) where the virtues of intellect, *veeryam* (valour or potency) wealth and *swarajyabhimanam* (patriotism) conjoin together.

The *VidesheeyaMedhavithvom* in short gives expression to the *praja*-voice, (as well as the silence of the *praja*), the political will of the *prajas* in a period when both the *raja* and *praja* altogether face the grave crisis evoked by the colonial modern assaults on the indigenous polity. It radically places the *praja* instance as the chief and determining force in safeguarding the sovereignty of the *rajya* polity. The case of the *praja*-people is argued out accrediting them as the only solid force that stood firmly in guard of the sovereign idea of the *rajyam* and xavioured the *raja* as well as the *rajyam* at the moments of their crisis and disaster. Historical incidents are cited in favour of the argument. The essay now points out the deviance taken by the present rajas from the avowed ideal of the *rajya*-polity violating the mutual trust between the *prajas* and the *raja*. And it reveals the bitter historical truth that the *praja*-phrase has always been a victim phrase, an affect-phrase, a *differend* in the discursive disputes of the period those prevailed within the *rajya*-polity of the times and of the past, and between the *rajya*-people and the colonial modern polity or the alien powers:: It accuses the *raja* that "the great services done by the *prajas* to the *rajyam* are neither rewarded nor even acknowledged fully by them and their governments." "The *prajas* are not even consulted in crucial matters of government." "On the other hand, they are discriminated, degraded and even persecuted by the authorities"<sup>67</sup> This amounts to be a crucial judgment pronounced by the *praja* people on the political policies of the kings of the *rajyam*. The *praja*-narrator issues his critical verdict on certain kings of the *rajyam* for mistrusting the words of *prajas* in crucial political matters which he indicts as a grave failure in their primal duties and *dharmic* obligations. This is detected to be the internal antinomy of the present day *rajya*-polity which has now been overarched by the structure of the colonial modern nation state. Even the kingdom has been succumbed to the process of subjectification, which

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<sup>67</sup> Here the essayist seems to be suggesting the case of Raja Keshava Das who is said to have been imprisoned and put to death by the king who preceded Ramavarma Ayilyam Tirunal prompted by the intrigues within the court. V.R. Parameswaran Pilla, *Raja Kesavadas*, (Thiruvananthapuram: Department of Cultural Publications, Government of Kerala, 1993), 187.

demanded the abandoning of their dharmic ties and duties towards the people. These gestures of critical judgment would remind us of certain occasions in the historical novels where the *raja* instance is subjected to rigorous criticism by the *praja* instance.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, these bold criticisms raised against the *rajas* would demonstrate the primal principles of the modus operandi of the *praja* democracy, namely the politics of the ‘parodic’ or ‘negative’ worship.

What we find in short, in these critical engagements of the *praja*-hood with the *raja*-hood is not only the reformulation of the *prajayatha* ideals of the *rajya*-democracy, but also an execution of them in the here and now of the ‘historico-political’.::

No thought was given to the opinion of people either when the treaty was made with the British Empire or even after that. The ruling sectors and historians cannot deny that it was the native people who had helped and protected the *rajasthanam* (the power and position of *raja*) with the military strength.<sup>69</sup>

The self-critical reflexive thrust of the *rajya* democracy is brought forth in this sentence of judgment. It spots out the gravest mistake committed by the kings of Tiruvitamcore: the unwarranted act of bringing the country into an uneven treaty with the British without the consent of the *praja*-people who have given their blood and lives to rescue the kingdom in its hours of crisis. People were not even consulted on such a crucial political decision with its far-reaching consequence in the sovereignty of the country. The *rajyam* would not have been possibly come into existence, and the titles like *dharmaraja* would have become mere objects of mockery and shame if the *prajas* had not assisted them in time and given off their lives for the *rajyam*. The *rajya* history is thus rewritten in the present essay promoting the *praja* as the chief instance of the *rajya* polity, the chief players of native history as it is done by the historical novels though in a more intensive manner of presentation in a different genre.

The author further advances the critique by bringing out the crucial role played by the native officials, especially the *Dewan peshkars* appointed by kings in rescuing the *rajyam* from disasters.

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<sup>68</sup> Marthandavarma, 107, 327; Ramaraja Bahadoor, 303-305.

<sup>69</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla, The *Videseeya Medhavithvom*, 41.

It was neither the Maharashtra Department nor the groups of Dewans imported from Madras Government but the Dewan Peshkars, appointed by the King himself, who had protected the country from being falling into disaster. The import of foreigners and the export of wealth — the only administrative activity performed by the (foreign) ministers. We, the humble *prajas*, the children of Vanchirajyam, were the people who endured sleepless nights and countless other miseries in order to protect the country from the hazards it faced.

It was in such a situation in spite of laying the foundation of education for us, that your highness carried on your reign and made your country dependent on the foreign ministers thus making us the laughing stocks of the whole world.<sup>70</sup>

The kings including the present king, Sree Moolam Tirunal, are thus judged to be guilty of deviating from their paramount responsibility and duty to protect the sovereignty and the well-being of the country as delegated to them by the *praja*-people and the divine Idea that constitute the *dharma rajyam*. The distrust shown by the kings towards the *prajas* and their reluctance to involve the *praja*-people fully on matters of administration and government thus shatter the legitimacy of the present-day kingship. Notably, it is the generic transition that curiously takes place within the text from the genre of essay to that of the romance, or the parodic worship which empower the essayist to issue a political verdict on the policies of the king on behalf of the tribunal of the *praja*-people.

The political tract of *Videseeyamedhavitvom* thus seems to be re-enacting the instances of the *prajas* exercising their right to judge critically the political policies of the raja, as it is done in various junctures of the historical novels of C.V. by the actors like Subhadra, Mankoyikkal Kurup and Kunchaikutty Pilla<sup>71</sup>. The Essays in other words implicate a radical mode of cultural political action which works out the historical romance in the 'historico political', in the arena of contemporary life.

### **3.6. The Praja-Politics of the 'Parodic Worship'**

The final portion of the tract brings into the forefront the political pragmatics of the 'parodic worship', triggered by the genre of the historical

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.,42.

<sup>71</sup> *Marthandavarma*, 107, 327; *Ramaraja Bahadoor*, 303-305.

romance secretly operating in its body. When the tract comes to a close, the genre of '*nivedanam*'— the 'memorial' or 'petition' with its ethnic connotation of devotion – takes over the generic norms of the political essay and the text metamorphoses in to a memorandum addressed towards the King, Sree Mulam Tirunal by his prajas "on behalf of the sense of right which is purified by 'devotion and obligation'".<sup>72</sup> This would demonstrate the multi-generic tensions and engagements that had been brewing off within the genre of the essay. Notably, this 'sense of right purified by devotion and obligation', associated with the fundamental principles of *praja* democracy, is different from the sense of rights held by the subjects of the modern state. It now 'assumes the expression of the heart-felt grievance of the *prajalakshas*' (lakhs of prajas).<sup>73</sup> Though it comes forth as a request, a petition of grievances, as I have shown before, it also turns out to be a critique, a political judgment on the erroneous policies of the kings themselves. At times it dares to make a cross-examination of the kings, a critical verdict on the attitude of mistrust, and ingratitude shown by some of them towards the *praja*-people who are hailed by the writer as the sole supporters and protectors of the kings and kingdom at times of crisis. The *Praja*-petitioner, who declares himself to be the humble devotee of the raja, now switches on to the ritual mocking, or critiquing of the deity, characteristic to the *praja*-politics of the 'parodic worship' where the worshipped is interrogated and judged by the worshipper, the deity by the devotee. Herein lies the self-critical potency of the 'pagan' democracy of the *rajyam*. Worship is complemented or fulfilled by abuse or dissent as it is shown to be in the cases of primeval savage modes of worship. The *praja*- democracy here resuscitates the 'savage' politics of 'intensity' in its critical or 'negative' worship of the deity here the king, with its radical consequences in the 'historico-political'. The *praja* here regains his right to address, the right to worship and thereby to mock the king, as well as turning the latter into an addressee instance. This libidinal reshuffling of the addressee and the addressor instances through the savagery of the 'parodic worship' could possibly be occurred only in an alternate polity, an aesthetic or 'sensus' community where *prajas* and *rajas* are equally

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<sup>72</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla, *The Videseeya Medhavithvom*, 41.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*,41-42.



bonded to a sublime idea of the 'absolute' as signalled by the *rajyam*.

### 3.7. *The Right to Self-Government and Self-Determination*

The king, the object of the parodic worship of the *prajas*, is now apprised of the absurdity of the theory of the 'incompetence' of the natives as put forward by the foreign lobby. This is detected to be just an alibi for denying people participation in government. The theory, it reveals is as ridiculous as the 'bidding that one would be allowed to swim only after learning swimming'. The people would never get competence in administration if they are deprived of the proper facilities and opportunities to participate or involve in governmental affairs. The *praja*-tribunal enlightens the king of the paramount principle of the resurgent politics of nationalism which asserts that 'the burden of uplifting a solid nation is never invested on another country'. What is being invaded here is the mythologies of the 'civilizational mission' propagated by the British as well as the advocates of the 'foreign dominance' within India. The *rajya* politicians of Tiruvitamcore who are well-informed of the enlightened ideas of national liberation and emancipation and the struggles fought for realising these ideas by the people all over the world, prove themselves that they are capable of unmasking the hidden motives behind such seductive theories advanced by the foreign administrators. They explicate the King in unequivocal terms that 'the claims of the government as representing a civilized polity would be proved false unless it makes any attempt to rescue the people from the disastrous sway of the *Videseeyamedhavithvom*, responding to the appeal made by the *praja*-people in their political '*nivedanam*' (petition)'.

If the policy that only foreigners would be allowed to have the right to be blessed with great honours of British Empire, and the universal fame accrued of ministership, is strictly enforced wouldn't our progress would turn too narrow? If somebody argues for the strange principle - that one would be allowed to enter water only after learning swimming - that the ministership would be provided only after proving one's competence. The just answer to it is that, how one would get training unless the *kalari* for training of minister ship is not opened to them. The conviction in the spirit of justice inlaid in this cry for participation in rule might provide us victory. The burden of lifting up a solid nation has never been given to another country. If Tiruvitamcore is not rescued from the disastrous sway of foreigners, who have been oppressing the *rajyam* for a century, the government's

claim that it represents a civilized rule would be revealed as fake.<sup>74</sup>

The *praja* petitioner earnestly ensures the king that the demands of the natives for the right of minister ship, and getting control over the '*turas*' should not be mistaken as a call for a coup or revolt against the authority of the *raja*. It is the expression of the legitimate rights of the *praja* people which would only augment the well-being of both the *raja* and the *rajyam*:

The demand raised by the natives of Tiruvitamcore for the right of ministerhip and the control over '*turas*' should not be mistaken as an adventurous move to usurp the whole power of the government. The moment our prayer is answered, then it would make you realise the truth that when the *nattu* people themselves govern the rules of *rajyam*, the glory of the authority of the *raja* would shine radiating joy in heart and showering nectar in eyes by its magnificence and grace.<sup>75</sup>

The essayist makes it certain that the king should not misread these judgments as a traitorous move to usurp power or dismantle the kingship and kingdom when the *rajym* is at the worst hours of its political crisis. Instead, this should be gracefully received as an earnest prayer, worship, though it is parodic according to the legitimate traditions of the *rajya*-polity. "If the people's requests are heard, if they are allowed to govern the country, it would only enrich the honour and glory of the *rajyam* including the *raja*, and *praja*. "Then only the *raja* would be able to realise his real function of radiating glory and joy that would lift up the sensibility and sensuality of the people into sublime levels; then only would the true grandeur of the king manifest in its full bloom".

The *praja*-tribunal thereafter alerts the king that the *rajyam* is facing the most dangerous challenges to its integrity and sovereignty. The remote-controlling of the *rajyam* by the foreign rulers, and the continuance of the universally rejected policies of the *Videseeyamedhavithvom* have brought unprecedented hardships to the country and its people. The *raja* is alarmed of the gravest situation of the country and the dangers looming before him: the power and sovereignty of the king is dwindling day by day under the new conditions of administration which the essay elaborates as the *Videsheeyamedhavithvom*. The essayist also expresses the

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<sup>74</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla, The *Videseeya Medhavithvom*, 44-45.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.,45.

genuine anxiety felt by the people on the demotion of the power and status of the king himself leading towards a state of abject dependence and subordination'. Finally it is again revealed by the *praja*-speaker to the King, the addressee, that this should not be seen as a mere essay, a petition, or a litigation but heard as a prayer, arising from the 'sacred soul of the people' which is expected to motivate him to shower his blessing grace to his *prajas*. And there is a prayer within the prayer which is addressed to the "*paramasakti*' the ultimate divine force of the cosmos' which again demonstrates the generic agitation of the historical romance that precipitates within the text.

Let this great prayer originating from the *paripaavandeehi*- the sacred soul - of the people, unified in a single spirit, excite even the heart of Maharaja by the gracious kindness of '*parama sakti*' - leading to the realisation of the blessing sought for by it.<sup>76</sup>

### 3.8. The 'We' of the *Videsheeyamedhavithvom*

The 'we' that speaks through the essay as the addressors of the petition, the tribunal which makes judgment on the king and the *mantrimandalam*, or the band of devotees who worship as well as mock their deity should be seen as different from the nationalistic or horizontal 'we', the subjects manufactured by the modern state and society. It epitomises the *prajalokam*, 'joining in this emancipative task united in hearts, and forgetting all differences of class or community'. The 'we' here includes "all classes equally sharing the merits as well as the defects of the *rajyam*, arraying in a brotherly manner, who submit their political will" for the well being of the *rajyam*, before the King and the world. It is a 'we' which is an object of an aesthetic genre, namely the historical romance and not the object or the subject of a speculative discourse or a 'truth' genre like the sciences or the social sciences. It implicates the *praja*-people, who might be viewed as the object of an idea, not of a determinate discourse like history or sociology as it is today, or a cognitive or descriptive genre. It is a problematic 'we' that cannot be represented in histories but in the 'indeterminate', 'indirect' or 'negative' presentation of the historical romance. It is a sign which "indexes recalls or anticipates" the historical progress of the *rajya*-people.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 46.

### 3.9. *Worship as a cultural-political action*

It is also stated that this grand prayer “arises from the unitive, holy soul of the *praja*-people”. The prayer thus seems to express the political desire of the heterogeneous *praja*-people within the *rajyam*. It is the holy assemblage of the *praja*-people, metamorphosed in their unitive presence into a ‘sacred soul’, by itself, that is revealed to be the addresser of this prayer. Significantly, the phrase suggests that not only *raja* the deity, but also *praja* the devotee is held as the object of the worship in the political cult of the *rajyam*. The intention of this political prayer, as revealed by the essayist, is to excite the king’s heart, induce him to provide *anugraham* (blessing) to the native people by granting them the political rights of self-rule and self-determination. The grace of the ‘*paramasakti*’ that seems to implicate the cosmic mother principle as well as the supreme force-principle of the cosmos which marks the culmination of all god-forces and force-phrases is invoked to induce the heart of the king to bless the people’s prayer. As I have elaborated earlier, the political strategy of worship in the context of *rajya* politics lies in making metamorphoses on the ‘selves’ and the ‘others’, on the minds of devotee and deity, the worshipper and the worshipped, prompting them to enter into the dynamic circuits of reciprocation called *dharmam*. The worshipped or the deity who is positioned strategically in an addressee or recipient instance, in the beginning of the worship is expected to be metamorphosed into an addressor or donor instance by the libidinal dynamics of the worship. Thus, the genre of worship or prayer which frequently intercepts or interrupts the structure of the text which incessantly vacillates between the genre of essay and memorandum reveals that it is the heart of the raja his sense of political reflection which is being addressed by this prayer, by this petition. Subsequently it exemplifies a unique cultural political action performed by the *rajya* people to induce changes in the hearts of the authorities, rajas, and even *prajas* themselves and the equation of forces in favour of the *praja*-people’s desire for the *rajyam*. This is how the ‘pagan’ politics of the ‘parodic worship’ which I would argue as constituting the core of the cultural practice pertaining to the historical romance of the *rajyam*, intervenes or interrupts the ‘historico-political’ sphere of the people. It could be

seen as being employed in the historical novels as the politico-aesthetic strategy or alchemy of changing the modern subjects into *veera* subjects, *praja* subjects—subjects of a sublime realm of Idea. This has to be acknowledged as the sublime and radical mode of democratic cultural action invented by the *praja* people of the *rajyam*, in their politico-spiritual pursuit to inflict changes on the selves, forces, powers, regimes and times towards the goal of people's progress.

The political pragmatics of this cultural action which is the life-blood of the *praja*-democracy is well-demonstrated by the way C.V. responds to the proposal for publishing his essays in a book form. The appeal comes from the cultural activists of the *rajya*-movement, the new generation of the historical romancers. C.V.'s response brings into forefront the praxis of the cultural politics involved in the writing. Reading, and publishing of such works of political importance.

If it is possible to produce, in the people's heart, the consciousness of the necessity of a change in the historical direction of our *samsthana* (country), your attempt to revive my reminiscences would be materialised as a *hadhayoga mahaprayogam* for the attainment of political salvation (*raashtreeyamokshalabधि*). Your attempt to make the heart of the authorities dependent on *janahitha*, (the wish of the people) by the publication of *karyavada* (reflection on the paramount facts) without any attempt to revolt and strife may become an ideal project even for the native people elsewhere.<sup>77</sup>

The author here reveals the political motivation behind the writing and publishing of these essays. First of all, the work affirms the utmost necessity of a change in the present polity and history. It is "intended to produce in the hearts of the people, the consciousness of the necessity of a change in the historical direction of the polity of our country." This should be held in other words as the part of a cultural movement which is aimed to inculcate the desire for a political change—the 'progress'—in the hearts of the people. It tends to be a discursive intervention in the course of history in the relations of power and forces governing the political destiny of the people.

The intention of the work as revealed by the author here is "to make the heart of the authorities dependent on *janahitha*, the will of the people." It means that the tract is primly intended to articulate the political desire of the people. It

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., xxxv.

demonstrates the reciprocal and critical thrust of the *praja* democracy which has invented its own modes of persuading the authorities in favour of the *janahitha*. In short, it testifies to the intensive modes of cultural actions invented by *prajayatha* democracy in its proposed goals of making “changes in the hearts of authorities and subjects of the *rajyam* towards the direction of progress. This would indicate how the cultural or trans-sensual politics of worship launched by the *praja*-politicians on the level of phrases, genres selves and forces, implicates the intensity and sublimity of the struggle for self-determination as fought by the *rajya*-people.

Let me add briefly one more point with regard to the cultural practice invented by the historical romancers of the *rajyam* in their intense reciprocation with the heterogeneous times and phrases of the past and present: the war and worship. Significantly, the narrator of *Videseeyamedhavithvom* submits the book into the feet of the *raja* who is being worshipped by him with unceasing devotion. The *raja* is requested to accept the book as a *nivedanapatrika* (a memorandum as well as a *naivedyam*) consisting of the testimonies and documents required for the examination of the *rajyasthithi* (the present conditions of the *rajyam*). The author admits that the writing of these essays marks an act of worship, performed by him in order to ward off his inner pain. And the worship of the *raja* is complemented by a prayer to *Padmanbha* intended to ward out the dangers that shroud his holy abode, the *raja* and *rajyam*. In the final portion of the essay also we find the essayist requesting the king to treat the work as a prayer. However, the worship in the political aesthetics of the historical romance is complemented by another practice called war both of them in intense interrelation to each other. This would be corroborated by various instances especially that of when the author specifically notifies in the preface that the work is intended to be an intensive mode of a war of phrases (*a toolikasthraprayogam*). And this sort of war of words is realised as the only means of resistance against the disastrous policies of the regime of the *Videsheeyamedhavithvom*, against the laws of subjectivity enforced by the colonial modern-nation-state. The narrator who exercises the *praja*-right of ‘parodic worship’ in his political engagement with *raja*, is thus seen as intended to use his pen as a weapon against the arch-enemies of the *rajyam*. It shows the amazing trait of heterogeneity shown by the practices of the *praja*-politician in his double roles

as a warrior and a *bhakta* or worshipper which is intertwined in his each actions. At times war is worshipped as a deity, as well as a mode of worship by the historical novels. War is a worship and worship is a war in the politico-spiritual movement of the *rajyam*, as demonstrated by the historical novels as well as the various genres associated with the movement. *Praja* is in short a historical romancer par excellence as we find in the politico-aesthetic celebration of the *praja*-hood carried out by the historical novels.

### 3.10. *The Invention of Malayala Rajyam*

The most important legacy of the *rajya*-movement in view of the present writer, is its political contemplation of the identity of the people, its radical invention of the idea of a *Keralam* or a *Malayala rajyam*. This should be seen as the most exemplary instance of the radical process of doubling or coupling of the heterogeneous times and phrases played out in the political aesthetics of the *rajyam*. The historical romance for instance inscribes the *rajyam* as *Keralam* and *Keralam* in turn as the politico-cultural matrix of the *rajyam(s)*. In the anachronistic, non-linear or ahistoric historiography of the people's progress reinvented by the historical romance, the idea of *Keralam* occurs as a double to, or doubling with that of the *rajyam*, and paralogically emerges as anterior as well as posterior to the *rajyam* and vice versa. The Malayalam or *Keralam* is at times found to be mapping the pre-history while at times the post-history and also the current history of the *rajyam*. Or more precisely the relation between both defies the laws of temporal succession marked by a 'before' or 'after' as it is the common case with the relations of pairs or double that abounds in the historical romance. The *rajyam* here is found to be re-formed or reworked into the *Malayala-rajyam* and Malayalam or *Keralam*, revisioned as a *rajyam*. The politico aesthetic horizon of the *rajyam* of Tiruvitamcore widens to the cultural milieu of Malayalam and the matrix of Malayalam condenses, intensifies or transmutes itself into the *rajyam*. The historical novels of C.V. which could rhetorically be called a *theakkan veera gadha* (a southern heroic ballad or Tiruvitamcore *veera gadha*) due to the intense coupling of the genre of novel and the folkloric genre of ballad also turn out to be

the *veera gadha* of a Malayala-*rajyam* which is being invented in the process of writing the *rajyam*.

We would get an idea of the intensity and consistency of the practice of the political and cultural self-reflection initiated by the *rajya* movement when we glance through the nature of the organisations and activities ignited by the historical romancers like C.V., G.P.Pilla, P.Tanu Pilla, P.Ayyappan Pilla and others in general. The emergence of organisations like the Malayali Social Union, Malayali Sabha, Malayali Trading company, and the journals like *Malayali*, *Kerala Patriot*, *Mithabhashi*, and eventually the out-break of the agitation of the Malayali Memorial in 1891, as indicated either by their names or ideals, signal the catastrophic occurrence of a sublime sensibility of the Malayali identity, transgressing the constraints of caste, community faith and even locality and nativity among the people of Tiruvitamcore of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

The '*Malayali Sabha*' is perhaps, the first movement in Tiruvitamcore which had inculcated the politico-cultural feeling of a Malayali identity, an ethnic fervour towards the aesthetic politics of the *rajyam* among the educated youths and the people in general. Eventually it was an expansion of the "*Malayali social union*' that functioned within the Maharajas College under the enlightening guidance of the Scottish professors Rose and Harvey:

It was partly the English education and partly the guidance of Mr. Ross and Dr. Harvey that was instrumental in inculcating the thoughts regarding the political economy of the *rajyam* and *samudayam*. It was the Maharajas College of Thiruvananthapuram under the president-ship of Ross which had sown the seeds of *Malayali Sabha* the earliest national organization of Keralam born out of these sorts of ideas. The wide usage of the term '*Malayali*' upholding the idea of nationality also originates from the college of Ross itself. The *Malayali Sabha*, a larger association of cultural-political activists was actually evolved out of the '*Malayalee social union*' the small association which functioned within the campus under the leadership of the veteran native politicians like P.Thanupilla, C.Krishna Pilla, P.Ayyappan Pilla and others. It was the same institution which had provided motivation for organizing the '*Malayalee Trading Company*'. This trading company, which had been originally intended for developing a proficiency for trade among the natives by taking over the right of transactions from the



*paradeshees* did function for twenty five years”,<sup>78</sup>

The idea of Malayalam in short meant to be a platform of resistance against the historical regimes of the period, an arena of war and an altar of re-union, a radical sensibility which formed a tribunal of heterogeneous people of the country. The tumultuous occurrence of the feeling of a Malayali identity as we witness in the case of the historical romance of the *rajyam* in Tiruvitamcore should of course be distinguished from the proliferation of the term as a concept of a linguistic identity, the name of a homogenous horizontal unity of the consumer-readers conjured up by the print-media the so called ‘imagined’ community in Andersonian terms.<sup>79</sup> The missionary as well as administrative modes of discourses, the genres of literature, histories sociologies and ethnographies produced both by the foreigners as well as the natives of the period generally used the term as a device of identification to differentiate it from the erstwhile peoples of the South, the Tamils, Kannadins and others in geographical linguistic or empirical terms. However the term Malayalam appears in the genre of the historical romance in its association with the *rajya*-movement in a first-person narrative, in the addressor instance yet unaffected by the self and its interests. And ultimately it reveals itself to be an *affect-phrase* a ‘*differend*’ which historically suffered ‘wrong’ in the political and discursive assaults unleashed by the powers of the times. It occurs as the sign of an Idea of the ‘unitive whole’ of a people aspiring for progress and which itself signals progress. Unlike the hegemonic discourses which hold it as an object of a cognitive, descriptive, dialectical or speculative genre, the historical romance reinvents it as an object of a sublime Idea of reason which could not have any direct presentation or could be presented only in the negative manners of the ‘sign’.

Though the term Malayalam occurs less frequently in the Malayali Memorial it radiates the whole text as an affect-phrase as a sign of the ‘unitive whole’ aspired, presumed or felt by the *rajya*-people. This is well demonstrated in the strategic use of the term Malayali Hindus or Malayali Sudras destined to

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<sup>78</sup> N. Balakrishnan Nair, *Sakshal* C.V. (Tiruvanandapuram: Kamalalaya Printing Works & Book Depot, 1951.) 21-22

<sup>79</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities-Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism* (London : Verso, 1983), 41-49.

unmask the universal implication of the term Hindus and to differentiate the natives victimised by the regime of foreign dominance, from the Tamil or Maratha Brahmins and other communities who represented the colonial dominance and aggression. Moreover, the statistical data and the conditions of the people of Cochi and Malabar are cited (who are signified as the brethren of the respective communities) for contrasting the case of Tiruvitamcore treating three of them as comprising a common unit or a cultural historical matrix, a higher unity specifically in terms of an Idea. Significantly it was from the mutual discussions of the Malayali youths hailing from these three areas who met in Madras that the idea of the Malayali memorial sprung up.<sup>80</sup> The resurgence of the feeling of belonging to the Malayali nationality among the Malayali youths who lived and met in the cosmopolitan city of Madras might be seen as the political expression of their radical difference from the various nationalities and powers engaged in contestatory relations in the period. The fellowship and involvement shown by the Keralites hailing from two other states who resided in Madras and elsewhere to the successful execution of the Memorial also suggest the precipitation of the feeling of the identity of a Malayali people in this historical juncture as the mark of a political self-reflection rather than a 'self-consciousness'.

The Malayalam is recognised by the *rajya* politicians not merely as one of the medium of expression but as some thing which amounts to be a weapon of resistance; the mother-tongue of the idea of freedom or liberation. Significantly, one of the demands raised by the memorial is to promulgate the knowledge of 'Malayalam' as the necessary prerequisite for getting entrance into the governmental service:

For all public servants in the State, a knowledge of Malayalam (the language of the country) must be made absolutely mandatory. In the case of foreigners, it must be insisted that within a prescribed period, subsequent to their appointment, they should pass an examination in the vernacular of the country. They should not be eligible for service unless they furnish evidence that they have attained a prescribed proficiency in Malayalam.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Robin Jeffrey, op.cit., 166, 167.

<sup>81</sup> Included in the document C. No. 1744, related to the "Memorial" as cited by Dr. K. Ayyappa Paniker, *C.V.Raman Pilla* (Thiruvananthapuram: Dept. of Publications for the University of Kerala, 1993), 34.

This demand implicates not only the general concern for the *prajas* to promote the prominence of the native language in the administrative affairs of the country but also their indignation and resistance towards the assaults on the Malayali language and culture perpetrated by the 'foreign' Indian administrators. The essay *Videseeyamedhavitvom* satirically reveals the awkward state of affairs in the country where the Malayalam is taught by the teachers who did not have any primary knowledge on Malayalam and where the native language is subordinated to Tamil which had almost been raised to the status of an official language under the regime of the 'foreign' dominance.

The political intensity of the self-reflection, the dynamic affirmation of the feeling of Malayali identity as demonstrated by the *rajya*-politicians of Tiruvitamcore thus should be seen as radically associated with the *praja*-people's resistance to the colonial order of the times. The politics of identity involved in the assertion of the Malayali nationality here implicates a political polarisation between the people and the alien powers who were set on a programme of political and cultural conquest devouring the cultural differences and the singularities of the people. The Identity or nationality politics here means the radical self-positioning of the people on behalf of a sublime idea of people's unity and heterogeneity which could rightly be called a battle of positioning in Gramscian terms. The assertion of the identity in this case should be seen as exceeding a mere sense of unity or homogeneity forged on the basis of geographical, linguistic or discursive norms and affiliations.

The political thrust of the affirmation of a Malayali nationality as a radical mode of defence and resistance against the colonial assaults on the people is well-brought out by the essays of Videsheeya Medhavitvom. The regime of the 'foreign dominance' as the essay reveals us has immersed not only in a devastating programme of plundering the indigenous wealth but also in destroying the cultural identity of the people. The assaults on the nationality of the people by the Tamil administrators and their associates and aides are found to be more disastrous than that inflicted by the colonial regime of the British. This is disclosed by contrasting the present condition of the city of Tiruvananthapuram, with Ernakulam which is found to have rather been successful to some extent, in keeping intact, its cultural

identity, its Malayali traits unlike the former. The author here brings out the bitter and the complex reality of the period, that The Vanchirajyam which has triumphantly encountered and survived the threat of even Tippu and others has now been turned out to be the defeated, or victims in their own land under the regime of the ‘foreign dominance’.

Gradually the whole symptoms of culture got changed. The capital of the *rajyam* had been surrendered to a mixing that seems to be non-Keralite in its form. Eranakulam which has the misfortune of the presence of the *sthanapati*-the resident-only occasionally, still shines as a Keralite city. However, the Vanchirajyam which had been unreachable to even Hyder and Tippu might be seen in the eyes of the visitors of Tiruvanandapuram--Ananthasayana nagaram--as abode of the victorious *pandyadesha* Brahmins.<sup>82</sup> ]

This cultural mix which the author calls the *akerleeya mishrata* (the non-Keralite mixture) is detected as the evidence of a silent and disguised conquest of culture by the aliens over the people of Tiruvtamcore whose cultural identity as Keralites is thus adversely affected. Ernakulam, which seemed to be ‘more fortunate than Thiruvanthapuram, because of the lesser degree of foreign intervention as undergone by it, is found to be still shining like a Keralite city’. The threat of the cultural invasion as raised by the Tamil Brahminical administrator is recognized to be more devastating and immediate than that of the British rule. This double mode of colonialism has robbed off the cultural identity of the people in two ways: it has brought forth a cultural mix between the Tamil and Keralite traits which has a damaging effect on the latter. Secondly it has turned Tiruvtamcore as the last refuge of the evil regime of *chatruvarnyam* which had been banished from all the prominent states of South India.

While glancing at the *koshakaryalaya* of the country, one encounters a strange scene which reminds of the third class trains that approaches the railway station of places like Viruthappetty in Kambancholan nadu. This would prompt the patriots to beat their heads in shame. The natives have to bow their head (in shame) seeing the wonder that the students get their education of the Malayalam language through the Tamil teachers. Thinking of the loss of wealth resulting from the evil service of the demonic tribes of dependents, the decadent state of our existence appears as a wrong model which has to be rejected. The natives who travel along countries like Hyderabad, Mysore, and Baroda would be surprised at the prosperity achieved by them from their bond with the British. As Tiruvtamcore has given refuge to the *Dushkali* that is *varnashramam*—which has been exiled from other states due to the influence of reform—the decline of people’s propitious prosperity is

<sup>82</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla, *The Videseeya Medhavithvom*, 40.

accelerated daily.<sup>83</sup> (Italics researcher's)

Significantly, the essays of *Videsheeyamedhavithvom* inscribe the traces of the idea of a 'Malayali' identity providing valuable insights regarding its historical occurrence across time as the sign of people's self-reflection of a 'unitive whole', as a fortress and of force-field of people's resistance against the foreign invasion. This would perhaps be seen as the earliest instance in the history of Modern Keralam of attempting a historical reflection on the idea of a '*Malayala-rajyam*' a '*Keralakhandam*' or '*Kerala mandalam*' in its ethno-political dimensions.

The essay which also serves as a clue to the political implications of the historical novels of C.V traces out a vertical zone of Idea, a libidinal site of shared dreams, remembrances and fields of action in the notion of a *Keralakhandam* or *Malayala-rajyam*, even though the *rajyam* of Tiruvitamcore, the primary political unit of the period, is found to be the historical manifestation of the former. Notably, this could be seen as the first 'historico-political' tract in Keralam in the modern times which re-visioned the idea of united Keralam as a heterogeneous assemblage of peoples comprising the *rajyams* of Malabar, Kochi and Tiruvitamcore, as a cultural matrix of an Idea.<sup>84</sup> The dreams and the 'immemorial' traces of a united Keralam inscribed by it anticipate the later movements of *aikyakeralam* those sprung up during the forties and fifties of nineteenth century at the juncture of the reconstitution of states in India after its independence.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 40-41.

<sup>84</sup> C.V's concern with the progress of Keralam is reflected in the speech made by him at the occasion of the celebration of his *Shashtipoorti*. P.K.Parameswaran Nair, op.cit., 294-295.

<sup>85</sup> However, we might discern a qualitative difference between the two of them. Though the importance of the later movement for *aikyakeralam* might not be overlooked, it might be reviewed as a displaced or deformed expression of the political desire for a *Malayali* identity. If the *rajya*-movement of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries heralded the political dream-work of a *Malayalarajyam*, the *aikyakerala* movement of the later period inscribed Keralam or Malayalam as merely one of the linguistic states reconstituted in the Independent India, as the monolingual dominion of a centralised semi-unitary state. If the latter imagined Keralam as a horizontal consumerist solidarity the former which drew its source of inspiration and energy from the political and generic matrix of the historical romance, re-inscribed Keralam as the politico-ethnic desire of the people, the object of a sublime idea of people-hood linked on a vertical plane. 'Keralam' on the contrary, was not conceived as a cultural matrix of *rajyams* or a sovereign union of *rajya*-nationalities (as the former did) by the chief ideologues of the *eikyakerala* movement, but as a sub-nationalism, a subordinate polity with the status of a sub-state under the overarching authority of the Indian nation-state. In short the idea of Keralam emerges in a displaced form of a *samsthana* – consciousness produced as the by product of the Pan Indian Nationalistic consciousness in the later movement for *eikyakeralam*. Significantly, the *rajya*-nationalism of Malayalam as

Significantly, it is the idea of Keralam which is upheld by the essayist as the core unit of culture, polity and identity of the natives, as the sign of the 'unitive whole' of the people, rather than the concept of a Pan-Indian entity usually upheld by the nationalist ideologues of the British Indian States. Keralam is conceived for instance as a specific sovereign national culture or polity similar to Japan or China by the author when he makes crucial reflections on the importance of the politics of nationality or identity. It stands as an indicator of a vertical progression of culture, a fully blown nationality though a 'minor' one in view of the grand narratives of national histories.

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invented by the historical romance radically differs from this *sasthan*-consciousness or the sub-national feeling upheld by the later movement for *eikyakeralam* in the sense that it embodies an alternative narrative of nation, polity and people. It would also explain as to why the dissection of Kanyakumari and Nanchinadu, the heartline of the Tiruvitamcore *rajyam* from the newly constituted Keralam did not evoke any sense of indignation or protest among the activists of the movement of *eikyakeralam*. It would be relevant here to note the words of caution, uneasiness, and pain relieved by Dr. K. Bhaskaran Nair in an essay written just before the event of the merging of Tiruvitamcore and cochi in 1949 July associated with the reconstitution of the Kerala State. The title of the essay 'Before the tribunal of history' (*Charithrathinte Neethi Peedhothinumunpil*) significantly implicates the subtle and complex issues of justice involved in the dissolution of the former *rajyas* and cultures on behalf of the project of National Integration and reconstitution. See Dr. K. Bhaskaran Nair, *Dhanyavadam* (Kozhikodu: Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., 1989), 168-177. The essay exemplifies the intensive feeling just lying behind the consciousness of the identity of a Tiruvitamcore *rajyam* and the sense of belonging imparted by the idea of a Kerala culture, which seem to be so different from the *Samsthana*-consciousness or a *rashtra*-consciousness betrayed by the nationalists and the communists respectively. This would also implicate the bitter story of the ethnic, cultural and emotional partitioning of each people, culture or polities that took place within the union of India, which were reconstituted into arbitrary units of mono-lingual states by the administrative measures of a modern nation-state. This is the story which is submerged under the 'Great Indian Story' of 'National Independence' and 'Integration.' The historical significance of the ethno-national formations of heterogeneous *rajya* polities have been overlooked by the ideologues of the unitary Indian State constituted on the Euro-modernistic concept of state and nation. We should also take into account of another important concept raised by the Marxist intellectuals of the period on the nationality question of Keralam. They differ from the nationalist school only in the sense that they write Keralam as not a subnation or substate but as a nation in replica of Euro-modern mode of nation-state. E.M.S in his significant work on the nationality question of Kerala writes off the matrix of the *rajyam* as a feudal regressive state, and reconstructs Keralam in terms of the Leninistic notions of nation-state. The Keralam emerges as a horizontal, pastoral solidarity of new subjects in his work which seems to be quite insensitive to the *rajya* politics of Malayalam evoked by the historical romance. See E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Keralathinte Deseeya Prasnam*, E.M.S, *Sampoornakritikal*, Sanchika - 11 (Tiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2000), 191-201. However, we might detect certain vibrant and radical streams of creativity and political revolt within the *eikyakerala* movement which goes beyond the official or the administrative implications of the movement. An exemplary instance would be seen in the aesthetic and cultural expressions of the period especially the poetry and prose of P. Kunchiraman Nair and others where we find eventful recurrence of the ethnic ballads of a Malayali people, the political aesthetics of a *rajya*-nationalism, inflamed by the desire for a *Malayalarajyam* (which amounts to an aesthetic revolt against the official modernistic regime of the period).

Of course there takes place a generic transition from the essay to the historical romance when the writer reinvents Keralam as an ethno-cultural matrix of identities as, the substratum or the *mandalam* of the *rajyams*, a higher and sublime level of the people's unity in heterogeneity, which transgresses the boundaries of caste, community and class. The author makes it explicit when he re-discovers the paramount principles of self-determination and self-rule as the most important means to counter the dangers of colonial interventions and invasions on native peoples. He alerts us that only those nations that had vigilantly thwarted the intrusion of foreigners into the native matrix of power and government had been able to achieve great progress and prosperity. "The secret behind the great success and fame achieved by Japan in the realm of handicrafts and in the arts of acquiring wealth and abundance for a prolonged period lies in the vigilance shown by them in prohibiting the entrance of foreigners into their *mathrubhoomi* (motherland)". Likewise, "the secret of the progress achieved by the people of China also lies in the national self-consciousness and the political alertness shown by them in prohibiting foreign interventions in their motherland." The progress in terms of thinking the sublime in one one's identity is possibly realized only where the culture of skills in Kantian terms (and sensitivity to the sublime) has developed to a higher level by minimizing conflicts and inducing the sensitivity of the people towards the feeling of the sublime, towards the reflective matrix of idea. This would in short index the receptivity of the people towards the occurrence of the feeling of the sublime, or the primacy given by them to the politics of Idea. Thus the identity movement here exceeds the doctrines which professes the determinism of one instance either politics or cultural, or economic as super-arching principle behind the progress of peoples. Re-kindling new thoughts on the universal historical principles of identity politics, the essayist comes back to the native or local history to elucidate to how the people of Keralam confronted this issue in earlier times. And here he makes a radical reflection not only on the logisitics but also the 'super-sensual' reason that characterizes the politics of identity. Once again the essay demonstrates the dynamic coupling or the assemblage of the 'sacred' and the 'secular' the spiritual and the political as worked out by the rajya-people. And it also torches light on the hidden aspect of the political energetic of

the rajyam. He traces out one of the crucial steps taken by the Keralites from the time 'immemorial' for warding off the threat of foreign aggression: the installation of the shrines of the Sastha and Kali. "Keralam also had managed to secure this protection through the installation of shrines of Sastha and Kali".<sup>86</sup> The worship of the identity or the nationality invariably would lead one to a matrix of worship, both in temporal and sacred terms. For ensuring the protection of this deity — *Kerala rajyam*--who occurs in a quasi temporal quasi spiritual layer of the radical nowness of the aesthetic reflection, the catastrophic juncture of the historical romance, the ancient ones, the predecessors of the present 'us' are revealed to have invoked the forces and energies from another deep source of culture, the 'sacred' or the 'divine' which in the case of the native people's faith has been derogated as pagan or heathenish aberrations by the missionary modernist sensibility. The ethnic self-reflection here is not constrained by the humanist, pan-nationalist and the secularist, notions that ruled the modern nation.

The identity is thus shown as a force-field where the deities or spirits both pertaining to the 'sacred' and the 'temporal' are immersed in an ethno cosmic drama playing out a higher accord of faculties phrases and selves which of course subverts the imagination of the modern nation state. The *moortis* or *deities* are the locus of forces or energies. The 'patriotism' itself is hailed as the *janatahridayasthamoorthi*<sup>87</sup> (the deity residing in the hearts of the people). And the rajya-politics is more concerned with this catastrophic inter-play of forces than the play of power/ knowledge which demarcates the ethos of the nation-state. The essay thus provides 'pagan' insights on the cultural history of the Malayali people. And it is by the churning out of the 'little narratives' of the people, their legends, myths fables and oral traditions, their local and folk-histories that the essayist could rediscover the ethno-political matrix of people's identity.

The Malayali nationality or identity is in short traced out by the writer as an ethnic site where the heterogeneous phrases or genres of the 'political', 'sacred' or the 'aesthetic', arrive at a higher accord and where the 'sacred' is brought to a dynamic reciprocation with the political force-field of the people. He reinvents the

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<sup>86</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla, *The Videseeya Medhavithvom*, 39-40.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.



political connotation of the indigenous faith, deconstructs the religious and ritualistic intonations of it. The inception of the shrines of Kali and Sasta, and the faith pertaining to them is revealed to be a political move taken by the Malayali-people to protect them from the external aggression and the internal feuds and to sustain that higher accord of the people brought out indeterminately on behalf of an Idea. Though their real intentions are distorted later by the preceding generations, these are reread as the symbols or icons of faith not destined to partition or segregate people but to unify them in a higher level. They are viewed by the writer as the sign of people's accord justice and sovereignty and their idea of the 'absolute'. They are traced out to be the part of a politico-ethnic logistics invented by the people to guard them from foreign aggressions and intrusions and from the threat of self-disintegration.

The historical novels of C.V. demonstrate how these forces of the sacred, the gods and goddesses intervene and interrupt the course of history in favour of the *rajya* people as the fellow players or warriors of the veera actors.<sup>88</sup> And more over they unravel how they enhance and produce in alliance with the human actors a politico-spiritual zone of joy, a paradoxical joy in the sublime idea of the *rajyam*.

The essay now goes on inscribing the non-linear history of Keralam which it considers as a 'unitive whole' or a Mandalam of Malayali people.:

But later that *mandalam* (Keralam) disintegrated and one portion was subjected to the British rule and the other two became native states known as Kochi and Tiruvitamcore. When a resident, (*sthanapati*) representative of the British Empire was installed in the latter states, peace and consequently the people's lethargy increased *thus the divine nature and necessity that had been characteristic of the relation between raja and praja had been lost.*<sup>89</sup>

The essayist who is a historical romancer as well, here ironically traces out the historical junctures of the disintegration of the united Mandalam of Keralam. It is pointed out that long before the advent of the British, the fragmentation of

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<sup>88</sup> This would suggest that it is not just as mere aesthetic or rhetoric devices that the Gods and Goddesses like *Sastha* and *Kali* partakes and intervenes in the narrative events of the historical novels of C.V. Kunchaikutty Pilla for instance emerges as an incarnation of *Sastha* when he ascends the mountain in order to destroy the bund. The turbulent flood evoked by this act is called by the narrator as '*Pravaha kaali*'. It is also alluded to as the *varunaasthram* sent by Padmanabha against the *agneyasthram* of the Tippu.

<sup>89</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla, *Videseeya Medhavithvom*, 40.

*Keralakhandam* has occurred, and there arose three separate native states in Malabar, Kochi, and Tiruvitamcore. Malabar later became a province of the British Indian Empire. Although the states like Kochi and Tiruvitamcore, still continued to exist as separate states in appearance, they were actually robbed off their political sovereignty by the British rule. In the cases of Tiruvitamcore and Kochi, the British intervention in the form of the inception of a *sthanpathi* or resident marks the point of rupture implicating the deformation and destabilisation of the *rajyam* as a sovereign political principle and the appropriation of the native mode of government by the colonial-modern apparatus of the new State the new Order. And these 'conditions of peace', incepted by the new regime paradoxically inflicted an inertia, and a grave insensitivity among the new subjects towards the primal ideas of the *rajyam*. Subsequently, it led to the collapse of the paramount principle of the *rajya*-polity : the idea of a divine and irrevocable relationship of love and devotion between the *raja* and *praja*. With the ascension of the regime of *Videsheeya Medhavithvom* through the importation of the Marathi or Tamil administration this process of the dis-figuration or disruption reached a disastrous level which threatened the cultural and political sovereignty of the *rajya* people of Tiruvitamcore. Keralam which is reinvented as the politico-cultural substratum of the *rajyams*, as a united whole, is thus considered as the pre-history of the present day *rajyams* all of which have been in due course devoured by the British. Keralam appears here as the historical recurrence of a higher dream, a self-remembrance which is to be forgotten under the spell of the modernist discourses, an ethnic sign of people's desire to be one in many and many in one and its reflection of the 'sublime'.

The essayist deviates here from the common practice of writing history, as a linear, diachronic progression of events in time. There is no original moment, in the non-linear, anachronistic and 'paralogic' time of historical romance which infects the genre of essay; instead, there are only events linked to events marking cataclysmic points of transitions. Keralam emerges as a sign of history, an idea of people's progress, wrote in non-linear and vertical linkages of times and phrases. It is perceived as an occurrence of the sublime idea of a people-hood which recurs along the vertical plane.

Here we may stumble upon the presentational issues at stake in the inscription of the identity of a people which we hold as an object of an Idea. Let us be here reminded of the critique of judgment produced by Immanuel Kant, and the insightful rereading of it provided by Jean-François Lyotard which unravels the discursive assaults inflicted by the linear determinate discourses or the 'legal faculties' on the idea of progress by representing, reducing or immobilizing it into determinate concepts.<sup>90</sup> The reflective judgment carried out by them on the complex 'passages' of phrases and genres nullifies the validity of writing the identity or nationality (being objects of 'Idea') in the speculative or dialectical genre of history. And the importance of the historical romance derives from the fact that it is a genre of genres which incessantly invents a 'negative' presentation, a 'negative aesthetics' only which could ensure the competence of it to write the identity of Malayalis or any other community of people. As the notion of identity is an indeterminate object of an Idea it is found to be irrepresentable in the empirical or dialectical genres according to the critical judgment of generic passages or transitions brought forth by Kant.<sup>91</sup> Such an illuminative perspective on reflection and presentation might empower us to judge the present-day attempts to represent, define, paraphrase, substitute or translate the idea of identity as into a discursive plane as illegitimate and unjust. Because, this would invariably lead to the immobilization or reification of the idea involved in it. The identity of a people in short is irreducible into diachronic phenomena, data, or empirical or determinate forms, examples, emblems, images or symbols, predestined meanings, metaphors or standardised behaviours. The discursive formation, the horizontal and diachronic laws of progression characteristic to the genre of essay now recedes back to be replaced by the negative genre of the historical romance, to provide a just presentation to the identity of Kerala or Malayalarajyam.

However, it is in the historical novels of C.V. that we find the culmination of the cultural politics of identity or nationality as enunciated by the *rajya*-movement. We might see their culmination of the historical romance of the *rajyam*. What we call the *rajya*-movement in short is a micro-national, politico-

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<sup>90</sup> Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, 164-165.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-165.

aesthetic, 'minor' movement marked by its heterogeneity which might be subtly distinguished from the patriotic or the Pan-nationalist movements that are generally found predominant in the British Indian provinces and elsewhere in the world, of the times. The politics of identity in the case of the historical romance is paralogically a politics of difference in the sense that it is a resistance of the 'heterogeneous' against the 'homogeneous' and 'horizontal' unities offered by the colonial or nationalist modes of powers. At the same time it stands for a paradoxical unity or a 'higher accord' of the different and the heterogeneous phrases, times, forces and peoples.

The historical romance in short invents the identity of the native people in the sublime idea of Keralam or Malayalam as a sign of progress, and inscribes it in a negative aesthetics. The Keralam or Malayalam does not appear there as a mere *deshom*, a locality or a nation-state or a sub-national state as the modernist discourses of Malayalam portrays it. Instead, it occurs as a *rajyam*, specifically a *dharmarajyam*. It is not something which already happened in the past history or which might happen in the promised land of future but it happens in the here and now of the historical romance. As it is an indeterminate object of an Idea of absolute reason, and as its nowness is indescribable in diachronic or serial time of history it can be invented only in terms of what Kant would call a 'sign'. And such a sign of history is brought forth through the resurrection of certain catastrophic events pertaining to the *rajya*-epoch of the immediate past and the dynamic coupling of them with the present. Keralam as an idea of the 'absolute reason', the 'unitive whole', the progress of the people, or the infinity of the people's time is therefore 'recalled', 'anticipated' and 'indexed' in these events re-inscribed by the historical romance. It epitomises an indeterminate and heterogeneous community which is not founded on the 'political economy' of 'communication' and 'capital' but on the catastrophic resurgence of a sublime Idea, an infinite feeling of the infinite in the higher accord of the heterogeneous phrases genres and linkages worked out by the people, in the finite world. It is a 'community without communication' which is brought-forth by the sensitivity and commitment shown by the people towards the matrix of the Idea of sublime.

The term Keralam or Malayalam recurs in lesser frequency in

Marthandavarma, the earliest historical novel of C.V., in contrast to his later ones *The Dharmaraja* and *Ramraja Bahadoor*. However, the crucial issue at stake in the war of succession fought between Marthandavarma on the one side and Thampis and Pillas on the other is shown to be the *dharmic* ideals or values traditionally upheld by the Malayali people. Marthandavarma's struggle against the Thampi faction is depicted not merely a struggle for usurpation of power or continuation of the traditional kingdom but as a political struggle of the *praja*-people of Tiruvitamcore for the repossession of self-rule and self-determination and a *dharmic* mode of polity marked by its '*Malayality*' against the threat posed by an alien mode of power. The whole conflict is unravelled as the culmination of a political or cultural polarisation, a *dharmic* battle of idea where the identity of Keralam is at stake. This is why the *praja*-people, the *veera*-selves of the country march behind Marthandavarma who is held by them as the champion of this *dharmic* cause and whom they bring to victory.

The narrator of Marthandavarma dramatically unravels this politics of identity involved in the war of succession through the words of Kazhakkottathu Pilla. Significantly he is the only person who dares to question and dissent with the decisions taken by the *sabha* of Ettuveetil Pillas to forge out a political intrigue and coupe against the King. Kazhakkottathu Pilla opposes the resolution of the *sabha* to topple the accession of King Marthandavarma because he views it as a grave deviation from the norms of succession traditionally followed by the Malayali people. To him, it meant the transplantation of the principles of patriliney as represented by Thampis over the matrilineal affiliations which governed the indigenous polity on matters of inheritance and succession. He argues that "it is illegitimate for a few persons to topple in a fine morning the custom traditionally observed by the people from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari—which is held traditionally as the extent of the cultural locale of 'Keralam'—and to claim that it is justice".<sup>92</sup> He walks out of the *sabha* in protest against its unjust decisions, yet, ensuring that he would never betray them and would stand behind them in the oncoming battle. Pilla however, never abandons his faith and confidence in the ultimate triumph of the political idea of Keralam: "It is not without any intention

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<sup>92</sup> Marthandavarma, (1983), 178.

that the shrines of twenty four *sasthas* were installed in the foothills of the mountain for the protection of Keralam in ancient days”<sup>93</sup>. The novelist also portrays Keralam through the eyes of others as in the case of the eulogy of Keralam provided by the Muslim trader Hakim: “Keralam as a heaven where the trees of money grows with abundant fruits”<sup>94</sup>

The frequency of the recurrence of the terms Keralam, Keralakhandam or Keralamandalam, the differentiation of Keraleeyam from akeraleeyam increases when we come to the later novels, *Dharmaraja* and *Ramarajabahadoor*. This would implicate the intensification of the political self-reflection of the Malayali people, the historical momentum achieved by the politics of identity among the people in the past epoch presented by these novels as well as the historical present of their presentation. If the former is marked mainly by the threat of the oncoming invasion of the Sultans of Mysore, and the resistance of the people against it, the latter implicates the political and cultural invasion of the dual colonialism, one that of British and the other the regime of the *Videsheeyamedhavithvom* remotely controlled by the British.

The novel, *Dharmaraja*, begins in a historical juncture clouded by the threat of invasions raised by alien powers like the Pandyas as well as Hyderali of Mysore who has just attacked Madhura that time. The security and sovereignty of Tiruvidamcore is found to be in danger, although the kingdom is portrayed to be on the path of expansion and progress under the benevolent reign of Marthandavarma. The narration however advances to the period of the ascension of Dharmaraja as the king and Kesavapilla in to the prominent positions of royal service. It also witnesses the intervention of Hyderali in the internal affairs of the *rajyam* with the purpose of igniting internal strife and disturbance among the people and forging out a coupe against the king by using the dissidents within the kingdom.

Whenever there arises occasions to politically situate the *rajyam* of Tiruvidamcore the narrator of *Dharmaraja* unequivocally places it as an inseparable entity of Keralam. The Vanchirajyam, as the novelist asserts, is a kingdom which still remains as the prominent portion of Kerala Mandalam. And he

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.,181.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.,234.

appeals that the tumultuous events of violence narrated by him should be seen as testifying to the fact that there lived certain lion-hearts, or brave souls in this country also.

However, the myths as well as the scholars of myths hail that the installation of great nations (*Maharashtras*) are grounded on blood-stained foundations. Couldn't it be argued that even the modern historical texts remain as the monuments of blood-shed and of blood shedders? As this is the case, if certain killings take place, in the turbulence of the coming of the state (*samsthana*) even in the case of the Vanchirajyam, which still remains as the prominent portion of Keralamandalam that had been ruled by Perumals, it would only prove that there resided certain lion-hearts extremely courageous.<sup>95</sup>

If the novel *Marthandavarma* esteems the *savissha sree* (specific graciousness in terms of beauty)<sup>96</sup> inherent to the women of Keralam, in *Dharmaraja* he talks of a cultural trait of graciousness specific to Keralite, a *Keraleeya sree* (a graciousness in terms of wealth character and culture which is characteristic to Kerala people). Narrating the genealogy of the Kaliprakotta Tampis of the southernmost parts of Tiruvitamcore one of whom were to play an important role in the narrative the narrator brings to our notice that these people were in the earlier period gifted with this cultural trait specific to Malayalis and how they lost it later.<sup>97</sup> The novel *Marthandavarma* satirically shows us how Sundarayyan the evil and villainous character is beaten down as if a punishment for mispronouncing and thus deforming *Sivanandalahari*, the work of Sankaracharya whom the author suggestively calls the author of *Keraleeyachara* (for making the *kriti--sivanandalahari* of *Keraleeyacharakartha* a *vikruti*).<sup>98</sup> Significantly it is by detecting the excessive mixing of the aesthetic flavour characteristic to the Sanskrit works specifically produced by Keralites like *Narayaneeyam* that Nanthiyathunnithan, the enlightened and aristocratic *praja* who himself is a great Sanskrit scholar identifies the real nature of Hari Panchanana the fake yogi in masquerade.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>97</sup> *Dharmaraja*, (1999), 151.

<sup>98</sup> *Marthandavarma* (1983), 189.

<sup>99</sup> *Dharmaraja*, (1999), 295.

It is in the novel *Ramarajabahadoor* that we find the culmination of the political reflection of a Malayali nationality where the *rajyam* of Tiruvitamcore fully synchronises with the idea of Keralam and where we find again in the historical annals of the people a radical resurgence of the politico-spiritual feeling of an *AikyaKeralam*. Although this feeling is brought-forth by the meteoric invasion of Keralam by Tippu, and whose assaults on the cultural and political fabric of the people gave rise to polarisation in terms of nationality, to the novelist it was the heroic resistance shown by the veera people of Tiruvitamcore that provided it a sublime dimension.

The term Dharmaraja itself denotes the righteousness of the King Ayilyam Tirunal Ramvarma and the *dharmic* thrust of his reign as demonstrated by his daring attempt to offer shelter and assistance to the Malayali 'bretheren' of Malabar and Cochi who fled in fear of the assault of Tippu. Though this has bestowed the king the honourable title *dharmaraja* it also at the same time evoked the wrath of Tippu provoking him to invade Tiruvitamcore. This would be marked as a juncture of historical rupture in the annals of the malayali people which had first exposed them to the 'mass' experience of war and therefore history which according to Luckacs has been the motive force of the historical romance in Europe. Thanks to the courtly historian Sankunny Menon, who perhaps for the first time insightfully revealed the insufficiency of not only the genre of history but also that of the historical romance as produced by Scot to present the turbulence of this event..:

Tippu was certainly in a very awkward predicament and one for which he was not prepared. He had no idea of what a Malabar monsoon was. His army had no shelter; no dry place for parade; all their ammunition, accoutrements &c., got wet. Even the very necessaries of life were washed away by the impetuous current of the flooded river. These untoward events exercised a depressing influence in the mind of Tippu. If he had ever repented of his cruel actions in his life, it was at this moment. He repented his having reduced to ashes large pagodas, churches and other edifices which could have now afforded him and his army shelter and protection from the severity of the rains. Cholera, small-pox and other epidemics broke out. Provisions became scanty and the scarcity was followed almost by famine. Numbers began to perish by disease and hunger. The lawless people took advantage of the time and commenced plundering every thing that they could get hold of, and



in fine, *the state of the country had become so desolate, that even the pen of Sir Walter Scott, the great Novelist, would find it difficult to give an adequate description of it.*<sup>100</sup> (Italics Researcher's)

C.V. the historical romancer par excellence however, reinvents the event of war and the people's resistance to it as a 'sign' of history or 'progress' as a radical juncture of the catastrophic reoccurrence of a Malayala rajyam, an Aikya Keralam as a sublime feeling of an idea of absolute, as an object of the political aesthetics of the historical romance. More than a religious aggression, the Tippus invasion is shown to be an assault on the political and cultural identity of the Malayali people.:

...That Tiger (Tippu) launched a fierce entour arraying a sizeable troupe of soldiers for the sake of the devastation of Keralakhandam where his father has already implanted the tree of victory. The establishments of the *Bhargava Sankaras*, the sacred threads emblematic of Aryan culture and the *poorvasikhas* which are the marks of Keralam, all these were evaporated on the extremity of the hotness emitted by the religious obstinacy of Tippu.<sup>101</sup>

The reception and shelter given to the large number of refugees flown from Malabar also is shown to have opened doors to the *Akeraleeyas* (sent as spies, emissaries with their secret mission of evoking disturbances and insurrections in the kingdom).<sup>102</sup> The novel however marks this invasion as a juncture of progress in the sense that it has brought into forefront the heroic valour and political commitment of the people evoking sublime feelings. Among the catastrophic experiences and cultural legacies imparted by the invasion of Tippu the narrator specifically esteems the blissful artistic experience provided perhaps for the first time to the sensibility of Keralites by the Hindustani music which resonated in the military camps of Tippu.

Keralam was not fortunate enough to experience before the tragic experiences it had undergone by the entrance of that militia such a musical concert reaching in accompaniment to the flow of the waves of light soft wind. ....<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Sankunny Menon, op.cit., 233-234.

<sup>101</sup> *Ramaraja Bahadoor*(2001),18. It is to be noted that the term *mathom* in Malayalam denote not only religion but also 'opinion' as its primal meaning.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 338-339.

While retrieving the events of the heroic resistance offered by the Malayali people against the danger posed by Tippu, the narrator also makes insightful reflections on the new subjects of the present epoch, who are deprived of this intense feeling of identity under the cultural invasion of the west its colonial modern regime. The impact of this masqueraded war on the self and the sense of honour of the people is recognised to be more disastrous and devastating. This would perhaps be held as the most subtle sharp and radical critique raised by a native writer against the assaults of colonial western Order on the cultural identity of the people of Kerala.

The divine magnificence of the *Kerala Bhoolakshmi* was radiant with the abundance of gracious wealth and welfare. However, when it was 'civilized' by the fraudulent whiteness of the West, the golden radiance genuinely possessed by that shrine turned pallor. The members of the community born in those ancient times and held to be 'dark blind eras, were *Jayadrathas* in terms of the largeness of their body, *Arjunas*, in terms of safe-guarding of their self-pride, honour, and glory, *Jamadagnyas* in terms of the art of shedding blood, and *Bhageerathas* in the cases of taking up great tasks of perseverance and adventure. Perhaps those unprejudiced who have survived the last phase of this lineage of the past would acknowledge the 'hearty nature' of this primeval times.<sup>104</sup>

This ironical re-visioning of the western mode of reform and its disastrous effect on the indigenous culture again recur in another context when the narrator contrasts the present conditions of a province of Cochi with its pre-colonial grandeur and holiness.<sup>105</sup>

The cities and places are not mere the local of the civilizational habitation of the humans. They are also the mythic locales of *pauranic* or aesthetic geography of people, the passages of their politico-spiritual transactions; they are paramently the gracious abodes of deities. The narrator now makes a crucial observation, a contrasting between two places one Perumpadarppu and Tiruvananthapuram in terms of their sacred geographies. The temple abode in Peruppadarppu is seen as an earthly *Kailasam*, shone by the dalliance of Parvati. The city of Tiruvananthapuram in contrast is hailed as the earthly manifestation of *Vaikundam* adorned by *Vishnu* and *Lakshmi*. This would also illumine the heterogeneity of the

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 327.

faith sustained by the people. The distinctive use of the *Vaishnavite* and *Saivite* imageries bring out the subtle nuances, of faith, the variations and differences in the spiritual orientation followed by the people of these two *rajyams* of Malayalam, and their differential impact in the political and historical practices and destinies of the people. The historical romance revisions Tiruvananthapuram as a *vaikundam* the absolute abode of Vishnu, thus reinvents the vaishnavic thrust of the rajya-polity of Tiruvitamcore. The *rajyam* of Tiruvitamcore thus emerges in the historical romance as *vaikundam* the libidinal object of the vaishnavic desire, the object of faith, the non-finalisable finality of the vaishnavic Idea of the 'absolute', the political field of vaishnavic energies.

The narrator now goes back to the time of the event narrated, which anticipates the oncoming invasion of Tippu. The threat of the attack by the non-Keralites is shown to have been sending a note of gloom and horror in all objects of nature and culture.

The facades of the palatial apartments of the King that made the precincts of that lake grand and fascinating has turned gloomy by anticipating the invasion of the non-Keralites in that abode and the subsequent fall of the grandeur of her lord.<sup>106</sup>

Long before the emergence of the *Aikyakerala* movement in Keralam and the constitution of Keralam as one of the states of India in 1956, we thus witness the 'formless formation' of a Malayala rajyam, an Aikya Keralam in the historical novels of C.V. especially in *Ramarajabahadoor* as the political geography, a cultural habitat of an Idea. It is seen as rather implicating an ethnicity or a nationality than merely a territorial or administrative unit called *samsthanam*<sup>107</sup> (provincial state), or an *upadesheeyata* (sub-nationalism) or a linguistic unity as it

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 327-328 .

<sup>107</sup> The *samsthana* consciousness which was the ideological drive behind the *Aikyakerala* movement of the later period was actually a by-product of the 'Indian national-consciousness' developed out of the independence struggles of British Indian provinces. It has to be differentiated from the *rajya*-consciousness and sensibility shown by the historical romancers of Tiruvitamcore in presenting their idea of a *Malayala rajyam*. It exceeds the linguistic, administrative and consumeristic unities which had been the driving force behind the reconstitution of states. It springs from the cultural political matrix of Malayaali people. For a general understanding of the *aikyakerala* movement, See, P.Narayanan Nair, *Aranootandiloode*, (Thrissur: Kerala Sahithya Akademi, 1973); Cheriyan Philip, *Aikya keralam kal nootandiloode* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S, 1984).

was deformed later.<sup>108</sup> The cultural or aesthetic frontiers and horizons of a Malayali nationality or identity are mapped, its phrasal resources and force-fields, its strength and weaknesses, are inscribed, and its catastrophic occurrence is negatively presented by these historical novels. About sixty five of the prominent works are listed by the scholars of C.V. the verses, motifs and themes of which appear as epitaphs, allusions mythemes and notes of references in the historical novels. They include the *kilippattus*, of various authors, *tullal pattus*, *chambus*, *kaikotty kkalippattu*, *vanchippattus*, *attakkadhas* of both *thekkan* and *vadakkan* brands,, *keerthanams*, *tekkann pattus*, *Ramakadhappattu*, *manipravalas*, *prabandhams*, dramas, etc apart from the works not included in the list like *Valmeeki Ramayanam*, *Bhagavadgeetha*, *AbhijnanaSakunthalam*, the hymns of Sankaracharya, and other Sanskrit works<sup>109</sup>. Significantly most of these works mainly cited accrue to the Malayali writers and artists inseparably related to the genealogy of the cultural and aesthetic resurgence of the Keralam as a nationality distinctive from the Tamil, and Sanskritic traditions. It is through the subtle and dynamic reciprocation of these phrase-worlds with the core phrase-events of the narrative that the phrasal republic of a Malayalarajyam is installed by these novels. Keralam is thus invented as a nationality marked by its heterogeneity, as the historical romance of a sublime idea of progress which I would mark as the radical legacy of the historical novels of C.V. and the *rajya*-movement associated with it.

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<sup>108</sup> The concept of Keralam or Malayalam as raised by the later movements which emerged during the Nineteen Forties and Fifties was coined either in terms of a *samsthana* consciousness or a concept of Kerala state reproducing the Modern Nation-State or duplicating the Indian Nation. There also is heard the distinctive voice of leftist movement which imagined Keralam as a separate nation-state, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Keralathinte Deseeya prasnam in E.M.S. Sampoorana Kritikal*, 191-201.

<sup>109</sup> *Ramaraja Bahadoor*, 62-63.

## CHAPTER – IV

### RE-VISIONING THE GURU-MODE OF REFORM – SRI CHATTAMPI SWAMIKAL

A closer examination of the socio-religious reform initiated by Sree Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru – which is phrased here as the Guru-Mode of reform - is attempted in this chapter. The subtle differences and affinities among the Guru-Mode of reform, missionary discourses and the historical romance are looked into.

#### **The Tradition of Contesting Tradition**

The guru-reformers, had been as zealous and aggressive as the missionaries in their critiquing of conventions and traditions. However, the movement as ignited by Chattampi Swamikal and Narayana Guru marks a significant turn in the traditions of critiquing the tradition or convention within itself. Although it could be seen as an indigenous struggle for self-emancipation launched against certain forces of tradition it never attempted a total nullification of the native traditions as the missionary reform did. Significantly, it initiated a process of re-alignment with certain self-critical practices occurring and recurring within the tradition itself. The guru-reform in short, has identified itself with certain vibrant streams of tradition all the while contesting its theocracies and ritual regimes. We might see in them the resurgence of the radical lineages of dissent and protest within the indigenous faith that had been submerged in the modernistic and the Brahmanic discourses on tradition.

#### **The Lineage of anonymous *Avadhootas***

The crucial difference of the guru-reform from the missionary mode is that the former has drawn its strength from the radical streams of tradition despite its contestatory engagement with the conventional, ritualistic and priestly regimes of the indigenous faiths, with their stale decadent and malicious practices. The missionary discourses of reform on the other hand had launched an all-round onslaught on the traditions of the native people reducing them into a monolithic

discourse. Though we might acknowledge the important role played by the western discourses and its regimes of power in triggering off the conditions for the resurgence of the guru-reform in its ideational and institutional dimensions, the main sources of its inspiration lie in the native soil itself. It primarily drew its creative impetus from the progressive traditions of spiritual reform namely, *jnana*, *bhakti*, *yoga*, *visisthadvaita*, *siddhanta* or *advaita-vedanta* which gained new momentum in South India from the medieval period on wards.

Kunjan Pilla Chattampi who later was known as Chattampi Swamikal, had got his initiation from the folk-traditions of spirituality, from the *avadhootas*, *bhikshoos* or the vagrant mendicants, who were the disseminators of the indigenous spiritual wisdom. Curiously, it is a *mantra* called *Balaa Subrahmanya*, instructed by an anonymous old yogi that is said to have invoked the mind of Kunjan Pilla into the catastrophic occurrences of spiritual illumination and knowledge<sup>1</sup>. Significantly, it happens quite before his scholastic engagement with the classical and prominent discourses and texts of spirituality. Perhaps this seemed to be a great event not only in the life of the Kunjan Pilla, the young devotee of Lord *Subrahmanya*, but also in the annals of the Guru-Movement in Keralam. I would suggest, though it may seem too far-fetched, that it was the transmission of this *mantra*, this force-phrase or the phrase-force to his close associates like Sree Narayana Guru and disciples like Teertapada Swamikal and others and its figural operation on the mode of thinking and knowledge which have triggered off a wave of spiritual enthusiasm in the cultural scene of the period.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> K.Bhaskara Pilla, *Chattampi Swamikal* (Tiruvananthapuram: Sree Vidhyadhiraja Sabha, 1978), 20.

<sup>2</sup> The *mantra*, it is held, produces a crossing or redoubling of spiritual powers attributed to the *saiva*-deities of knowledge; it simultaneously evokes and remobilizes the deity-forces of *Baalaa*, connoting the deity of knowledge called *Saraswati* and *Subrahmanya* and inducing a reciprocal engagement between them producing a spiritual illumination in the self of the *upasaka*, thus ultimately metamorphosing him into the state of a *jnani*. Vidyaananda Teerthapada Swami writes that Sree Chattampi Swamikal had instructed the *chaturddasakshari mantram* known as *Bala Subrahmaniam*, to Narayanguru Swamy at Manalthitta in Vamanapuram Attukara. Preface, *Advaita chinthapaddhathi* ( Kottayam: Sree Teertapadaasramam, 1970), 11, 26; Vidyaananda Teerthapada Swamy, Pandit C. Ramakrishnan Nair, *Sree Teerthapaada Paramahamsa Swamikal*, Vol.1 (TeerthaPaadapuram: Teerthapaadaasramam, 1980), 66,75. Sree Teerthapaada Paramahamsa Swamikal explains the effectivity of the *mantra* in his own case and in the cases of Chattampi Swamikal, Narayana Guru and Neelakanda Teerthapada Swamikal. *ibid.*, 79-84. Chattampi Swamikal is said to have instructed the *mantra* to his disciples *Teeratha pada paramahamsa*, *Neelakantha Teertha pada*, and to Sree Narayana Guru((who is held to be a

The spiritual and scholarly quest of Kunjan Pilla reached a decisive turn when he joined The *Jnanaprajagarm* an association of scholars, artists and intellectuals convened by Pettayil Raman Asan in Tiruvananthapuram. Renowned scholars like Prof. P. Sundaran Pilla, a college student at that time, Thaikattu Ayyavu, and Swaminatha Desikar were the active participants of the Samajam. The scholarly deliberations, debates, and discussions conducted by the Samajam turned out to be the *Kalari* of wisdom which exposed Kunjan Pilla to the contemporary world of knowledge. There he came in to a dynamic contact with the spiritual and cultural movements and events that had made upheavals in the different parts of the world especially the Dravidian self-respect movement and the resurgence of the *jana*, *saiva* and *siddha* traditions of spiritual reform that took place in Tamilakom.

Swamikal's acquaintance with Thaikattu Ayyavu, a great exponent of *Hathayoga*, and Swaminatha Desikar a great Tamil scholar laid solid foundation for learning the yogic and devotional practices of Tamilakom and the language, literature and culture of Tamil people. The spiritual romance with the discourses and practices of the Tamil *sidhas*, *jnanis* and saints got a further boost and depth later on when he was fortunate enough to gain the scholarly tutelage of Subbha Jatapadhi, a great Tamil scholar of Kallaikurissi, who used to visit Tiruvananthapuram for participating in the 'Navarathri' session, those times.<sup>3</sup> While going back home, Jatapadhi brought his favourite disciple along with him which provided a better opportunity for KunjanPilla to gain a direct and deeper association with the cultural and spiritual heritages of Tamilakom.<sup>4</sup> However, these

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disciple of Chattampi Swamikal by certain writers, though, the notion is contested by others). Vidyanda Teerthapada Swami, Preface, *Advaita Chinthapaddhathi*, 11, 26; *Sree Teerthapada Paramahansa Swamikal*, 66, 75; On the issue of the controversy regarding whether Sree Narayana was a disciple of Chattampi Swamikal see, Dr. K.Maheswaran Nair, *Sree Chattampi Swamikal: Jeevithavum Kritikalum* (Thiruvananthapuram: Dooma Books, 1995), 75-77, 129-134; P. Natarajan, *The Word of the Guru*, (Banglore South: The Gurukulam Publishing House, 1952), 58, 59; Teertha Pada Paramahansa Swamikal, one of the chief disciples of Chattampi Swamikal, and foremost in socio-spiritual reform, has demonstrated the catastrophic effect of the realisation of the *mantra*, as producing spiritual enlightenment and creative efflorescence in the mind of the *upasaka*, and metamorphosing his self in to *siva*-hood or *siddha*-hood or the accomplished state of a *jnani* or a *paramahansa*. *Sree Teerthapada Paramahansa Swamikal* (Volume 1), 79-84.

<sup>3</sup> K.Bhaskara Pilla, op.cit., 27, 28-32.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 28-32.

scholarly, textual and cultural encounters could not pacify but only inflame the spiritual anguish felt by the young aspirant of *Jnana*. The credit again goes to an anonymous *Bhikshu* or *Avadhoota* who was, by accident, wandering around Vativeeswaram, for kindling a deeper state of spiritual illumination to Kunjan Pilla by means of *sparsadeeksha* (initiation through physical touch). It is this chance incident that is held to have catastrophically drawn Kunjan Pilla into the transcendental yet immanent occurrences of the illumination of the absolute *jnana*.<sup>5</sup>

Chattampi Swamikal represents an order of asceticism—*sanyaasaparambara*—which has thus shed itself off all the conventional ideas of *sanyasam*.<sup>6</sup> It affirms that *Jnanam* is the *moksha sadhanam*<sup>7</sup>—the means of salvation - and therefore the ‘true symptom of *sanyasam*.<sup>8</sup> Notably, it was not from any sort of institutionalised orders of spirituality or conventional *guruparamparas* but from the *avadhootha*, *siddha* or the unconventional folk traditions of spirituality that Chattampi Swamikal, and Sree Narayana Guru derived their inspiration or the initiation and accession into the guru-fold.<sup>9</sup> Their associations with the spiritual and epistemological lineages of *advaita*, *saivasiddhanta* and *jnana* had nothing to do with any official or formal regime of *acharyas* or *acharas* (conventions); and their linking with Sankara, *saivasiddhas*, and *visisthadvaitins* and other traditions of spirituality is marked rather by a vertical rather than a horizontal or conventional mode of affiliation.

### De-Brahminising the Tradition

Chattampi Swamikal initiated a new discursive contest in Keralam against the brahminical dominance and the regime of *chaaturvarnya* associated with it. In *Praacheena Malayalam*<sup>10</sup> which seems to have been written and disseminated

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>6</sup> Vidyaananda Teerthapaada Swamy, Preface, *Advaita Chintha Paddathi*, 4-7; *Sree Teerthapaada Paramahansa Swamikal*, Vol. 1, 511-515.

<sup>7</sup> Vidyaananda Teerthapaada Swamy, Preface, *Advaita Chintha Paddathi*, 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> K. Padmaja, *Philosophy of Sree Chattampi Swamikal*, Ph.d. Thesis, submitted to the Department of Philosophy (Calicut: University of Calicut, 1986), 39-40.

<sup>9</sup> *Sree Teerthapada Paramahansa Swamikal* (Vol.1), 61, 512-515; K. Padmaja, op. cit., 142-143.

<sup>10</sup> Chattampi Swamikal, *Pracheena Malayalam*.in Dr.K.Maheshwaran Nair, *Sree Chattampi*



years before its publication in 1913, he contends that the *Namboothiri Brahmins* have no legitimate authority over the land and properties of Keralam as claimed by them on the basis of *Keralolpathy*. He builds up a genealogy of nair-hood on the basis of the classical, folk and local sources and puts forward the claim that the Nairs are the successors of the *Nakas* who are supposed to have been the early inhabitants and the original custodians of Malayalam<sup>11</sup>. The Parasurama legend of the genesis of Keralam and the notions of the Brahminical ownership of the land and monopoly over faith are vehemently attacked. He formulates the idea of the *Naka*-descent of the Malayalees, especially of Nairs whom he traces out to be the original inhabitants of Malayalam. The work as a whole denounces the *sudra* identity conferred upon the Nairs by the Brahminical varna system;<sup>12</sup> it invents an indigenous ethnology where the Nairs are hailed as the dharmic heroes who have always stood for the realisation of the idea of *dharmam* and *jnanam* from the time 'immemorial'. The reinvention of a Nair identity in terms of the sublime ideas of *dharmam*, *jnanam*, *sivam* and *yogam* as ventured by Chattampi Swamikal, implicates a radical cultural action on the part of a non-Brahminical, indigenous community whereby it sheds off its *varna*-illusions and the identity of *sudra*-hood, superimposed on it. This movement of *de-sudraisation* or *de-brahminisation* thus marks the significant instance of the native people asserting its ethnic identities over the brahminical regime. The Nairs are here reinvented as a dignified community, a vertical unity based on an idea of honour, a progressive ethnic lineage of the people upholding the principle of *dharmam* over that of *varnam*, and the principle of *gunam* (merit) and *karmam* (actions) over *janmam* (birth). The story of the 'decline of the Nairs' or the Malayali people, as a whole, is written here in terms of the *Brahminical* colonisation of the minds and the selves of the indigenous people in contrast to the new story written by Robin Jeffrey. Of course, it is the usually heard story of the fall of a community from its original splendour and glory by the wicked onslaught of an intruder or a coloniser. The *Brahminical* intruders have corrupted and demoralised the familial, religious and social fabric of

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Swamikal, *Jeevithavum Krithikalum*, 306-366.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 367-392.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 392-455.

the natives according to this tale of Malayali people retold by Chattampi Swamikal. They are the assailants who have robbed the people off their confidence, self-respect and sense of honour according to him.<sup>13</sup> The Swamikal retraces the historical operation of the movement of *brahminisation* which is traced out by him as responsible for infecting the *dharmic* people of the country with a sense of guilt, self-humiliation, and disgrace. The remembrance of a glorious past here, in the case of the *guru*-narrative, does not slip into a sense of nostalgia or the simple gratification of a wish but develops into the logistics of selves struggling against the strictures of the brahminical *varna* regimes of the period. The Nair in this sense is the counter-subject who is in incessant revolt against the traditional brahminical society and its *varna*-based power-structure. The affirmation of a nair identity around the beginning of the last century in Keralam challenging the ritual dominance of the brahminical *varna* system and its feudal affiliations has to be considered as the genuine expression of a movement for self-respect and honour of a community relegated to the position of *sudras*. By reinventing the genealogy of a *Malayalee-Dravidian* ethnicity as distinct and superior to the Aryan or brahminical cultures, the work asserts the sense of honour and the self-dignity of the indigenous communities and induces them to reflect on the higher modes of unities namely Malayalam/Keralam or the *rajyam*. However the assertion of an identity which is associated with a caste name and the invocation of an 'other' in the image of the *Nambootiri* Brahmins, almost amounting to a degree of racial antagonism, as in the case of the 'othering' of the Aryan intruders as done by the Dravidian movement of Tamilakom, had all the negative consequences expectable in such cases. Scape-goating the *Nambootiris* as the source of all evils and cause of all the disasters fallen on to the nair community and essentialising the former as an absolute racial 'other,' the work emitted wrong signals of caste or ethnic antagonism. The counter-genealogy of the nair-self reconstructed by Swamikal failed to induce any genuine attempt to widen the horizon of the identification. There was no attempt to relink it into the larger and broader ideas of complex unities or ethnic conglomeration of people as signified by the emergent notions of a Malayali nationality. Instead it inevitably slid into an exclusionary narrative that could be

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 361-3.

used by the caste-subjects as a legitimate tool for solidifying the caste-interests. The indiscriminate mixing of the 'descriptive', 'cognitive' or 'truth' genres of modernity with the 'analogical' or 'prescriptive' genres of local tradition, the unfair blending of the historical genres with the genres of the indigenous logic and myth seems to have depreciated the authenticity of the work as a historical or ethnographical text. However, the traces of the historical romance of a *dharmic* people displaced or repressed in the truth-phrases of the above mentioned texts, and the critical interrogations conducted on the Brahminical texts or legends do provide some valuable insights for the re-inscription of the cultural histories of the Malayali people.

In *Vedadhikaraniroopanam*<sup>14</sup>, Swamikal asserts the people's right to knowledge, right to the *veda* irrespective of the criteria of caste, *varna* and gender. He challenges the *brahminical* injunctions on the *kshatriyas*, *sudras* and women from learning the *veda*, on the basis of a radical rereading of classical vedic and *sasthraic* texts and traditions; and he subjects them to the critical scrutiny of the vedantic hermeneutics. First of all the Swamikal here strategically evokes the polemics regarding the divine authorship or the origin of *Vedas* those prevailed between the *srauthas* and *prapanchavedees* in order to trace out the *sworoopam* - the true form - of the *Vedas*.<sup>15</sup> He dis-establishes the notions of the *srauthas* regarding the infallibility of the *Veda* as a text, and its non-human origin – *apaurusheyathvom* - by citing their internal contradictions. The defective and questionable practices sanctioned by certain portions of the *Vedic* text in his view disprove the theory of their divine origin. The *arthavada*, and *upakhyana* portions mostly containing *karmakandas* which prescribe *yajnas* and animal sacrifices are found to be detestable and illegitimate by the philosophers, sages, bhakti saints and the commentators of the *vedic* or *sastraic* texts of the later period. The Swamikal concludes that the textual, the ritualistic and the explanatory portions of *Veda* mostly conditioned by socio-historical constraints could never be accepted as representing the core of the *Vedas*. As they belong to the verbal testimony—*saabdapramanam*—they are held inferior to the *prathyaksha*—perceptual

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 461-509.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 463-471.

knowledge—and *anumana*—inferential knowledge—as the authentic sources or *pramanas* of knowledge. That is why the *bhashyakaras*—the interpreters—of the *Vedas* have classified those portions which are not universally applicable and valid to people of all times and stratas, as mere *arthavadas* or explanatory passages. These are thus denied off the status of the *vidhi vakyas*—or prescriptive phrases. The Swamikal thus demonstrates that the *Vedas* as texts are neither infallible nor *apaurusheya* (of divine or trans-human origin). To substantiate the argument he points out the way the *Vedic* text itself mentions the names of the sages and scholars who had authored the *mantras* and the *riks*. However, Swamikal highlights the *pranava*-oriented portions of the *Vedas* which propound the manners of realizing *brahma* and which deal with the knowledge of the self, as constituting the crux of the *Vedas*. These he ranks as the highest and absolute sources of spiritual knowledge called *jnanam* which could be considered as *apaurusheya* and *mokshasadhanam* (the ultimate means of *moksham* or salvation). Swamikal deconstructs the *Vedic* texts by rejecting their discursive or ritualistic corpus. He traces the reflective, philosophical or figural core of it which deals with the knowledge of self. This he discovers as the most authentic substance, the crux of the *Veda* that is not to be considered as inferior to the *prathyaksha*, *anumana* and *sabda sources* of knowledge<sup>16</sup> because it is legitimately and ‘im-mediate’ derived from the ‘the transcendental ‘real’ or the super-‘empirical’ state of knowledge realised immanently by the innermost core of the self known as ‘*athmaprathyaksham*’ (the real and total experience of the soul which exceeds the empiricism of the senses) or *indriyatheethaprathyaksham* (the trans-sensual experience). The latter as a mode of thinking and judging the ‘absolute’ transgresses the finite nature and rational limits of the other sources (*pramanas*) and procedures of knowledge and is held as the ultimate criterion and testimony for the occurrence of absolute reason. Only these accomplished-states of self-experience could transport one to the ‘superrational’, ‘super-real’ state of the knowledge of the Infinite, and it is also the culmination and therefore the termination of the whole processes of knowing where the tripartite divisions like the knower, the knowledge and the known vanish into a non-dual, unconditional,

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 472-473.

experience of unification with the Other, the Absolute; and this is the state which is otherwise known as *satchit and anandam*, the concordance of existence, knowledge and bliss. Consequently, it is those portions in Veda which are dedicated to reflection and judgment on the absolute, which think the 'absolute', that are recognised as the core of it. The rest of the text, the ritualistic, descriptive and explanatory parts- the *artha vada* portions - are judged to be quite inapplicable and mostly illegitimate according to the logical and ethical wisdom of the present day people. As they are constrained by the conditions of the time, the finite time of history, they are susceptible to critical verification, negation and modification.

To deprive the right to learn the *Vedas* to the *sudras* and women in effect means to deprive them off their only means of attaining *jnanam* and thereby *moksham* or total liberation. This is in Swamikal's view, the worst crime, the greatest injustice committed by the brahminical regime towards large sections of people. He cites several instances from the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Aagamas*, the *Ithihasa Puranas* the *Sasthras*, and from the procedures and precedents of tradition, of *kshatriyas*, *sudras*, and women learning, teaching and even excelling in the knowledge of the self<sup>17</sup>. He discloses that some of the important *riks* of the *Rigveda* have been actually authored by the *sudras* or *dasas* specifically bringing out the case of the great sage Kavasha who was a hunter by birth<sup>18</sup>. The Swamikal cites the *jaanasruthyupakhyanam* of *Chandogyopanishad* which belongs to the *Saamaveda* as an evidence of the right of the *sudra* to learn the *Veda* in both of his works *Pracheena Malayalam* and *Vedadhikara Nirupanam*. Significantly, he exposes the distortion made by Sankara in his commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*<sup>19</sup> where he has misinterpreted the *sudra*-phrase of *Janasrutyupakhyanam* and consolidated the brahminical injunction on the right of *sudras* to learn the *Vedas*. The same *prakarana* (portion of the text) is contentiously reread by him as sanctioning the right of the *sudras* to learn the *vedas*. These two works of the Swamikal would thus demonstrate the radical practices of rereading the tradition carried out by the *guru*-movement of reform.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 479-508.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 498.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 430-439, 487-494.

## Reinventing the Principle of *Sivam*

In *Advaita Chinthapaddhathi*<sup>20</sup> there takes place a deeper and subtle level of the reformulation of the *advaitic* or *jnanic* epistemology. The Vedantic thought is revitalised by the radical traditions of the *Saiva siddhantha* and the *jnana sampradayas* developed in the Dravidian traditions of South India<sup>21</sup>. With the keen, penetrating intellect and logical proficiency characteristic to him, the Swamikal churns out of the traditions of the *advaita vedanta*, *saiva siddhanta*, *jnana*, and *Bhakti* traditions of spirituality, the supreme principles of *jnanam*, *brahmam*, or *sivam*<sup>22</sup>. “*Thathvamasi*”, one of the renowned *mahavakyas* of *Upanishad*, is reinterpreted in terms of the principles of *saivic-advaitam* giving prominence to the *asi vakyam* which denotes the vital principle of the *sivam*—the *siyathathvom*<sup>23</sup>. The *asi* phrase is deciphered by the Swamikal as the auspicious state of the ‘occurrence’ of the ‘absolute cosmic being’ in its ultimate gracefulness. The state of *sivam* as suggested by the *asi vakyam* is traced out as the force which links the *tat* that is the ‘Other’, the *paramathma*, (the universal soul) with the *thvom* i.e., the *jeeva*-self, the *jeevathma* (the individual soul). The *asi* phrase or the *sivatathvam* implicates the existential state of the reunion of both the *jeevathma* and the *paramathma* in the here and now of the present. It also suggests the phenomena of *subham* or *mangalam*, the auspicious and joyful finality of the story of creation/destruction, or the vital principles of the ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ blooming in to their fullest splendour, in the here and now of the universe. The *sivam* in short, is conceptualised as the culmination of the ethnic vision of the ‘absolute’, the assurance of ‘progress’, the ultimate sign of self-fulfilment, liberation or salvation of *jeevas* or beings, the finality of their self-realisation in the nowness of the present.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 527-648.

<sup>21</sup> For a general understanding of the doctrines and practices of *Savasiddhanta* or *jnana sampradayas*, see, V.A. Devasenapathi, *Saiva Siddhanta as Expounded in the Sivajnana-Siddhiyar and its Six Commentaries*, (Madras: University of Madras, 1974); *Sree Teerthapada Paramahansa Swamikal Vol.1*, 536-542.; Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta: A study in the Mysticism and Theology of Saivism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>22</sup> The word signifies a state, which is held as auspicious and happy-ending.means auspicious and happy-ending.

<sup>23</sup> Dr.K.Maheshwaran Nair, op.cit., 603-618.

The guru movement heralds a mode of reform which could be named as *saiva-advaitic* or *jnanic* mode of reform in the sense that there takes place not only a retrieval or recurrence of the *saivic* or *saivasiddhantic* traditions of radical reform that had its resurgence in the medieval Dravidian cultures but also a blending of both the *advaitic* and the *saivic* philosophies.<sup>24</sup> One should be here reminded of radical resistance shown by the adherents of the *saivic*, *siddhantic*, *vaishnavic*, *jnanic* traditions of Tamilakom of the medieval and the late medieval periods against the brahminical dominance, challenging the ritualistic and the casteist regimes of the traditional society.<sup>25</sup> And this would mark perhaps the earliest traces of the emergence of people's movement for socio-spiritual reform. In the cases of both Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru, we find a deeper affinity to the Dravidian *Saiva*-movements of Tamilakom<sup>26</sup> which supplement their inlaid association with the *advaita Vedanta*.

### The Guru-Movement as a Jnana-Movement

The *saivaadvaitic* or the *jnanic* movement instilled by the gurus gives prominence to the principle of *jnanam* as the ultimate means of liberation or *moksham*. *Jnanam* is not only a means but also an end in itself according to the

<sup>24</sup> This is first pointed out by Mahakavi Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer in his History of Malayalam Literature. See Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, *Kerala Sahithya Charitram, Vol V* (Trivandrum: Publication Department, University of Kerala, 1954), 985-986. See also K. Padmaja, op.cit., 34-35, 94-100, 106-115, 148. The *Saivaadvaitic* philosophy which belongs to the *Saivic* traditions of Tamilakom has certain differences from the *Saiva Siddhantic* philosophy. The systems of thought other than the *Siddhanta* are classed under four heads: 1- *purap-purac camyam* (outermost); 2- *purac-camayam* (outer); 3- *ahap-purac-camayam* (inner); and 4- *ahac-camayam* (innermost)...The *Saiva advaita* belongs to the last group of schools which is called innermost. The deviation of the latter from the former is subtly brought out by the *saivasiddhantins* for establishing their crucial principles. See T.M.P. Mahadevan 'Saiva Siddhanta' in Sarveppalli Radhakrishnan ed. *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western Volume 1* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1967.), 369.; V.A. Devasenapati. op.cit., 139, 143, 220.; also, S.P. Annamalai, *The Life and Teachings of Saint Ramalingar* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1973), 39-46.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 107; we might see the refutation of the principle of caste in some of the *Tevarapatikoms* of Appar. A.S. Gnanasambandham ed. *Tevara Tiruppathikangol* (Chennai: Gangaiputakanilayam, 1998), 828, 830, 834; Siva Thiru N.R. Murugavell, *The Characteristics of Saiva Siddhantam* (Chennai: World Saiva Council, 1997), 10-11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 106-115. For a study of the philosophy and literature of Sree Narayana Guru, see Dr. A. Padmanabhakurup, *Sree Narayana Guruvinte Sahithyavum Darsanavum* (Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Company Ltd., 1989), 39-49.

*jnanic*-hermeneutics professed by them.<sup>27</sup> The *jnani* is held as the real *sanyasi*.<sup>28</sup> *Jnanam* is acclaimed as the *brahman* or *Sivam* by itself, the ultimate and the absolute divine principle of the cosmos, the realisation of which would provide *jeevanmukti* or ultimate salvation to the practitioner within his or her worldly life. The union of the *jeevathma* (the individual soul) and the *paramathma* (the absolute soul) is not something to be accomplished in the future, because it is held as already attained according to the principle of *praptaprapta*.<sup>29</sup> Salvation thus is held to be just an outcome of the practice of knowing that both the individual soul and the cosmic soul are the same and that they are always in union. The *jnani* realises that there is no duality in the knowledge of the ultimate reality because both the self and the 'Other' are already held to be identical in essence and therefore there is no longer any need of administering any sort of unity between them. The whole issue, therefore lies in freeing oneself off the illusion of the 'duality' and knowing this 'non-dualistic' 'reality' at the core of one's own self and life. The devotion or worship in the case of Gurus implicated deep reflection, or the logical or hermeneutic procedure of knowing the absolute.

The *jnana* epistemology as put forward by Chattampi Swamikal and Narayana Guru could be seen as a significant attempt at synchronising the *saivic*<sup>30</sup> and *advaitic* traditions of knowledge.<sup>31</sup> However, this has produced certain ambivalences, or antinomies in the philosophical positions held by them. The principles of *jnanam*, cited above definitely betrays the traces of the *Sankaradvaitic* doctrines of knowledge which gives prominence to the principle of absolute identity between the *jeeva*-self and the *Brahma* or the cosmic self. This would also indicate the subtle deviation taken by the *jnaanic* epistemology of the Swamikal from the pure *Saiva-siddhantic* position which reads the *advaitam* as a

<sup>27</sup> K. Padmaja, op. cit., 38, 39, 143.

<sup>28</sup> *Sree Teerthapada Paramahansa Swamikal* (Part 1), 131-133.

<sup>29</sup> *Sidhartha bodhaka vakyas* are differentiated from the *vidhi vakyas* by the Vedas. While the former suggests '*Praptaprapta*' i.e., attaining what has already been attained, the latter is associated with the *apraptaprapta*. Chattampi Swamikal, *Advaita Chintha Paddhathi*, in Dr.K.Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 619- 620.

<sup>30</sup> Dr.T.Bhaskaran, *Sree Narayana Guruvinte Sampoorana Kritikal* (Kozhikodu: Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Company, 1985), xxi-xxii; Dr. A. Padmanabha Kurup, 39-49; K. Padmaja, 34, 35, 16, 92-115.

<sup>31</sup> *Sree Teertha pada Paramahansa Swamikal*, Vol. I, 511-516, 526-527, 130-135; K. Padmaja, op.cit., 42-91.



relation of unity rather than identity or non-difference between the self and *Eeswara*.<sup>32</sup> The emphasis given to the self-reflection as an introspection of the self and the other—the *brahma*—also subtly differs from the libidinal or devotional mode of introspection professed by the *Saiva Siddhantins* or the *Visistadvaitins*.

Of course, the practice of ‘knowing’ in the hermeneutics of the *jnana* as professed by the Gurus is never confined to the mere rationalistic, positivistic or speculative reasoning and perception that constitute the norm of the cognitive or descriptive genres of the modernity. The *Jnana*-epistemology is all the more different from the discursive concept of knowledge as upheld by the missionary-modernist mode of knowledge. The principle of *Jnanam* is realised as an *aparokshaanubhuti*<sup>33</sup>—a direct, unmediated ‘trans-sensual’ state of ‘occurrence’ within, which is to be sensed or encountered at the core of one’s own self (*athmaprathyaksham*)<sup>34</sup>, in the ‘im-mediacy’, in the here and now of life. The triple differentiation involved in the epistemological operation, namely, the subject, the object of knowing and the output of knowledge—the so called *triputis* of *jnana*—wither away at the ultimate instance of ‘knowing’ where the three instances of knowledge merge into one. The hermetic and the existential pragmatics of *jnana* comprise of the three successive modes of contemplation of the ‘absolute’ called *sravanam*, *mananam* and *nididhyaasanam*.<sup>35</sup>

The Guru-reformer’s daring attempt to synthesize the *advaitic*, the *saivic* and ‘other’ traditions of indeneous spiritual knowledge however has opened up a venue of negotiation mainly between the two important traditions of spirituality in Kerala. Though Chattampi Swamikal tends to displace and repress the *saivic* intensities retrieved by him-self in his elaborately structured logic of *saiva-advaitam*, he has incorporated many of the radical principles of the *Saiva siddhantic* traditions in his spiritual and social practices. The *varna-jati* orientation

<sup>32</sup> T.M.P.Mahadevan, op.cit., 377.

<sup>33</sup> K.Maheshwaran Nair, op. cit., 633-635.

<sup>34</sup> K.Maheshwaran Nair, op. cit., 633. Swamikal here differentiates the mode of empirical knowledge, *indriya prathyaksham*, with the *indriyatheetha prathyaksham* or *Athma prathyaksham* which transcends the former.

<sup>35</sup> For a pragmatic demonstration of these three modes of knowledge which constitute the *Jnana*-hermeneutics, see Dr. Maheshwaran Nair, op. cit., 602-617. These three practices of knowing are basically held as *Brahmajnana sadhanangal* (means of realising *brahmajnana*.), op. cit., 652.

of Sankara has been severely criticised by him in his rereading of the *Brahmasutram*. The repossession of the *saivic* or *jnanic* modes of spirituality pertaining to the Dravidian Tamil traditions by Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru, in short, heralds a *saivic* turn in the religious or spiritual practices of the Malayali people. The dynamic reciprocation and negotiation that took place in the Guru-narrative of reform between the *saivic*, *siddhantic*, *advaitic* and *bhakti* traditions of spirituality would demonstrate their heterogenistic thrust. To appreciate the extent of the intense engagement initiated by the Guru-movement with the spiritual principles of the *Saiva-siddhantic* as well as the *Visistadvaitic* traditions of Tamilakom, one should have at least a general idea of the radical principles of spirituality put forward by them. It would be relevant here to note briefly the most significant shifts, effected by one of them, namely the *Saiva Siddhanta* which had a deep influence on the spiritual vision of the Gurus. :

1. The primal principle of the *Arul* or *Anugraham* (the blessing grace and the love) of the 'Other' or the *Eeswara* (*sivam*) towards the *Jeeva-self*.

The *Siva-Tatvom* implicates the principle of the grace or the love of the Other (the *Eeswara* or *Sivam*) which is held as the crucial factor in the up-ward journey of the *jeeva-selves* (which are otherwise called *pasus*) towards their liberation or re-union with God, the Absolute (here the *Pasupati*). This is a radical departure from the *advaitic* traditions where the 'Other' remains a passive, neutral or *nirguna* instance and the whole affairs of the knowledge and the pursuit for the 'absolute' are centred on the self-introspection on the absolute identity between the self and the 'Other'. It is quite impossible for the *jeevas* to attain liberation or *moksha* without the *arul* or grace of the 'Other' according to the *saivasiddhantins* as well as the *Visistadvaitins*. The catastrophic principle of the grace of God or the 'Other', disrupted the principle of certainty, determinacy and self-assurance that drove the *advaitic* epistemology to cancel out all forms of dualities or multiplicities of the phenomenal world privileging the self-centric discernment and the discriminative analysis of the 'eternal' and the 'ephemeral' (*nityaanityavivekam*). Unlike the conventional *advaitic* order, which reduced the whole relation of the self and 'Other' into absolute identity, the *saivasiddhanta* as well as the *Visistadvaita* gave importance to the paralogic principle of 'unity-in-difference'

or the dynamic reciprocation between the ideas of ‘unity’ and ‘difference’.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the relation between the God and devotee or the instances of *eeswara/brahma/sivam* and the *jeeva*-self are held to be mediated by the love or affection on the part of *eeswara/sivam*.<sup>37</sup> The act of the provision of grace—*aanugraham* or *arul*—by the *Eeswara* is held as the initiative taken by the ‘Other’ or the God in the erotic interaction between the self and the ‘Other’ or the *jeeva*-being and the *Eeswara*. *Arul* is the sign of the love of god effectuated in the materiality of worldly life. Arul Nanti, one of the renowned saint of Saivasidhanta states that the ‘grace is the gift of the divine towards the *jeevas*.

...Out of the abundance of his love (*arul mika utaimaiyin*), God favours the soul with a precious treasure, the experience of immanent grace (*porul mika arultalum*) (18.18), so that he and his grace may shine in the place of the soul’s ego. (*tannatun tanumay ennai inrakki*, 18.19), and grants the gift of himself. (*tannaiyum...tantu*, 18,20)

In *Anukambadasakom*, Sree Narayana Gguru writes that it is the possession of grace or *arul* which distinguishes or defines a being.<sup>38</sup> *Anpe sivam*—*sivam* is love or grace—is the dictum of the *saivajnanis*<sup>39</sup> which demonstrates the erotic turn heralded by the *saivic* faith in the spiritual tradition of the Dravidian people.

The *saivasiddhantins* also differ from the *Vedantins* in the question of the ‘immanence’ and ‘transcendence’ of God in its relation with the *jeeva*-self. The principle of the Divine Immanence according to the *Siddhantins* never obliterates that of the transcendental Otherness of God.

...By the vision of God the *bhakta* becomes deeply aware of God’s immanence as far as he realizes his dependence on, and union with,

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed description of the differences between the *advaita* and *saivasiddhanta* see V.A.Devasenapati, 113, 113, 216, 246, 255, 267, 272, 304.

<sup>37</sup> K. Padmaja, op. cit., 94-100.

“ God, for Tirumular, is not merely one who loves souls but one whose very essence is love. Where there is love, there is God; and where there is God, there is love. God and love are convertible terms.

The ignorant think that love (*anpu*) and God (*civam*) are two (different things); they do not know that love is God. After knowing that love is God

They remain possessed of love which is God. (*Tirumantiram*, 257), cited in Maria Susai Dhavamony op.cit., 128-132.

<sup>38</sup> Dr.T.Bhaskaran ed. *Sree Narayana Guruvinte Sampoorana Kritikal*, 512.

<sup>39</sup> K. Padmaja, op. cit., 94.

God. Arul Nanti emphatically denies that this experience is the same as that of the *advaita*. He states that if the mystic were to say 'I am *Brahman*', then he would not hold God to be his creator, his lord... The mystical experience of God's immanence is not of such a nature that the soul and God become identified and lose each his individuality; and the divine immanence is not intuited in such a way as to obliterate the divine transcendence. Arul Nanti even explicitly introduces the idea of distinction in the mystical union, as he investigates more precisely the nature of this experience. It would not be true knowledge of God, he says, if God and the soul were to stand apart...; if the soul were to know only itself, for such knowledge would be empirical ;if the soul were to know God in an objective manner, opposing the knower to the known,, for such a knowledge again would be imperfect and empirical; or finally, if the soul were to know God through its own total submergence, for that would not be the conscious union between the two. The conclusion is obvious: the soul in union with God through his immanent grace knows God and itself. This union is conceived of as an entry of God into the soul, as an illumination of his grace in the soul, and as his gift. From the soul's point of view, it is conscious possession of God, realization of his immanence, and acknowledgement of its dependence on him. The distinction between the stage of bondage and that of freedom from it, for ArulNanti consists precisely in this, that the soul in bondage acts and lives in an egoistic spirit, and valorizes everything in terms of 'I' and 'mine', whereas in the mystical state it leads a god-centred life.

Arulnanti's elaboration of the *Sivasiddhantic* ideals reveals how it transgresses the *advaitic* philosophy of the 'Being' or the 'Self' which reduces the Otherness of the 'Other' into the 'self' or the 'same'. The unity of the God and the *bhakta* is something so complex and paralogic that it could not be reduced to a concept of absolute 'identity' between both as advocated by the *Sankara-advaitins*.

The soul stands united with God for ever in its ontological structure; there is neither identity nor separation between the two that are thus united. In the mystical state, therefore, which is but the intuitive realization at the conscious level of the ontological structure, God and soul stand related neither in identity nor in duality, but in union in which God gives himself to me and myself to me'.. When it is said that God gives the soul to itself, it is not implied that the soul reverts to its previous egoism. Far from it, the author only wishes to say that in the ecstatic vision of the divine, the soul, without losing its individuality, is deified and that this deification is but a return to its ontological divine nature., now consciously possessed. To put it more concretely, the soul acquires the divine mode of thinking and

passes into the Divine Light, which none the less has been all along present to it.

The divine grace (*arulcatti*) according to Arul Nanti is the ‘pivotal point of contact between the divine and the created spirit, as the principle of participation of God in the soul and of the soul in God.’. It is the ‘token of God’s self-gift to the soul and of the soul’s self-surrender to God’.

In conclusion, we may say that *Saivite* mysticism as propounded by ArulNanti consists, certainly, in the intuitive experience of divine immanence, but not without at the same time including divine transcendence. It is a mysticism of divine immanence in so far as, the soul lays hold upon God’s presence and power in its own deeper self and lives mystically united with him. It is a mysticism of divine transcendence as well, in as much as the soul realizes its utter dependence on God and lovingly surrenders to him in all that it thinks and does. In such experience the divine grace(*arulcatti*) is the pivotal point of contact between the divine and the created spirit, as the principle of participation of God in the soul and of the soul in God, and finally as the token of God’s self-gift to the soul and of the soul’s self-surrender to God.<sup>40</sup>.

## 2. The affirmation of the world and life

The human body is held as sacred because it is believed to be the dancing ground of the *Eeswara* or *Siva*; it is the medium of the cosmic dance of creation

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<sup>40</sup> Mariasusai Dhavamony. op.cit., 249-251. Arul Nanti is one of the greatest ideologue of *Saiva Siddhanta* was the disciple of Meykanta Tevar and the observations made here is based on his work *Irupaavirupatu* wrote about A.D.1254. Umapati another *Saivasiddhantin* elucidates the mystical union between the self and two in a similar fashion:

God and the soul are not one in the sense in which gold and golden jewels are one, as the *mayavadins* maintain, because these two realities are different in nature. They are not contraries like light and darkness as the *Nyaya-Vaisesika* holds, because both the Vedas and the *Agamas* teach the doctrine of *cayucciyam* (the ultimate union of God and soul) and reject the absorption of one in another. Again, they are not one and yet opposed to each other, like a word and its meaning, as the *Paarkariyan* (followers of Bhaskara) and *Civaattuviti* teach, for Siva and the soul are as different from each other as the sound of a word and its meaning. The *Saiva Siddhanta*, which is the elucidation of the *Vedanta*, on the contrary, holds *attuvitam* (*advaita*) in the sense that God and the soul form a unity in duality, i.e. oneness of union with perfect individuality of being, like the understanding (*arivu*) resulting from the union of the soul and body (*uyir-utal*), like the vision (*oli*) resulting from the union of sunlight and the eye.

Umapati warns us not to confuse this kind of *advaita* with that of the *Maayavadins* (apparently having in mind Sankara), for whom one only Being, appearing as two, finally becomes one in identity, because otherwise there would be only one Being. Nor can the position of the *Aikiyavadin* be accepted, for whom two different beings ultimately become only one in identity, for in such a teaching one of the two would be annihilated. Mariasusai Dhavamony, op.cit., 272-3.

destruction and benediction enacted by *Siva* the *Nataraja*.<sup>41</sup> The Life is the *vibhooti* or the *prasadam* (the blessing grace or gift) of *Sivam* and therefore it is holy. The whole created world and its beings embody the cosmic holy dance (*Tiruvilayaadal*) played by *Siva* the saviour of the bonded selves of the world.<sup>42</sup> Human life is held as the medium and means offered by the God for the deliverance of the *pasus* (bonded beings) from their bondages (*pasam*). This is a radical deviation from the *advaitic* principle of the *vivartam* which discards the phenomenal reality as a mere symptom of a logical illusion or *Maya*. The introspection centered on the individual self or the Being thus keeps the *Advaitin* in general secluded from the cosmic and temporal drama of the paradoxical union and separations that takes place between the 'finite' and the 'Infinite' in infinite forms, in the here and now.

### 3. The *subha*-destination of the movement of the beings and world.

The idea of *subham*—the auspicious end or the finality of the story of the beings — would implicate the optimistic belief in the whole direction and the destination of the beings of the world as held by the *DaivaSiddhantins*. This is a crucial factor which distinguishes it from the seemingly pessimistic cynical or melancholic view of the world and life shown by the *Sanskritist* traditions of *advaitins*. Of course Sankara talks about the importance of *subheccha* (will to a happy end) in attaining competence to the pursuit of self-knowledge. However, the *subha*-imagination of the world revived in the *Saivic* (as well as the *Visishtadvaitic* or *Vaishnavic*) resurgence of *Bhakti* intensifies the hopeful

<sup>41</sup> Mariasusai Dhavamony cites the important principles of *Saiva siddhantam* elucidated by Manavaacakam Katantaar (A.D.1255) in his work *Unmaivilakkam*: "The five different divine functions... are all easy to Siva to perform, involving no effort, so that he is said to 'act without acting', and thus every thing that he does is conceived as sheer sport. This takes us to the notion of Siva's dance. It is interpreted commonly as the source of all movements, the origin of the five cosmic powers (*panchakritya*) or *civatatuvam*. More especially his dance symbolizes his gracious action in working out the liberation of souls (36). His posture as *Nataraja*, with the various gestures of his body, is seen particularly in the light of liberating activity. His hand holding a rattle (*damuru*) removes the impurity of *mayai*; the hand with *agni* burns out *vinai* or *karma*; his foot on the ground presses down *aanavam*, lest this *malam* should gain power; his raised foot stabilizes the power of his grace; and finally, his two hands, in gestures showing mercy and love, plunge the liberated souls into the ocean of bliss.op.cit., 256-257. The *Unmaivilakkam* puts great stress on the conception of God as the merciful and gracious lord; nay more, it defines the divine nature itself as Grace of Mercy.

<sup>42</sup> Dr. A. Padmanabha Kurup, op.cit., 43.

affirmation of a faith in the vertical progression of beings across time. This invariably provides the radical traces of an alternative narrative of historical progress.

#### 4. The *Guru-sishya* erotics

*Siva* is the *adiguru* who comes down to the world as the primeval preceptor of the beings in order to deliver them from their bonds. Even the *bhakti* or the desire for attaining the *sivapadam* is held as being instilled by the grace of *Siva* the compassionate and the affectionate God, for the purpose of delivering the *jeeva* selves—the *pasus* from the bondage— from the *pasam*(bondages)—of the world. It is the god's love which initiates one into the libidinal course of devotion thereby directing him or her along the right track of the self-pursuit. It is *Siva* the *Pasupati*, who is beheld as the initiator of the supreme knowledge called *jnanam* and hence called the *Guru*. The relation between the devotee and deity thus assumes the mode of a *guru-sishya* relation marked by the intensity of their mutual love and reciprocation. *Guru-grace*, subsequently is held as the paramount instance in the pursuit for *jnanam*. It is by the grace of God that the devotee reaches the precincts of a *Guru* when he or she is found to be spiritually ripe for acquiring knowledge of self-realisation. The *guru* in the world is hailed as the surrogate of the God, embodying the blessing grace or *anugraham* of the god whose presence itself assures one of his deliverance from the worldly bonds. 'Siva's appearance in the human form of a *guru* is like a decoy for the purpose of snaring man to his side

Grace operates in the *Guru* (divine teacher) through whom mystic knowledge is revealed to the devout soul, and this divine manifestation is the fruit of grace. The same lord (*ko*) who, inseparable and unseen, was sustaining souls during the time of ignorance (*ariyaamai*), manifests himself now in the form of a visible *guru* through his *arulcatti*. People do not recognize the divine grace that is hidden in the *guru* and that helps souls (*arulpuriyavantaporul*) without manifesting its true nature (*arulaavakaiyaal*). *Siva* performs the work of creation (*pataippu*), preservation (*nilai*), destruction (*iru*), and concealment (*maraippu*) without any manifest appearance; but his work of grace (*arulal*) is performed unseen in the form of a *guru*. Those whose understanding is veiled by the darkness of *aanavam* (*poyirunta cintai*) and sense-perception cannot know the teachings of divine grace appearing in the form of a *guru*. The world does not realize that *Siva's*

appearance in the human form of a guru is like a decoy for the purpose of snaring man (*paarvaiyena maakkalimunparrip pitittarkaam*) to his side. The *Sastras* themselves require the divine guru for their elucidation; there fore he ought to be sought after by every aspirant who desires to be delivered. To secure release from *aanavam* Siva's unseen presence alone in the soul, as its light, will not suffice; his grace manifested through the guru is necessary. To the *vijnanakalar* Siva straightway grants his grace, removing *aanavam*; to the *pirala:yaakalar* who are freed from *kalai* (self-deception) Siva reveals himself in their consciousness, and he removes *aanavam* and *karma*. To the *Cakalar* he comes in the form of a guru and bestows grace. The ultimate reason for the need of guru *bhaki* is that the knowledge of the Supreme Truth can only be communicated by the Lord who possesses perfect wisdom and reveals it through the guru.<sup>43</sup>

Guru is the medium through which Siva the *aadi guru*, who possesses perfect wisdom, reveals the knowledge of the supreme truth to his devotee.

##### **5. Combining the *saguna* and *nirguna* modes of worship.**

Both the *saguna* (attributing a form or quality to God) and the *nirguna* (without any form) modes of worship are combined in the pragmatics of the *saiva-jnana sampradayam*. Siva is worshipped both in form and without a form. As Sree Narayana euologizes Siva in one of his poems 'he is with form, he is formless and his is the formless form (*Aruvaay uruvaay aruvuvuvay*).<sup>44</sup> Chattampi Swamikal emphasises the importance of the heterogeneous spiritual practices like *bhakti*, or *rajayogam*, for a seeker of knowledge in order to acquire competence. The work *Sreechakrakalpam* written by him demonstrates that he did recognize a particular mode of *saaktheyam* as an important means for attaining knowledge and realization. Sree Narayana Guru likewise is found to have harmonised various methods of devotion and spiritual quests like *bhakti*, *karmam*, *rajayogam*, *Kundalini yogam*, *tantravidya* etc.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Mariasusai Dhavamony, op.cit., 282-3. These are the doctrines elucidated by Umapati in his work *Tiruvarutpayan* composed around A.D.1307.

<sup>44</sup> Sree Narayana Guru *Thevarappatikangal*. 3, *SreeNarayanaguruvinte Sampoorana Kritikal*, 557.

<sup>45</sup> Dr. A. Padmanabhakuruppu, op.cit., 33.



6. **The principle of *Jeevanukamba*** (kindness towards *jeevas*) or *Jeevakarunyam* and *ahimsa* (non-violence)—a sense of compassion and concern towards the other beings and emphasis on non-violence.

The *JeevaKarunya Niroopanam* written by Chattampi Swamikal and the poems like *Ahimsa*, *Jeevakarunya Panchakom*, *Anukampa Dasakom*, written by Sree Narayana Guru demonstrate the emphasis given by the Gurus to the principles of non-violence, love and compassion towards not only fellow-human beings but also towards the whole species of the created world. The kindness shown by Chattampi Swamikal towards various species and creatures of the nature like, snakes ants flies birds and dogs have become legends in the minds of the people of the period.

7. **The radical protest and resistance shown** to the social inequalities like *varna* and *jati* as enforced by the *Brahminical* regime of traditional society.

The dynamic principles of spiritual liberation re-invented by the *Saivic*, *Siddhantic* and the *Visistadvaitic* traditions have inspired the *siddhas* and *jnanis* of the Tamilakom to question the social inequalities and evil practices of *Brahmanical* regime of caste and *varna*.<sup>46</sup> They criticised the redundant rituals, the hegemony of the Brahmin priests in religious affairs and the violence involved in the practices like animal sacrifices. Unlike the usual *advaitins* they did not totally neglect the worldly affairs and social conditions as insignificant in the spiritual quest for knowledge and realisation. The affirmation of the differential realities of the world and the principle of love and regard to the 'others' have resuscitated a deeper concern and sensitivity towards ethical principles and justice. The importance given to the attitude of compassion and non-violence to all beings of the world would demonstrate this. Non-conformity to the retrogressive practices customs and conventions of the society and the radical dissension with the existing regimes of power as shown by the adherents of these liberal streams of spirituality was so intense that they were held by the people as open-selves who could transgress the laws of subjection prevalent in the society. These liberated selves

<sup>46</sup> We might see the refutation of the principle of caste in some of the *Tevarapatikoms* of Appar. A.S. GnanaSambandham ed. *Tevara Tiruppathikangol* (Chennai: Gangaiputakanilayam, 1998), 828, 830, 834; Siva Thiru N.R. Murugavell in *The Characteristics of Saiva Siddhantam*, 10-11.

were revered as *turaivis*, *siddhas*, *avadhootas*, *hamsas*, *paramahamsas*, *jnanis* or *athivarnasramis*—the honours often designated to both Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru by the people of the period.

The rediscovery of the principle of the *sivam* as the sign of the ultimate progression of selves and their union with the ‘Other’ as heralded by the guru-thinkers thus implicates the repossession of the radical and vital traditions of culture. And this would be seen in the context of the crisis of faith faced by the people of Keralam in the colonial modern epoch. It marks the crucial movement of the redefinition of the faith, the reclamation of the reflective matrices of culture abandoned during the epochs of *brahminical* dominance and later on in the hegemony of Euro-missionary discourses. Consequently, the *jnana* or *saiva* enlightenment ignited a great enthusiasm in discovering rare and valuable texts and discourses produced by the *Malayali*-Dravidian or Tamil traditions of spirituality. It has augmented the retrieval of the reflective devotional and hermeneutic practices of *saivasiddhantha*, *jnana* or *bhakti* movements submerged under the dominant discourses of the times. The *jnana* movement thus boosted up the intellectual and scholarly activities among the emergent generations of Keralam, accentuating the retrieval and remobilisation of local knowledge. It had invariably inspired meticulous and informal re-search on the indigenous traditions of knowledge and scholarship.

Chattampi Swamikal, honoured by people as the *parama bhattara vidyadhiraja* for his immense scholarship and accomplishment in spiritual knowledge,<sup>47</sup> had been in the forefront of this new *yajna* of knowledge. As elaborated earlier, he was the champion of the discursive or epistemological struggle launched by the indigenous reformers against the *brahminical* and missionary epistemology as exemplified in his polemical works namely *Pracheena Malayalam*, *Vedadhikara Nirupanam* and *Christumatachedam*. The *Pracheena Malayalam*, perhaps the earliest historical treatise on the history of Malayalam, in modern times which establishes the pre-*brahminical* heritage and glory of the Malayali people itself is the outcome of a rigorous research of tradition. And it triggered off a wave of enthusiasm in the rediscovery of the past. Consequently,

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<sup>47</sup> K. Padmaja, op. cit., 23.

valuable and insightful works of the ancient and medieval Tamilakom and Malayalam were unearthed, reread, and translated; commentaries of the major works belonging to both *Sanskritist* and the Dravidian Tamil traditions, sidelined by the brahmanical regime of knowledge were retrieved. The age old *thaliyola* (Cadjen leaf) manuscripts written in *vattezhuthu* and *kolezhuthu* were collected, re-verified and scrutinised; historical records and materials preserved in temples, palaces and *tharavadus* were re-examined; legends *paatus*, *puranas* and folklores, vibrantly circulant among the Dravidian Malayali traditions, were compiled and selectively reproduced.

The reinvention of *jnana* thus meant not only the retrieval and reinterpretation of the religious or spiritual works of the past but also the re-inscription of the history of the Malayali people, as rigorously attempted in *Pracheena Malayalam*. A genealogy of the Malayali selves and community was constructed perhaps for the first time in the annals of Keralam though in a non-official, informal or ameturish level. This of course marks a progressive turn from the tradition of the negation of the world as an illusion, and the trivialisation and demeaning of human reality as carried out by the ideologues of the conventional schools of *advaita* and *bhakti*. The spiritual or the scholarly practice of re-appropriating and re-inventing the radical traditions of knowledge as initiated by the *jnana* movement under the guidance of Sree Chattampi Swamikal had further been pursued by his scholarly disciples like Neelakanda Teerthapada Swamikal, Teertha Pada Paramahansa Swamikal and others on one level and by Sree Narayana and his disciples on the other.

The spirit of criticism kindled by the hermeneutic or reflective practices of *jnana* movement had never been confined to the critique of tradition. It also stirred up people's resistance against the missionary discourses which assaulted the religious and cultural traditions, mutilated the faith, confidence and the sense of self-respect and honour of the people. Chattampi Swamikal launched a battle of logic against the missionary discourses as demonstrated in his polemical work *Kristumathchedam*. Actually the text contains the logical analysis and arguments produced by Swamikal for the purpose of intellectually arming his disciples against the onslaught of the missionary discourses. It was the manual of the logical lessons

given by Swamikal to tutor the disciples assigned to counter the fiery sermons of the missionaries made in the precincts of temples, and market-squares on the occasions of festivals and fairs.<sup>48</sup> The people were irritated and annoyed by the way the missionaries hailed them—as ‘sinners’ and ‘uncivilized’—hurting their sense of self-respect. The people who had cultivated a sound vision of the world and were enlightened by the optimistic worldview of the *Saivadvaitam* were in short offended by the tone of black-mailing conveyed by the abusive speeches of the missionary preachers which tarnished the native modes of worship and faith. This was of course the part of the missionary strategy of inflicting a sense of guilt and sin among the people in order to make them vulnerable to the colonial modern project of subjectifying and proselytizing them into the new order of power and capital.<sup>49</sup> However, the criticism raised by the Swamikal against the missionary mode of Christianity does not betray any sort of communalistic prejudices on his part. The ‘*Christumatasaram*’ the first essay incorporated in the ‘*Christumatanirupanam*’, provides a deeper elucidation of the Christian faith which is reported to have gained applauses even from the Christian priests for its insights.<sup>50</sup> The logical contestation carried out by Chattampi Swamikal with the missionary discourses should be seen as the part of a radical struggle to uphold the self-respect and honour of the people’s faith and culture.

### Rereading *Tatvomasī*

Chattampi Swamikal deviates from the conventional mode of *advaita* when he rereads the *upanishadic* phrase *tatvomasī* according to the hermeneutics of the Dravidian *sampradaya*.<sup>51</sup> He problematizes and complicates the simple monism and the non-dualism of the *advaitam* by imbibing the insights provided by the *saivic* traditions. The *saivic* implication of the *asi*-phrase is re-invented which is

<sup>48</sup> Vidyananda Teerthapadaswami, Preface, *Advaita Chintha Paddhati*, 18-20; *Sree Teerthapaada Paramahansa Swamikal*, 239-245.

<sup>49</sup> This is elaborated by the present writer in an unpublished monograph, “The ‘Great Symbol Massacre’: A Re-reading of the Missionary Narrative of Reform,” (1998).

<sup>50</sup> Kurissery Gopalapilla, ‘Swamikal Swakritikalil Koodi’, *Sree Chattampi Satabdasmarakagrandham*, (Tiruvananthapuram: Smarakagrantha Samiti, 1953), 101; also K.Bhaskara Pilla, op. cit., 56; The *Sarvamata saamarasyam* is another work which is included in the list of the lost works of Swamikal. It is cited by his disciples as demonstrating the respect and regard shown by him towards the other religions of the world.

<sup>51</sup> Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 602-617.

deciphered as the key phrase of the *Mahavakyam*. In spite of these significant deviations from the *Sanskritic* and *Sankaraadvaitic* traditions of reading the *mahavakyas*, Swamikal ultimately clings to the *advaitic* position. This would betray the inherent ambivalence, the internal antinomies involved in the Guru Narrative of knowledge and reform. Though it is true that the Guru-thinkers explore the radical principles of devotion re-invented by the *Saivic*-traditions, there is also a conscious attempt on their part to contain or neutralise the *saivic* intensities retrieved by themselves under the super-arching philosophy of the *Advaita*. Despite the Swamikal intensely followed the radical doctrines of *saiva siddhanta* mainly that of absolute non-violence (*Ahimsa*), the grace and love of God (*Arul*) and compassion towards all beings (*jeevakaarunyam*), in his life and spiritual career, he could not outgrow the Sankaraadvaitic school of philosophy which professed the absolute identity of the Being and 'Other'. In the case of Sree Narayana Guru, the ambivalence is so subtle and deeper and seems to be slanting towards the pole of *saivasiddhantam*. Guru himself did proclaim that he was following the *sampradaya* of Sankara. Yet, his philosophical treatises as well as poems, the ironic and parodic phrases uttered by him in private confrontations and his deeper quests of spirituality bear witness to the relentless negotiation between the logical or the hermeneutic regime of the *advaita* and the passionate devotionism and spiritual erotics characteristic to *Saiva-Siddhantam* or *Visisthadvaitam*. This has brewed up an inner tension within the career of Sree Narayana Guru, which though mostly unnoticed by the historians of the socio-religious reform in Keralam, provides us crucial clues to the cultural and social implications of the movement as a whole. They would testify to the intensity of the inner contestation or negotiation that takes place between the 'logical' and 'libidinal', 'discursive' and 'figural', between the cognitive or descriptive genres and the philosophical, or reflective genres in the deeper layers of phrases, thoughts, and practices.

The rereading of the *Tatvomasī* phrase as carried out by Chattampi Swamikal in *Adviata ChintaPaddhati* would demonstrate this complex and ambivalent process of negotiation that takes place between the *Advaitic* and *Saivic* principles in his thought. Let me elaborate.

The phrase *Tatvomasi*, one of the renowned *Mahavakyas* (aphorisms) appears in the sixth chapter of The *Chandogya Upanishad*.<sup>52</sup> Literally, the phrase refers to the equivalence between God, the Infinite, and the finite individual. However, instead of the literal sense (*sakthivrutthi*), it is the suggestive or the analogical sense (*lakshanavrutty*) which is opted for reading the phrase by the Swamikal.<sup>53</sup> Three modes of *lakshanas*, namely the *jahallakshana*, *ajahallakshana*, *jahadajahallakshana* are used for finding out the *lakshyartham*, the analogical or suggestive meaning implied by the phrase. The reading however, begins with an examination of the literal meaning of the phrase. It repositions the linkage of the phrase as *thvom, tat, asi*, meaning ‘you are that’ in order to bring out the paradoxical nature of the phrase which apparently unifies the *thvom*—the finite or conditioned self—, and the ‘*tat*’—the ‘Other’—that implicates the *Eeswara* or God. The paradox is untied through a rigorous operation of logical analysis whereby the reality of the identity or the unity between the two is conceptually established. The literal meaning of each phrase is now de-structured and the hidden meaning is retrieved by self-pondering, through the three modes of knowing or discerning called, *Sravanam*, *Mananam* and *Nididhyasanam*:

1. *Thvom Pada Sravana Kramam (The Sravana Practice of the Thvom Phrase.)*<sup>54</sup>

The *vachyartham* (the literal meaning) of the *thvom padam* denotes the conditioned self, being corrupted by its identification with seven *karyopadhis* (consisting of the body, the senses, the emotive mind, the intellect, the *chittham*—the affective consciousness,—the *ahankaram*—the ego—and the *pranan*—the life-force). However, its *lakshyartham* (the destined or suggestive meaning) is derived to be the *koodastha chaithanyam* (the effulgent substratum of the *jeeva*-self) which is being realised as the *jnanasworoopam* (that in the form of knowledge). This is accomplished when the self purges itself of its identification with these seven *karyopadhis* whereby it realises itself as the absolute self or the *brahmam* which stands as the *sakshi* (the witness) of all of these conditional

<sup>52</sup> For a general understanding of the importance of the phrase *Tatvomasi*, see Sukumar Azheekode, *Tatvomasi*, (Kottayam: S.P.C.S. 1993), 129-131.

<sup>53</sup> Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 603-606.

<sup>54</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 606-607.

situations. Through the application of the *Jahalakshanavrithy* it is deduced that the *koodastha chaithanyam* serves as the true substratum and the incessant witness to these seven conditions. This is meant by the process called *thvom pada sravana kramam*—the practice of the contemplative and analytical reflection on the phrase *thvom*.

## 2. *Thvom Pada Mananakramam (The Manana Practice of the Thvom Phrase)*<sup>55</sup>

There happens a dimensional shift in the second process called *thvom pada mananam*. The chief modalities of the interrelations and operations of the seven conditions mentioned above are further conceptualised in terms of three *sareeras* (bodies) pertaining to the planes of *sthoolam*, *sookshmam* and *kaaranan*, three *avasthas* (states of mind) called *jagrat*, *swapnam* and *sushupti*, and five *koshas*—physio-psychic sheaths—of the *jeeva*-selves called *annamayam*, *pranamayam*, *manomayam*, *vijnanamayam* and *anandamayam*. After reflecting on the transitory or the perishable nature of these three planes of *sareeras* and the three *avasthas*, and the five *koshas*, each of them are as such cancelled accordingly through the reflection of the identity of the ‘jeeva-self’ in itself. The *thvom padartha tureeya roopajnanam* (the *jnanam*, accomplished in the form of the *jeeva tureeyam*, and derived as the true meaning of the *thvom padam*) is there after found to be radiating as a *sakshi* which exceeds the three *avasthas* despite being present in all of these states as a witness. This *tureeya roopajnanam* is identified as the true essence of the term ‘thou’ or the individual-self (the *jeeva*-self). The phrase ‘Thou’ thus ultimately means the *jnanam* which manifests itself in its full radiance in the state of the *jeeva tureeyam*. This is how the *jeeva*-self is re-discovered in the reflective process of the *thvom pada mananam*.

## 3. *Thvom pada Nididhyasanam (The Nididhyasana Practice of the thvom phrase)*.<sup>56</sup>

The *Nididhyasanam* in this context implies the state of the full blooming of self-knowledge, where one realizes that he or she is the *jnanasworoopam* which radiates as the *sakshi* (witness) of the *avasthatrayas* (*three avestas*), by the means

<sup>55</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 607-609.

<sup>56</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 609-610.

of reflecting on and consolidating the illumination of knowledge obtained by the processes of the *sravanam* and *mananam* of the *thvom padam*. The *jeevajagrat*—the waking state of the *jeeva*-self—is discerned to be dissolving at the state of the *jeevaswapna* which in its turn dissolves at the state of *jeevasushupti*. Even this state of *jeeva sushupti* is dissolved into the *jeeva tureeyam* which is held to be a state beyond all sorts of conditioning. Thus it is found that there exists an imperishable state even after the dissolution of the *avasthatrayam* (three states) along with three the *sareeras*, and the *abhimana namas* (the names of their identification) associated with them. This is the state of the *jeevasureeyam* which is beyond all states. The guru enlightens the *sisya* that in the phase of the *tvom pada nididhyasanam* one realises that he or she is the *jnanasworopam* itself which shines in *tureeyam* (which is *tureeyam* itself) and which provides those three states of existence (*avasthatrayam*) with their substance and splendour (*satthasphoorti*).<sup>57</sup>

#### 4. *Tatpadasravanakramam* (The *Sravana Practice of the tat phrase*).<sup>58</sup>

The *tat padam* also is similarly read according to its *vachyartham* as well as *lakshyartham*. The ‘Other’ or the *Eeswara phrase* is de-structured by eliminating the seven *karanopadhis*, attributed to the godhood in its conditioned or impure state. The *suddhaavasta*—the pure state—of *Eeswara* is discovered as the *brahmachaitanyam* (the effulgence of the cosmic soul) which shines as the *sakshi* to those conditional or impure states of the *Eeswara*. Here arises another paradox. The *jnanam* which shines as the *sakshi* to seven *karyopadhis* operating in the *jeeva*-self is already affirmed as truthful, infinite, absolutely indivisible, integral and singular in itself by the introspection of the *thvom padartham* (the meaning of the *thvom padam*). If the *brahmachaitanyam*, which shines in the *Eeswara tureeyam* as the *sakshi* and *sathroopam* (the form of existential truth) is also accepted as the absolute, then there arises a contradiction because of the apparent duality, and division attributed to the idea of the absolute. This would therefore invalidate the truthfulness of the phrase. The aporia is logically resolved by the appliance of the *lakshanavruthy* of the *ajahallakshanam*<sup>59</sup> which would allow the

<sup>57</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 610.

<sup>58</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op cit., 610-612.

<sup>59</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op cit.,612. By the application of the *ajahallakshanam* it is derived



seeker of knowledge to establish the identity between the two. The principles of *Jnanam* and *Brahmam* are established according to the *ajahallakshanam* as identical. Thus it is found that there does not exist any duality between them in terms of the *lakshyartham* despite they differ in names in literal sense. Both are thus established to be identical. It is thus confirmed through the discerning process of *tatpadartha sravanam* that the *jnanam* realised in the state of the *jeeva tureeyam* as the *sakshi* is one and the same with the *suddhabrahmam* (the cosmic self in its pure form) which is discerned shining as *sakshi* in the *tureeyam* of *Eeswara*, and vice versa.

##### 5. *The Tatpadamananakramam (The Manana Practice of the Tat Phrase)*<sup>60</sup>

The three *sareeras*, three *avasthas*, and the respective *abhimananas*—the names of identification—of God are found to be non-identical to the *Brahmam* through the process of *mananam*. As each of the three *avasthas* dissolves in one or the other or finally in the *tureeyam*, they are held to be, transient and ‘conditioned’ states which are incompatible with the identity of the *Brahmam*. Therefore the *suddhachaitanyam* (the pure effulgence) which shines as a *sakshi* in the *Tureeyavashta* of God (*Eeswara*) transgressing the three *avasthas* is derived as the absolute *Brahmam*.

##### 6. *The Tat pada nididhyasanam (The Nididhyasana Practice of the Tat Phrase)*<sup>61</sup>

The *suddhabrahmanubhavam*—the pure experience of the *Brahmam*—attained as a result of intense reflection on the meanings derived by the processes of *sravanam* and *mananam* of *tatpadam* is called the *Tatpada nididhyasanam*. The *Eeswara jagrat* (the waking state of the God) is discerned to be dissolved into the *eeswaraswapnam* (the dream-state of the God) which in turn, is found to be dissolved into the *Eeswarasushupti* (the deep sleep of the God). The *Eeswarasushupti*, finally dissolves into the *Eeswaratureeyam*. The *Brahmam*, which radiates as the *sattha* (substance) in the *Eeswaratureeyam* and which is

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that the phrase suggests a meaning other than the literal which implicates the identity of both the phrases *Jnanam* and *Brahmam*.

<sup>60</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 612-614.

<sup>61</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 614-615.

signified as *prasanthaghanam* (tranquil and dense) is to be finally recognized in the course of the reflective process of the *tatpada nididhyasanam* as the same with the *jnanasworoopam*, illuminated in the *jeevatureeyam*.

Thus through these three processes of self-reflection, the *Eeswara* in its personified or conditioned form is de-structured into the state of the *brahmanubhavam* which occurs in the *Eeswaratureeyam*. This is a state which is held as imperceptible to the domains of the word and mind, and irrepresentable in the worldly discourses.

#### 7. *The Asi Padasravanam (The Sravana Practice of the Asi Phrase)*<sup>62</sup>

The *Asipadam* is now subjected to a rigorous process of rereading which leads to the discovery of the *saivic* connotations of the phrase. The illusory and the transitory attributes of the phenomena of *sivam* are thereafter progressively cancelled by deploying the same mode of analysis followed earlier. The *asipadam* implicating the *siva*-phrase is discerned to be emitting an 'impure' literal meaning (*vachyartham*) as well as an analogical or suggestive meaning (*lakshyartham*) which is held to be 'pure'. Literally, it refers to the usual attribution of the *sivam* as the *sadroopasakthi* (the force in the form of the *sat*) the *chidroopasakthi* (the force in the form of the *chit*) and *anandaroopasakthi* (the force in the form of bliss). The *lakshyartham* of the *asipadam* refers on the other hand to the *chaithanyam* (effulgence), which is derived by cancelling each of these three conditioned forms of forces, and which is found as a *sakshi* and a substratum to all of them. This is held as the *suddhaavastha*, the pure state of the *sivam*. It is also found that the differences between these three instances of *jnanam*, *brahmanam*, and *sivam* exist only in terms of names and not in terms of their pure substance. This is established through the appliance of the *jahadajahallakshana*. Similarly, it is comprehended through the device of *lakshanavruthy* that despite the differentiation of the phrases into *jnanam*, (*chit*) *brahmanam*, (*sat*) and *sivam* (*anandam*) the *chaithanyam* of the *sivam* radiates inseparably and integrally as *satchitanandam*.

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<sup>62</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 615-616.

8. *The Asi Padamananam (The Manana Practice of the Asi-phrase)*<sup>63</sup>

The three *sareeras*, the three *avasthas* and the *abhimana namas* (names of identification) associated with them, of the *sivam* are recognised not to be identical to the *sivasworoopam* (the true substance of the *sivam*) because all of these are found to be dissolving in to one or other or the *tureeyam* of the *sivam*. Then there arises the question: what is the *sivasworoopam* or the true substance of the *sivam*? The *chaithanyam* (the effulgence) which radiates as *sakshi* to these three *sareeras* and the three *avastas* of the *sivam* and which at the same time exceeds them is realised as the true substance of the *sivam* found as such in the *asipadartha manana turyaroopam* (the *tureeya roopam*, realised in the course of the *mananam* of the meaning of the *asi padam*).

9 - *The Asipadanididhyasanam (The Nididhyasana practice of the Asi phrase)*<sup>64</sup>

The *Asipadanididhyasanam* here implicates the consolidation or fulfilment of the *sivanubhavam*—the experience of *Sivam*—as accomplished by the reflective practices involved in the *sravanam* and *mananam* of the *asi padam*. One thus wakes up fully to the knowledge that one is the *Sivam* which radiates in the *Sivatireeyam*, (the *suddhasivam*) which is held to be unconditional and superseding the states of the *Sivajagrat*, *Siva swapnam* and *Siva sushupti*, and which is found to be identical to the states of the *jeevasakshi* and *Eeswarasakshi* (both of which had earlier been proved to be identical). Thus one realises the *sworoopam* of oneself as the *suddha sivam* which is unconditioned by the three *upadhis* (*sakthis*) and which at the same time radiates as the *sakshi* to them. And this is the state of *suddhasivam* which is held as *avangmansagocharam* ('imperceptible to the word and mind') and *akhanda paripoorna satthamatra sworoopam* ('in its true form of an integral whole and pure substance') in the *vedantic* diction. The attainment of this *siva*-state is supposed to be providing one *jeevanmukti* (the ultimate deliverance in one's own life) the ultimate state of liberation aspired by beings.

<sup>63</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 616-617.

<sup>64</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 617-618.

The '*Advaita Chintapaddhati*', like most of the works of Chattampi Swamikal, is presented in the form of a dialogue between a Guru and *sishya* or between a *vaktavu*—the instructor—and *jijnasu*—the inquisitive. The *sishya*, as he is addressed in the work, is held to be a competent seeker of *jnana* who has already accomplished *devatha-prasadam* (the grace of the deity) through the means of *sagunopasana* (the worship of *Eeswara* attributing it a form or a quality—*guna*) and has eliminated the impurities of the mind called *vikshepam* (projection) through the practice of *Rajayogam*.<sup>65</sup> Significantly, these sorts of stray references to the requirements of a competent pursuer of *jnana* would reveal the traces of the libidinal modes of devotion or *bhakti* and heterogenous practices of reflection involved in the pursuit of *jnana* which remain mostly unsaid in the texts. This would also suggest that the *athmavidya*—the knowledge of the self—or the *jnana-paddhati* instructed by the Gurus, might rather be seen as a pragmatic or action game where the heterogeneous modes of worship and self-pursuit are re-linked revealing the hetero-logic thrust of the *Dravidian jnana-sampradayas* than merely a truth-game or knowledge-game. The *Sagunopasana* is thus found to be relinked to the *nirgunopasana* characteristic to the *Vedanta*. The practice of *rajayogam* is approved as a necessary means of getting relieved from the delusions of mental projection (*vikshepam*) and of gaining competence for the *advaitic* pursuit. These apparently divergent practices are conjoined as complementary phases in the course of the *jnana*-pursuit. Moreover, this would also wake us up to the silent and suggestive zones, paralogic or negative phrases abounding in the discursive fabric of the *vedantic* or the *jnanic* hetemenutics.

The moment the aspirant switches on to the mode of reflection called the *sravanam*, there takes place a catastrophic turn in the hearing, seeing and sensing of the 'self' and the 'other'. The thought progresses from the plane of *sthoolam* (the gross) to *sookshmam* (the subtle) and thereafter to *kaaranam*—the causal—and ultimately dissolves into the state of the *karana rahitham*—the supreme state of reality which is unbounded by the laws of cause and effect, creation and destruction. Likewise the pursuit of *jnanam* advances from the *indriya prathyaksham* (the sensual or perceptual reality) into the *athma prathyaksham* (the

<sup>65</sup> Dr. Maheswaran Nair, op. cit., 610.

reality produced at the core of one's self), from the *parokshanubhooti* (the indirect, mediated or alienated experiences of *jnanam* or self) into the *aparokshanubhooti* (the direct, immediate or unmediated experience of the occurrence of *jnanam* as self). The discerning processes as implied in the practices of *sravanam*, *mananam* and *nididhyasanam*, also suggest the dimensional changes progressively taking place in the pursuit of *jnanam*.

### The saivic Turn

The reinvention of the *asi vakyam* as the *siva*-phrase marks the crucial deviation taken by the Chattampi Swamikal from the conventional vedantic or *Sankaraadvaitic* traditions of interpreting the *mahavakyas*. The saivic turn heralded by Chattampi Swamikal in the *advaitic* reflection of knowledge is subtly brought forth in the following observations:

The whole reading of the *tatwamasi* is significantly done according to the hermeneutic traditions of the *Dravidacharyas*. The Sanskritistic Acharyas have usually been pre-occupied with the process of establishing the unity between the phenomenon of the *brahma chaithanyam* which is being meant ultimately by the *tatpadam*, and that of the *koodasthachaithanyam* which is being discovered as the real meaning of the *thvom padam*. This is generally done according to the mode of the reading called '*jahadajahallakshana*'. However, the Tamil works like '*Ozhivilodukkam* establishes that the *suddha sivam* which radiates beyond the *swanubhava*' and exceeds the notion of the '*brahmam*', as implicated by the *lakshyartham* of *tat padam* and that of the *koodastha*' as suggested by the *lakshyartham* of the *thvom padam* signifies the ultimate principle. Accordingly it is this *siva* principle, which goes even beyond the imagination of the *sathchidandam* that is being taken as the *lakshyartham* of the *tatwomasi* phrase by Chattampi Swamikal.'<sup>66</sup>

As Chattampi Swamikal elaborates, it is the *asi* or *siva* phrase which links the *thvom* phrase and the *tat* phrase, the former referring to the *jeeva* self and the latter, the *Eeswara*-self or *Brahmam*. The *Siva*-phrase which stands for this unitive state of linkage transgressing the apparent binarian conditions of the self/Other relation is also conceived as the third important state or phrase in the presentation of the absolute self ; this has the effect of triplicating the binary relations and

<sup>66</sup> Vidyananda Teertha pada Swamy, Preface, Sree Chattampi Swamikal, *Advaita Chintha Paddhati*, 67.

equations of the *tathvam asi*-phrase as a whole. There is thus established a tri-logical or paradoxical unity of the absolute soul by deducing a complex equation of the *jeeva-tureeyam = eeswara-tureeyam = siva-tureeyam*, through the afore-said reflective processes of *sravanam*, *mananam*, and *nididhyasanam*.<sup>67</sup>

Let me attempt here to pursue the dimensional differentiations and inter-linkages explicated by the triple reflection of the unitive relationship between the self and the 'Other' in the context of the reading of the *tathvomasī* phrase. If the *thvom padam* refers to the plane of the *jeeva* self, or the *koodastha* dimension of the Absolute, the *tathpadam* signifies the 'Other', the divine, the cosmic or the *Eeswara*-dimension, which could otherwise be called the absolute self. The *jnanam* is discovered as the absolute meaning of the *tvom padam*, which is associated with the *chit* in the *jeeva*-plane. The *brahmam*, likewise is realised as the absolute meaning of the *tat padam*, which implicates the plane of the divine and the *sat* dimension and which is found as the correlative of the *jnanam* which radiates as the core of the *chit*. The *Asi* or *Sivam* in its turn implicates not only the unitive linkage of these two dimensions but also a trilogic unison, specifically the concordance of the existential, reflective, and the libidinal matrices as otherwise known integratedly as the *sat chit, anandam* (bliss). Paradoxically it emerges both as a part and a 'whole' and that which exceeds the whole, of this trilogical equation

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<sup>67</sup> The principle of *Advaitam* (the non-dualism) is thus metamorphosed to that of a tripartite or tri-logical unity which could be called an *Atraitam*. This triplication complicates the simple monism and the dualistic conceptualization involved in the conventional reading of *Advaitam* (non-dualism) and heterogenises the field and mode of knowing. The *Atraitam*, the absolute 'oneness-in-three' logically and contemplatively established by the *Saiva jnanam* refers not to a simple unity produced in the three *avastas* or three bodies as conceptualised usually, but a complex and multidimensional oneness which could only be realised in the fourth state called *Tureeyam* exceeding these triple phenomena. This *ekam* thus invented in the *Tureeya* state does paralogically implicate the *anekam*, or the 'multiple' and refers to a *chaturtham* or a fourth plane held to be embodying the real identity of the *jnanam = Brahmam = Sivam*. Thus the *sivam* is held as the unitive or integrated state of the three dimensions of the absolute being called *sat chit* and *anandam* and which at the same time exceeds these three. The equations thus derived by the reading of the *mahavakya* invents a fourth order transgressing the triple differentiation of the phenomena, forces and bodies. The fourth order of body called *karanarahita sareera* likewise is realised as the absolute self which transcends the three *sareeras* called *sthoola, sookshma* and *karana*. Thus the dualities are re structured into triple entities which are being transgressed and traversed by the fourth dimension, infinitive in its dimension and is held as the substratum of these three entities or states. The unity thus invented by the fourth order or dimension of the reality which is held as the culmination of all realities is to be seen as a 'paralogic' or vertical unity. This paradoxical unity is being distinguished from the illusive or provisional unities of senses selves or subjects produced in the three states or modes of realities.

of identity. The relation between the self and the 'Other' is also provided with a *subha*-finality by the linking of the *saivic* narration on to it which I think as the most substantial contribution made by the Guru-narratives of the absolute.

The reading provided by Swamikal thus triples and complicates the usual formulae of identity between the 'self' and the 'Other' provided by the *Sankara-advaitic* mode of hermeneutics regarding the Upanishadic phrase of *Tatvomasi*. Retrieving the *saivic* implication of the *asi* phrase it elaborates the three dimensions or matrices of the 'absolute real', spelt by the *mahavakyam* and establishes the relation of identity prevailing between them. The absolute 'self' within the *jeeva*-self is derived through a rigorous process of analytical reflection on, and affirmation of, the intransient and the Infinite, and negation of the transient or the finite states of the *jeeva*-self. The literal meaning of the *thvom* phrase, i.e., the finite *Jeeva*-being is rejected through the introspective process of the cancellation of the seven *Karyopadhis*, three *avastas* and three *sareeras* and their subsequent identities which usually define the *jeeva*-self. Thus ultimately it is the suggestive meaning (*lakshyartham*) of the *thvom*-phrase, derived through the analytic reflection of the phrase, as the *koodastachaitanyam* or the *jnanam* which is discovered as its true meaning. It is held as the true substratum of the *jeeva* which remains a *sakshee* to the whole activities of the senses and the world produced by it and which at the same time is held as the source of the effulgence that pervades all of them. This is otherwise known as the *tureeya* state which is held as exceeding the three usual states and as a state of convergence of the three states of 'real' called *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*. The same mode of reflective operation is progressively conducted in the cases of two other dimensions namely that of the 'Other' (the *eeswara*) and the '*sivam*'. While the *Eeswara tureeyam* or *Brahmam* is discovered as the real or the absolute meaning of the phrase *Tat*, the *Siva Tureeyam* is traced out as the absolute meaning of the instance of the *Anandam* (bliss) or *Sivam*. The discovery of the 'absolute' with regard to each of these three phrase-dimensions is more importantly followed by a process of identification between them in absolute terms without which the whole formulations would have become invalid.

Here again we find the clash between the *advaitic* and the *siddhantic*, the contest and negotiation between the 'logical' and the 'libidinal', the 'discursive'

and 'figural', and the 'hermeneutic' and 'reflective judgment'. While certain zones of radical singularities unique and intractable differences are marked out by the Swamikal, in the reflection of the the 'absolute', these are finally found neutralised by the all-pervasive and regularised schema of identity constructed by him. The *asi* phrase which implicates the *sivam*, is revealed to be the key-phrase of the Mahavakyam which is also found to be the 'affect-phrase'. The centrality and the primacy of the term in the phrasing of the 'absolute' are brought out. However the Swamikal fails to provide a complex or catastrophic synthesis to these different dimensions of the 'absolute' inlaid in the paradoxical phrase *tatvamsi*. Instead he could only produce a dialectical or logical synthesis of them by reducing the differences in to 'sameness'.

If we deconstruct this equation, and rediscover it as a 'sign' it would implicate a triple progression and culmination of the instances of the reflection of the absolute (as *sivam*). It seems to implicate a paralogic union of the differences involved in the triple instances of the 'absolute', rather than, simple affirmation of the 'absolute identity'. It should in short be read rather as a prescriptive or pragmatic phrase than a truth-phrase. These three dimensions also refer to the principles of *sat*, *chit* and *anandam* respectively. The reflection progresses from the first instance of reflection of the individual self, as the *chit* or *jnanam* or *jeeva tureeyam* to the reflection of the *sat*, the self of *Eeswara* as *Brahma*, or the *Eeswara tureeyam* and ultimately to that of the 'anandam' or *sivam* as *sivatureeyam*. And each instances are subjected to the three modes of reflection called *sravanam*, *mananam* and *nidhidhyasanam*' another sort of triple progression of reflection in terms of intensification and 'transition'. The process of reflection and identification undergoes a drastic change from the second instance of the contemplation of the *tat* or the core of the *sat*, the Other. The Being in the core of its immanence now proceed to the Other, and reaches a synthesis with the Other', which means the synthesis of dimensions of absolute which are incommensurable with each other in their impure states. The reflection again progresses further in to a higher dimension of the 'Otherness' in the instance of 'Sivam' which specifically refers to the state of *anandam* (bliss). And this specific instance of *anandam* which at the state of 'sivatureeyam' gets united with the other instances of the *sat* and *cit*,



therefore implicates not only a single dimension but also a wholeness which exceeds the dimensional differences and which possibly effectuates the whole linkage. At the state of *siva tureeyam* the reflection reaches a culmination where the triple progression of 'knowing' come to an end, and there happens a transmutation of the whole processes of reflection. Thus the triple progression of the reflection on the triple instances of the 'absolute' at its culmination bears witness to the 'occurrence' of a complex and paradoxical synthesis, a higher accord, the sublime finality of the progressive *subha* story of knowing the 'absolute'. This otherwise would implicate the tripling of the triple instances of *sat chit anandam*, and its culmination at Sivam. Or it also suggests a middle point between the instances of the Immanence, transcendence, an instance which marks not only the union of both themselves but also their union with the third instance called *sivam*. And the *siva*-phrase not only refers to an instance of the triple dimensions of the absolute, but also the 'wholeness' and the unison of the triple instances and which exceeds that wholeness. A higher synthesis thus happens in the course of the reflection, a 'wholeness or unity that never curtails the singularity of each instances but doubles or triples them in order to reach the ultimate finality of reflection, the sublime state of the realisation of the *sivam*. Thus when the reflection reaches the instance of the *siva tureeyam*, at the zenith of reflection, the synthesis produced at the instance of the *jnanam*, *chit* or the *jeeva* undergoes transformation. And it is only at the final state of the reflection of the *sivatureeyam*, the knowledge of the absolute reaches its ultimate finality. The reflection goes through processes of invention implicating unification rather than identification, a process of doubling and tripling in its intensity and range. Instead of a repetition or reproduction what happens in the course of this triple reflection is a take off from the instance of the 'Being' to that of the Other and thereafter to that of the Sivam, which signals the culmination of this process of union and which at the same time exceeds the union. It provides the crucial insight that the heterogeneous instances in their core are not in isolation or absolute difference with each other but in union with themselves and this is brought out by the 'occurrence' of an Idea of absolute which at the same time exceeds this differential unity. The immanence at its core is in other words united with Transcendence at its core, and this 'unity-in-difference' at its core is the

realised as the core of the Idea of *sivam*. And it is this instance of the *Sivam* or *Sivatureeuam* which should be found the subject here. It is the self which reflects on *Sivam* at the grace of the *Sivam* is to be recognised as the subject here. And this instance implicates the ‘occurrence’ of an Idea of the ‘absolute’ which exceeds all differences and unities. Thus we might deconstruct the text of the Swamikal retrieving the traces of a dynamic synthesis in Kantian terms of the triple dimensions of the ‘absolute’. And this would differ from the dialectical or Hegelian synthesis of the ‘self and ‘other’, which translates or reproduces the ‘self’ in to the ‘other’ and the ‘other’ into the ‘same’ as typical to the philosophies of the Being’ as traced out by Levinass.

The basic problem with the Swamikal’s interpretation of the *Mahavakyam* is that there happens an unwarranted mixing of genres: the rules and modality of a ‘cognitive’, ‘descriptive’, or ‘logical’, genre which are applicable only in the cases of limited or finite phenomenon, mostly hijacks the reflection or presentation which actually pursues a limitless Idea of the absolute or the Infinite. The reflection of an Idea of absolute here mostly slides in to the modality of a logical or speculative discourse which is illegitimate in the sense that it would kill the radical otherness of the “occurrence” of the absolute’. The determinate language and logic is used to present an object of Idea of the ‘absolute’ which is indeterminate and irrepresentable. The unexpected, the catastrophic and tumultuous ‘occurrence’ of the ‘presence’ implicated by the *asi* phrase is thus found regularised schematised and thus robbed of its ‘eventhood’.

The logical operation of reduction, on the whole, begins with the reading of the the *asi*-phrase as ‘denotative’ of the state of ‘being’, a sign of equivalence or identity, dwelling upon the literal meaning of the term. The *asi*-phrase which seems to be an analogical or symbolic phrase or a ‘sign’ here turns out to be a ‘truth’-phrase which simply equates the self with the universal self or the ‘Other. This might invariably be related to the *Sankaradvaitic* strain of thought which still lingers within the reflective *sampradaya* of the Swamikal. The *asi*-phrase which might be seen as the sign of an ‘occurrence’, of the unison between the self and the Other, loses its *saivic* intensities by the reading deployed here.

The *asi-phrase*, which is the key-phrase without which the linkage between the self and the 'Other' would become impossible, thus reveals itself to be an 'affect'-phrase or the locus of a 'differend' submerged in the usual readings done by the *Advaitins* and even that produced by the Swamikal. Literally, it means 'to be' or 'is' and suggests the existential state of the 'being'. However, as an analogical or paralogical phrase it implicates the event as 'it happens' or 'it becomes'. It seems to suggest a catastrophic process of 'becoming' rather than 'being', an event of union rather than equivalence. To read it as a 'truth'-phrase or a 'cognitive' phrase would reduce the whole statement a pre-judgment a reductive formula, a cliché or an unwarranted 'truth'-claim. The *saivic* connotations of the phrase as retraced but displaced in the reading of the Swamikal actually implicate an 'occurrence' (of the divine or saivic grace). According to the principles of the *Saiva Siddhanta*, the *asi* phrase refers to the erotic divine principle which binds the Other with the *Jeeva*-self, by which the Other draws the *jeeva*-self towards itself by bestowing its love and grace and simultaneously by which the *jeeva*-self gives away its to the Other by devotion and worship. It should be seen as the 'sign' of the catastrophic occurrence of the grace of the Infinite which leads the *jeeva*-self to its ultimate destination of the realization of the absolute.

The *Tathvomasi* phrase as a *Mahavakya* of the Upanishad as instructed by a Guru to his disciple, here, the Father to his son, should be seen as a 'prescriptive' or 'pragmatic' phrase, a *mantra*-phrase which belongs to the genre of romance. It is a libidinal phrase in the sense that it conveys the ('disinterested') desire of the 'Other' for the self and the desire of the self for the 'Other'; it also involves the gracious love of the Guru who sows the seeds of this desire on the heart of his disciple. While the *asi*-phrase recalls and indexes mainly the occurrence of the fulfilment of the the union between the self and God in the case of the Guru, it implicates the 'occurrence' of radical desiring, the case of anticipation with regard to the disciple. The reflection of the *mantra* in its culmination is expected to lead the disciple to the state of its realisation, to witness 'the occurrence of the absolute. As a referent, it is the signal of an 'immemorial'<sup>68</sup> event of fulfilment. The

<sup>68</sup> A Lyotardian phrase referring to 'that which can neither be remembered (represented to consciousness) nor forgotten (consigned to oblivion) Bill Reading explains the term as follows: "It is that which returns uncannily. As, such, the immemorial acts as a kind of

*Tatwamasi* phrase therefore should be seen as neither a logical exposition nor an instruction or a formula of a spiritual programming. Instead it seems to denote the presentational mode of a sign<sup>69</sup> which in Kantian terminology “recalls, shows and anticipates,” the ‘event’ of the realisation, the sublime occurrence wherein the *jeeva*-self and the ‘Other’ rejoin and rejoice in their oneness. The *asi* phrase thus surpasses its literal sense which refers to a simple present tense and actually implicates a complicated temporality which simultaneously refers to past, present and future and beyond those. It suggests a ‘sublime’ temporal state which cannot be partitioned or confined in to the three divisions of time or the three *avastas*; it refers to a sublime time which goes beyond these finite states in to that of the of *tureeya* and *tureeyateeta* (the transcendental divine state). The paradoxical phrase in short exceeds the criterion of times offered by the cognitive logical discourses and representations which proceed in diachronic time.

The *asi* phrase thus remains an ‘affect’-phrase repressed in the various readings produced by the different schools of Vedanta over the ages. The *Advaitins* have translated the *Tatwomasi* phrase which we find as belonging to a *mantric* or libidinal genre, a prescriptive genre or the genre of romance into a ‘truth’-genre or a genre of ‘knowledge’ or ‘logic’. The *asi* phrase is mostly viewed by them as suggesting a state of ‘Being’ which would establish the absolute equivalence between the self and the ‘Other’. While the *Visishtadvaitins* read the phrase emphasising a qualified mode of non-dualism, the *Madhvacharya* reads it as referring to the duality of the two.<sup>70</sup> The *Saiva Siddhantins* rereads the phrase by retrieving the *saivic* or the ‘libidinal’, ‘existential’ and the ‘experiential’ implications of the *asi* phrase. They refute the principle of ‘non-difference’ as advocated by the *Advaitins* especially in their interpretation of the *Mahavakyam*. According to the *Siddhantins* the *asi* phrase implicates an ‘occurrence’ of ‘unity’

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*figure* for consciousness and its attempts at representing itself historically... The task of not forgetting, of anamnesis, is the task of the avant-garde, which struggles to keep events from sinking into the oblivion of either representation (voice) or silence” Bill Readings *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics*, (London : Routledge, 1991), xxxii;xxxiii, 22, 58-62.

<sup>69</sup> Lyotard explains the Kantian concept of sign in the following words: “Kant glosses this sign of history in his way: “*signum rememorativum demonstrativum, prognosticon*,’ a sign that recalls, shows, and anticipates. Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 164-65.

<sup>70</sup> Sukumar Azheekodu , *Tathvomasī*, 163-165.

or 'non-separation' (*ananyathvam*) rather than 'non-difference':

...the *Siddhantins* disagrees with the *Advaita* on the interpretation given to the *Upanishadic* texts concerning *mukti*. The *mahavakya* (*tat tvam asi*)... does not signify oneness of being (*onre porul enr anru*). When we say that a certain person is a tiger, on account of his mighty power, it means that he has become like a tiger and, not that he is not different from a tiger. Again, when someone says that he is sick, he does not wish to say that he is not different from sickness. By the dictum *akame Piramam* (Skt. '*aham brahma asmi*'), the *Siddhantini* understands 'being united with Brahman', "I remain in him without separation (*veranre*)."<sup>71</sup>

The *Siddhantins* have identified a stage in the spiritual attainment of the *sadhaka* which is called *Saaroopya* where the devotee attains certain similarity with the *Eeswara* and which does not imply any kind of absolute equality. Even the stage of *Sayoojya* which is held as the ultimate state of union with the *Eeswara* is held as a state of 'union-in-difference' and there does not occur the total merger of the identity of the self into that of the *Eeswara*. According to the *Siddhantins*, the principles like *Aham Brahmasmi* indicate certain initial stages in the spiritual pursuits of the *sadhakas* where the ego of the devotee is aggrandized due to its identification with the infinitive powers of the *Eeswara* instance. Such kinds of knowledge are held as belonging to *Paasajnana* (the knowledge that arises from the state of bondage) which are differentiated from the absolute knowledge named as *Patijnanam*. It is in order to distinguish the radical difference and the transcendental dimension of the 'Other' from the immanence of the 'Being' that concepts like *Ateetam* or *Tureeyateetam* are put forward by the *Siddhantins*.

In the case of Chattampi swamikal, the complex negotiation between the *saiva siddhanta* and *advaita* at times slants towards the instance of *advaita*. Perhaps both the Guru's were attempting a complex synthesis of the two. The paradoxical 'unity in difference' as postulated by the *Saivasiddhantins* does not appear as such in the interpretation provided by Swamikal on *Mahavakyam*. The Identity between the 'self' and the 'Other' is found as already achieved (*praptapraptam*). And it is just a matter of reflection on the self, in proposed manners, which is required for the termination of the ignorance involved in the sense of schism between the two. The logical process that is employed is the

<sup>71</sup> Mariasusai Dhavamony, op.cit., 299.

progressive negation and equation of heterogenous instances in terms of their finiteness and infiniteness.. It is a process of 'knowing' rather than 'uniting' or 'becoming' that is being apparently implicated in the hermeneutics deployed here. Otherwise it would have amounted to an invention in reflection. Instead of the erotics of union between the self and other, it is an epistemology or the gnosis of the identity of the self and the other which is being privileged here. If the God of the *siddhantins* (as that of *Visisthadvaitins*) is an object of love, the Brahma for the *Advaitins* is an object of 'knowledge' or 'truth'; the culmination of a process of knowing or a logical speculation which only establishes a truth pre-determined. However at the same time there happens the withering away of the *triputis* of knowledge because of the absolute identity of the self of the knower and the known which is the absolute; where the knower merges into the known, or vice versa, and the self in to the cosmic self vice versa. The logical synthesis achieved by the Sankaradvaitin in short differs from that made by the *SaivaSiddhantins* and *Visisthadvaitins* between the *jeeva*-self and the 'Other'. However, it might be observed that it is this sense of the difference or the 'otherness' within the unity rather than that of an absolute identity which brings off an erotic dimension, an intensity of love between the self and the *Sivam* or Vishnu in the cases of the *Saivasiddhanta* and the *Visisthadvaita*. The *asi* phrase might be viewed as the subject of this drama of occurrence instead of the *thvom* or *tat*, in the sense that it is the radical phrase which witnesses this sublime feeling of union that activates and links both. It is this phrase which makes the synthesis possible between the two bringing out a unity in difference, a paradoxical unity suggested by the *Siddhantins*. However, the Swamikal's reflection begins with the reflection on the instance of the self, by the self though this self is deconstructed in the process of reflection and, and it then moves from the 'being' to the instances of the Other and the *sivam* in a linear progression, reproducing the same modality of reflection. The Being or the self is the subject in the case of Swamikal's reading (though this subject would ultimately merge into the Universal self, the Brahma) while the *saivasiddhantins* would focus on the 'occurrence' that is *sivam* as the subject which repositions and links the instances of the *thvom* and *tat* into paralogic relation of 'Unity in duality' or heterogeneity or a paradoxical assemblage. This

catastrophic and indeterminate occurrence of the ‘becoming’ or union with the Other provides the mode of reflection in the case of the *Siddhantins* (and *Visisthadvaitins*) a sense of uncertainty and irregularity. However the advaitic principle of identity establishes a regularity and determinacy to the process of reflection, and makes it a programme of the ‘Being’ which either aspires to find itself in the ‘Other’ thus making it ‘self-same’ or to merge its whole identity to that of the ‘Other’. The *saiva siddhantic* reading on the otherhand would focus on a complex synthesis where the ‘Other’ makes the initial and the determining role in the unity and where the self never merges in to the ‘Other’ yet dwells in unity with the Other without totally nullifying itself. There is no merger of the individual soul to the absolute as in the case of the *advaitam*. A paralogical unity is established without blurring the radical differences between the two. As in the hymn of Narayan Guru, what the devotee aspires is not the absolute merging of the finite soul to the Infinite but living for ever immersed in the ocean of his/her grandeur (*mahassu*) (*DaivaDasakom*). As I have indicated earlier, it is this sense of the paradoxical unity in difference, which eroticises and dramatises the ‘manner’ of reflection and devotion in the case of the *Saiva siddhantins* and the *Visisthadvaitins*.

In Swamikal’s interpretation the three matrices or instances of the absolute namely, the *jeeva*-self, the universal self, and the *sivam* are interchangeable or substitutable because of their absolute identity. But in the case of the *siddhantins* the *sivam* is the ultimate state which is untranslatable or unsubstitutable to any other phrase and it is the supreme state of knowledge, the ‘Absolute’. And it is that ‘state of the absolute’ which makes the initial moves in the form of love, grace, and initiation to knowledge in the relation between the God and devotee. God, the Infinite, emerges as a lover, a benefactor, or a Guru to the devotee and it is only through his grace and by means of union with it that the devotee would be able to attain the ultimate knowledge of the Infinite. If there is an erotic anxiety of a lover in the pursuit of devotion and knowledge in the case of the *saiva siddhantins*, there is the determinacy and self-assurance of a logician in the reading done by Chattampi Swamikal<sup>72</sup>. It is the radical alterity of the three dimensions which is

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<sup>72</sup> The phenomenology of the ‘Other’ as elaborated by Emmanuel Levinas has critically

held by the *Siddhantins* as unerasable but linkable and unifiable that provides the unity a paradoxical, as well as catastrophic nature, libidinal as well as sublime dimensions. And it transmutes the whole process of 'knowing' into a process of invention and romance with an Idea of the absolute.

The elaborate systematisation and conceptualisation which characterises the logical speculation of the Swamikal might also be seen as marking the weakness of the mode of reflection followed by him. The minute mapping and scanning of the different layers of consciousness and reflection, concerned with the pursuit of self-knowledge, is done in a superb way which would seduce one by its analytical sharpness, logical dissection, transcendental syntheses and assurances. However, the predominance of the determinate genre of logic, the tendency to schematise systematise and conceptualise the instances of the knowledge of the 'absolute' leads to philosophical abstraction and retards the creative surge of his thought. The possibility of the 'unexpected', the unpredictable and the 'asymmetrical' are never confronted but absorbed by the deterministic structure of the logic. However the affect-phrases leave their marks in the interstices of the text. The reflective flashes here and there illumine the logical scheming; the phrases that are fertile and 'paralogical' disturb or resist the regime of the logical genre. If one resurrects the *saivic* intensities displaced in the mode of reflection and the structured phrases of Swamikal it would catastrophically subvert the elaborate and complex programming of self-reflection forged out by his hermeneutics. The certainty and determinacy of the logical scheming meticulously carried out by the Swamikal seem to abandon the 'figural' or the historico-political drama involved in the romance of union between the Infinite and the finite. However the spiritual or philosophical tract produced by him itself testifies to the deeper contestation brought forth between the 'figural' or the 'reflective' thrust of the *saiva siddhanta* and the logical or the conceptual regime of the *advaitic* hermeneutics within it. Even though the logical finalisation characteristic to the *advaitic* epistemology, attempts to neutralise the charge of the *saivic* erotics within Swamikal's

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unravelling a similar process of the 'philosophy of Being' hegemonising the Western philosophy by repressing and containing the radical differences of the 'Other' turning them into a repetition of the 'same'. Sean Hand ed. *The Levinas Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 9-88, 166-190, 235-249.



philosophical tracts, his prose, his life-practice, his dialogic engagement with disciples, his entours into the deeper zone of silence all mark his intense and passionate association with the radical principles of *saivasiddhantam*. The libidinal or the 'figural' which is repressed in the logical scheming is let loosened in the *guru-sishya* relation eroticising it as well as the course of reflection. This would indicate the dynamic negotiations and confrontations took place between the *advaita* and the *saiva-siddhanta* narratives of the 'absolute' in the reflective practice of Swamikal. The ambivalence, of the text actually reflects the conflicts and disputes that brewed up in the contemporary scene, of culture on the reflection of the 'absolute'. The 'affect'-phrases discovered and then displaced by the spiritual reflection of Swamikal might be seen as evoking crevices within the logical regulation established by him on the basis of the equations of identity. And there in the silent interstices of the texts we might listen to a romance with the Idea of absolute which is being repressed by the genre of logic.

One of the major drawbacks of the *Saivic* resurgence kindled by the Guru-movement was that it could not make a dynamic linkage with the 'historico-political' phrases. The spiritual reflection of the 'absolute' was in short, not radically conjoined with the political life of the people. This would also implicate the basic constraints of the saivic vision of the world. It lacked the trait of heterogeneity which is a necessary requirement of the presentation of the 'absolute' according to Kantian critique of knowledge. The *Vaishnavic* streams of reflection, with its deeper affirmation and problematisation of the worldly life, the historico-political realms and the *dharmic* or reflective actions demanded by this reflection of the absolute were excluded from the *saivic* synthesis of the *jeeva*-self and the cosmic self. The omission of the texts like *Bhagavadgita* which had radical implication in the political spiritual reflections and practices of the people of India, from the spiritual reflection of the Gurus suggest the political disorientation of the Guru-movement, its dissociation with the political spirituality of the *Vaishnavic* faith. The aversion shown by Chattampi Swamikal to the 'socio-political' activities might reflect the saivic or ascetic disinclination towards the matrix of the world and the political core of it as inherited by him. It is not accidental that the radical doctrines of texts like *Geetha*, with their emphasis on the principles of *karmayoga*

and *swadharna*, and the *sakhi-bhakti* or or *veerabhakti* where the reflection leads one to the battlefield of forces and *dharmic* conflicts, and to union with the Infinite through the dharmic political actions (inspired by an Idea of 'absolute') was, consciously, or not, excluded from their rereading of *advaita* as such..However, the historical romance of the *rajyam* in contrast, reinvents a heterogenous accord of the *saivic* and the *vaishnavite* streams of reflection, their phrases and forces. And this we would acknowledge as a progressive turn achieved by the historical romance on the reflection of the 'absolute' in the 'here' and 'now' of the 'historico-political'.

## CHAPTER – V

### RE-VISIONING THE GURU-MODE OF REFORM

#### – SREE NARAYANA GURU

##### *1-Siddha on Descend*

The consecration of a *sivalingam* in Aruvippuram<sup>1</sup> in the year 1888 marks a great event in the annals of Malayali reform, providing a new impetus to the *Advaitic* and *Saivic* modes of ‘self’-reflection and socio-spiritual practices. It also marks the ascension of Sree Narayana Guru as the initiator of a subversive movement of reform which reclaimed the right of the lower caste people to worship the chief deities of Hinduism like *Siva*, formerly disallowed by the Brahminical *varna - jati - regime*. It provided a new form, a new language to the resistance to the ritual supremacy of the Brahmins in matters of worship. The event also implicates the invention of a new mode of devotion, a new idea and icon of faith not only in the case of the people belonging to the lower strata of *varna* and caste but also that of the people of Keralam in general. The radical significance of the event also lies in its defiance of the injunctions of the *varna* regime against the *sudras* and the lower castes from entering into the devotional and ritual practices like *aradnana*, *pooja* or *tantric* observances exclusively reserved for the *Brahmins* and the *Savarnins* (people of higher *varna*) in general. Moreover, it repossesses the radical traditions of the *Advaitic* and *Siddhantic* modes of thought, or the *jnana/bhakti* movements which contested the *varna-caste* regime of Brahmanical Hindu society in Tamilakom and Malayalam.

The intensive pursuits of spiritual knowledge, the rigorous observance of *sadhana*, *dhyanam*, and *tapassu* had already metamorphosed Nanu, the young *bhakta/ sadhaka* into an accomplished *jnani/ siddha/ yogi* quite before this event. It is Chattampi Swamikal who is said to have initiated Nanu to the radical and deeper ‘manners’ of reflection on the ‘absolute’ as illuminated by the *Advaitic* and *Siddhantic* traditions of Tamilakom.<sup>2</sup> Like Chattampi Swamikal he also gained a

<sup>1</sup> P.K.Gopalakrishnan, *Sree Narayana Guru: Viswa Manavikathayude Pravachakan* (Tiruvananthapuram: Prabhath Book House, 1992), 44-46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 34, 35.

profound knowledge and training in Yoga and Tantra under the guidance of Thaikkattu Ayyavu a prominent spiritual master of the period.<sup>3</sup> Nanu, the young aspirant of knowledge had also entered into a scholarly engagement with the classical texts in Sanskrit and Tamil. Chattampi Swamikal was rather a companion than a guru to Nanu in his pursuits of *jnanam* (the knowledge of the absolute). Both are said to have spent many days together in penance at *Maruthvamala*, near Kanyakumari, assisting each other.<sup>4</sup> The intermittent years of silence, seclusion and penance brought him into higher states of self-reflection and spiritual accomplishment. Nanu soon became an *avadhoota* wandering incessantly across the borders of the 'social' or the 'worldly' life. This nomadic period of wandering, seems to have given Nanu, the *avadhoota* a good opportunity to closely interact with various kinds of people, communities and sects. The young *avadhoota* who roamed silently around the villages, jungles, mountains, the coastal and hilly regions of the Southern and even certain parts of Northern India, came to a halt in 1885 at the mountain abode of Aruvippuram in Neyyatinkara situated in the riverbank of Neyyar. The silence continued for some more time and the intensive practice of meditations and penance came to its culmination at the inaccessible mountain spot of Aruvippuram, then a desolate place uninhabited by the human beings and surrounded by fierce animals. There he witnessed the ultimate blossoming of the spiritual silence (*maunanila*) into the blissful communion of the self with the Infinite, ultimately aspired by yogis, sages and *siddhas*. Natarajaguru describes the metamorphosis of Nanu into a *siddhayogi* or *jnani* in the following words:

...The red fire of knowledge was beginning to glow within him. It was as if his feelings were beginning to melt. It was as if the ambrosial essence of his being was beginning to pervade his mental horizon. This emotion made him call upon God as his only refuge – God, “whose tender feet dripped with the honey of compassion”. God was to him the pearl of perfection, the dancing centre of his life, the lotus that sprouted in the silence of his heart caught in the centre of which, buried among the petals, like a humble bee having its fill of honey, his soul enjoyed uncoveted blessing. It was as if his soul in the form of a radiant child, planting his foot in the centre of

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 34, 35.

<sup>4</sup> K. Bhaskarapilla, op. cit., 41, 42.

a glowing radiance, had devoured within his being the light of the sun and the moon...

It was an experience beyond words; and the volume and force with which images such as these surged up within his mind, richly breaking through barriers of rhyme and metre in some of his prayers written at this period, throw ample light on its nature...

It was as if he had come into possession of a rich heritage. A veritable ball of radiance had come into his possession. Its light seemed to heave, with every breath, reaching beyond the bounds of the three worlds. Sounds seemed to fill the sky. The eye was filled with beauty. Music and rhyme burst forth unpremeditated in his voice. Tears of compassion and pity stood ready, at the least little demand, to overflow into action. He became a changed man with a strange silence in his ways, both the subject and the object of utmost compassion.

Undivided and uncramped with trivial events, Time to him became richer and richer in inner meaning, while the ponderable aspect of time became of less import. Past, present, and future merged into a continuous whole and he forgot weeks and months as they glided freely by without affecting him. The joy of the state into which he had fallen was alluring him deeper and deeper into his own consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

It might be here in the catastrophic moments of the *saivadvaitic* illumination that Guru became one of the fortunate or blessed ones “suckled in the milk of the Absolute beyond”<sup>6</sup> and for whom the time meant indivisible flux of blissful moment”.

Ten thousand years do a moment make for the favoured ones  
Suckled in the milk of the Absolute beyond; but when knowledge is caught  
In the power of the nature that is relative here,  
Half a second, ten thousand years long would seem<sup>7</sup>.

The moment the movement of the ascension came to a halt reaching its zenith, another radical movement began—the movement of descend, towards the world, the so called lower realms (*mandalas*) of the existence.<sup>8</sup> A descend which would objectify the ascendance or provide a proper presentation to it to judge

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<sup>5</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru* (Varkala: Narayana Gurukula Foundation, 1990), 16-18.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 516.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 516.

<sup>8</sup> According to the spiritual epistemology of the Indian scriptures, especially the Vedas, there are seven worlds or realms of experience called *saptalokas* or *mandalas* in the macro levels and within the micro-cosmic level of the *jeeva-selves*: The worlds of the *Bhur*, the *Bhuva* and the *Svar*, are held as belonging to the lower levels.

whether 'it happens'. Or perhaps this would implicate the pursuit for another higher state of reflection and synthesis to be accomplished by a spiritual aspirant who pursues the 'occurrence' of the absolute'. People grieved by the miseries of the world began to surround the Yogi and were carried over by the spiritual illumination and compassion showered by his gracious presence and phrases. The yogi, 'fortunate enough to 'drink the milk of *para*' (the 'Infinite' in its motherly attribute of infinite affection) by the gift of the blessing grace of God, the Infinite, discovered a new means of presentation or a testament to the grace of the Infinite, in his passionate engagement with the suffering ones of the world who approached him. The descend to the world of men, thus marked the most crucial turn in the life of the Yogi. In the unitive relationship between the Infinite or God and the 'finite self' there occurs another instance of Infinity and unity: the love of the fellow-beings which emerges as a means of the objectification or presentation testifying to the grace and love of God, the Infinite. And it would implicate another dimension submerged in the conventional *Advaitic* discourses on the relation of unity between the 'self' and the 'Other'. The love and grace of the God is found vindicated in the love of the fellow-beings of the world. Another instance is thus added to the oft-discussed relation between the self and the Other, the devotee and the deity—the instance of the 'other being, the fellow-being. Perhaps it is this reinvention of the other-being' or the 'other self' which I would consider as the energetic of the socio-religious reform headed by Sree Narayana Guru.

The event of Aruvippuram thus marks the descend of Nanu, the *siddha* into the realm of the worldly people, the crucial metamorphosis of Nanu, the *avadhoota* into Narayana Guru. It meant the transmutation of an accomplished and self-absorbed *Siddha* or *Parama Hamsa* into a compassionate *karma-yogin*, a Guru-companion of the worldly people. It is here that Guru brings into practice the radical principle of the *saivic* erotics which he reinvents as axiomatic of a libidinal pragmatics of faith: "The action one adopts for the sake of self-happiness should also secure simultaneously the happiness of another".<sup>9</sup>

The love of the self and the God or the pursuit for self-happiness thus engenders an intensive love of the 'world' or the people. The pursuit of the

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<sup>9</sup> Verse 24 of *Atmopadesa Saakam*. *ibid.*, 549.

happiness of self goes beyond the realm of the Being; it embraces the transcendental realm of the God as well as the 'worldly' the 'social', the subaltern habitat of the other-selves, the other beings. It is the *Saivadvaitic* or *Siddhantic* revelation of this new spiritual ethics which prompts him to get out of the alluring state of the bliss of contemplation, self-withdrawal, and penance and enter the world of suffering and struggling—the so called *samsara*—for fulfilling the tasks called forth by the Divine Grace. It was revealed to him that a yogi was bound to sacrifice even the bliss of self-contemplation and spiritual ascension in order to fulfil his worldly or divine obligation to lift the beings of the world the suffering downtrodden people. And this implicates the practice of lifting one self beyond the dimensions of 'Being' towards a new state of spiritual accomplishment (which cannot be divorced from the social or secular realms of existence) through the means of one's *dharmic* action. The *siddha*, the fortunate one, suckled in the abundant grace of God, the infinitely compassionate, is obliged by that grace of Idea to reciprocate by providing a proper presentation to this 'occurrence of the sublime', the 'bliss of grace'. Guru allegorically wrote in one of his poems suggesting this new turn in his life: "it is high time to postpone the blissful engagement with the higher and the transcendental and to reach the suffering masses; the time has come to plunge into the river of the day to day life of the world in order to take up one's social or *dharmic* obligations of life"<sup>10</sup>

Guru was in other words, inventing a new mode of action in his installation of *Sivalinga*, an action which would provide 'happiness to oneself and the other-self'. Plunging deep into the abyss of the ethnic 'unconscious' of the people, he brings out the phallus of divine desire and installs it as the icon of a sublime idea of Infinite. The whole event should rather be seen as a cultural or symbolic action rather than a religious or ritualistic gesture. Subsequently, it heralded a new mode of cultural practice which could invoke and mobilize the ethnic energetics of the people. A new manner of 'reflective action' or 'active reflection' was thus reinvented that amounted to be a reflective judgment of the sublime, or the negative presentation of the 'absolute'. The *Linga*-installation in Aruvippuram,

<sup>10</sup> Verse 12- *Subrahmanya Keertanam* in Dr. Bhaskaran. T, ed, *Sree Narayana Guruvinte Sampoorna Kritikal*, 72-73.

thus elevated the people's devotion and reflection towards the *saivadvaitic* matrix of Idea, where a higher and libidinal engagement with the Infinite was opened, and which aroused the people's receptivity to the 'occurrence of the 'presence' or the 'sublime' in the here and now of the world. The Aruvippuram incident, and the people's devotional involvement in it, triggered of a new spiritual erotics which began to manifest in the form of a resurgence of energies in the field of socio-devotional reform. It became the nucleus of collective, yet passionate contemplative engagements, producing new sort of unities interrelations and commitments cutting across the caste and *varna*'. An indeterminate community sensitivised and avowed to the *saivadvaitic* idea of the reunion of the Infinite and finite and the materialisation of it in the socio-spiritual existence of the people was thus brought into historical existence which could be held as the fulcrum of the *saivadvaitic* manner of reform initiated by the Guru-narratives. The incident thus became a source of inspiration a model-action which aroused a spontaneous movement of incepting idols, shrines and temples as a pact between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' by people of various places wherever such new devotional unities arose. The people, excited by the feeling evoked by the 'event', thus joined in rank with Guru in his quest for linking and negotiating with the 'sacred', in their struggle for social and spiritual resurgence. It was this socio-devotional movement which was steered by the event that later became the focal points of the Guru-mode of socio-religious reform. About forty three temples were installed in various places from the southern part to the northern tip of Keralam. Most of them were done under the direct presence of Guru and the others by disciples on behalf of him.<sup>11</sup> Noticeably, it was rather an organic movement marked by its spontaneity, than a project pre-programmed by any one even by Guru for that matter. Neither did it obey any ritualistic or theological rules, nor conform to any astrological designs. Interestingly, after the installation of the idol of *Devi* in Mannanthala temple, one of the prominent persons, displeased by the way Guru disregarded the astrological laws in selecting the right moment (*muhoortam*) for the function, asked Guru about the *raasi* (the astrological position) of the installation. "It is

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<sup>11</sup> Koyikkal K.Jacob. M.A, *Sree Narayana Guru* (Chengamanadu: Nava Sobha Publications, 2001), 80.



ridiculous to make the *jatakam* of the child before he is born”: this was the ironic reply provided by Guru.<sup>12</sup> The answer reveals the element of indeterminacy and creativity that played behind the task of the installation of each shrines and temples. Mostly it depended on the collective desire and devotion of the people of the locality and the judgment of Guru. Guru never allowed any sort of preconditioning or fixations on the part of the devotees with regard to the installation of shrines and the uncertainty of the ceremonies lasted until the moment of installation. For instance in Karamukku near Thrissur, it was at the final moment of the function that Guru revealed his decision to install a lamp as the shrine leaving aside the idols proposed and brought by the local devotees for the purpose.<sup>13</sup> Certain temples of Kali where there survived the bloody sacrifices and impure and rude methods of worship were changed into shrines of Siva or Devi by replacing the icons of Kali or Durga (of horrible kinds). Devi emerged in the Guru-iconography solely in her *sathvic bhava* (a character-trait marked by serenity gentleness and truthfulness)<sup>14</sup>. This was a bold and radical step which could effectively put an end to the violent and evil practices of worship and bring people into the fold of the matrix of Idea, to the refined and sublime mode of worship and reflection reinvented by Guru. In Murukkumpuzha, near Tiruvananthapuram, Guru installed a circular glow (*prabha*) made of *panchaloha* (five metals) contrary to the wish of the devotees who proposed Siva as the chief idol of the shrine.<sup>15</sup> This was formerly a Kali temple where the practices of animal sacrifice and offerings of toddy prevailed. The new temple of Siva legitimately prohibited such rude practices. The words like *Sathyam* (truth) *Dharmam*, (justice) and *Daya* (kindness) were inscribed in the *Prabha*, implicating a ‘reflexive’ turn in the mode of devotion. In Kalavankodam near Cherthalai when there arose a controversy among the devotees with regard to whose idol, they would install, whether that of Siva or Devi, Guru discarded both and installed a framed mirror inscribing *Om* in the middle.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the usual norms regarding the installation of shrines were

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 152-153.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 153-154.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 154.

disregarded and the attention of the devotees was directed from the idols to the reflection of the *Saivic* Idea of the absolute. In such matters, Guru seems to have incorporated much from the radical ideas and practices of faith and devotion initiated by the Tamil Saints.

Later on, the movement of building temples and shrines lost its freshness and spontaneity and turned out to be a stereotypical ritual project merely serving as a platform for the unification of caste subjects. Sensing the trend Guru dissuaded his disciples from building more and more temples and pleaded them to divert their energy towards the secular project of building schools, conference halls libraries and industrial centres in the precincts of temples. However, Guru who was aware of the importance of the devotional or the symbolic movement of installing new shrines and temples did not totally refrain himself from the practice and continued to install new shrines until the end of his life. It was these new shrines and the devotional relations formed around them, and the reflexive matrix of Idea resurrected by them, which opened up the field of energy that nourished the institutional and organizational activities of the Guru-mode of socio-religious reform.

## ***2. The Pact with the 'Social' and 'Institutional'***

A crucial turn occurs in the career of the Guru as well as the course of the socio-religious reform in Keralam when the S.N.D.P Yogam is founded in 1903 transforming the *kshetra yogam* of Aruvippuram.<sup>17</sup> The Yogam which was convened by the *Eezhava* elites under the leadership of Dr. Palpu elected Guru as its patron and permanent president and N.Kumaran Asan, as its secretary.<sup>18</sup> It induces a drastic shift in the life of Sree Narayana Guru, remoulding him to the role of a full-fledged reformer which invariably brought out a schism within his self between the 'disinterested' interest of a *saivajnani* and the interests of an *Eezhava*-missionary of reform. Guru now descends to the social or the institutional realm of reform eager to work out his new ideas of reciprocation between the 'divine' and the 'worldly'; to lift the suffering humanity and to 'derive joy in the

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<sup>17</sup> P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Sree Narayana Guru, Viswamanavikatayude Pravachakan*, 66-68.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-68.

actions which simultaneously evoke joy to others. Incidentally he enters into a pact with the new society, which is driven by the missionary-modern mode of subjectivity, and laws of capital and market. There onwards he persists on a process of negotiation and reconciliation with the new powers and the emergent middle class for the sake of working out the *Saivadvaitic* vision of reform in the historical present. The Yogam was expected to be a platform for the effectuation of the *Saivic* ideals of “conjoining the love of God and love of the people”, “happiness of the self” and the “happiness of the other-selves”, the “material and the spiritual well-being of the people”. The newly entered pact with the social realm, with the colonial-modern conditions of the time, of course creates a tension and ambivalence in the words, thoughts and actions of Guru. Phrases and gestures turn out subtly ironic and parodic, inviting contestatory interpretations by the disciples, scholars and ideologues of the modernist regimes of reform in general, who found it an opportunity to appropriate the words of Guru.

Curiously, we might discern the clubbing together of two modes of organisations, two divergent streams of forces and interests in the historical genesis of the S.N.D.P. Yogam. As the genealogy of the Yogam itself reveals it was an institution which was superimposed on the *Aruvippuram Kshetrayogam* formed in 1899, which was in fact an extension of the *vavoottu yogam* an organisation sprouted up organically around the *Siva* shrine of Aruvippuram. Even though the *Kshetrayogam* was dissolved in 1903 into a joint stock company and registered according to the company act, it remained to function subtly within the organisational structure of the Yogam and the reform led by it, as a dissenting stream clashing with the interests and policies of the hegemonic or official stream of the movement. This subterranean stream of *Kshetrayogam* which was pushed to the margin of the institution implicates a vertical and organic form of people’s affiliation. It marks an a deeper affiliation with the devotional or spiritual affairs, an affinity which went beyond the ‘social’, or the ‘contemporary world’, beyond the living ones, to the non-linear vertical affiliations of the living and the dead ones of the past, a deeper and wider coalition of the *jeevas* (the individual selves) journeying across life and death, ‘this world’ and the ‘other world’, the ‘immanent’ or the ‘transcendental’, the ‘ethnic’ and ‘cosmic’, towards the ultimate self-

realisation of the Other, the Infinite. The 'company' mode of organisation on the contrary implicates a horizontal modernistic mode of organisation which is basically concerned with the material uplifting of a contemporary caste-community a linear, horizontal social affiliation of people confined to the issues of the living ones, the 'ordinary' the contemporary subjects. If the former represented the spiritual and devotional ethos of the people who were initiated into a mode of faith reinvented by Guru, the latter conveyed the social aspirations or the materialistic ambitions of the newly emergent middle class of the *Eezhava* community which was always keen to hijack the words and institutions of Guru. It was in fact the joint front of these mutually competing forces which piloted the Guru-mode of socio-religious reform in general in this phase. And Guru is found grappling with various roles offered to him by this new ordeal, the roles like that of a captain, a mediator, an umpire, and at times a victim of these contestations. We might see the polarisation of these divergent forces later on into rival camps of interests and programmes leading to the formation of the *Sanyasi Sangham (Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham)* in 1928 which triggered off legal and discursive wars between the Yogam and the Sangham.

Before the formation of the Yogam, as we have shown earlier, Guru had already initiated his radical devotional practice, professing a new *dharma* which challenged the inequalities of caste and *varna*. Guru himself is reported to have inscribed in the walls of the Siva temple in Aruvippuram the subversive manifesto of his new creed:

Devoid of dividing walls  
Of caste or race  
Or hatred of rival faith  
We all live here  
In brotherhood.  
Such, know this place to be!  
This Model Foundation!<sup>19</sup>

However, it still remains a paradox that Guru did not succeed in including this motto of brotherhood which transgressed the factional identities of caste and religion, in the manifesto of the newly formed Yogam. Curiously, one of the reasons, as the scholars inform us, was that there was no provision in the company

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<sup>19</sup> Nataraja Guru, op.cit., 24.

act of the time for a clause which could accept a community of 'brotherhood' beyond the caste identities. I would cite here an incident which would provide an insight in to the 'historico-political' conditions under which Narayana Guru the *Saiva-advaitin* and his disciples were forced to accept the laws of the new social order either as a gesture of compromise or a strategic move for negotiation.:

Chinna Swami or the Kayikkara Kumaru, who was later known as Kumaran Asan, was reading out the draft of the bye-law of the S.N.D.P. Yogam, for the approval of Guru. The reading was incidentally interrupted by Guru who asked Kumaru whether the Yogam was constituted only for the welfare of the lower caste people like Ezhavas. Kumaru explained that they were forced to do so because as per the rule of company act one is required to specify the field of the activities of the organization for the registration of the company. Keeping silent for a while after listening to the explanation provided by Kumaru, Guru exclaimed slowly: "Let Kumaru be our Asan (teacher) now onwards". It was after this incident, it is believed, that Kumaru was widely called as Kumaran Asan."<sup>20</sup>

In such perplexing situations when the iron laws of the modernity raised hurdles to his higher aspirations Guru receded to back to ambivalent phrases, the double-edgedness of the parodic or ironic phrases which rescued him from totally succumbing to it on the one hand or abruptly dissociating with the status quo on the other.

The explanations provided by the writers and biographers on the genesis of the S.N.D.P. movement also would disclose the concerted, strategic attempts made by the *Eezhava* elites to draw Guru into the organizational activities. The main intention behind this was the promotion of the interests and policies of the elites of the community and the utilization of the charisma of Guru for their own benefit. Reportedly, it was only after the ascension of Guru as a popular figure that the *Eezhavas* as a community approached him and recognised him as their spiritual head and they found the spiritual aura of Guru as a cultural investment for their enterprise of reform.<sup>21</sup> It is also pointed out that in the *avadhoota* days it was rather the families of fishermen of the coastal areas and the Pariahs, Pulayas, the

<sup>20</sup> M.V. Devan, *Narante Ayanamo Narakathilekkulla Vazhivettamo?*, *KalaKaumudi*, Vol.1377, 2002, January 20 (Tiruvananthapuram: Kalakaumudi Publications, 2002),15.

<sup>21</sup> B.R.P.Bhaskar, *Eswarapadaviyilaykuyarunna Sree Narayana Guru Samakalika Malayalam weekly* 2001-july 13 (Cochi: Express Publications), 25.

Muhammadans and the Christians who often gave him food, shelter and support than the *Eezhava* community.<sup>22</sup> In Aruvithura, he was surrounded by devotees from various communities irrespective of caste and faith. Moorkothu Kumaran reports that it was mostly the Tamils and certain Nairs who first acknowledged Guru respectfully as a *siddha* or *yogi* and served him in his earlier days. Except Dr. Palpu and his family, the *Eezhavas* as a whole are reported to have not only kept away from accepting Guru as a venerable *jnani* but also indulged in insulting him at times even branding him as an insane.<sup>23</sup> Significantly, it took almost fifteen years for the *Eezhava* elites even after the renowned incident of Aruvippuram, to recognize Guru as their religious head.

The educated middle class members of the *Eezhava* community had already made their attempt to form a community organisation for upholding their interests, to implement certain reforms for redressing their grievances, and clear out the obstacles in their upward journey to material progress, quite long before the formation of the Yogam. Dr. Palpu who was the veteran leader of the community initiated several attempts to set up an *Eezhava Mahajana Sabha* around 1895. Although he could not publish the draft of the bye-law of the organisation in the journal *Malayali* and even could not summon certain meetings for mobilising people for it, the attempt did not materialise due to various factors.<sup>24</sup>

The story of the meeting of Dr. Palpu and Vivekananda would at least explain the strategic effort made by the *Eezhava* elites to bring Guru into the fold of the community reform and utilize the wave of enthusiasm and energies instilled by the Guru, for the material advantage of the new middleclass which in fact steered the movement. Most of the writers seem to accept the theory that it was Vivekananda who had enlightened the *eEzhava* leaders like Palpu and others of the strategic importance of putting a *swami* or a *guru* in the forefront of community reform.<sup>25</sup> Vivekananda is said to have instructed Palpu and others that it would be impossible to effectuate social reform in India without the service of a spiritual

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>24</sup> Koyikkal K.Jacob, op.cit., 72.

<sup>25</sup> P.K.Balakrishnanan. ed. *Narayana Guru* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S.1980), 109.

*guru* mainly because of the inlaid spirituality of the Indian people.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the incident suggests that it was Vivekananda who made the *Eezhava* elite aware of the institutional usefulness of Sree Narayana Guru. The incident also reminds us that the 'Ramakrishna Mission' mode of socio-religious reform had actually evolved in to a strategy and technology of reform which could be utilized by the elite educated classes, including that of the deprived castes and communities, all over India, towards their material upliftment. The enterprising, new subjects of the colonial modern regime have been thus tutored of the use-value of the *gurus* and *swamys* in the solidification and the social ascendance of the deprived communities in their struggle for power, wealth and social status. The strategic attempt of the new middle class, mostly the *Eezhava* elites, to profit upon the spiritual charisma of Guru is manifest from the beginning of the formation of the S.N.D.P. movement.<sup>27</sup> The incident thus marks an institutional turn in the career of the *Saivadvaitin* who now appears in the role of a social activist and an avowed reformer. And there also began, at the same time a concerted attempt among the disciples and devotees of Guru as well as the discourses, texts, print-media and the cultural and socio-political agencies of the period, to strategically reconstitute him into the role of a Guru-missionary.

Curiously, the S.N.D.P. Yogam was the third institution formed in Tiruvidamcore, according to the Indian company act, the first being the Punaloor Paper Mill and the second the *Malayala Manorama*.<sup>28</sup> The trade exhibitions conducted in Quilon at the second anniversary, and in Kannur at the fourth anniversary of the Yogam, openly demonstrated its business zeal and industrial orientation. The company did produce results in terms of its avowed project of promoting the material interests of the community, though it could not achieve much in its pronounced ideal of spiritual progress. Even in terms of the material or economic progress it could be argued that the fruits of 'progress' (in 'material' terms) which were solely enjoyed by the elites never reached the lower strata of the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 112-114.

<sup>28</sup> *Malayala Manorama S.N.D.P. Yogam Supplement* (Kottayam: Malayala Manorama 2002 May 15 Wednesday), 2.

community itself.<sup>29</sup> However, there emerged numerous establishments, institutions, schools, libraries hospitals, reading rooms, temples and shrines, business enterprises, local associations, journals, around the net-work of Yogam as testifying the strength, status and the massive support accomplished by community under its elite leadership. The coordinated activities of Asan, Palpu and Guru provided tremendous boost to the programmes of socio-religious reform launched by the Yogam in its earlier days. The saintly presence of Guru and his sublime phrases were enough for the Yogam to gain legitimacy for its reform enterprises focussed on the *Eezhava* community, especially the ‘material’ gains of the elites of the community. Guru was held not only the ‘cultural capital’ of Yogam but also a real treasury due to his personal involvement in the mobilisation of fund and wealth on behalf of the Yogam. Guru’s appeal towards the members of the community to enter actively into educational industrial and agricultural activities also produced results. The members of the Yogam fared well in their activities in educational agricultural and industrial spheres. Its representatives were nominated to the Sree Moolam Praja Assembly which provided them new venues and opportunities to express the grievances of the community and plead for its welfare. More opportunities of job and education and more representation in service were now available for its members. The Yogam succeeded to a great extent in channelising the spiritual energy of Guru towards the activities destined to promote the status, power and progress of the community.<sup>30</sup> It could of course realise the primal importance of the ‘words’ of Guru which was the phrase-force that instilled a feeling of unity and integrity among the members of the community. The reforms initiated by Guru in the socio-religious and ritualistic realms in fact became a boon to the Yogam in the sense that they have tilled the ground for the process of modernising and homogenising the community. It tutored the members of the community to abstain from wasteful expenditures and take recourse to the

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<sup>29</sup> P.K. Balakrishnan. explains the class character, and the limits of S.N.D.P in his article *Yogathinte vargaghatana*. op.cit.,112-117; Koyikkal K.Jacob. M. A. op.cit., 79.

<sup>30</sup> ‘When Kumaran Asan got out of the secretary ship of Yogam in 1919 after a span of 15 years, the number of the members increased to a considerable level Lower caste Students of all walks of life got the right of admission in all of the schools of Tiruvitamcore. They also got entry into the Government service. The lower-caste people got representation in Legislative assembly through nomination. They got representation in Government service and Assembly, proportionate to their population’. Koyikkal K.Jacob M.A. op.cit., 77.



profitable and productive practices, business and agricultural enterprises. It augmented a work ethics among the people of the community which in course of time bore fruits in terms of increase in wealth, assets and status. The installation of new temples under the auspices of Guru also helped to mobilize and accumulate the money and wealth of the members of the community which invariably nourished the coffers of the Yogam.

If the Yogam, which was steered by the elites of the *Eezhava* community made strategic attempt to utilize the spiritual charisma of Guru for the promotion of their material interests, Guru also made moves to efficiently employ the organisational network of the Yogam for the effectuation of the radical reform in socio-religious and ritual realms. He found it a medium for propagating the higher and sublime ideas cultivated by him in terms of the devotional and cultural matters. The movement of the installation of shrines and temples launched by Guru in the earlier phase was continued, widened and deepened in its form and content and spread out to the length and breadth of Keralam. The redundant and primitive modes of worship accompanied by animal sacrifice and impure and evil practices were vehemently attacked and replaced by more refined and sublime modes of worship. The practices like *Madan Tullal*, *Maruta tullal* *Pekkoothu Tullal*, *Poorappattu* and the modes of offering flesh, eggs and the blood of the animals as oblations were brought to an end in many of the shrines of worship.<sup>31</sup> In Kottar itself, it is reported that forty one shrines where such evil practices of worship prevailed were eliminated by Guru and in the remaining one he installed the idol of Ganapati bringing to an end all the 'wicked' practices followed there.<sup>32</sup>

The joint front of socio-religious reform thus launched under the enlightened leadership of the Guru-reformer could make substantial progress in the field of the *acharaparishkaram* (reform of rituals and conventions) and *aradhana parishkaram* (reform of worship). It was in a huge convention held at Paravoor in Quilon in 1905 that Guru spelt out certain crucial programmes of reform in the rituals and conventions traditionally followed by the *Eezhava* community. He insisted the community to stop the wasteful expenditures related to ridiculous ritual

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.,124.

observances, pompous ceremonies, and extravaganzas which had traditionally drained the wealth and strength of the people, mainly the rituals like *Thaalikettu* and *Tirandukuli* and *pulikudi*<sup>33</sup> etc. A simplified mode of marriage ceremony acceptable to the common people of the community also was introduced by Guru thereafter. He also encouraged the practices like mixed marriage and the *panthibhojanam* (common feast) among the people.

From the beginning of the formation of S.N.D.P. Yogam, Guru made earnest attempts to widen the goal and practices of Yogam beyond the interests of a particular community, towards a broader unity of peoples and communities transgressing the caste distinctions and the feudal ties of the 'Hindu' society. He also raised his voice against the sectarian and exclusivist tendencies shown by the Yogam. He criticised the attitude of the majority of the community which still disallowed the deprived castes, lower to the *Eezhavas* in caste status, to enter into the temples and institutions of the *Eezhavas*. He pleaded the case of the lower castes as a whole and appealed the members of the Yogam to open its doors to all of the downtrodden castes and to join in rank with them in their struggle to redress their grievances. The community was urged to shed off the sectarian caste-community identity of the *Eezhavas* and resort to a higher or larger unity and identity beyond caste and religion which he named the '*Malayali*.'<sup>34</sup> And this higher accord of people as evinced by Guru of course has its roots in the *Saivadviatic* vision and reflection of the Idea of Absolute. This was however, a

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<sup>33</sup> *Thaalikettu* was a mock marriage, a ceremonial tying of the marriage thread around the neck of a girl even before puberty. Girls up to the age of 12 were victims of this ridiculous ritual. It was considered an index of status of social prestige. Non-performance of it was a stigma and brought inferiority and shame for a family. *Tirandukuli* was a rite which amounted to the public announcement of a girl's puberty or adult-hood. It was, as it were invitation to eligible bridegrooms. *Pulikudi* was another primitive custom for celebrating the occasion of the first pregnancy, by ritually drinking a so-called sacred concoction. Dr. K. Sreenivasan, *SreeNarayana Guru* (Trivandrum: Jaysree Publications, 1989), 85.

<sup>34</sup> Guru is reported to have once told one of his disciples that it is better for the community to drop the name *eezhavas* and to use the place name *Malayali* to signify their identity. Dr. T. Bhaskaran ed. *Sree Narayana Guru Vaikhari* (Perumbavoor: Kunnathu Nadu S.N.D.P.Union 2000), 101; Dr.K. Sreenivasan has pointed out that Guru has nourished the idea of a United Kerala. He writes: "Sree Narayana Guru's efforts towards a reformed worship also caused certain important side effects. Among them is the idea of a United Kerala. The political fragmentation of the land of the Malayalees into Travancore, Cochin and Malabar had hampered the flourishing of their culture, literature and arts...The Guru's efforts to build temples for the powerful Thiya (Ezhava) community of Malabar helped to create an All Kerala perspective". Dr.K.Sreenivasan op.cit., 57.

vision which was negatively phrased, indirectly presented, or displaced in presentation, and therefore could never reach the discursive perception of the disciples, the 'public', the new subjects produced by the print-sensibility. It was 'invisible' to the 'modernised 'eye', inconceivable to the 'consciousness' constituted by the knowledge-regime of the new age.

However, the two streams, with opposite interests and goals could not maintain their initial alliance for a long time and soon they clashed. The conflict between the *Saivadvaitic* aspirations of Guru, and the casteistic and the materialistic interests nurtured by the office-bearers of the Yogam invariably did burst out into open rivalry. The latter could not digest the sublime ideals of Guru which transcended all the barriers of caste and faith and which went against the institutional strictures of the 'company mode of reform. Guru himself could finally realise the basic contradictions prevailed between the ideals he cherished and the programmes followed by the Yogam which implicated a company mode of reform. However, Guru was unwilling to abandon his spiritual convictions and to make any compromises in his struggle against the regime of caste.

After the installation of the shrine of *Sarada* at Varkala in 1912 Guru left for Alwaye handing over his whole properties and institutions into the possession of Yogam.<sup>35</sup> He was looking for an institution which did not subscribe to the injunctions of the 'company act' or the laws of the modernistic regimes which insisted the specification of identities of caste or community in any formal or official project of reform, as in the case of the S.N.D.P. This might have been the motivation behind the founding of the *Advaitasramam* which started its initial activities in 1914. It was at the *Advaitasramam* in Alwaye that Guru wrote his famous treatise on caste called *Jati meemamsa* or *Jati nirnayam*. The motto of the *Advaitasramam* was put into words and pasted on behalf of Guru in the entrance of Ashram in 1914:

*Om tat sat*

*Alwaye Advaitasramam*

The motto of this ashram is that Man has only one caste one religion and one god and that there does not prevail any dissonance in terms of castes faiths and Gods.

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<sup>35</sup> P.K. Gopalakrishnan, op.cit, 96.

On behalf of Sree Narayana<sup>36</sup>

The Sanskrit School of the *Advaitasramam* was inaugurated in 1915 where the students from all castes and faiths were admitted without any discrimination. Thus, the founding of *Advaitasramam* and the school provided a new avenue for Guru to launch his struggles against the regime of caste and to work out and disseminate the *saivaadvaitic* ideals professed by him. The radical moves made by Guru in promoting the cause of the people who lied far below the *eezhavas* in the status of caste and the bitter criticism raised by him against the casteist policies of the Yogam soon antagonized the elite circles of the Yogam. When it was detected that Guru was transgressing the boundaries drawn by them, the leaders of the Yogam began to isolate Guru from its affairs which further strained the relation between Guru and the officials of the Yogam.:

“If during the period of the active leadership of Dr. Palpu, Kumaran Asan and T.K. Madhavan there prevailed mutual understanding, coordination and spiritual intimacy between them and Guru, the mediocre leadership which ascended to power later on could not share the higher aspirations of Guru”.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the relation between him and the Yogam had lost all of its former warmth and closeness. Certain scholars even point out that the relationship had been strained from the beginning due to the misbehaviour of some of the leaders of the Yogam which tormented the mind of the Guru.”<sup>38</sup> The “secretaries, who succeeded Asan, behaved like mere company officials”. They did not have any regard to the institutions of *dharmā* founded by Guru. “They were incapable of respecting the ideal of ‘one caste’ and ‘one religion’ as advocated by Guru”.<sup>39</sup>

Guru however, did strike back at the moment he detected the symptoms of official arrogance, cynical disregard and ingratitude on the part of the authorities of the Yogam especially towards him and the ideals advocated by him. Totally estranged and infuriated with the policies of the Yogam, Swamikal took back in 1915 the properties handed over to Yogam and gave in registration the power of attorney for their administration to Chaitanya Swamikal. In 1916 Guru made a

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>37</sup> Koyikkal K.Jacob.M.A, op.cit., 184.

<sup>38</sup> Dr.T.K. Raveendran “S.N.D.P.yude Swamidroham” *Samakalika Malayalam weekly*, 2001 September 14.

<sup>39</sup> Koyikkal K.Jacob.M.A. op.cit., 184.

proclamation in *Prabuddhakeralam*, informing the public that he did not belong to a specific caste or faith. He reveals in public certain bitter truths regarding the practice of the organisation and his disciples. It is disclosed that he is misrepresented by certain followers of him; and despite the fact that he had already shed off caste or religious prejudices many years back, certain followers of him, have been creating a wrong notion among people regarding his real nature. And this he warns is the part of a hidden plan to misappropriate his name.<sup>40</sup> He even declares that “such people who stick on to their sectarian caste practices could not be considered as his real disciples”.<sup>41</sup> In the same year, Guru sent a letter to Dr. Palpu stating that he wanted to dissociate from the activities of the Yogam.<sup>42</sup> The letter was later published by Guru himself in 1928 in *Dharmam Weekly*.<sup>43</sup> The reasons cited by Guru are the following:

1. The decisions and resolutions were passed by the Yogam even without consulting him.
2. The Yogam is not concerned with the higher ideals of Guru and does not give any solid support to him in his struggle against caste prejudices.
3. Caste-feelings are mounting high among the members of the Yogam.
4. Formerly he has abandoned the Yogam from his mind. But now he dissociates it in his words and deeds also.

The phrases show poignantly that Guru’s divorce with the Yogam was total and irreversible; he has dismissed it from his mind, words and deeds—*mano-vak-karma*. The fact that Guru has been withholding this personal letter from publishing until 1928 expecting a positive response from the Yogam also implicates the widening gulf between him and the organisational set up of the Yogam.<sup>44</sup> Instead of providing a positive response to Guru’s letter, the Yogam

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<sup>40</sup> P.K. Gopalakrishnan. op. cit., 117-118.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 117-8.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 162-163.

ignored it and decided to proceed with its policies defying the 'words' of Guru. It passed a resolution in 1916 to pressurise Guru to cancel the power of attorney given to Chaitanyaswamikal.<sup>45</sup> Heated arguments and discussions arose in the meetings of Yogam on the issue. Some of the members of the Yogam spoke in support of Guru and the others opposed him vehemently. Guru, however did not give up his resistance to the casteistic policies and the 'company'-dictums of the Yogam and proceeded boldly with his *saiva-advaitic* vision of reform.<sup>46</sup>

A report on the S.N.D.P. Annual meeting held at Kottarakkara, as cited in *Mitavadi* in 1917, informs us that a committee was formed to decide on the suggestions provided by Guru for effecting a drastic change in the structure of Yogam.<sup>47</sup> Guru is supposed to have demanded a basic amendment on the organizational structure of Yogam for widening its out-look and goals towards the welfare of the whole downtrodden castes instead of narrowing down exclusively to the interests of the eezhava-community.<sup>48</sup> The later reports which appeared in *Mitavadi* shows that the committee which was comprised of the prominent persons could not make a positive decision upon the suggestions of Guru.<sup>49</sup> This, in other words, meant that the leadership of Yogam was incapable of shedding of its *jatyabhimanam*—caste-pride. However, the authorities of the Yogam, could never totally reject the suggestions of Guru because of his legitimate and venerable position as the patron of Yogam and the spiritual-head of the community. Due to the incessant pressures and persuasions made by Guru, finally, the Yogam passed the resolution in its seventeenth anniversary, held at Alappuzha in 1920, for giving membership to people irrespective of their caste or community.<sup>50</sup> It was this resolution which enabled the prominent leaders like K.C.Abraham Master, C. Kuttan Nair, Mannathu Padmanabhan M.C.Joseph and others, to join Yogam as its members. However, the clause in the resolution restricting the membership only to the people who supported the proclaimed goal of the Yogam i.e. the welfare of the

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<sup>45</sup> Koyikkal. K.Jacob. M.A., op.cit.,185.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.,185.

<sup>47</sup> P.K. Gopalakrishnan, op.cit.,161-162.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.,161-162.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.,163-164.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.,164-165.

eezhava community escaped the notice of the people.<sup>51</sup> It meant that the Yogam was not ready to make any radical structural change to its organization by abandoning its caste-interest. Perhaps being pleased at least at these friendly gestures, Guru attended the special meeting of Yogam held at Prakkulam in 1922<sup>52</sup> Yet, there did not emerge any positive change in his relation with the Yogam. Guru continued to keep his distance from the activities of the Yogam even after that. However, he did attend another meeting of the Yogam held at Sivagiri in 1927 for discussing its organizational matters especially under the initiative of T.K. Madhavan. The following message was given by Guru which is known as the 'message for organization' (*sanghatana sandesham*):

No group can gain strength and achieve prosperity by any means other than organised effort. It was on this principle that the Yogam was established twenty five years ago. The term Eezhava does not denote caste or religion. There fore anyone can be made a member of the Yogam. I wish many more joined."<sup>53</sup>

Guru here makes another strategic attempt to purge the Yogam of its preoccupation with caste and rejuvenate it as a meaningful organization. First of all, he emphasizes the primacy of the organization in the case of the deprived people in their struggle for gaining strength progress and prosperity. He reminds the people of the noble purpose that led him and his companions to found the Yogam twenty five years ago. Then he redefines the term *eezhava* as implicating an identity which transgresses all connotations of caste and religion, rather a higher mode of unity. Untainted by the failure occurred to him in his attempt to effectuate an amendment to the by-law of the Yogam, Guru makes here another move to broaden the ideals and practices of the Yogam by breaking off its casteist shell. This radical gesture of the re-definition of the Eezhava identity, would be seen as another intervention in the affairs of the Yogam<sup>54</sup> The idea was further explained and clarified by Guru, in another message, send to the annual meeting of the Yogam held at Pallathuruthy in 1927.:

...The aim, of the organisation should not be that of creating an

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>53</sup> Dr.K.Sreenivasan, op.cit.,78.

<sup>54</sup> P.K.Gopalakrishnan, op.cit, 166.

exclusive community merely bringing together a particular clan of people. The religious reform should not end up merely a movement of giving up the present faith and joining another religious group. The structure of our community should be that of unifying the whole sorts of men. Religion should permit freedom of faith. It should be a way of life acceptable to all of the enlightened minds and should lead humanity towards a noble goal. The 'eternal dharma' of "One species, one religion, and One God for Man' is such a sort of religion. To me, the most desirable mode of action for our organisation is to bring together the whole people who believe in this 'eternal *dharma*'. The acceptance of this '*sanathana dharma*' would be taken as a sort of conversion as well as the declaration of freedom for those people who think that the inequality and grievances should not be eliminated without conversion."<sup>55</sup>

The message invariably explains and clarifies the position held by Guru, with regard to the idea and practice of reform. It would also illumine us the sublime and paralogical intonations inlaid in his famous aphorism which is mostly misread by modernist scholars, writers and even the disciples and devotees of Guru: 'One caste, One religion and One God for Man". The distance kept by Guru, from the missionary mode of reform on the one hand, and the 'company' style of reform professed by the *eezhava* elites of Yogam on the other, is pronounced once and for all in the above-mentioned speech. All sorts of exclusivist practices—both casteist and religious—are opposed. All sorts of dogmatism involved in religion are questioned. Proselytism in his view is not a panacea for all ills. It means just a flight from one sort of dogmatism to another. "It is freedom of faith which is most needed in the case of religion". Guru designates the higher and noble path of religion envisaged by his aphorism "One caste, One faith and One God", as the *Sanatana Matom*, the Eternal faith. It implicates 'a way of life acceptable to all of the enlightened minds that would lead humanity towards a noble goal'. The most important task of 'our' organization, he says is to bring together the whole people who believe in this 'eternal *dharma*'. Guru here specifies that the unity envisaged by him does not refer to an eclectic union of multiple and diverse faiths or a corporate community of the faithless, but a higher accord of enlightened minds. And the unity thus called forth invariably is founded on the *saivadvaitic* reflection of the 'absolute which he calls here the *Santatanmathom*, a community which

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<sup>55</sup> M.K.Sanu, *Narayana Guruswamy* (Kottayam:S.P.C.S, 1986), 460-461.



subscribes to the sublime idea of the Infinite known as *Sivam* or *Brahmam* and man's unity with it. And it does not refer to a regime or regimentation of faith and thought as represented by the modern religions. It neither subscribes to the missionary principle of proselytism which professes total negation of one's traditional faith nor to a policy of uncritical conformity with traditional faiths. It works out a middle path which lies in-between these two extreme options provided by the historical conditions of the period. At the same time, the message reveals the gulf which prevails between the sublime ideals of reform held by Guru and the modes of their application in the contemporary society by the institutional or organisational devices which he finds incompetent as such. These radical ideas of faith and reform would also demonstrate how the Yogam or the institutions founded on behalf of Guru have deviated from the higher ideals of reform professed by him. His explicit admission of the failure of the institutional means of reform, carried out by himself and his disciples as in the case of Yogam, and his incessant resistance to the Missionary role imposed on him by the hegemonic discourses and the organizational forces of the time, all would testify an important factor neglected by the modernist scholars: the *Saivadvaitin* in him was always in conflict and contestation with the official or company mode of reforms, with the missionary-role delegated to him by the discursive forces of the time. Significantly, this was the last message sent by Guru to the members of Yogam.

Meanwhile, another incident occurred, which aggravated the conflict between Guru and the Yogam: the writing of the Will of Guru. In 1926, Guru wrote his Will handing over Bodhananda Swamikal, who was chosen as his inheritor, all the legal rights of his possessions and properties. It was also stated that after the time of Bodhananda Swamikal the whole right of Guru's properties should be assigned to the person chosen by the majority of the ascetic disciples of Guru.

A time came, towards the close of his life when he felt it necessary to make certain important decisions. The Yogam was drifting away. Its leaders including C.V.Kunjuraman, T.K.Madhavan and Sahodaran Ayyappan were still close to his heart. In the name of the political expediency, they had to deviate from the Guru's ideals of love and universal brotherhood. That is how the idea of a separate Order of Monks germinated. Will they not continue his mission

without adulterating it? Already conflict was surfacing between the leaders of the Yogam and the members of the *Sanyasi sangh*. To forestall and pre-empt a serious rift, which was brewing there already about the properties, the Guru wanted to make his Will. There was also the idea of a *Dharma Sangh*. Influenced by these considerations, he made his Will in 1926. The reaction of the Yogam was strongly critical. There began after the Guru's passing, litigation and acrimony between the two.<sup>56</sup>

It anticipated Guru's decision to form an association of ascetics and proved that Guru placed his trust more on his ascetic disciples than on the associates of Yogam. Consequently, these drastic steps taken by Guru ultimately antagonized the authorities of the Yogam who were eagerly waiting for an opportunity to repossess the property of Guru.<sup>57</sup>

### 3. Parting of Ways

Guru's dissociation from the authorities of the Yogam becomes total when a *Sanyasi Sangham*—a society of ascetics—known as *Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham* was formed by him in 1928 as an alternate organization of reform and social service. It was of course the fulfilment of his long-drawn wish for founding an association comprising of ascetic disciples with deeper dedication and commitment for the sublime ideas of reform cherished by him which could link the activities of social welfare and the spiritual ideas of the *Saivaadvaitam*.<sup>58</sup> It was also a logical outcome of his distrust and dissatisfaction with the institutional apparatus and activities of Yogam. The pacts arrived with the 'social and 'institutional' have now been abandoned, and gradually there arouse grave mistrust in the mind of Guru towards the laws and the institutional agencies that governed the modernist mode of society. He could now detect (though belatedly) the operation of the same laws of the times, behind the move of his own disciples and institutions to isolate him and misappropriate his words and possessions. The

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<sup>56</sup> Dr. K.Sreenivasan, op.cit.,169.

<sup>57</sup> P.K.Gopalakrishnan, op.cit.,169.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 168-171; Notably the ascetic disciples closest to Guru were not from the *ezhava* -caste. There were two Brahmins, seven *savarnas*, two belonging to backward caste and one European Christian. C.R.Keshavan Vaidyar, *Guru Charanangalil* (Irinjalakkuda: Vivekodayam Books,1984), 65.

words of Guru thereafter emit a sense of frustration and anguish. His tone becomes melancholic.

Several reasons have been put forward by various scholars and writers to explain this sense of desperation and dejection undergone by Guru in the later phase. Guru had already lost all hopes in the functioning of Yogam. He was also displeased with the activities of the *sanyasi sangham*. "The behaviour of some of his ascetic disciples was found disgusting. The harassment inflicted on Bodhananda and Swami Dharma Teertha by certain disciples belonging to the fold of monks distressed him. The ill-treatment shown to Dr. Palpu and his son Nataraja Guru also hurt him much. The stories and rumours on the disgraceful behaviour of certain monks reached his ears disheartening him to the core. Guru was already displeased by the disregard and aversion shown towards him and his ideals by certain officials and members of Yogam."<sup>59</sup> This sense of disillusionment which began to haunt Guru, in his later phase, is described by one of his biographers as follows:

It is to be suspected whether the shadow of disappointment had begun to darken the mind of Guru at the end of his life. It was not his failure to totally fulfil his higher ideals in the present that might have tormented him. He was the farsighted one who had even told Gandhi that he would have to take on a second life again to fulfil his ideals. The realization that the organisation brought to birth by him-self has forsaken his ideals themselves, might be the factor that dispirited his mind. The Tamil Nadu-Ceylon journey which commenced at the end of his life would have been a response of this mental situation.<sup>60</sup>

It was this growing disillusionment and desperation which seemed to have prompted Guru to set on a journey to Tamil Nadu and Sree Lanka in 1926.

Mystery shrouds this unscheduled visit in 1926, hardly two years before his *Mahasamadhi*. His original destination was Ambasamudram in Tirunelveli District. In Sivagiri there echoed around him discordant notes which naturally made him pensive. The Yogam was set on an independent course of its own. Its commitment to the Dharma of Sree Narayana had become simply a superficial gloss. With the monks at Sivagiri also, it was difficult to unfold an ideal state of affairs. Very few of them had the will to scholarship and selflessness the Guru expected of them. There were

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<sup>59</sup> Koyikkal K.Jacob. M.A, op.cit.,188.

<sup>60</sup> P.K.Gopalakrishnan, op.cit.,194.

also lapses which irritated him. Scandals having a bearing on sex and morals ostensibly rocked the establishment.

As the fall out, perhaps, of some unpleasantness in his own chosen abode, the Guru, with a small entourage abruptly set out for Tamil Nadu, immediately after his seventieth birthday. "It will be better not to write about the cause of this unscheduled journey.", commented Swami Vidyananda, who accompanied the Guru.<sup>61</sup>

The dejected Guru had even expressed his disinclination to come back to Keralam at the end of his sojourn in Tamil Nadu and Ceylon.<sup>62</sup> He 'remarked half-humorously as well as wistfully when he reached Tirupetakam, a village on the banks of the Vaigai about ten miles north of Madurai, in the course of his journey':

We needn't go back to Kerala. Better remain somewhere here. Some might come seeking us. Even then we won't return. Or will no one come? May be, our Das. There are a few others also. But none so devoted as these Tamil brethren.<sup>63</sup>

Even though the emissaries arrived from Sivagiri, to persuade him to return home land, they failed to get a positive response from the Guru immediately.<sup>64</sup> He continued his journey and proceeded to Colombo. Though he was given a hearty and honourable reception by the various nationalities and communities in Ceylon, his mission to reconcile the warring factions of Malayalis naturally ended up a failure.:

In fact, they even insulted the couple of emissaries the Guru deputed to help them sort out their differences...The Guru did not like the idea of leaving SreeLanka. He even toyed with the thought of staying on at Neuralia or Trincomalee. He prevailed upon most of his entourage to return to India. It was with great difficulty that the rest persuaded him to leave for home.<sup>65</sup>

It was due to massive pressure and compulsion from his disciples that finally he agreed to go back to the home country. Keralam now appeared to him an alien land, populated and hegemonised by the new subjects of the protestant modernity, the new mediocrity which could never come to terms with the

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<sup>61</sup> Dr. K.Sreenivasan, op.cit.,167.

<sup>62</sup> Sukumar Azheekodu, *Guruvinte Dukham* (Kollam: Imprint Books, 1993), 135-136; P.K. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., 194-197.

<sup>63</sup> Dr. K. Sreenivasan, op.cit.,168.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.,168.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.,168-169.

*saivadvaitic* dreams cherished by Guru.<sup>66</sup>

The long drawn journey of Guru was a question posed on the conscience of Kerala. Reaching the home land after the journey Guru once told Valappad Kunjumami Vaidyar: I was like a bird which waited in futile for the blooming of fruit in the *Elavu* tree (cotton tree) (as if it would bring forth a tasty fruit)". Guru had undergone the same feeling of futility as would have gone through by the bird<sup>67</sup>

The eventful life of Guru comes to an end shortly after the founding of the *Dharma Sangham*. He reached *Mahasamadhi* in 1928 September 20.

The final phase of Guru's career, which succeeds the 'missionary phase' marking the institutional or organizational activities, thus presents the image of a dejected, forlorn master as juxtaposed to the triumphant missionary image projected by the texts and discourses on Guru; and this is notified by certain authors as the 'plight of Guru.'<sup>68</sup> Both of the images—one that of a victorious missionary or a social revolutionary or the other that of a 'Guru who failed and was betrayed'—however, does not do justice to the dynamic stature of Guru as a *Jnani* unyielding in his struggle to pursue the reflection of the 'absolute' called forth by the *Saivadvaitic* manner of devotion. The dejection and disillusionment felt by Guru in the later phase, in fact seems to have been the outcome of his painful realization of the futility of the institutional or 'company' mode of reform launched under the initiative of him and his disciples. It actually marks the dawn of his awareness regarding the true nature of the contemporary society and the new subjectivity produced by the laws of the age. In the cynical arrogance and disrespect shown by his own disciples and institutions, towards his higher ideals, he could now decipher the operation of the laws of the new Order which was hostile to the cause taken up by him. This sense of frustration and grief therefore, might not be seen as the outcome of any failure on his part to achieve any sort of material benefits. Rather it rose from a sense of righteous indignation as demonstrated by his reluctance to reconcile with the laws of the times. This was perhaps the cost he had to pay for his non-conformity to the existing powers and

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<sup>66</sup> P.K.Gopalakrishnan, op.cit., 194-197.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 196-197.

<sup>68</sup> Sukumar Azheekodu, op.cit., 132-136.

institutional regimes of the modernist society.

The dissonance shown by Guru with the sectarian and exclusivist practices, followed by the institutional or company mode of reform infuriated the authorities of the Yogam, mostly comprised of his own disciples, and who now proclaimed their open enmity to him. This would reveal to us the significant fact that the ideals and practices of Guru exceeded and at times countered the modernistic projects of social reform undertaken by the institutions like Yogam. It is true that Guru did not engage in any critical reflection of the laws of profit and productivity that govern the contemporary social order and the massive organisations like Yogam it gave birth, with their strange combination of the vertical or residual allegiance to caste and the horizontal unities of the modern subjects. Yet, he could sense the iron laws of necessity that govern the times through the bitter experiences undergone by him in the course of his pursuit for the reflection of the absolute and its social presentation. In the monstrous growth of the institutional network of the community reform he could now read the horrendous antinomies of the age. (The realisation dawned to him that even a *Jnani* was un armed to confront them and prone to their seductive designs; that these monstrous forces of the new order could use even the spiritually accomplished souls like him as a tool.) He could also realise that the institutional or company agencies of community reform had been sucking the blood of the *jnani*, manipulating his *Saivic* grace, and nourishing on his ascetic force like a parasite. And it is this painful realisation of the laws of time which could be seen as the chief factor that inflicted the intense sense of angst in the mind of Guru in the last phase.

Guru and the organisers of the Yogam, in their enthusiasm to forge out a joint-front of reform had neglected in the earlier days the basic discordance that prevailed between the ideals of Guru and the interests of the *eezhava* elites who officiated the Yogam. If the *Saivadvaitic* vision of reform conceived by Guru was based on a spiritual principle of 'loss'<sup>69</sup>, a vertical progression of human selves, or the energetic of a sublime Idea, the socio-economic perspective of reform as put forward by the Yogam and such other institutions was anchored on entirely

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<sup>69</sup> George Bataille, "The Notion of Expenditure" in Allan Stoekl, with Carl R. Lovitt and Donal M. Leslie, Jr, ed. *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 116-129.

different principles. The project of reform followed by the latter was in fact governed by the capitalistic principle of profit, productivity or utility, and the historicist, horizontal and linear concept of progress held by the modern subjects (the 'knowing' subject'). The latter could appropriate the words of Guru by translating his sublime ideals which were incommensurable with those of the latter, in to the discursive structure of modernity, to the genres of the 'capital'. The short-term pact that existed between them seem to have been in effect more beneficial for the elites who engineered the 'company enterprise' of the community reform.

It is also highly significant that Guru felt himself an alien, an exile in the contemporary society of Keralam and thought of leaving the country in his last phase. The belated realisation of the impossibility to communicate with and change the minds of the new subjects, schooled in the missionary mode of knowledge and possessed by the colonial modernist ethics of profitability, productivity and utility, did upset Guru. He preferred the company of the devout and committed Tamil devotees than that of his Malayali disciples who represented the new 'public' emerged in Keralam internalising the positivistic, utilitarian, ideals of the modernity and who were set on for the race to achieve material benefit. It implicates his dejection with the Keralite community of the times, constituted as a horizontal community of modernised, or Protestantised individuals or egos. It was quite shocking to him to realise that he was surrounded by an abstract community which had broken all of its ties with the radical traditions of the people's past, which was genetically incapable of comprehending the sublime ideals of *Bhakti* and *Jnanam* re-invented by him.

The greatest contribution made by Guru to the Malayali reform, in my view, is the reinvention of a sublime idea of God, a new mode of devotion linking the 'spiritual' and 'temporal', the 'worldly' and the 'otherworldly'. It should be admitted that Guru failed to communicate and disseminate the core of these ideas to the contemporary society including his *eezhava* disciples. However, his passionate erotic spiritual poems, the paralogic phrases evinced by him in the course of his conversations, and certain radical gestures shown by him in his life-practice, are seen by the present writer as bold attempts to provide a negative presentation to this *saivadvaitic* matrix of Idea. It could here be reminded that his

disciples, as well as the scholars of the period caged in the discursive and socio-historical conditions of Modernity, were incapable of comprehending the true implications of these cultural actions. The instruction given by Gúru during the period of the founding of Sivagiri Madhom, and which was later published by Kumaran Asan in 1908 would reveal the traces of this radical vision of reform nurtured by Guru.

Human beings, as a whole, yearn for happiness. It is the goal of all sorts of organisations which work in terms of worldly and spiritual affairs. The souls of men prize that happiness which lasts forever rather than the sensual pleasures which are ephemeral...

The temporal and the spiritual are not different. In reality, both of them act according to a single goal. The body enjoys happiness due to the coordinated activities of its whole organs. Likewise, for the attainment of the state of happiness which is the ultimate aim of human kind, there requires the coordinated action of the whole practices related to the spiritual and worldly realms.<sup>70</sup>

This, of course, was a radical deviation from the traditional modes of faith prevalent in the country, from the conventional mode of *bhakti* and the *Sankaradvaitic* order of *Vedanta* which put forward the doctrine of *Maya*, both of which somewhat trivialized the significance and reality of the worldly life. It was the *Saiva-advaitic* illumination on the inseparability of the principles of the 'love of self', the love of the Other, the Divine, and the love of the 'fellow-beings' which prompted Nanu the *Avadhoota* or ascetic to descend (or to ascend further to a new dimension in the pursuit of the absolute) from the blissful state of union with the Infinite accomplished by him as the culmination of his spiritual *sadhanas* in Aruvippuram. The formation of the Vavoottu Yogam comprising of the devotees sprung up around the *saivic* shrine of Aruvippuram and its spontaneous development into the Kshetra Yogam marks the initial advancement achieved towards the direction of linking the 'spiritual' and the 'worldly'.

The formation of the S.N.D.P. Yogam however marks a deviation, as I have pointed out earlier, in the sense that it was an alliance, of diverse interests and goals, a temporary accord between divergent forces and allegiances. As a result of this uneven accord with the organised interests of a caste-community, Guru, whose ideals transgressed the boundaries of caste class and communities, was drawn into

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<sup>70</sup> Translation here is done by the present writer from Malayalam. Dr. T.Bhaskaran, op.cit.,1.



a sectarian field of activity. This of course, turned up beneficial to a specific caste-community constituted according to the modern laws of subjectivity. However, this casteistic unity was achieved at the expense of a far higher and sublime accord of people envisaged by Guru.

The institutional success of Yogam in executing its project of promoting the interests of the eezhava community in general by the means of the company mode of reform, tremoured up a new wave of enthusiasm for reform among the various communities of Keralam. It was hailed as an effective and perfect model of caste-community reform which could be adopted by other communities, both the higher and lower ones in caste-status, to enter in to this new race for power wealth and status. The *Pulaya Mahasabha* began functioning in 1905 under the leadership of Ayyankali. The *Yogakshema Sabha* was formed in 1907 with the aim of reforming the community of *Nambootiris* the caste-Brahamins of Keralam. In 1914 the Nair Service Society came into being with the same projects of promoting the interests of Nair community. Though the grievances within the respective communities could be resolved to a certain extent as a result of the reformist measures implemented by these organizations, they turned out to be the agencies which effectuated the reconstitution and consolidation of caste communities in newer forms adapting to the conditions of modern society. Thus, instead of demolishing the divisive and sectarian bonds of caste and communities, the activities of the Yogam in effect became the roll-model of a new movement of reform, which became the nucleus of the exclusivist and sectarian politics of caste-community. Paradoxically, the history of the institutional movements of the caste-community reform thus turns out to be a history of their diversion, from the higher ideas of reform and progress which actually instilled the life-force to them.

It has to be admitted that the uneven accords forged out by Guru with the powers of the times, with the 'social' and the 'institutional' point out his failure to recognise the laws and forces which operated behind these 'formations'. The excessive trust put by him on the words and practices of his disciples, mainly hailing from the middle class elite sections of the Ezhava community, seemed to have prevented him from comprehending the laws of the times and bringing out effective negotiations and strategic accords with the powers of the new Order.

Guru, who could never get relieved of his embarrassment over the strange laws and designs of the modern order, held his disciples as his true guides or even Gurus in the worldly matters, in the institutional or social affairs. Perhaps this curious shift begins to take place during the founding of the S.N.D.P. Yogam, remoulding the Kshetra Yogam of Aruvithura. Notably, it was his disciples, the sceptic intellectuals who got substantial education in English and were well-informed of the social economic and legal discourses of the period, who gave the feedbacks to him on the social institutional and 'worldly' matters as a whole in this phase. The influence of the disciples seems to have led Guru to fall in to false premises, wrong decisions and options regarding reform. It subsequently affected the effective working of Guru's radical ideas of reform on two levels. Firstly they misinformed and misdirected Guru by feeding him with the missionary modernistic concepts and dogmas regarding reform. Secondly they appropriated the words of Guru by misinterpreting his parodical phrases, by translating his radical ideas into the discursive dictions of missionary modernism. The paradoxical aphorisms coined by Guru were thus reduced in to slogans and formulas useful for the consolidation of the 'company' mode of unities and powers. The grace of Guru was in fact totally capitalised. It was through the strategic operation of 'textualisation' and 'totemisation' of the 'words of Guru' as launched by the disciples, modernist scholars, the institutional agencies like Yogam and the discursive net-work of the period, that Guru was finally reconstituted in to the asphyxiated image of a protestant missionary or an *Ezhava* Bishop.

A historical examination of the life and practice of Guru would reveal that there occurred certain flaws in the methods opted by him to work out his radical vision of conjoining the 'temporal' and 'spiritual'. The major contribution of Guru to Malayali reform as mentioned earlier is his reinvention of a new mode of libidinal devotional ethics. And this was achieved by him through a rigorous and incessant pursuit of the 'indeterminate' realm of the 'spiritual' or the 'otherworldly'. He viewed this 'world' from a compassionate yet distanced or detached view of an ascetic who did not venture out to make a close study of the new 'world' which had gone through so many changes and transformations in terms of history and culture. It was a 'different world' which had been thoroughly

ordered, occupied and regularized by the humanistic and colonial regimes of capital of the times, different from the old 'world' or the old notions of world. And the indoctrination given by the English-educated disciples of Guru on the nature of the new 'world' was mostly coloured by the missionary-modernistic concepts and prejudices. Though he was gifted with the genuine insight of a great Yogi on the antinomies and relations of forces that governed the indigenous tradition of society within, Guru was incapable of grasping the social dynamics and the discursive laws of the new worldly order which intruded in to and reconstituted the whole fabrics of the contemporary society. Guru's inability to problematise the realm of this 'new world' as a different terrain of reality, prompted him to hold the 'social' or the 'worldly' instances as taken for granted. And the circle of his disciples who informed and directed him on worldly affairs also stood in the way of the *Saivadvaitin* who was avowed to effectuate a radical re-form in the faith, devotional practice and the material life of the people.

The ambivalence of the phrase 'worldly' as used by Guru implicating the heterogeneous realms and fields of human life is utilised by the disciples of Guru, the company-reformers, for reducing it to the realm of the 'social'. The political cultural and the spiritual dimensions of the 'worldliness' is conveniently substituted by the 'social' instance thus violating the heterogeneity of 'the world'. Subsequently, the reform movement was narrowed down to the privileged instance of the 'social'. The historical reality that the 'social' or 'public' as constituted as such in the period was a colonial modern space and it was the forces of capital and the hegemonic discourses of modernity which governed this 'social' or public space was conveniently overlooked by the disciples as well as the modernist scholars who subscribed to the 'company' mode of reform. They had inherited the pro-colonial stance of the missionary modernistic discourses which 'scape-goated' the native tradition as guilty of all the grievances of the present. (This colonial orientation which provided legitimisation to the new subject's identification with the caste/class interests that might be traced out as the determinant fact hindered them from venturing on a radical critique of the 'historico-political' conditions of the period and linking the 'spiritual' with the political).

The political disorientation of the Guru-movement is demonstrated by the

pro-British stance taken by Guru as well as most of his disciples and the institutional network of reform brought forth by their joint front. The dissociation of the movement with the politics of nationalism or micro-nationalism as epitomised in the *rajya* movement of the historical romancers also reveals its apolitical thrust. Though Guru showed reverence towards the English and the English educated natives and though he could not venture out a radical critique of the colonial modern order, his ironic and parodic phrasing and his aesthetic and philosophic reflections subtly contests this apparent conformity with the new order as such. It is pointed out that excepting T.K. Madhavan, the whole of the prominent leaders of Yogam took a pro-British attitude.

...the coming of the British, in their opinion (of Dr. Palpu and Kumaran Asan) was a blessing in disguise. That was a view which was wide-spread in our country even during the Twenties of this century. In the preface of the bye-law of the Yogam, Asan pointed out that the coming of the English power to India was really the reincarnation of the most merciful God for saving the world, as promised by Him whenever evil predominated over good.<sup>71</sup>

The role of the British raj in the disruption of the forces of old feudal caste-varna-regime and the reshuffling of the equations of power and socio-cultural relations creating new openings to the downtrodden castes is of course an undeniable historical fact which could not be overlooked in any serious study of reform movement.<sup>72</sup> The ideologues of Yogam and the active adherents of the new movement of socio-religious reform however, conveniently closed their eyes on the economic political and cultural onslaught of the British order on the indigenous polity and people. Significantly it was the missionary modern discourses hegemonic in the period which tutored the new middle class on the primary lessons of socio-religious reform. And it is these lessons which might be traced out as the chief factors that insensitised them to the 'historico-political' realities of the colonial modern regime.

"The British are our new gurus who have to be worshipped, because they are the people who had provided *deeksha* to us." This was the strange statement

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<sup>71</sup> Dr. K.Sreenivasan, op.cit., 80.

<sup>72</sup> The patronising role of the British on the setting up and the flourishing of the caste-community reform movement especially of the *eezhavas* is acknowledged by Kumaran Asan and even Sree Narayana Guru. See, P.K. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., 68.

issued by Guru in reply to the query of one of his disciples on his attitude on the imperial designs of the British. It was however the view of the middle class *eezhava* disciples seduced by the missionary narratives of reform which is reflected and parodied in this paradoxical phrase. The phrase however, seems to convey the sense of sympathy and gratitude felt by Guru towards the British.<sup>73</sup> Guru unequivocally reveals his intention when he explains this parodic phrase. He reminds his disciples that it was quite impossible for the lower caste people like *eezhavas* even to imagine of getting *deeksha* and setting on the path of *sanyasa* in the earlier times because it was forbidden by the brahminical *varna* regimes of the past. The implication is that unless the British had toppled the *varna-jati* regimes and had created new spaces of revolt and remobilisation on the part of the lower castes and communities there would not have emerged a Guru-missionary out of Nanu, the *avadhoota*. The new order introduced by the British regime is thus hailed as a boon by Guru and the reformers of the period because of the new opportunities and openings created by it for them to embark on a programme of socio-religious reform. Guru of course had realised the paramount fact that the sudden shift in the status and social destinies of his community was inseparably related to the patronage and the blessing grace provided by the British.<sup>74</sup> Though Guru at times opens his heart on the internal strife and maladies of a caste-ridden Hindu society and expresses his perplexity at the strange ways of the new masters and their native followers in his parodic phrases, he never makes any direct statement or reflection on the negative impacts and possible dangers of the colonial modern regime imposed by the British. Yet, unlike the apolitical, exclusivist and sectarian attitudes of his disciples who steered the Yogam and who could never imagine a higher order of unity transgressing the caste-community relations, Guru did incessantly struggle for an ideal and wider level of unity and identity beyond caste and community. The name given to this higher accord of people by him was 'Malayali'.<sup>75</sup> Significantly, Guru once suggested his *eezhava* disciples to choose

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<sup>73</sup> P.K.Balakrishnanan, op cit., 162.

<sup>74</sup> This is endorsed by the writings of Kumaran Asan and others. P.K. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., 68.

<sup>75</sup> Dr. K.Sreenivasan op.cit., 57.

the term Malayali instead of using their caste name.<sup>76</sup> Though this forlorn voice was drowned in the noise of the missionary or company mode of reform predominant in the period, it invariably reveals the ethnic vision of unity nurtured by Guru.

A close study of the activities of the Yogam would reveal that its elite leadership had been more fascinated by the missionary mode of reform which they held as the most viable means of reform and progress than the *Saivaadvaitic* vision of the transformation of self and community as advocated by Guru. Admissibly, the Eezhava elites of the Yogam did succeed to a great extent in diverting the attention and energy of Guru towards the missionary line at least in the initial phase. The resemblance of the practice of Yogam with the functioning of the Christian church has already been brought to notice by certain scholars:

As regards the goal of social change, the Yogam became the Guru's most effective forum for immediate action. It was registered as a joint stock company. Among its objectives were, besides the dissemination of the Dharma and the administration of the Mutts and temples, the sponsoring of the religious and secular education of the people and also their professional advancement. The majority of *Eezhavas* was engaged in agriculture. Many of them also took to weaving and coir making. A small section had also ventured into commerce and business. Significantly the temples and Mutts established by the Guru were expected to encourage the above secular activities also. Thus, there was a genuine dove-tailing and co-ordination of the spiritual and material needs of the community. Such emphasis on material objectives is rarely found in the annals of spiritual establishments started by Hindus. Perhaps the Guru and Dr. Palpu were influenced by the model of the Christian Church.<sup>77</sup>

However there prevailed serious discordance between the missionary mode of reform which harnessed the religious energies for the material or social welfare or progress and the *Saivadvaitic* vision of reform professed by Guru which strived for linking the material or 'worldly' realm with that of the 'spiritual' for the ultimate reunion of the self with the 'Absolute'. This crucial conflict and

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<sup>76</sup> "Is eezhava a caste-name? Is'nt it the name of a place (deshom)? If it requires an apt place-name isn't it proper to call Eezhavas who had been settled here for a long times as 'Malayali'. Malayali is one who inhabits Malayalam and English who lives in England likewise..." T. Bhaskaran, ed. *Sree Narayana Guru Vaikhari*.op.cit.,101.

<sup>77</sup> Dr. K.Sreenivasan, op.cit.,70.

dissonance brewed up, within the reform movement as initiated by Guru is never given its due importance by the so called rationalist disciples of Guru and the modernist scholars alike. The protestant ethics of profit and productivity as Weber revealed, promoted the capitalist mode of life where profit meant a deference of happiness. Guru who ventured to conjoin the idea of happiness sought both in the worldly and spiritual level, could not even guess the existence of a mode of worldly life and ethics like that of capitalism and Protestantism which prioritised profit and production at the expense of happiness both in its worldly or sensual and spiritual dimensions. It is this inverted asceticism of the protestant capitalist civilization which foreclosed the 'sensual' and privileged the 'productivity' or 'profit' that distinguishes it from all the previous modes of production and culture. As observed by Bataille, the French thinker.<sup>78</sup> Such a 'displaced worldliness' characteristic of Protestant or capitalist ethos was some thing ungraspable to the *saivic* imagination of Guru which was anchored on a vision of sublime mode of 'expenditure' or 'loss' as a means and index of the fulfilment of happiness. Many of the scholars of the modernistic school, have already highlighted the modernistic thrust of Guru mode of reform by pointing out his attack against the wasteful and unproductive expenditures associated with the redundant rituals ceremonies and festivals. They have however, been blinded by their procedures of knowledge from discovering the aesthetics of 'loss' inlaid in his thoughts and practices and the 'carnivalistic' and libidinal manner of devotion invented by him in his passionate *Saivic* poems and spiritual reflections.

Guru's advice to the members of Yogam and the community to give priority to the spheres of education, agriculture, industry and medicine was well-received by the members of the community. And it did produce results. Schools, companies, business firms, pharmacies hospitals, publishing houses all arose around the nucleus of the Yogam and the Sangham. Though the material progress achieved by the community within a short time span was enviable it failed to pursue the cultural or reflective actions, reinvented by Guru, the 'actions which are expected to provide happiness to the 'self' as well as 'another self' or the fellow-being'. The community which achieved strength and status now had already

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<sup>78</sup> George Bataille, op.cit.,116-129.

abandoned the devotional or reflexive matrix of Guru vision of reform. Instead of the prayer of 'loss' chanted for achieving the 'grace of dwelling deep in the 'mahas' (realm of divine greatness) of God, the Infinite," ("Into the sea of Thy Glory profound, Let us all plunge, And flourish ev'r, Flourish, in happiness flourish."<sup>79</sup>) there arose the massive *mantra* fore more profit more status and more power which have become the surrogates of the idea of human happiness.

The Yogam as well as the community, in course of time, became a horizontal alliance of 'egos', narrowing down to the relations of an exclusivist casteist corporation consisting of the seekers of profit, status, and power. And no wonder that this 'new middle class' kept cynical distance from Guru and his ideals. The schools, hospitals, companies and firms which added to the prestige and wealth of the community could only produce power and profit instead of the 'paradoxical happiness' envisaged by the *Saivadvaitic* vision of Guru. It should here be reminded that it was these institutional complexes which were defined as the locus of the pastoral mode of communities by Foucault and which became the recruiting centre of the new subjects of power.<sup>80</sup>

The cry for conversion incessantly heard from the inner camps of the Yogam throughout the early decades of the Twentieth century also betrays the missionary orientation genetically inlaid in its organizational and the ideological constitution. Proselytization was held as the most fashionable gesture of reform by the English educated *Eezhava* elites who manoeuvred the official programs of the Yogam. It was found to be a shortcut towards the attainment of social status, power and wealth, in short what were generally believed to be the indices of social progress. Conversion was upheld as a panacea for all grievances of caste, a compensative measure for the suffering undergone under gone by the community in the past under the Brahminical casteist regime. More over, it was deployed as one of the profitable and strategic means for bargaining for more rights, powers and status with the religious regimes of the period. At times, it was used to threaten and blackmail the 'authorities of the Hindu society dominated by *Savarnas* (higher

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<sup>79</sup> Sree Narayana Guru, *Daiva Dasakam* in Dr. T.Bhaskaran op.cit., 242.

<sup>80</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Subject and Power' in his afterword to Hubert L.Dryfus and Paul Rabinow, ed. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1983), 208-226.



*varnas*) and at times, it meant a call for the forces of market for the whole-sale selling of the community to the major religious orders of the period. Mocking the claims of the 'conversionists' who upheld proselytization as a magic formula for all ills, Kumaran Asan, the renowned Malayalam poet, unmasked the deceptive and illusory principle involved in it by naming it the 'doctrine of the alchemy of conversion' (*Matha Parivartana RasaVadam*).<sup>81</sup> The fiery debates and negotiations aroused over the issue of conversion however, betray the superficial notion of religiosity and reform held by the members of the Yogam, their insensitivity and disinclination towards the radical reflection of the absolute' initiated by Guru.

The craze for conversion among the *Eezhava* leaders ran high, about the 1920s and there arose heated discussions and campaigns in favour of the mass conversion of the *Eezhavas* to other religious sects. C. Krishnan the editor of *Mitavadi*, who himself accepted Buddhism as his creed was in the forefront of advocating the massive conversion of the *Eezhavas* into Buddhism. Judge Ayyakutty, Sahodaran Ayyappan, and C.V. Kunjuraman, the prominent leaders of the Yogam stood in support of the move. Even the name of Asan, who had written passionate poems re-invoking the Buddhist romance, was dragged in to the debate as if he also favoured the movement. Asan however opposed the move for conversion in his presidential address in the annual meeting of S.N.D.P. held in 1923 at Quilon. Soon, there appeared a critical rejoinder to the arguments of Asan in *Mitavadi* published in May 28 1923. Asan explained and clarified his position with regard to the issue of conversion in a letter send to C.Krishnan which was later published as a pamphlet titled *Matha Parivartana Rasa Vadam* ('The doctrine of the alchemy of conversion'). The letter shows the keen understanding, deeper awareness, insight and practical wisdom possessed by Asan on matters of reform, spiritual faith, tradition and social change and especially on the reflexive vision of Guru. The main objective of Yogam is categorically defined by Asan as the effectuation of the *dharmic* ideals of reform initiated by Guru, for the progress of the community. He argues that 'the religious reform does not mean conversion but the working out of the religious vision of Guru which is contained in the famous

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<sup>81</sup> Kumaran Asan, "Matha Parivartana Rasa Vadam". The full text is included in M.K.Sanu, *Mrithyunjayam Kavya Jeevitham* (Irinjalakkuda: S.N.Chandrika Educational Trust, 1996), 290-298.

aphorism “One caste, One religion and One God for Man”<sup>82</sup>. He beats down the arguments of the ‘conversionists’, point by point and alerts the members of the community on the possible dangers of conversion. The ‘alchemy of conversion’ Asan writes, could not raise the status of the lower caste people till now:

There are Pulayas and Pariyahs in our land who have joined Christianity. The Doctrine of the ‘alchemy of conversion has not yet transformed these raw irons into gold.’<sup>83</sup>

He alerts his fellow men that it is disgraceful for the community as a whole to change their ‘faith’ as if ‘one changes one’s clothes’. Moreover, he also reminds them that their attempt for conversion invariably makes a mockery of the radical ideas and practices of socio-religious reform upheld by the community under the initiation of Guru.:

The pain of the shoulder which carried stones for the building of temples has not yet subsided. It would be cruel to tell the people again to carry stones for building *Viharas*. I could certainly say that *Swamy Trippadangal* who has solid foundation in spiritual matters would not change his religion even if compelled by some of us who crave for conversion. I feel sorry to say that it is an act of disrespect to Guru on our part, to persuade our Spiritual Guru for conversion. It is my humble opinion that it is disastrous to run after the priests of Ceylon or Tibet leaving a great Teacher who has been instrumental for the whole progress of our community till this time, the one who is universally acclaimed by whole of us and whose presence we proudly hold as the fortunate accomplishment of the community; it is like running after fortunes throwing away the gold possessed by one self.<sup>84</sup>

Asan also claims legitimacy to his opinions by testifying that he was truly representing here the words and vision of Guru on the issue of conversion. There is no ‘short-cut’, no magic for a community which had been undergoing bondage for thousand years to re-establish its freedom’. He writes that the community could attain progress only through the acquisition of knowledge and wealth as illumined by Guru:

Then only the freedom attained thus would last for ever as ours. It would never be the religion which is borrowed or relied upon by us,

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 298.

but we ourselves would be the rightful claimants of that victory. Is'nt it the real freedom, the real manliness (*paurusham*)?<sup>85</sup>

The arguments of Asan, was convincing enough to calm down the fervour among the leaders of the Yogam for conversion at least for the time being. Yet, the 'conversionists' did not withdraw from their basic stand. They made strategic attempts to read the mind of Guru, to confirm his true position on the matter and to persuade him to provide at least certain statements in favour of them. It is in this context that Sahodaran Ayyappan who himself seems to have accepted Buddhism as his creed sought an interview with Guru at *Advaitasramam* in 1923. It would be relevant here to cite an extract of the interview which would illuminate the position of Guru and some of his prominent disciples on the issue:

Guru: Ayyappan, Doctor (Dr. Palpu) talks about conversion.

Ayyappan: Some more people are inclined to do so.

Guru: Isn't it enough that man becomes better by himself? Isn't it the real meaning of changing the religion? Or is it any other sort of change which people talk about?

Ayyappan: It is in Buddhism that we see more means for the betterment of men.

Guru: Are all Buddhists good men? I understand that among them are many who eat fish, drink and practise inequality.

Ayyappan: It has to be admitted that among the Buddhists good men are too few nowadays. ... Buddhism also has been corrupted. Still Lord Buddha's teachings are the best means for people to better themselves.

Guru: Aren't the teachings of Christ good? The doctrines of Muhammad Nabi are equally good. But are all their followers good? The crux of the problem is this: whatever be one's religion, an individual should go on striving to improve himself. Otherwise, he would slide down. The words, thoughts and deeds of men should be pure. ... Caste has established its sway amongst men. Sankaracharya himself has erred in this regard. Vyasa who wrote Bhagavad Gita and Brahma Sutra mentions the four *varnas* in two places differently. Caste has to be done away with. All human beings belong to the same community. To re-establish that true state of existence, caste has to be done away with. What are the views of Kumaran Asan?

Ayyappan: Asan thinks it would be a public insult to Swami to change religion without getting Swami's consent.

Guru: Well, is it so?

Ayyappan: Asan says Swami's opinion should be sought first.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 298.

Guru: Is not my view known so far? Do you know my view?

Ayyappan: I know. Swami has no antipathy towards any religion. I know that Swami desires human beings to live as one integrated group whatever be the variations in religion, dress or language.

Guru: That's what I wish. Religion is an opinion. Whatever be the differences in religion, men can live together. Caste differentiation ought not to exist... Take Satyavratana for example. He has no caste, no prejudice, has he?

Ayyappan: No, not a trace of it.

Guru: Probably it is difficult to reach that level. It is doubtful whether even Buddha had shed the feeling of caste to such an extent. One could live like that. What is wrong with Hinduism? Aryasamajists and Brahmasamajists are Hindus. They don't observe caste.

Ayyappan: They are not Hindus. They call themselves Hindus just to feel strong. Arya Samajists swear by the Vedas. They acknowledge their authority after giving a new interpretation to them. ... Some ask: why change religion? Isn't Sree Narayana Dharma good enough for us? Still, they are not happy when asked to take Narayana Guru's opinion.

Guru: Let them have any religion they like. One must have the liberty to believe in the religion of one's choice.

Ayyappan: This was Swami's earlier view.

Guru: I still stick to it. When the need to change religion is genuinely felt, you should certainly do so. The freedom for it should be yours. Religion is different to each. A son may not like his father's faith. There should be freedom of faith for all. That's my view. Do you feel so?

Ayyappan: Yes, we do. Recently in a registered deed, I entered Buddhism as my religion.

Guru: (Smiling) You didn't note your caste, did you? Well, that was good. Caste shouldn't be mentioned anywhere. Man should live together as of one caste...Man is one caste, that is my religion.<sup>86</sup>

What is noticeable in this conversation is that while Ayyappan attempts to make Guru speak in favour of conversion, Guru in turn enters into tongue of Ayyapan and makes him admit the futility of such a move. In the conversation between the Guru and the *Sishya* one could listen to the subtle contestation of phrases and ideas. Guru repeatedly reminds his disciple that the foremost question is not that of choosing or changing any religion. The prime issue is how one

<sup>86</sup> The full text of the conversation is given in Dr. T. Bhaskaran ed. *Sree Narayana Guru Vaikhari*, 189-191. However, it is the translation of the conversation done by Dr. Sreenivasan which is adopted here, though with certain modifications. Dr.K. Sreenivasan, op.cit., 115-117.

practices or works out the religion for one's betterment. The choosing of a religion is purely a personal or a private affair of an individual. "A religion, he says, "should not be judged on the basis of its proclaimed ideals". 'Every religion in the world has its own limitations and possibilities'. One should not put all blame to any of them for all ills nor glorify any one of them as exclusively good and beneficial, because the betterment of men depends on how they themselves work out the ideals of the religion for their self-progress. An individual is not supposed to escape from this fundamental responsibility of working out one's self-betterment by handing it over to any organised religion and seeking shelter behind it. Guru thus disposes the debate for conversion as a trivial issue and gives focus to the struggle required to be carried out by the individual within the fold of one's religion against the laws of caste and for self-betterment. In support of his stance Guru cites the examples of the Arya Samajam, and the Brahma Samajam and finally the case of Sathyavratam, his devout disciple. Ayyappan, however, misses this crucial point as it is the case with most of his disciples. . The disciple's announcement of his acceptance of Buddhism with its tone of self-admiration only evokes a meaningful smile in the lips of Guru which seems to be more eloquent than his words. The smile speaks of the instantaneous awareness that illumines him now of the irresolvable gulf estranging him from his disciples who were too 'intelligent' and crafty to realize the true significance of his words and whose notions of spirituality were pathetically shallow and superficial.

Two days after the above conversation there again took place another session of conversation between Guru and his disciple Kottukkoil Velayudhan on the same topic. Let me cite an extract of it which I think is quite relevant to our context:

Guru: Doesn't the change of religion refer to the change of opinion? It is enough that man becomes good. Then, we would say that it signals a change of religion. There is no point in merely changing one's external appearance without bettering oneself. What is your opinion?'

Velayudhan: There is no use in man changing his name without getting himself better.

Guru: Is it so? O.K. Thus when one becomes good then it could be said that his *mathom* (both in the meaning of opinion and religion) has changed. One who sheds his habit of eating fish and flesh is in

fact changing his *mathom*. That is the real change. That is the sort of change which is most desirable. Some say that one could change their religion for gaining worldly freedom; I don't know anything about it.

Velayudhan: Some say that in the present circumstances if one wants to change religion for worldly freedom then one has to join Christian faith. Some others instruct to accept Buddhism. There are also people who opt for Islam.

Guru: I don't know much about it. If it becomes so necessary then one should think deeply of such options before taking a decision. Is it true that the Yogam has decided that all of its members should be invariably *Eezhavas*?

Velayudhan: Yes, it is true.

Guru: What is the use of it? Why can't they drop the caste name? Even now, they have not yet gained a mental courage to denounce the caste-identity. Isn't it?

Velayudhan: A name is required at least for the purpose of signification and communication.

Guru: To distinguish one from others, isn't it? Ok. Then is caste name the only option for that? Isn't caste something non-existent? Write the name of something which really exists. Accept the name of the religion. Decide on a religion according to one's own desire. One could adopt the name of the Hindu faith or the *Dharma* faith according to one's wish, couldn't he? ... What defects do the advocates of conversion see in Hinduism?

Velayudhan: It is said that the religious literature of Hinduism is rotten. For instance, the Vedas and Gita sponsor animal sacrifice, worship of multiple gods, and the caste system.

Guru: Perhaps the Vedas may be doing that. Yet, here and there, we may find certain good things in it. The religions which are acclaimed for having good literature do not seem to be as good when viewed in terms of the observance of these ideals. It means that whatever may be the quality of the religious literature there is no use of them if man becomes degenerated. Man should become good. Caste should be eliminated. There should be purity in words, thoughts and deeds. There is no difference between Christianity or Islam in this regard. Hinduism seems to contain all of these important religious principles. Do the Mohammadans and Christians ever join Hinduism?

Velayudhan: In certain places, Christians are coming back to it.

Guru: If we allow freedom and equality then lot of people would come back to Hinduism. Isn't that so? It has to be reformed. Whatever may be one's religion man should become better. Caste should be totally eliminated. That is my opinion.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Dr. T. Bhaskaran ed. *Sree Narayana Guru Vaikhari*, 191-193. Translated by the present writer into English.

The conversion according to Guru does not implicate any deeper change in one's spiritual vision or opinion but a mere shift in one's external appearance. The words of Guru, here, bring into open the amusing paradox or contradictions that tear apart the determined and assured positions of his disciples who were mostly the office-bearers of the Yogam. The English educated elite leaders of the Yogam who think of changing their religion as a protest against the evils of casteism and the malpractices of Hinduism are not only hesitant to shed of their caste identity but also are obstinate in their insistence of it as a requisite for holding the membership of the Yogam. However, the crux of the words of Guru is that what matters is not the changing of one's religion but ultimately the dropping of the prejudices of caste from one's mind, words, and deeds. Thus, Guru's disagreement with the campaign for conversion as launched by the leaders of Yogam was much pronounced. He considered it as a deviance from one of the most important tasks of the period i.e. the fight against caste, and the reforming of one's faith from within.

There again takes place another important conversation on the issue between Guru and C.V. Kunjiraman which was published in *Kerala Kaumudi* in 1926 (1101 *Kanni* 23). The conversations made by C.V. Kunjiraman, Sahodaran Ayyappan and others with Guru would reveal to us the strategic attempts made by the leaders of the Yogam to persuade and commit him to send green signal to the proposal for the mass conversion of the *eezhavas* as designed by the *eezhava* elites. Guru who had a deeper and radical conviction on the matters of faith and devotion however, did not succumb to the pressures of his disciples in the issue of conversion. Realising the trap involved in the questions and proposals put up by these interlocutors Guru unequivocally expresses his basic disagreement with the idea of conversion.

Let me cite the relevant portions of Guru's conversation with Kunjiraman as it expounds the well-thought out opinion of Guru regarding the issue of conversion:

I (C.V. Kunjiraman): Nowadays the enthusiasm for conversion is on the increase in our community. Some say Buddhism is good; some prefer Christianity while some others opt for Aryasamaj. Thus, this enthusiasm finds its manifestation in different forms. And there are

also people who say conversion is not necessary at all.

Swami: There are two facets for religion—one is internal and the other external. The question is that which of these is sought to be changed. If the enthusiasm is aimed just towards the external change then we cannot call it a change of religion. It is a change at the level of community. The change in the internal religion, on the other hand, occurs gradually in each individual who is accustomed to the practice of thinking. It naturally undergoes change when one's knowledge increases and none could impose a change on it. It is better to give up the religion if one loses his faith on it especially in the cases of the organised religions usually known by the nomenclatures of Hinduism or Christianity. It is cowardice or hypocrisy on the part of a person to cling on to a religion even after losing faith in it. Change of religion in such cases would be beneficial for him as well as the religion which he quits. Evidently, it would not be beneficial for a religion to increase the numbers of people who don't have real faith.

I: Those who choose to continue as Hindus also say that Hinduism, as it exists today, is not good.

Swami: In that case, what they say is that not only Hindus as such but also Hinduism are in need of change. There is no such religion as Hinduism. Foreigners referred to the inhabitants of Hindustan as Hindus. If the assumption is that the religion of those who live in Hindustan is Hinduism, then the religions of Christians and Muslims living in Hindustan should also be considered as Hinduism. None says so or agrees with it. Then it is to be inferred that Hinduism, is the common name for those religions, which took shape in Hindustan itself and which are to be distinguished from those faiths like Christianity and Islam which emerged in foreign lands. That is why some claim that Buddhism and Jainism etc also belong to Hinduism. If it is not illogical to call so many distinctly different religions like the *Vedic*, *Puranic*, *Sankya*, *Vaiseshika*, *Meemamsaka*, *Dvaita*, *Advaita*, *Visishtadvaita*, *Saiva*, and *Vaishnava*, etc by the common generic name of Hinduism, why attribute logical fallacy to the practice of designating all the religions of the world— taught by various Gurus as means of salvation for the mankind despite their minute variations due to the conditions of time and space— by the appellation “One Religion” as suggestive of a single goal?

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Swami: ...What is the urgent need of India today? :- Deliverance from the conflicts between castes and religions. Let us all attempt to study and understand all religions with equanimity and equal reverence and exchange the wisdom thus gained with mutual love. Then we would realise that the rivalry arises not from *mathom*(religion) but from *madam*(arrogance).(makes pun with the



words *Mathom* and *madam*<sup>88</sup>). The enthusiasm for conversion also will naturally disappear thereafter.<sup>89</sup>

Guru, here theoretically as well as pragmatically rejects the idea of conversion as it is favoured by the missionary reformers and the *Eezhava* elites of the period. The widespread conversion of the *Eezhavas* as advocated by the leaders of the Yogam suggests rather a change of community than that of faith according to Guru. Religion is defined by Guru as the common pursuit of man for attaining salvation and it refers to the means for the upward movements of men. Even though these means may vary with religions/individuals, they could be treated as one because of the inherent sameness of their goal. This he states as the real meaning of his famous doctrine of 'Oneness' as upheld by him in his famous aphorism, 'One caste one religion and one God for man.' The conceptual dualities of the 'universal' and the 'specific', the 'unity' and 'heterogeneity' are complexly conjoined without excluding or privileging any one of them in his idea of 'one religion.' The target of Guru's attack here is the organized and dogmatized religions of the world. And he emphasises the right of each person to choose any of the heterogeneous means of spiritual pursuits offered by various faiths according to one's own need and wish. The tendency for conversion and the feuds between religions arise from the gravest malady of embracing certain dogmas of religion at the cost of the individual pursuit for spiritual progress. The Semitic or missionary notions of Hindu religion which reduces it into a single or uniform faith organized and conceptualised in terms of the western modes of religions is rejected by Guru who upholds the heterogeneity of Hinduism(s). The need of the time according to Guru is to reform the Hinduisms rather than substituting it for another creed as if the faith is an exchangeable commodity.

Finally in his message to the annual meeting of the Yogam held at Pallathuruthy in 1927 which is held as his last message, Guru declares his position with regard to the idea of conversion in unambiguous terms:

The aim of the organisation should not be that of creating an

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<sup>88</sup> Note here is provided by the present writer.

<sup>89</sup> *Sree Narayana Guru Vaikhari*, 176-183. The translation is done by the present writer; at times, the translation done by Dr.K.Sreenivasan, is accepted with slight modifications. Dr. K. Sreenivasan, op.cit.,132-136.

exclusive community merely joining together of a particular clan of people. The religious reform should not end up merely a movement of giving up the present faith and joining another religious group. The structure of our community should be that of unifying the whole sorts of men. Religion should permit freedom of faith. It should be a way of life acceptable to all of the enlightened minds and should lead humanity towards a noble goal. The 'eternal dharma' of One species, one religion, and One God for Man' is such a sort of religion. To me, the most desirable mode of action for our organisation is to bring together the whole people who believe in this 'eternal *dharma*'. The acceptance of this '*sanathana dharma*' would be a sort of conversion as well as the declaration of freedom for those people who think that the inequality and grievances would not be eliminated without conversion.<sup>90</sup>

Guru here conveys his opposition towards the current practice of the Yogam of confining its activity to the *Eezhava* community. He suggests that the structure of Yogam should be widened as to bring together all men who have faith in the doctrine of 'One caste, One creed and One God for Man', irrespective of caste and creed. Significantly, he uses the term *Sanatana Dharma* to signify this radical faith instead of the term Hinduism which smacks of caste prejudices and Brahminical dominance. Such a universal idea of spirituality, he says, would assure freedom of faith and as such should be distinguished from the dogmas of the organised religions. There incessantly happens radical change and progress in the interiority of faith in the case of *Sanatana Dharma* as reinvented by him and it also involves declaration of one's freedom of faith. It is suggested that if it is such a deeper change in the internal aspect of religion which is being advocated by the ideologues of conversion then they could find such a sort of change in this *Dharma* as propounded by him which is primeval as well as novel, Hinduist and at the sametime non-Hinduist. Guru's attitude towards conversion and reform is indisputably disclosed here revealing his basic disagreement and dissension with the company mode of reform as effectuated by his disciples who were the office-bearers and stalwarts of the Yogam.

Even the convincing arguments of Guru failed to make any positive impact on the minds of the executives of Yogam, to eradicate their obsession with the

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<sup>90</sup> Cited by M.K.Sanu in his work *Narayana Guru Swami*, 460-461; translation here is done by the present writer.

‘doctrine of conversion’. As their understanding of the spiritual vision of Guru was merely superficial and shallow they did not have any remorse in disregarding his wiser opinions on the issue. It soon became clear that it was neither any craving for sublime ideals of faith, nor their righteous indignation against the casteism of Hinduism that prompted the leaders of Yogam to yearn for the idea of conversion. Instead, it was the use value of the principle of conversion as a means for bargaining and demanding for more power, prestige and privileges within the social set-up in a politics of ‘compensation’ which prompted to them to take recourse to it. The company ideology of reform taught them that the sale value of the community could strategically be raised by the means of the slogan of conversion. After the *samadhi* of Guru, the cry for conversion mounted up high among the adherents of the Yogam. The oppressive measures deployed by the Travancore Government against the Abstention movement and the temple entry agitation inflamed the issue. When C. Kesavan was arrested in 1935 the *Eezhava* leaders began to talk about conversion as the only alternative for the community.<sup>91</sup> C.V. Kunjiraman who was the editor of the *Malayalarajyam* which opposed the Nivartana agitation resigned from it in protest and launched again a fiery campaign for the mass conversion of the *Eezhavas*. He published a pamphlet which was released at the Maramon convention held at Kozhenchery and which proclaimed that there was no other means for rescuing *Eezhavas* except that of joining Christianity.<sup>92</sup> The frenzy of conversion soon flared up among the members of the *Eezhava* community. In protest against the negative attitude of Government towards the demand for ‘temple-entry’ the Yogam passed a resolution in favour of taking recourse to conversion on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1935. The fervour created by the agitation for temple-entry now shifted towards the campaign for conversion ignited by the writings of C.V. Kunjiraman and others.<sup>93</sup> There arose heated debates among the leaders of the Yogam as to which religion they should join. “The Christian, Sikh and Islamic organisations and the workers of Aryasamajam rushed

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<sup>91</sup> K.G.Narayanan, *Eezhava-Teeya charitra padhanom* (Kayamkulam: Anaswara Publications, 1984), 537.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 533.

<sup>93</sup> N.R.Krishnan, *Ayithochadanam Adhava Kshetrapraveshanam* (Turavoor: Sree Narasimhavalasam Book Depot. 1963), 136-137.

to Travancore carrying their money bags to canvass the *Eezhavas* to join their creeds. While C.V. Kunjiraman spoke of the benefit of joining Christianity, C. Krishnan, Sahodaran Ayyappan and others favoured Buddhism. K.P. Thayyil and others argued in favour of joining Islam and people like N. Krishnan opted for Sikhism".<sup>94</sup> The editor of one of the contemporary journals called *Potujanam* provides a sarcastic report on the movement :

The agitation for conversion led by C.V. Kunjiraman staying at the Moolayil bungalow in Petta, shook the Hindu communities of Travancore as a whole. It almost seemed certain that the *Ezhavas* as a whole would quit Hinduism in the near future. The topic of debate was just as to decide which religion they would join. The Christian missionaries rushed from England with bags of money in order to capture the *Eezhavas* whose numbers amounted to about 8 lakhs. The Akalis came from Punjab. The Aryasamajins under Veda Bandhu also rushed into the scene. The Muslim Mullas reached the place with a pace of flying. In Chertalai certain *Eezhavas* became Sikhs wielding *sikha* and *kripans*. In Kayamkulam some people turned Muslims by wearing caps. *Mitavadi* and *Sahodaran* indicated the direction towards the path of Buddhism. C.V. Kunjiraman opted for joining Christianity. Missionaries and Kathanars began to circum-ambulate around the Moolayil Bungalow. His Christian friends like K.C. Mamman Mappila, N.V. Joseph, M.M. Varkey visited the house to convey their regards. C.V. Kunjiraman was brought to Maramon Convention with due reverence and reception as the chief speaker. The lakhs of copies of the yellow book of C.V. Kunjiraman printed at the C.M.S. Press in Kottayam were distributed at the sponsorship of Christian priests. One of the prominent newspapers of Kottayam scientifically predicted on the basis of the increase in the number of the Christian population as shown in the census report, that, Keralam would transform into a Christian country in the immediate future.<sup>95</sup>

The threat of conversion posed by the *Eezhava* community did produce result in the sense that it was one of the crucial factors which prompted the Travancore Government to decide in favor of opening the temples to all the Hindus. However with the declaration of the temple-entry proclamation in 1936 the fervor of conversion ebbed out among the *eezhava* community. The 'victory' gained in the long-drawn struggle for entry into Hindu temples somehow pacified the community as a whole revealing that what it needed was a graceful and

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 137.

respectful entry to the prevailing Hindu order, a legitimate inclusion into it. The 'conversionists' could not pursue thereafter their enterprise for bringing out mass conversion of the community due to the conformity shown by the majority of the community to the existent Hindu system of faith. In short, not only the elite *Eezhava* leaders but also the common folk of the community slipped away from the middle path, the middle line of faith discovered by Guru between the conventional regime of Hinduism and the 'conversionist' syndrome of substitution of faiths as saleable commodities. The community as a whole including the elite leaders of the Yogam and the common-folk seemed to have abandoned the task of effectuating the radical mode of spiritual praxis as initiated by Guru.

The angst of Guru thus lies in his painful realisation of the black-holes that existed in the realms of sensibility and communication between him and his disciples, the new subjects of the period. If the English educated *Eezhava* disciples of him who were mostly atheists, rationalists and positivists in their outlook attempted to carve out a missionary reformer or a Bishop out of him, his *sanyasi* disciples who laboured hard to turn him to a Hindu *sanyasi* succeeded in persuading him to wear the saffron uniform.<sup>96</sup> These instances indicate how the Guru is being moulded or re-made by his disciples and the institutions he has founded. As a result of the indoctrination of the former the 'worldly' as used by Guru is reductively read as the 'social' and the 'social' is narrowed down to the realm of caste-community. The organizational means of reform as advocated by Guru was displaced and thus co-opted to the 'institutional' instance which was ultimately super-arched by the 'company' structure of relations and functions and the laws of modern society. The Guru mode of reform in short is found to be restructured and neutralised by the 'missionary' or what could specifically be called the 'company' mode of reform. However, Guru who had a high regard and

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<sup>96</sup> It was the *sanyasi* disciples of Guru who are said to have offered saffron clothe and persuaded him to wear it especially during his visit to Ceylon. While M.K.Sanu writes that it happened in his first visit to Ceylon in 1918, Dharmanandaji reports that it occurred in his second visit in 1926. Guru who was reluctant to wear it is reported to have ironically retorted: "Anyway it is useful because it would look clean even when stained with dust". As it amounted to be receiving *Deeksha*, Guru is said to have stated that it is the devotees and people whom he considers as his Gurus. Koyikkal K.Jacob M.A. op.cit., 205-206.; also P.K.Balakrishnan.op.cit.132. P.K.Balakrishnan does anticipate here the attempt of the disciples of Sree Narayana Guru to overpower him through the strategy of worship.

affection to his disciples, did not ever hesitate in asserting his true position when the former seemed to totally deviate from the sublime ideas of reform envisaged by him.

#### 4. Reforming Worship

The educated disciples of Guru, with their missionary orientation are thus found to be guilty of misrepresenting and trivializing the *Saivadvaitic* implications of Guru-phrases. The militancy shown by Guru in eradicating the superstitious practices, wasteful ceremonies and rituals, and the worship of evil deities or petty gods as followed by the common folks, also have induced the modernist writers to entitle a 'missionary' image to Narayana Guru. There are instances when we find him throwing away the stones and idols worshipped by the people of the lower strata. He enforces a stricter differentiation between the *utthama devatas* (good deities) and *adhamadevathas* (evil deities) and makes a classification of gods, faiths and people in terms of *suddhi*, (purity and cleanliness) *asuddhi*, *anachara*, *durachara* (customs or rituals which are found to be evil) etc. The writers have drawn to our attention that the idols installed by Guru in the temples built by him mostly belong to the lineage of *Saddevathas*<sup>97</sup>. The idols of the *Durdevathas* are at times mercilessly eliminated<sup>98</sup>. Such acts of offences committed by Guru in the course of his struggle for reforming the Hindu faith, within, are conceived by some as parts of a movement of Sanskritisation or the rectification of primitive modes of Hinduism.<sup>99</sup> Some see in his repossession of the worship of the so called *Uttamadevathas* of Hinduism and the denunciation of the impure and evil practices like the animal sacrifices, the continuation of the traditions of the classical mode of reform initiated by Sankaracharya within the structure of Hinduism. However, the position taken by Guru against the worship of the 'petty' deities and rude and redundant modes of worship related to them was more subversive. We find Guru at occasions poignantly using satiric phrases against certain religious practices of the people held as decadent and primitive as it is demonstrated in the case of Guru's

<sup>97</sup> P.K.Gopalakrishnan., op. cit., 52.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>99</sup> Dr.A.Padmanabha Kurup, op.cit., 76, 77. These sorts of reforms as exemplified in the provision of sacred thread to the *eezhava poojaris* by Guru, is even equated by the author with the process of *brahminisation* of the *eezhava* caste.

confrontation with a *komaram* or *madan*(oracle)<sup>100</sup>. He disarms and destabilizes the ritual dancer (*komaram*) by unmasking the comically frail and pathetic countenance of an aged, disabled man and making him see himself through the critical yet idealistic gaze of an enlightened generation; he strikes at the *komaram*, with the phrasal ammunitions of satire. Hit by the pungent irony of the Guru-phrases the old man withdraws ashamedly from the scene. The subversive laughter, which recurs in the parodic or ironic phrases and gestures of Guru, implicate a subtle and strategic practice of demystification and un-masking of fake institutions of faith.

There are indeed occasions when the militant mode of reform launched by Guru within the native faith reminds us of the missionary projects of war against the local faiths and gods. A list of *durdevathas* deposed by Guru in the Arumukham Pillayar Kovil and the allied streets has been produced by K. Damodaran, one of his biographers.<sup>101</sup> The idols thus thrown out are reported to have been worshipped earlier by the *Eezhavas* of the place.

*Isakky (yakshi) icons: 2*  
*Madon peedhom: 2*  
*Poothathan peedhom: 1*  
*Vangara madonpeedhom: 1*  
*Chudalamadon peedhom: 2*  
*Isakky peedhom: 1*  
*Mallan karunkaaly peedhom: 1*  
*Karuppan and Irulan etc.: 21*

Certain writers point out that some more idols especially that of the *ugramoortis* (fierce deities) have been eliminated by Guru from the site. The actual number according to others amounts to 42.<sup>102</sup> Amusingly it is also reported that Guru has not exempted from his aggressive project of ritual rectification or the elimination of the *durdevathas*, even the idol of Kali in Manykal Bhagavati Temple, the former abode of his worship which sheltered him when he fell ill and desolate due to small pox in his boy-hood days.<sup>103</sup>

However, a deeper analysis of the practice of reform carried out by Guru

<sup>100</sup> *Sree Narayana Vaikhari*, 218.

<sup>101</sup> Cited by P.K.Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., 52-53.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 53.

would make us realize that the parallels drawn with the missionary projects are just superficial. It would also be inappropriate to call it a process of *Sanskritisation* or a continuation of the traditional or classical mode of reform as initiated by Sankaracharya and others within the structure of Hinduism. The inception of the temples and icons affiliated to *Saivic* pantheon and the elimination of the so called 'petty' or 'evil' gods implicate a radical spiritual reform which goes beyond the missionary project of invading the 'pagan' or 'savage' gods of the natives on behalf of a Superior Father God. It would be too simplistic to see in it a battle of the Aryan or Dravidian gods and modes of worship.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps the most important contribution made by Guru on the Malayali reform would be the reinvention of faith in a Sublime Universal God-force which neither implicates a plurality of Gods nor a monistic or monotheistic God-concept produced by the Hebraic-Christian or missionary traditions. It also radically deviates from the principle of the absolute non-dualism professed by *Sankara Vedanta*. And the idea of the *Daivam* (the God) resurrected by it provides a libidinal dimension to the *Advaitic* reflection of the *Parabrahmam*, the absolute self, held to be neutral and attributeless (*nirguna*). It could also be distinguished from the crude, chaotic and decadent practices of faith comprising of the worship of a plurality of *devatas* (deities) associated with the vile passions, fantasies, and materialistic indulgences of the indigenous folk. The sublime and passionate idea of an *ekadaivam* (Singular God) or *ekantika* (focussing on One god) devotion of God resurrected by Narayana Guru and Chattampi Swamikal had more affinities with the *Saiva Siddhantic*, *Visishtadvaitic* or *Saktheyic* imaginations of God which intensified and transmuted the relation between the God and the devotee and thereby the whole mode of devotion. To the *Saivic* streams of worship which would mark the core sector of the spiritual reflection of Guru, the sublime and erotic idea of *Sivam* implicated the supreme benevolent God-force embodying the integrity, indivisibility and singularity of the Absolute in itself. The absolute, the *Sivam* at the same time is held as possibly manifest in multiple forms and which is to be sought through

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<sup>104</sup> Countering the theory that Guru was 'Sankritising or 'savnising' the tradition, Scholars like Dr.T.Bhaskaran go to the other extreme of proposing that Guru was reestablishing the non-Aryan traditions. Dr. T. Bhaskaran ed. *Sree Narayana Guruvinte Sampoorana Kritikal*, 11.



heterogeneous modes of reflection and devotion. The Guru vision of God retrieved the principle of the love (*ambu*) and blessing grace (*arulor anugraham*) of the God upheld by the *Saiva Siddhantins* (and the *Visisthadvaitins*). The *nirgunaradhana* (the worship of God as formless) is conjoined with *Sagunaaradhana* (the worship of God with form). Siva, the Pasupati, for example is worshipped with and without form or with ‘formless form’ (*aruvay, uruvay, aruvuruvay*)<sup>105</sup>. The ‘personal’, and the ‘impersonal’, are paradoxically combined in the *Saivadvaitic* reflection of God, rediscovered by Guru. It is the tense unity of these two modes of reflection which complicates and heterogenises the Guru-mode of devotion. The *Vaishnavic* and the *Saktheyic* pantheon of gods are not abandoned but acknowledged and accepted as heterogeneous attributes and functional variations of the *Sivam*, the Supreme god-head. The Body, world and the worldly life of the beings are sanctified by the principle of the divine *leela* or dance of Siva supposed to have performed for the benediction of beings. The world is no more an illusion but a *vibhooti*, an ornament, an embellishment of the glory of the God, or the gift, the token of the blessing grace of the God.

##### **5. Oru Jati Oru Mathom Oru Daivam Manushyanu**

The oft-quoted aphorism of Guru, the ‘One caste, one faith, and one God for Man’ might be held as the key-phrase which leads us to the radical ideas of devotion and faith reinvented by Guru. Yet, it has been turned out to be a victim-phrase a ‘differend’, subjected to the violence of interpretation, substitution or translation characteristic to the regime of modernity. These paralogical phrases which derive from the radical spiritual heritage of the *Saivic* or the *Advaitic* traditions are mostly read in terms of the monistic, monotheistic and ‘Euro-humanistic’ doctrines of the ‘Subject’—whether it is human selves, a Father-God or a ‘pastoral’ community. The *Saivic* or the *Advaitic* implications of the guru-phrase are thus submerged in the popular and official readings monitored by the missionary hermeneutics which disallows heterogeneity in matters of faith, gods and cultures. The *Saivic* imagination of ‘oneness’ which envisages the complex principle of ‘unity-in-heterogeneity’ is paraphrased in to the concepts of

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<sup>105</sup> Sree Narayana Guru, *Tevarappathikangal*- Verse 3, *ibid.*, 557.

standardised homogenised unities and identities forged out by the capitalist laws of modern societies. The operation of translation thus meant the detention of the heterogeneity and singularity of men, communities, faiths and the phrases. The paralogical 'oneness' of the *Saivadvaitic* phrases is devoured by the deceptive or seductive slogan of 'oneness', programmed by the missionary epistemology effectuating the hegemonic accession of the 'One', extinguishing the 'many'. The 'one god', translated into the Hebraic protestant terms meant the reduction and termination or the absorption of the 'many' by the One Father God while read in terms of the *Saivc-advaitic* principles it suggested an Infinite Oneness of God. And the Oneness here never did cancel the 'many' but included the 'many', a oneness which could masquerade or multiply into 'many'; a 'many-ness' which could be viewed as the dancing 'excess' of the One. If the 'oneness' in the case of the missionary narrative of Infinite implicates a relation of opposition with the 'many', it signals a paralogic unity and reciprocity in the case of the *Saivadvaitic* narrative of the Absolute repossessed by Guru. The slogan of 'oneness' put forward by the humanistic modernistic agenda of the 'Man' masquerades the conceptual violence involved in the monotheism of the modernistic knowledge. It implicates the strategic operation of reducing the heterogeneity or multiplicity of faiths and gods into one God and the annihilation of the 'others' who resist this monopolistic project. Thus the phrases were appropriated by the 'missionary'/company modern discourses of the period. They were used as devices for legitimating the modernistic enterprise of homogenising and standardising subjects and selves at the cost of the difference, and divergence of phrases that enrich a cultural matrix. The ideologues of the 'caste'-'company' associations of reform utilised it as an effective slogan for solidifying and integrating the members of their community. It was used as a magical formula for exorcising out of their selves faiths and phrases the 'many' or the 'others' which could potentially disturb or disrupt the fabricated 'oneness of their 'self' or 'community'. Kumaran Asan who once lamented of the violence of interpretation inflicted on this key *mantra* of Guru, ironically prayed to God for salvage him from the regiment of interpreters'.<sup>106</sup> And C.V. Kunjiraman in his famous conversation with Guru complains him that even the Asan who thus

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<sup>106</sup> *Sree Narayana Guru Vaikhari*, 176.

raised his dissatisfaction with the readings of the Guru-phrases did not venture to give a sufficient and comprehensive interpretation to them.<sup>107</sup>

The paradoxical and the ambivalent flair of the guru-phrases once more capture our attention when the *oru*-phrase is contested and got re-explained during the historic conversation held between Narayana Guru and Mahatma Gandhi when Gandhi visited Sivagiri in 1925.<sup>108</sup> Sensing the monotheistic, modernistic or missionary overtones of the popular aphorism of the 'One caste, One religion and one god', Gandhi poses his doubt on the plausibility of the notion of a single faith and single god even though he admits the validity of the idea of one caste. "Is it plausible to reduce the differences of heterogeneous religions into one universal religion or the multiple god concepts developed by different peoples into a universal single God?" Gandhi asks Guru. Gandhi here seems to be hinting at the epistemological or conceptual violence involved in the process of the reduction or the forceful integration of multiple faiths, gods and goddesses of heterogeneous peoples into an overarching 'One'. 'Difference is the basic principle of nature and culture' he says. Gandhi demonstrates his argument by pointing out that the leaves of the same tree appear so different in form. Unity, homogeneity or equality in terms of faith and gods would mean an assault on the 'different', the 'heterogeneous' the 'others'. Gandhi detects the negative suggestion involved in the popular formula of 'oneness'. He seems to have anticipated the dangers implicit in such an assertion which signals the modernist strategy of standardisation and homogenisation. The slogan according to Gandhi, masquerades a regime of oneness which usually is deployed to chop off the differences and singularities of the multiple faiths. Guru, who was a don of *Vedanta* and *siddhanta* as well as a practitioner of *siddhavaidya* and *ashtangahridaya* retorts by asking Gandhi to crush the leaves of the tree and taste their juice. Though the leaves look different in their external appearance, their juice tastes the same. What he demonstrates there is that when we crush the 'form' of the objects or beings, and squeeze them into juice, then we would arrive at a taste of oneness despite the multiplicity of forms. The reflection here shifts from the sense of 'sight', the eye of knowledge, towards

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>108</sup> P.K.Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., 141-147; M. Viswambharan, *Narayana Guru* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S. 1982), 94-95.

the taste of the tongue, to the materiality of a 'feeling' (of oneness) or an aesthetic judgment. Guru thus analogically presents the essential unity and equality of heterogeneous people, their religions and gods by applying the logic characteristic to *saivic-advaitic* reflection of the 'Absolute', while Gandhi stresses the heterogeneity of communities, gods, and faiths which is usually being violated by the conceptual regimes of 'Oneness'.

What strikes us in the conversation is that the binary opposition between the 'one' and 'many,' 'unity' and 'difference' in laid in the Euro-Modernist epistemology and its social and civilizational formations, are contested through a dialogic engagement which possibly brings forth, as a whole, the idea of a 'paradoxical' unity, or a 'negative synthesis'. If Gandhi emphasises the need of recognising or guarding the heterogeneity and diversity of different, faiths and cultures, Guru highlights the importance of realising the inherent unity of cults and gods in terms of the idea of *Saivaadvaitam*. The unity as conceptualised by Guru is not something imposed from the outside. Nor is it exclusionist in nature that would violate the 'singularity' or the differences of the 'many' as usually is the case with certain schools of *advaitam* and the Euro-Modernist mode of knowledge and its socio-cultural relations or practices. On the other hand, the 'oneness' is demonstrated by him as the 'essence' or the juice squeezed out of the 'many'; unity is established not in the formal or external properties and appearances of objects and people but in their inner core, as always professed by the *advaitins* and *siddhantins*. Such a higher synthesis is arrived at and testified by the means of a reflexive process which proceeds towards the 'subtle' and the 'formless' and which would resemble the bio-chemical operation of squeezing or churning out (or the *yagic* process of producing the fire through the churning of the *arani* [wood used for producing fire by attrition during *yaga*]).

The arguments of both Guru and Gandhi do not negate each other in any manner whatsoever; in fact, they complement and supplement each other. Gandhi's doubts and questions deconstruct the slogan of 'Oneness' while Guru's reply deconstructs the Gandhian phrases which would seem to be privileging or essentializing differences. Both emphasize the phrases silenced in the arguments of the other. The discussion invariably brings out the divergence in terms of

priorities opted by the political struggle for national independence and struggles of religious or caste reform undertaken by the 'swami'-reformers in India.<sup>109</sup> However, we might acknowledge the significance of the incident in the sense that this was a dialogue which rarely and unusually took place between the politicians of national struggle and the reformers immersed in the socio-religious and caste-community reforms, in the annals of the national history of freedom. Never indeed we find any sort of follow-up to such dialogues later on, which seems to be revealing the historical schism which distanced the 'national 'political' movements from the socio-religious reform movements that emerged in India of the times.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps we might decipher a deeper schism on the level of spiritual

<sup>109</sup> If there appears a kind of complacency with the colonial forces in the modes and practices of caste reform as taken up by Narayana Guru and others we may subtly detect a tendency of overlooking the importance of the struggles of lower castes and the deeper level of reform in the spiritual and religious practices of Hinduism (hegemonised by the *varna-jati*-strictures of *brahminism*) on the part of the freedom-fighters including Gandhi. This is the story of the split of forces and priorities that had genetically disabled the nationalist and reformist movements of India. The *saivic* energies of caste-struggles and spiritual changes could not enter into a reciprocal association with the *vaishnavic* traits which seem to have been vibrant in the Gandhian mode of anti-colonial national struggles. It should be mentioned here that according to the present writer the Gandhian mode of struggle betrays the influences of *vaishnavic* practices— if we can theorise such subtle traces of faith—as exemplified in the strategies of struggles reinvented by Gandhi, like, *sathyagraha*, *upavaasa*, *vrata*, or the mode of *nissahakarana*- or non-cooperation against the Britishraj etc. See Margaret Chatterjee, *Gandhi's Religious Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1983); If the former seems to be mostly apolitical and negligent of the dangers of colonialism the latter is found to be incapable of effectively de-brahminising the traditional faith and radically re-vamping the forces of faith and myth operating within the matrix of religion we call Hinduism.; Natarajaguru also provides valuable insights to the issue while making a comparison with the ideals and practices of Gandhi and Guru. He also brings forth the Vaishnavite traits shown by Gandhi in his attitude to social change and reform. Nataraja Guru, op.cit., 40-42.

<sup>110</sup> Where would we find any sort of the rejoining of forces, faiths and heterogeneous phrases of people however limited in its spatial or temporal manifestations? I would answer it in affirmative, bringing out the specific instance of the cultural practice of the historical romance arose in the latter half of nineteenth century and the early half of the twentieth century in Tiruvitamcore. The historical romance reinvents and works out a heteromorphous formation of the people, called *rajyam* where the forces faiths and phrases are remobilized, re-allied and metamorphosed in radical reciprocation, where the *Saiva*, *Saaktheya* and *Vaishnava* desires commingle playfully in the cosmo-libidinal drama of history. The personality of Kunchaikutty Pilla, the *Veera* or *Rajya* subject aesthetically conjured up by C.V in *Ramaraja Bahadoor* exemplifies this alchemy of the reunion or realignment of forces that recurs in the historical romance of the *rajyam*. Kunchaikutty Pilla, the *Veera Siddha* appears as the reincarnation of *Sastha* or *Ayyappa* who is hailed as the offspring of the multiple forces in the here and now of the historico-political crisis of the *rajyam*. *Saivasakti* and *Vaishnavasakti* join together, and hybridise in the reciprocal *leela* of *saktheyam* out of which comes forth the *Sastha*-force powerful and potent enough to withstand and transgress the calamities of the *Kali* age. C.V thus invents a new incarnation of *Sastha* or *Ayyappa*, the *Veera*-deity of Malayalis hailed to have guarded Malayalam from external aggressions, in the meteoric presence of Kunchaikutty Pilla who personifies the hybridisation of sacred forces,

reflections between the *Vaishnavic* or *Saivic* manners of devotion as one of the sources of this splitting of forces and phrases between the National movement and the reform movement in India.

Curiously, once again is Guru forced to explain the *oru*-phrase when C.V. Kunjiraman, a disciple of Guru, later on expresses his (and his colleagues) dissatisfaction regarding the ambiguity of the phrase and pleads him to clarify his point unequivocally.<sup>111</sup> This is another significant dialogue which reveals the deeper and sublime ideas pertaining to *saivaadvaitam*, detained in the popular readings of the *oru*-aphorism. The richer and radical nuances of the phrase are scissored off when it is translated in to the colonial modern sensibility of the period. The *Saivic* intensities charged in the phrase is immunised or neutralised by the generic operation of ‘representation’ or ‘translation’. Guru clarifies here that the term *jati* as used by him denotes human species as a whole. If *jati* is used to indicate the name of a specific species, then it would invariably include the whole of the human race and therefore there is only one *jati* for mankind. The term *matham* (religion) never implies any organised religion; it means the modes of spiritual pursuits one generally takes up for the sake of ultimate salvation. Guru reveals his radical ideas on religion when he says that the function of religion is just to assist people to ascend in the progressive upward direction (*oordhvagamanam*) of the spiritual pursuits, and guide them to know the ‘subtle’ (*sookshmam*)<sup>112</sup>. He also affirms that there is no need of religion for one who knows the ‘subtle’ or the ‘Infinite’. Religion is not an authority for such *jnanis*. On the contrary, it is on behalf of such *jnanis* that religion derives its authority. It was not after learning Buddhism that Buddha taught the means for *nirvana*. On the contrary, Buddha instructed *nirvana-maraga* (the means for *nirvanam*) only after discovering it by incessant search and Buddhism as a religion arose only after these deeper processes of reflection. Thus goes the arguments put-forward by Guru. He brings forth the *Saivadvaitic* thrust of his aphorism by stressing ones again that it negates all sorts of binary opposition between the ‘one’ and ‘many’—*ekathva* and

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in the here and now of the political crisis of *rajyam*.

<sup>111</sup> P.K.Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., 149-158.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 152-153.

*nanathva*. He explains it in terms of the *Advaitic* or *Saivasiddhantic* practice of viewing oneness in many and many-ness in the one. Thus the interpretation and clarification provided by Guru himself on the phrase prove that the aphorism of ‘Oneness’ refer neither to the monistic, or monotheistic oneness of the missionaries nor to the ‘Oneness’ which privileges the instance of the Being at the cost of the ‘Other’ and the ‘others’ as in the case of the *Brahmanical* or scholastic brand of *advaitam*. Instead it seems to implicate the differential or heterogenic oneness accruing to the *saivasiddhantic* or *Saivadvaitic* reflections of the ‘absolute’.

However, the message conveyed by the aphorism among the people in general was altogether different. The modernist writers, the new middle class and the common people read between the ambivalences of the phrase, the ‘monotheistic’ ‘monistic’ and ‘humanistic’ programmes of reducing the ‘many’ into ‘oneness’ as taught by the Euro-missionary discourses. The company reformers strategically deciphered the phrase, as signalling the formation of a singular community, a homogeneous faith and a monotheistic God, at the cost of the ‘multiple’ and ‘heterogeneous’ communities, faiths and gods. The modernist subjects saw in it the ‘call’ of the corporate unity of caste or community. They found in it a legitimisation for the modernist process of the reduction of differential realities and heterogeneous phrases of ‘truth’ in to ‘One’, leading to the monopoly of a single phrase or a single genre or a singular plane of community-relation over the others. Their readings reiterate the monotheistic resonances of the Protestant-Hebraic traditions of faith which reject the ‘pantheistic’ and ‘polytheistic’ native cults as pagan and uncivilised. It has to be noted in this context that the ‘*oru*’-phrase had traditionally been recognised as a problematic or contestatory phrase even among the *jnanis* or the *siddhas* of the Dravidian south. As it is found to be a phrase heavily loaded with the principle of monism and monotheism it is held as insufficient to convey the paralogic principles of ‘many in one’ or the ‘one in many’ implicated by radical streams of *vedantam* or *siddhantam*. It was against this super-arching ‘One’ professed by the certain modes of *Advaitic* orders that the *Visishtadvaitins*, the *Saiva-siddhantins*, or *Saiva-advaitins* and others rose in revolt leading to a transmutation of devotion and reflection of the ‘absolute’ in the medieval Tamilakom, and Keralam.

The misappropriation of the Guru-phrases by the discursive genres of the period, by the modernist regime of reading, provides a crucial wisdom for the researchers of cultural history. Phrases, whether it is uttered by a great soul like Narayana Guru, or not, face the danger of being emptied of their matrix of Idea especially when they are translated or substituted in to genres which are incommensurable to them. As it is the laws of the market which operate through the genre of slogan the reduction of the *mantric* or the paralogical phrases into slogans would invariably produce negative results. The Guru-phrase has thus paradoxically been turned just into a parody of the *Saivic* or the *Advaitic* ideas of the sublime unity of beings and faiths, when it was used as an ideological device for the solidification of caste-communities. The 'others' within and without, are expelled and the 'many' is warded off from the ambit of its enforced 'Oneness.'<sup>113</sup>

Amusingly, even after witnessing to these explanations of Guru illuminating the ideas inlaid in the aphorism, we find a modernist intellectual like C.V. Kunjiraman deviating from the sublime ideas of reflection and devotion put forward by Guru and turning out an ardent advocate of the doctrine of conversion. Allured by the magical prospectus of conversion he is found later on shifting his allegiance from one religion to other, vacillating between Buddhism and Christianity. Except for a few of the disciples like Kumaran Asan, Nataraja Guru and some of his intimate *Sanyasi* (ascetic) disciples like Satyavrata, Bodhananda and others, the majority of his disciples failed to understand the words of Guru in their depth and real significance. Perhaps an explanation for this would be that if the former reached Guru through aesthetic and spiritual quests the latter's relation to him was mainly mediated through the prism of the discursive principles of modernity, through the company laws, the print-language of media, the genres of articles, speeches or journalistic reports, the cognitive or descriptive genres, logical statements or debates, and the genres of the (cultural) market like slogans and propaganda. The sublime idea of oneness pregnant in the mantric phrase, '*Oru jati,*

<sup>113</sup> The exclusivistic tendency operating within the newly convened unity of the *Ezhava* community is manifest in the way it denied entry for the lower castes lying below the *Ezhavas* in the caste-status in to the schools, temples and other institutions founded by S.N.D.P. The lamentation of the Guru and his associates over their failure to achieve the higher ideals of unities above caste and community is drowned in the noise produced by the media and the propoganda net-work generated by the Guru-institutions. See M. Viswambharan, *Narayana Guru* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S, 1982), 66-69.



*Oru Mathom Oru Daivam Manushyanu*’ in short, defied the generic laws of discourses, or the regime of representation. It belonged to the matrix of Idea which therefore could only be re-invoked through the negative presentational modes of the aesthetic or ‘paralogical’ phrases. It was through the radical mode of cultural action of churning out the heterogeneous traditions of knowledge and faith, and through the catastrophic engagement with the aesthetic or reflective judgment of the ‘Absolute’ that Guru arrived at this *mantra* of oneness. It is impossible therefore to bear witness to these phrase-events without taking recourse to a radical engagement with the negative genres, indirect or negative manners of presentation, carried out by Guru in his devotional or philosophical poems and some of his reflexive tracts in prose. The rigorous coaching in the cognitive or descriptive genres, had already castrated the modernist subjects or intellectuals of their receptivity to the aesthetic or reflexive judgment of the Idea of the ‘absolute’ occurring in Guru’s phrases. This would explain why the modernist scholarship focussed their whole attention on the discursive and ‘social practices’ of Guru and the organisational activities of the S.N.D.P. Yogam. And their inherent insensitivity towards the matrix of Idea and their fear to confront the reflective judgment spelt out by Guru, prompted them to abandon the core sector of the Guru-phrases, the radical realm of the critical reflections, the cultural or aesthetic actions opened up by Guru. This zone of ‘silence’ or the ‘unknowable’ are either detained by the above mentioned scholars by trivialising and affiliating them to the redundant practices of the feudal or archaic past or skipped of conveniently as a whole.<sup>114</sup> However, it is these ‘irregular’ and indeterminate realms of ‘the aesthetic’ or the ‘reflexive’ deserted by the modernist scholarship, where I would locate the radical thrust of the Guru-manner of reform, its lasting contribution to the cultural progress of the Malayali people.

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<sup>114</sup> K.N.Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalekal* (Thiruvananthapuram: Department of Cultural Publications, 1990), 380-381. Author traces out the spiritualism followed by the Gurus as the main reason behind the limitations of the movement spearheaded by them. “Unlike that of Kant and Hegel, their spiritualism was not objective. Therefore they were incapable of founding a movement which could totally contain the objective realities. Their spiritualism was based on tradition. It was the practices of tradition which had been adopted by them in order to question the malpractices of society. Therefore the movement launched for eliminating the inequalities related to caste and religion could not destroy the traditional faiths”, 381.

## CHAPTER – VI

### RETHINKING REFORM

This chapter seeks to bring out an evaluation of the contestatory narratives of reform discussed in the previous chapters. The radical distinction of the historical romance of C.V. from the mainstream discourses of reform is brought forth. The chapter is divided into two parts; the first one is titled as the 'Reflections on historical romance' and the second part as 'An Evaluation of the narratives of reform'.

#### Part- 1: Reflections on Historical Romance

##### 1. *The 'Aesthetic Turn' in Malayali Reform*

The historical novels of C.V. might be considered as an exemplary instance of an 'aesthetic reflection' or a 'reflective judgment' of the 'sublime' in Kantian terms<sup>1</sup>. What differentiates the historical romance from the discourses of the 'socio-spiritual' reform and the 'liberal discourses of modernism', on the one hand, and the literature of 'taste' or the aesthetics of 'beauty' exemplified in the social novels of Chanthu Menon on the other, is its reinvention of an aesthetic of the 'sublime'. The contention here is that by pursuing and presenting this feeling of 'differend' or this 'differend' of feeling<sup>2</sup>, the historical novels of C.V. signal the possibility of the occurrence of the 'sublime' in the historico-political 'now' of the native people. It invents the historical romance of the *rajyam* as a 'sign of history' or progress. This idea of 'sublime' appear in the displaced form of a purely spiritual concept or 'knowledge' in the works of Sree Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru. There occurs the catastrophic glimmering of the 'sublime' in the margins of the logical speculations of the former and the passionate spiritual poems and prose-tracts of the latter. However, the main problem with the Guru mode of reflections on the 'absolute' is that they are on the whole confined and constricted to the spiritual or ascetic phrases and they have never been relinked to

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Francois Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 15, 19, 43, 50, 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 137, 141, 179, 226.

the core of the historico-political existence of the people. The ‘inverted asceticism’ of the missionary discourses on the other hand substituted the contemplation of the ‘absolute’ into a project of reproducing the verdicts on progress which are already prejudged and pre-determined by the ‘laws of Father’ or the textual tribunal of a ‘providential’ project of history. By historicising and discursivising the idea of progress or ‘absolute’, they emptied it of its ‘nowness’, its ‘eventhood’. The missionary mode of knowledge enforced a regulation on thought, policed the desire, and unleashed a programme of ‘normalising’ the selves. The heterogenous modes of reflection practiced by people were almost tabooed. The reflective judgment on the part of the ‘civilised’ or schooled subjects was found as blasphemy, a ‘civilizational sin’, or an epistemological offence. The missionary narratives thus heralded the hegemony of cognitive genres or the discourses of ‘logical speculation’ over the heterogenous streams of thought.

The radical thrust of the historical romance, as the thesis argues it, lies in the ‘aesthetic’ struggle launched by it against the missionary regime of knowledge. It resists the assaults on thought, knowledge and judgment embarked by the missionary modern discourse, by de-forming and disrupting the missionary prose, the print sensibility of the ‘imagined community’ emergent in the period. It is its dissensus with the discursive laws of the print-Malayalam—the modern Malayalam prose as reconstituted by the missionaries—that have made the historical novels of C.V. as ‘distasteful’ and ‘disconcerting’ to the modernist writers and critics of Keralam in general. They disturb and disrupt the unisonance established by the homogenous, linear, ‘empty’ time of ‘modern nation’. The idea of the ‘absolute’ is retrieved from the temporal schemata. The serialised time is broken. The whole assurances, certainties and unities, forged out by the knowledge-regime of the missionary modernity, are subsequently sabotaged.

The crucial importance of the historical romance derives from the fact that it is the genre of thought which installs the idea of ‘sublime’ in the nerve-centre of the ‘historico-political’ domain of the native people. More importantly, the objects which generate this feeling of the sublime in the case of historical romance do not basically pertain to ‘nature’<sup>3</sup> but human thought, the ‘mind’ in Kantian terms or the

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<sup>3</sup> Jean Francois Lyotard elaborates this crucial process of ‘denaturing’ or deforming that takes

reflexive matrix of the historico-political practices and movements of the native people themselves. The historical romance of C.V. in short brings us into an 'invisible' terrain of 'knowledge', which exceeds the determinate criteria and laws of the 'representative' regime of modernity.

Significantly, it is the idea of a *dharmarajyam* and certain political events centred around the struggle to safeguard the honour and sovereignty of the *rajya-polity* during the period of Marthanda Varma and Dharmaraja which evoke the 'sublime'. A noticeable factor in C.V.'s novels is that they are more or less silent on the 'normal', 'regular' or the ordinary state of affairs, the periods of peace, order and settlement. Their whole focus is on the turbulent junctures of crisis and conflicts undergone by the *rajya*-people. The sublime sentiments are invoked in contexts of the heroic resistance of the people against the invasion of an external power as in the case that of Tippu. The struggles against the adversities posed by the internal challenges of *coups*, intrigues and bloody insurrections—as attempted by the Thampis, the Pillais, and the purely fictitious characters like Perinchakodan, Haripanchananan and others<sup>4</sup> — and the 'iron laws' of the 'historical', the 'real,' the 'nature', or the fate also invoke this 'paradoxical feeling.' In other words, the instances of people's struggle against the regime of the 'real' or the historical conditions of the period for upholding the 'honour' of human reason and freedom produce this 'soul-stirring' feeling' in the minds of the actors and spectators of the historical drama of *rajyam*. As Lyotard reminds us in his re-exploration of Kant's 'analytic' of the sublime, the idea of 'resistance' forms one of the four key-instances, which marks the heterogeneity of the sublime feeling<sup>5</sup>. The term 'resistance' is therefore shown to be inseparably allied to the state of 'Sublime' in both the senses of the resistance shown by mental powers or faculties against 'sensible' interests within, and the resistance shown by the people against the forces or powers which batter their sense of freedom:

The critical concept of 'resistance' characterizes precisely the relation of the sublime feeling to the 'interest of the sense'...

In summary, the beautiful pleases in the absence of any sensible

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place in the aesthetic judgment of the 'sublime'. Ibid., 53.

<sup>4</sup> The characters of the historical novels of C.V who appear as antagonists.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 147.

interest. As for the sublime, it also “pleases immediately” but it pleases “by its opposition (resistance) to “the interest of the senses”... We find this trait of resistance (the *wider*) “against”(the *gegen*) marked once again a few lines later: the beautiful “prepares us to love (*lieben*) something, even nature, apart from any interest,” the sublime “to esteem something highly (*hochzuschätzen*) even in opposition to our (sensible) interest. ... The sublime is not unaware of the sensible interest; it opposes it. This intrinsic opposition is expressed in the affectual (I ask the reader to permit me the use of this word) differend that constitutes the sublime feeling: fear and exaltation. A differend, which in turn, is the subjective state of thought at the mercy of the differend of its powers to present and to conceive.<sup>6</sup>

The term ‘resistance’ in short implicates the tense and heterogenous engagement, that takes place between the mental faculties— the thinking’s confrontation with all sorts of ‘interests’, ‘affectations’ and temptations posed by desire, as well as the conditions of ‘real’—at the eruption of the ‘sublime’ feeling as a ‘differend’. And as a trait of social, political or individual action, ‘resistance’ is shown as the key-factor which differentiates the actions which induce a sublime feeling from the usual practices pertaining to exclusively moral obligations, devotional or spiritual practices or military operations.

All that can be conceded to sublime feeling in consideration of morality is resistance, the resistance of virtue to passions, to ‘fear’ ‘superstition’, the ‘frailty of human nature’ and its ‘short comings’. The courage of a soldier, or of a people at war, the submission of one who believes to God can be experienced by thought as something as sublime, on condition that the maxim orientating the will of the soldier, of the people, of the one who believes, be virtuous. But even then it is not morality itself that is felt to be sublime, it is its resistance to temptations, its triumph over them, reducing them to naught. The sublime and aesthetic effect results from the disproportion of pure will to empirical desire. However, virtue consists in the simple ‘presence’ of the former in the latter according to their “natural” accord, without resistance, and this is why virtue evokes beauty.<sup>7</sup>

Notably, it is the inherent trait of resistance as shown by the players of the historical romance, like Keshavadas, Anantha Padmanabhan, Subhadra,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>7</sup> Lyotard 1995: 238

Kunchaikkutty Pilla, Trivikraman, Savithri and others, which demarcates the *veera* people of the *rajyam* from the subjects of the nation-state in its modernist sense on the one hand, and the people who cling on to spiritual traditions namely *bhaktas*, *siddhas* or ascetics on the other. The modern subjects have been rigorously coached to abstain from the crucial question of reflective judgment, to detain the contemplation of the 'absolute' under the generic policing of the regime of cognitive or speculative logic and to neutralize it by containing it into the scheme of the serial progression of time. The *Bhaktas* or *Siddhas*, or *Sanyasins* and the associated ones on the otherhand represent a spiritual or devotional community which in contrast excludes the political libidinal and aesthetic phrases from the contemplation of the 'absolute'. The *veera* however, emerges in the historical romance as an alternate subject who never desists from resisting all sorts of interests, inclinations and desires that come in the way of the 'politico-spiritual' call of the sublime. He is the political warrior of an Idea, the witness and locus of a feeling of 'differend' marked by the paradoxical eruption of 'fear and exaltation'. The *veera* is incessantly in pursuit of inventing the political or aesthetic judgment and is marked by his 'passability' to the conflictual agitation and accord taking place between the powers of thought to 'conceive' and 'present' at the eruption of the sublime feeling. The *veera*, the romancer of Idea, is gifted with immense potency and valour to withstand the agitative engagement of heterogenous realms fields and phrases. S/he emerges in the historical romance as a *bhakta* and warrior at the same time or a *veerabhakta* in the devotional diction. S/he is a politician as well as a spiritualist, an activist as well as a thinker. S/he exceeds the laws of subjectivity enforced by the colonial modern conditions of the period. S/he is the resisting dissenting phrase, a radical subjectivity capable of confronting, or celebrating the 'true split'<sup>8</sup> of thought occurring at the out-burst of the 'sublime'

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<sup>8</sup> Lyotard explains the heterogenous accord that happens in the sublime feeling among the faculties of thought in following statements:

"Here the resistance, which marks the sublime feeling, bears testimony to what the dynamical synthesis is, of which the sublime feeling is the result. This synthesis involves the incommensurability of one power of thought with another. If, however, we accept along with Kant that their dissonance and not its resolution attests to a finality, a supreme consonance of thought with itself, then we have to conclude that it is essential for thought to feel reflexively its heterogeneity when it brings itself to its own limits (something it cannot avoid doing)...In the sublime feeling we can feel the nullity of this pleasure in the eye of this exaltation. When this happens thought feels itself in the truth of its split. This split suspends it above or apart

which at the same time marks a higher accord achieved between the various faculties of thought.

If the *rajyam* or its historical actors like Raja Kesavadas, Marthanda Varma, Dharmaraja and others, appear merely as cognitive phenomena, or empirical objects or 'real' beings in the historical discourses, they (the 'names') reemerge in the historical romance as 'affect phrases' or 'differends' repressed in the disputes of power by the knowledge-tribunal of colonial modernity. If the missionary modern discourses castigated them as objects of scorn and symptoms of a 'savage' 'barbarian' 'regressive' 'feudal' civilization, the court-historians like Sangoonny Menon litigated the dispute by promoting them as 'civilized' and 'progressive' following the same criteria used by the former. Both of these oppositional discourses had done wrong to these veera-phrases of the *rajyam* in the sense that they not only kept deaf to their silence but also mutilated their silence by voicing them within the rules of the hegemonic phrases. Both of them in short, deprived these 'affect-phrases' of their right to make linkages in their own terms and thus violated their 'singularity'. Both had substituted or translated these untranslatable phrases into the 'universal' idiom of the modernist or missionary rhetoric of history. Both of them are therefore found guilty of reducing the radical heterogeneity of the *rajya*-phrases into the monologic monotheistic laws of 'modern histories'.

## 2. Critiquing 'History'

The 31<sup>st</sup> chapter of the *Ramaraja Bahadoor* begins with a philosophical reflection on war and unmasks history as a biased genre which always legitimises and euologises the views of the victors.<sup>9</sup> The reflections made on the divergent

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from two ways of understanding this split, both of what are denegation: ordinary empiricism that draws from the split a lesson of wisdom in deception, and speculative idealism that uses the split as a pretext to authorize a delirium in the absolute. Thus the sublime feeling, as has already been suggested, is the subjective state critical thought must feel in its being carried to its limits (therefore belong them) and its resistance to this impetus, or conversely, what it must feel in its passion to determine and in its resistance to this passion. One might consider this a philosophical neurosis. Rather it is a faithfulness par excellence to the philosophical feeling, "brooding melancholy", as Kant suggested in his *Observations on the Feeling of Beautiful and the Sublime*. The absolute is never there, never given in a presentation, but it is always 'present' as a call to think beyond the "there". Ungraspable, but unforgettable. Never restored, never abandoned." Ibid., 149-150.

<sup>9</sup> C.V. Raman Pilla, *Ramaraja Bahadoor* (Kottayam, D.C.Books 2001), 367-368.

theories of war and the genres of narrating war suddenly turn out to be a critical judgment on the genre of history. The narrator detects the prejudices shown by the modern histories especially in their judgment on the native actors of *rajyam* like Veluthampi, Raja Kesavadas and others who represent the ‘defeated’ in history. This novelistic/philosophical introspection on war and history might appear to be just a generic convention for introducing the events of war associated with Tippu’s invasion. However, on a deeper reading it would be revealed as providing insight into the crucial act of the ‘reflective judgment’ that takes place in the historical romance of the *rajyam* and the political alignment it makes with the ‘defeated’.

War is euologised by the prominent historians as the true substance of the history of world. To them the peace is merely a reverie of the wise or the matured ones. On subtle reflection, it appears that the structure of each *dehadehi* (body and soul) is the mixture of contradictions... The enlightened eyes could detect traces of conflict even in the relations between the *raja* and *praja* ... One specific impact of this ‘acculturation’ of war—which is both an object of attraction and repulsion—is that it stands like a monument of the fear of common people. The victors are embraced by the world with pride. The defeated are condemned as the abodes of all evils and even their names are mutilated. Among the embattled pairs like *Vamanamahabalis*, *Parasuramas* and *kshatriya-kings*, and *RamaRavanas*, the victors are euologised by the contemporaries and deified by the posterity. Napoleon after his defeat was turned out to be just an object of sympathy; the predecessor of Washington, who had fought The British and deprived them of an empire, now-a-days enjoy the status of the *Manu* of world peace. A ministerial Lion who could not be held as guilty when compared to the immensity of the revolt to power shown by today’s Indian Patriots was subjected even after his suicide to the worst sorts of humiliation. The forms of the defeated depicted in the historical picture of the victors thus become tinged with deformity...<sup>10</sup>

The discursive violence launched by the historical discourses on the ‘defeated’ is brought forth by citing the brutal manner by which the names of the native leaders are brutally denigrated after their death. The narrator indirectly mentions the case of Veluthampi Dalawa the leader of a defeated revolt against the British carried out by the people of Tiruvitamcore as an example for this.

This would coincide with another instance of the critique of the contemporary history made by the narrator on the occasion of adoring the

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<sup>10</sup> *Ramaraja bahdoor* 367-368.



greatness of Kunchaikutty Pilla as a *veerayogi* who offered his life-blood in the struggle to safeguard the honour of the *rajyam*:

The grand eulogies of these great souls are sometimes forgotten by the indebted world infected by the vices like fear, envy and blindness. On the otherhand, the trivial actors are promoted to the status of god by installations of monuments. Historians, the *loka vaithalikas*, depict such figures in their textual canvass according to their prejudices.<sup>11</sup>

The historians are found to be reluctant and ungrateful to acknowledge the greatness of the people who sacrificed their life for a higher idea. The generic limitations of history prevent them from esteeming the sublime act of *bali* as done by the *veera*-politicians of the *rajyam* like Kunchaikutty Pilla. At the same time they unashamedly aggrandize the trivial figures into the status of the 'God almighty'.

### **3. *Veera Gatha, as the Folk- History of the 'Defeated'***

What the narrator indirectly states in these two instances and others of critiquing history is that the historical romance is a radical genre which relieves itself off the prejudices of history, and takes its position in favour of the 'victims', the 'defeated' in history. The historical romance at the same time should not be seen as a genre that simply reverses the equations whereby the same mode of representation is reinforced. On the contrary it is a 'negative genre', which reopens the case of the 'defeated' as a 'differend' by its aesthetic of the 'sublime'. The defeat of the *veeras* is not seen as indicative of their weakness or lack, but their glorious excess and potency, the inevitable cost paid for a politics of Idea. A higher mode of tribunal is summoned which could even try and judge the victors as guilty and mean. Herein lies the radical thrust of the politics of presentation embarked on by the historical romance. What it does is not a mere replication or a substitution of the case into the hegemonic modes of representation (thus reducing it to a 'litigation' in Lyotardian sense), rather, a devotional invocation of the sublime events submerged in the mainstream histories--a 'negative worship' of the Idea which propels the *veera*-epoch and the *rajya*-people. Significantly, C.V. himself reveals that the historical romance is intended to be a *pooja* (worship) of the *veera*

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<sup>11</sup> *Ramaraja Bahadoor*, 250.

politicians like Raja Kesava Das.

See, this is the *pooja* I am offering to that great leader, (Raja Keshavadas) who had rescued our *rajyam* from the demon of Mysore. Perhaps, you youngmen would write better than this. Yet I am proud of the fact that this genre is invented by my self. If you produce those sorts of grand and superb works, it would soothe me in my graveyard.<sup>12</sup>

#### **4. The 'Negative' Worship**

However, the term *pooja* as used by C.V, the historical romancer, par excellence, might be seen as 'analogic' in its sense. It does not indicate any simplistic or programmed act of devotion but a radical mode of worship which might be called a parodic or 'negative' worship, directed towards the Idea of the 'absolute'. It implicates a practice of acknowledging ones debt to the 'subjective feeling' that is the 'sublime' which occurs in ones thought, as a 'donation of divine grace'. Moreover, it implies the cultural action of the reception, as well as the anticipation of this blessing grace of the 'Inifinite'. The phrase *pooja* in short indicates the deviance taken by the historical romance 'with regard to its 'manner of presentation' from the hegemonic practices of representation. This deviance is inevitably necessitated by the presentational dilemma .created by the reflective judgment of the 'sublime'. The object of presentation here is not an object of cognition but that of an Idea, which demands absolute 'passability' from the recipients for the catastrophic occurrence of its grace, its 'gift' of the sublime feeling. The 'veera' who is worshipped here marks an 'affect' phrase or a 'differend' and as such it does not have a direct presentation. As Lyotard suggests, one could only link another phrase to it, which amounts to an act of invention in the 'here' and 'now'. The term worship in the case of the 'negative devotion' of the historical romance just implicates the intensity of the 'passability' or the dynamic receptivity shown by veera, an aspirant of the Idea of the absolute, towards the occurrence of the 'sublime' feeling which he holds as the blessing grace of the 'Inifinite'.

#### **5. The *Rajyam* as the 'Sign' of the Sublime**

<sup>12</sup> K.R Parameswaran Pilla, "C.V Raman Pilla Avarkalude Novelezhutthu" in *Atmaposhini* (Kunnamkulam: *Atmaposhini*, Book II, No: 9, 10, Dhanu-Makarom, 1096 (1921), 87.

The *rajyam* therefore emerges in the historical romance as a non-object of an Idea of absolute reason, or a sign of the 'absolute'. The reflections of it evoke sublime feeling. The reflection here assumes the form of devotion and devotion turns reflective. The *rajyam* and its politics of worship do not subscribe to any determinate concept, or project and their eruption unsettles all of the assurances and certainties provided by the diachronic schemes of history and the formal regimes of faith. They erupt like a 'question' or a 'question mark'. This as Lyotard had paralogically phrased, is always the case with the seismic eruption of the 'sublime feeling'.<sup>13</sup>

The paradoxical 'now' of the historical romance belongs to a 'differential' temporality, the time of the 'differend' which erupts out of the dynamic synthesis of heterogeneous times and phrases. Two epochs or times mainly that of the *rajyam* of the past and that of the lived present of the historical romancer enter into a reciprocal engagement bringing out an agitative union (by their incessant struggle against the laws of the colonial reality). The names which recall the actual empirical or historical objects/subjects, events, institutions or conventions have only analogical significance. The subject here is the differential feeling, the thought of the sublime itself and the actions and actors are constituted as 'signs' by the catastrophic movement of this reflection. The reflections evoked by these signs do not lead us to the objects of nature, the historical empirical individuals or events but towards the 'mind'. The history involved in the historical romance therefore leads us away from the 'natural' history of objects, subjects or events, towards a history of 'mind' which subverts the laws of history.

The mind of the historical romancer therefore reinvents *rajyam* as an affect-phrase an affect-feeling incessantly expelled or displaced in the discourses of modernity, the contemporary regimes of power and structures and apparatuses of dominance. The conflict between the colonial conditions of the times and the dissident phrases/selves of the historical romancers is inscribed in terms of a different type of conflict which rose between *rajya*-people of the epochs of Marthanda Varma and Dharma Raja and the powers and forces which threatened them. The disputes of the past is resurrected in alignment with the disputes and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 90.

conflicts of the present. Both instances interact and invents each other or 'each' in the 'other'. It is through the intense inter-play of these two times that the *rajyam* is summoned to quasi-historical or quasi-spiritual existence.

The two epochs or instances of conflicts see each other and work together in order to bring into open a differential time a 'differend' of feeling detained in the historico-political conditions and the discursive laws of a colonial modern Order. The aesthetic politics of the *rajyam* therefore emerges as a site of political judgment a point of resistance against the Order of the time.

Different manner of cultural practices, of the earlier and present times, are re-explored and dynamically assembled or synthesised. The practices of *bali* (self-sacrifice), *yuddham* (war), *aradhana* (worship), *leela*, (play) *utsavam* (festival) and *nirvanam* (salvation) are reinvented as radical modes of cultural political actions. They not only suggest the core practices of the *rajya*-people of the previous epoch but also implicate the cultural logistics of the present struggle for *rajyam*. The presentation itself, for instance, assumes the act of worship (*aradhana*) which is evoked by a sense of debt, called forth by the 'donation' of this sublime feeling. The worship as presentation here comprises of the heterogenous ethnic actions of 'loss', like *bali* (self-sacrifice) *yuddham* (war) *leela*, (play) *utsavam* (festival) and *nirvanam* (salvation). These are the actions which have rid themselves of all of their essentialistic and ritualistic associations—disinterested and unprogrammed actions.

It is, in short, the reciprocal pairing of these two times, two epochs which catastrophically brings forth the tumultuous feeling ie the sublime. The historical romance reflectively judges that "it happens," in the 'here and now', a nowness which cannot be reduced to the past, present, and future of a serial time-scheme. The *rajyam*, the sign of sublime is born out of the synthesis of these two epochs; it occurs in the interstices of them, in-between them. It pulsates in the locus of heterogenous phrases and genres triggered off by the assemblage of these two epochs.

The 'eventhood', the 'occurrence' of the *rajyam* is 'felt' or 'sensed' before it is captured in any possible signification, or 're-membered' or 're-instituted' in historical representations.<sup>14</sup> The eruption of this 'paradoxical', 'mystic' feeling of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 87.

the *rajyam* could therefore never find its proper presentation in the historical and literary discourses of the period which abandoned the forbidden zones and genres of thought. However, it demanded from the recipients, the invention of radical 'manners' of linking phrases, bold and catastrophic gestures of presentation (as exemplified in the indeterminate or negative acts of worship namely *leela*, *utsavam*, *yuddham* and *bali* conducted by the *veera* selves of the historical novels of C.V). It is this presentational crisis which called forth the invention of historical romance as an indeterminate or 'negative' genre which could present this crisis. The modernist regime of reading had desperately attempted to subject this 'political aesthetics of the sublime' to the scrutiny of the cognitive mode of judgment, the truth-claims of the Hegalian logic of speculation, or the set conventions of a community of 'taste' bred on an 'aesthetics of beauty'. These texts which were found to be deviant and disconcerting raised panic among the readers and scholars subscribing to the modernistic regimes of knowledge and 'taste'. The alarming signals of the historical nightmare of a decadent polity, a 'feudal aristocracy' or a 'nair dominance' were deciphered from the historical novels of C.V.<sup>15</sup> The chaotic agitation and accords of heterogeneous phrases genres and dialects, and the paralogic assemblages of diverse, fields, realms and faculties brought forth by the historical romance demanded a radical manner of reading, as 'devotion', 'reception', reciprocation and re-invention. The historical novels challenged the reading habits of the new subjects for whom reading was a passive mode of consumption or a procedure of knowledge which meant the decoding of the meaning, of the text or grasping the text through an accord between the faculties of imagination and reason. The reading in the case of the newly constituted 'educated public' is found to be pre-determined. It turns out to be the reproduction and assimilation of pre-judged pre-read concepts or contents as demanded by the colonial modern regimes of knowledge and the sensibility manufactured by it. Reading in the case of the historical romance, on the other

<sup>15</sup> K. Ramakrishna Pilla, 'Dharma raja', *Atmaposhini*, Pusthakom-4, vol.2 (Kunnamkulam: Atmaposhini, 1913); M.P.Paul 'Novel-Sahithyam', (Kottayam: S.P.C.S., 1953); Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline Of Nayar Dominance Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908* (London: Sussex University Press, 1976), 157-8, 162-3, 265-8, 175; P.K.Balakrishnan, *O, Chanthu Menon Oru Padhanom* (Kottayam: S.P.C.S., 1980), 83; E.M.S.Nambutirippadu, *Rajabhakthanum Kalakaranum* (Tiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 1993), 7-9.

hand, implicates an adventure, a romance with the matrix of Idea resurrected by the text, a heart-to-heart engagement with the heterogeneous phrases, forces, genres and times clashing and coalescing in the text—a life and death struggle to greet the tumult of the occurrence of the ‘absolute’ triggered off by the text.

### 6. Reform as ‘De-formation’

The ‘negative’ aesthetics of the historical romance disrupted the prominent forms, conventions, styles and tastes hegemonic in the period and sabotaged the air of ‘regularity’, the ‘certainty’ and the ‘consensus’ characteristic to the modernistic modes of narration. The critics and writers, who clung to the laws and regulations of the hegemonic modes of discourses or the regimes of representation, always maintained a safe-distance, guarding themselves, from the ‘terror’ of this ‘self’-disruptive surge of feeling. They branded it a sign of regression or degradation and an aberration in the progressive march of humanity.<sup>16</sup> It was found anachronistic and anomalous. The radical shift made by this ‘negative’ aesthetics of sublime was trivialized by the predominant institutions of communication and ‘taste’. The admirers of C.V., mostly enthralled by his marvellous works, on the other hand, could only produce eulogies of them. Incapable of confronting the political aesthetics of the ‘sublime’, ignited by these works, most of them consoled themselves by making aesthetic excursions on their textual and rhetorical flourish. They fled back from the force-field of the work and mostly undertook the safer projects of identifying and elaborating the textual recurrence of the chief *rasas* of classical aesthetics one by one in them.<sup>17</sup> The works which challenged and disrupted the aesthetic dictum of classicism are unfairly read in terms of the classical norms. They could however invite the attention of serious and devout readers on the marvel of the historical novels of C.V. The studies produced by the critics such as N.Krishna Pilla, K.Bhaskaran Nair, K.Raghavan Pilla, N.Krishnan,

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<sup>16</sup> K. Ramakrishna Pilla, op.cit.; P.K.Balakrishnan, *O,Chanthu Menon Oru Padhanom*(Kottayam: S.P.C.S., 1980), 83; E.M.S.Nambutirippadu, *Rajabhakthanum Kalakaranum* (Tiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 1993), 7-9.

<sup>17</sup> C.V. foundation has initiated a project of publishing works on the rasa aspect of the novels of C.V. Dr. M. Leelavathy, *Sringaravishkaranam, C.V yude Novelukalil*, (Kottayam, D.C.Books, 1989); Dr. K.M.Tharakan and Prof. Ambalappuzha Ramavarma, *C.V Sahithyathile Rasavicharam*, (Tiruvananthapuram: C.V.Raman Pillai National Foundation, 1993) etc.

S.Guptan Nair and others and the biographies wrote by P.K.Parameshwaran Nair and K.Balakrishnan illuminates the silent zones of the aesthetics of C.V. abandoned by the modernist scholarship and provide valuable insights on the energetics of the historical romance.<sup>18</sup> However, these veteran critics and writers, who produced fascinating studies on C.V's works, failed to inscribe the radical difference of the historical romance as a 'negative genre' of the 'sublime' that questioned the hegemonic norms of both the 'classical' and modernist regimes of 'taste' or 'beauty'.

### ***7. The Radical Impact of the Aesthetics of the Sublime***

Though this shift to the reflection of the 'sublime' did not have 'the characteristic of a revolution', its impercussion on the Malayali sensibility was far-reaching.<sup>19</sup> The radical turn heralded by the aesthetics of the 'sublime' in Europe is marked by its 'assertion of the critical rights of aesthetics over art'. The name 'sublime,' according to Lyotard, implicates the great events of politico-aesthetic struggles fought and won by the romantic aesthetics against the classical poetics. It marks the 'triumph of modernity or romanticism over the classical institutions of art' . :

Between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe this contradictory feeling—pleasure and pain, joy and anxiety, exaltation and depression—was christened or re-christened by the name of the *sublime*. It is around this name that the destiny of classical poetics was hazarded and lost; it is in this name that aesthetics asserted its critical rights over art, and that romanticism, in other words, modernity triumphed.<sup>20</sup>

Taking departure from the practices of the two oppositional streams of reading mentioned earlier, the thesis would view the historical novels of C.V. as a radical instance of the 'aesthetic of the sublime' or a 'reflective judgment' on the 'differends' detained by the colonial-modern regimes of knowledge and 'taste'. They signal the possibility of 'progress' in people's resistance to the conditions of

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<sup>18</sup> Prof. N. KrishnaPilla, *Pratipatram Bhashanabhedam* (Kottayam, S.P.C.S., 1986).

<sup>19</sup> Lyotard brings out the radical significance of the aesthetic judgment of the 'sublime', and the havoc created by its resurgence in the literary and artistic vocations, in the 'sensibility' of the western world in his work, *The analytic of the Sublime*, 153.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, op.cit., 92.

the new Order. They implicate the repossession of a political matrix of Idea submerged in the discursive noises and networks of the period. The ‘invisible’ vision of the ‘absolute’, or the commotion of the ‘it happens,’ is made conceivable in the ‘nowness’ of the politico-aesthetic reflection of the people. The *veera* epoch in that sense might be seen as a means through which this differential feeling erupts in the existential ‘now’ of the recipients, the historical romancers. The *veera* people, like ‘the absolutely large object (the desert, a mountain, a pyramid—or one that is absolutely powerful—a storm at sea, an erupting volcano’ as Kant enlists them), induce this paradoxical feeling of sublime in the minds of the recipient. Like those signs of absolutes which ‘can only be thought, without any sensible/sensory intuition, as an Idea of reason’, the *veera*-politics of the *rajyams* also disrupts the faculty of presentation. ‘The imagination fails to provide a representation corresponding to the matrix of Idea evoked by it. The *veeras* in short reemerge there not as historical objects or phenomena as the case with the modern subjects but as objects of an Idea, as signs which ‘signal, recollect, and anticipate’ the occurrence of the sublime.

#### 8. “It happens” in Tiruvitamcore

The anxiety which precedes the occurrence of the sublime, or the terror of deprivation arising from the question “is it happening” would be heard from an intensive appeal made by G.P.Pilla, the champion of the *swarajya* politics in Tiruvitamcore of the times.

Are the natives of Travancore doomed to remain for ever hewers of wood and drawers of water to a click of foreign officials? Search through the globe, and it is doubtful whether history can pattern another nation, another race, another class of people like the Travancoreans, similarly withheld from any important share in the administration of their country, similarly deprived of their birthright, and similarly held in subjection by a class of foreigners who have not conquered them by the sword, who have not driven them to obedience at the bayonet’s end, who are not intellectually their superiors nor physically their betters, but decidedly their inferiors in hereditary political insight, who have no right to remain in the land except in the right of sufferance and who, maintain their authority mainly by a scrupulous adherence to the policy of self-love. Such is the fate of unhappy Travancore! *Travancore was for the Travancoreans, but is not, and will it ever be? Is there no hope,*



*no remedy, no means of relief coming to the rescue of the poor down-trodden and ill-used natives of Travancore, or should they ever remain in sordid and grovelling subjection to the arbitrary rule of a few?* (Italics added). Can Travancoreans never expect to rise to that personal distinction and that political influence, which were the glory, the pride, the richest heritage and the brightest possession of their ancestors? Will there ever be a time when the noble and spirited deeds, the high and exalted philanthropy, the pure and virtuous ambition, the unsurpassed generosity, the admirable disinterestedness, the deep-seated devotion, the stainless honour and the *sublime* (Italics author's view) sense of justice of Kesava Dasas, Veluthambis, Ayyapan Marthandans and Chempakaramans will be repeated in Travancore, or is all the glory of Travancore destined to remain merely a tale of the imperishable past?<sup>21</sup>

The paramount question raised here is this: *Travancore was for the Travancoreans, but is not, and will it ever be?* These questions, these lamentations and these assertions of 'honour' bring us into the paradoxical site of a 'nation, a 'race' or a 'class' of people which he calls the Travancoreans. It implicates a 'community' which differs from the 'other' people, the honourable and virtuous ones of the world, only in terms of the dishonour and misfortune inflicted on them by the regime of the *Videsheeya Medhavithvom* (foreign dominance), the colonialism of the *Raos* and *Ayyers*. The historical romance incessantly and simultaneously poses this crucial question which reflects the political anxiety of the *rajya*-people of the Travancore of the times and answers it affirmatively. It critically affirms that 'it is' possibly here', this sought after 'event' of regaining the honour, liberty, and sovereignty of the *rajya*-people. The historical romance transforms this 'anxiety' in to the catastrophic event of the ('aesthetic) judgment of the 'sublime', by its reinvention of the '*rajyam*' as the sign of an Idea of the absolute'.

It is also noticeable that the struggle to reopen the conflict as a 'differend', as carried out by the historical romance does not accrue to a moral feeling of sympathy, or sense of duty or any desirous act of interest. On the contrary, it marks a disinterested political feeling (political in its problematised sense) rising out of a reflective engagement with the 'absolute reason', in the here and now. It arises

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<sup>21</sup> G.P.Pilla, *Selected Writing & Speeches of G.P.Pillai* (Trivandrum: G. P. Centenary Celebrations Committee, 1964), 101-102.

from an intense feeling of debt evinced by the graceful occurrence of the sublime in the negative worship of the *rajyam*. These 'disinterested and indeterminate acts of resistance and struggle signalled by the historical romance of the *rajyaradhana* (on behalf of an Idea of 'absolute') exceed the practices of representative politics as well as the religious or ritualistic acts of worship. The *veera*-politics in short is triggered off by a sense of obligation arising from a bond of 'supersensible' reason. It springs out of a matrix of Idea, and indexes a 'dynamic assemblage' of the heterogeneous realms like the 'aesthetic', 'libidinal', 'political' and 'spiritual'.

The question then arises, as to, how would it be ascertained that what is at stake here in the historical romance is an 'aesthetic of the sublime, rather than that of the 'beauty'. The catastrophic eruption of feelings evoking a 'negative delight,' the 'tumultuous agitation' of mind called forth by the Idea of the 'absolute' as shown in the instances of the eruption of the politico-spiritual feelings like *abhimanam* (honour or pride) declare that here is a case of the sublime. However, this crucial question leads the present enquiry in to the problematique of the 'reflective judgment' or the radical philosophy of the 'sublime'. Lyotard differentiates this contradictory or paradoxical feeling of the sublime from that of the 'beautiful', re-discovering the insights provided by Kant on the issue:

...The sense of beauty is for Kant, on the contrary (in respect to the determinate criterions provided by Baumgarten), kindled by a free harmony between the functions of the images and the functions of concepts occasioned by an object of art or nature. The aesthetics of the sublime is still more indeterminate: a pleasure mixed with pain, a pleasure that comes from pain. In the event of an absolutely large object — the desert, a mountain, a pyramid — or one that is absolutely powerful — a storm at sea, an erupting volcano—which like all absolutes can only be thought, without any sensible/ sensory intuition, as an Idea of reason, the faculty of presentation, the imagination fails to provide a representation corresponding to this Idea. This failure of expression gives rise to a pain, a kind of cleavage within the subject between what can be conceived and what can be imagined or presented. But this pain in turn engenders a pleasure, in fact a double pleasure; the importance of the imagination attests a *contrario* to an imagination striving to figure even that which cannot be figured, and that imagination thus aims to harmonize its object with that of reason — and that furthermore the inadequacy of the images is a negative sign of the immense power of ideas. This dislocation of the faculties among themselves gives rise to the extreme tension (Kant calls it agitation) that characterizes

the pathos of the sublime, as opposed to the calm feeling of beauty. At the edge of the break, infinity, or the absoluteness of the Idea can be revealed in what Kant calls a negative presentation, or even a non-presentation. He cites the Jewish law banning images as an eminent example of negative presentation. Optical pleasure when reduced to near nothingness promotes an infinite contemplation of infinity. Even before romantic art had freed itself from classical and baroque figuration, the door had thus been opened to enquiries pointing towards abstract and Minimal art. Avant-gardism is thus present in germ in the Kantian aesthetic of the sublime.<sup>22</sup>

The historical romance of C.V. provides several instances bearing witness to this 'self-disruptive' eruption of the 'subjective' feeling (which is different from the feeling of the subject) that is the sublime. Moreover, it could be even found that the supreme force that propels the progression of the narrative as a whole is this 'delightful pathos of an indeterminate feeling, 'the delirium of enthusiasm' as Lyotard would call it. It is this anxiety of 'is it happening,' and the suspension and transgression of this terror in the occurrence of the sublime events that might be esteemed as the aesthetic dynamics of the historical novels of C.V. As mentioned earlier, it is through a negative mode of presentation, a presentation which is indirect, minimal, and intense to the core that this turbulent feeling is provided with an appropriate presentation.

This mode of "presence" of the absolute is the grounds for the negative presentation...The vocabulary is one of energy...Although the senses are opposed in sublime feeling and "nothing...meets the eye of sense", the feeling provided by the unrepresentable 'presence' of the absolute is not lost, *verlorn*; it is not reduced to a "cold and lifeless approbation" without any moving force". The reverse is true...If there is no fear of a decrease in tension—due to an eclipsing of what can be presented by the imagination with regard to the absolute Idea— it is because the imagination, believed to have been blocked at the limits of its "first measure", has a "feeling of being unbounded"...thanks to the elimination, the "thrusting aside" of its own barriers. The imagination can even lose control, become "unbridled" and can drag thought into the "delirium" of enthusiasm. This is a temporary and remissible delirium, unlike *Schwarmerei*. In mania the imagination claims "positively to present" the absolute. Although the imagination gets carried away in *Wahnsinn*, presentation extends beyond its fundamental measure but remains negative. The obligation to which the imagination is subjected by reason does not only leave the imagination terrified, but gives it the

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<sup>22</sup> Lyotard- *The Inhuman* 98

courage to force its barriers and attempt a “presentation of the infinite”. This attempt can never end in “any thing more than a negative presentation”. What is this negative presentation? It is neither the absence of presentation nor the presentation of the nothingness. It is negative in the eyes of the sensible but at the same time is still a “mode of presentation”. This mode is withdrawn, in retreat (*abgezogene*), and the presentation it furnishes consists in a *Absonderung*, a putting apart and to the side, and “abs-traction”. The mode escapes, removes itself, (*abgezogene*) from there “first measure” of the imagination. What is presented according to this mode is separated from what is normally presented according to this measure; it is isolated, *ab-*, in a special status, *sonder*. Here the imagination has a way of presenting that “ex-ceeds” its norm, or, rather, “se-cedes” from it.

“...Negative presentation” is the sign of the presence of absolute, and it is or can only make a sign of being absent from the forms of the presentable. Thus the absolute remains unrepresentable; no given is subsumable under its concept. But the imagination can signal its “presence”, an almost insane mirage, in the emptiness it discovers beyond its capacity to “comprehend.”<sup>23</sup>

### 9. *Rajyaabhimanam as the Eruption of the Sublime Feeling*

An incident may be cited from the novel *Dharmaraja* which could be held as one of the most exemplary instances of the negative presentation of the sublime in the literary genres of the modern world.

The occasion is the retelling of the story of the sacrifice of a *veera-praja* – a *prajajeevabalikdha* in the language of the narrator – who is a warrior as well as a worshipper of the *rajyam*. More importantly it is shown as evoking the sublime feeling in the mind of the hearer, here Raja Kesavadas, the acclaimed patriot of Tiruvitamcore, in his youth. The event which had already been repossessed by the folk-genius is retold in colloquial phrases by Pavatikochi, the maidservant of Kesava Pilla, who had just entered into the royal service at that time. The narrator of the novel discloses that this *prajajeevabalikkada* belongs to the historical narratives of Tiruvitamcore and the story which abounds in ‘colloquial dialect’ of the teller and which pursues a ‘primeval narrative tradition’ is reproduced by him without violating its style except making some slight modification.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Lyotard, *Analytic of the Sublime*-150-152

<sup>24</sup> C.V.Raman Pilla, *Dharmaraja* (Kottayam, D.C.Books, 1999), 231.

Pavatikochi, the maid servant of Kesavadas, makes a proposal of marriage to him with a girl who hails from the Nankakoyial family of Arumana. It was while describing to him the whereabouts of the proposed family, that the story of a *bali* erupts, interrupts the narrative stream of the novel. The hero of the story is Nankakoyikal Veettil Kuruppukunju Piratty who escorted Marthanda Varma during his visit to Kolachal to make surveillance on the armed naval fleet of the Dutch, positioned in the harbour for combat. An attempt is made here to retell the story in English, in a free manner, putting utmost care not to do harm to the negative presentation of the sublime involved in it and minimizing the modifications and paraphrasing.

When the King ordered his aide to open the window of the royal cottage to have a look at the fleet, the latter held back the King and rushed forward to shield him from the thundering Dutch cannons aimed at the King. Exposing himself to the cannons and embracing death, Kurupu chanted “come oh! death” (“*chaake vah*”). ... To his holy eyes, the body of Kurup fell like a tree that succumbs to a thunderbolt. Overwhelmed with grief, Kulasekharara Sree Veeramarthanda Varma stood holding the body, with gratitude and love in return for the loyalty and devotion shown by his servant. The dead body of the *veera* was brought in front of his mother with royal honors. Seeing the King in tears, the mother asked kindly, “what news my son?” In utter perplexity, the overlord of the whole kingdom and *taravadu* finally said to her, attempting consolation: “From today onwards I will be your dear-most son.” Facing disaster and yet holding on, the wise and honourable lady consoled the king in turn by exclaiming: “Greatest is my womb which gave birth to a great son.” Grief-stricken by seeing the figure of the dearest son..., lying in a sleeping posture, that noble lady blocked the flood of tears, patted the lad and compressed her mourning in a oneworded requiem. (*ottamozhy opparu*): “Let the king rule forever, Oh, fairer like tenderleaf, (*arumakkodikkazhaka*) dearest son brought forth with utmost fondness, (*aasamakaneda*), Oh! virtuous minister! (*azhakulla manthiriye*)... There after she fell in to the mat for mourning. And still now at her age of 84 lies there in the same state.<sup>25</sup>

The proposed girl, in short, comes from a *veera*-family which wrote a *bali* story with their life-blood to the idea of the *rajyam* invoking the sublime feeling to the listeners. The *veera* sacrifices his life to rescue the King; he welcomes death, embraces it with a graceful smile. The responses of the King and the mother on the

<sup>25</sup> *The Dharmaraja*, 231-232

death of the *veera* bear the gravity and the dignity of the political judgment involved in the event and viewing the event. The effect of the narration on the mind and even the body of the present listener Kesavapilla, betrays the 'agitation' which signals the 'pathos of the 'sublime feeling' marked by the simultaneity of pleasure and pain:

...While the woman (*Bhagavathiyamma*) was narrating the story with varied emotions, the eyes of Kesava Pilla sparkled. His heart expanded, compressing the chest ribs; in the blood streams an exciting emotion was felt like the accelerated surge of a fleet of microbes; inner eyes visioned the *niryanam* (not ordinary death but a death which is held as equivalent to salvation or *moksham*) of the *rajabhakta siromany* (the jewel in the crown of the *rajabhaktas*) the *ugrarajyabhimani* (superb patriot). Befitting to the grace and fortune of being born in the community of that *mahapurusha* (great man), tears and wailing were suspended within him following the example of the *dheera janayithri* (the brave mother) of that story; with a spontaneous urgency he also made a *manaprathijna* (mental oath) for the fulfilment of the wish of his new mother. Though his reply was in stumped throat...<sup>26</sup>

The narrator unequivocally reveals that this is not the feeling of pleasure mediated by the 'beautiful forms' of taste in the mind of the addressee; the wailing and tears are withheld within; there is no melodrama expectable in romantic arts at such occasions. This is a 'differend' of feeling which arises out of the contemplative reception of the 'absolute reason' and cannot be communicated or translated into discursive language. There is no direct presentation to this feeling which exceeds all limits, measures and concepts of cognition. The narrator invents the 'it happens' here in a presentation marked by the colloquial folkloric 'manner' of narration — an indirect minimal presentation. The folkloric and novelistic phrases come into a contestatory and agitative union. The turbulence of witnessing the *bali*-story is brought forth by scanning the subtle gestures, bursting out of the body of the listener. It captures the tremor of the non-verbal or 'figural' speech of the body, libidinally charged and politically aroused by a call of Idea which disrupts the whole grammar and rules of discursive language or cognitive genres and conveys the 'pathos' of this strange feeling. The novel provides profound instances for us to distinguish this paradoxical delight from mere impulses, and

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<sup>26</sup> *The Dharmaraja*-233

emotions associated with 'interests' or desire. It makes the reader witness an 'eruption', an 'occurrence'; it makes us see 'the eyes of the hearer sparkling, his heart expanding beyond the chest ribs, beyond its corporeal limits, his bloodstreams surging with exciting emotions when he visions in his inner eyes, the soul-stirring event of the *niryanam* (a death, which exceeds death and which is held as the instance of ultimate redemption, the fullest realization of the life or the salvation) of the patriot'; it shows us see the listener seeing through it the 'invisible vision' of the Idea of absolute reason in the here and now of the political action of the people. The reader here witnesses a human action which goes beyond the human limits, and which demonstrates the absolute devotion and commitment to a non-object or a sign of the Idea called *rajyam*. The historical romance here bears witness to the occurrence of sublime in history in a political action which testifies as to how man defeats death, surpasses his limits, attains *niryanam* or divine deliverance by pursuing the call of an Idea in the here and now of history. This could be seen as an instance of progress or the 'sign of history' which the historical romance presents as irrepresentable in the serial time of history. The complex gestures of the hearer indicate the traces of the paralogic feeling of exaltation as well as angst felt at the occasion of 'listening' to a sublime vision intractable to the external eyes. His body becomes a theater of energies where the dramatic criss-crossing of this paradoxical feeling of pleasure and pain happens. Immense pleasure is evinced out of witnessing this great act which marks the 'boundlessness' of human reason. This pleasure at the same time is suspended by a contrary feeling of pain evoked by two factors: the angst produced by the premature demise of the hero or the grief undergone by the mother due to the loss of his beloved son, and the inability of the faculty of imagination to find an appropriate presentation for this eruption of the feeling of elevation. The sensation of angst, evoked by this tragic incident is in short transgressed by the exaltation felt at deciphering the 'presence' of the absolute Idea in the historical existential act of the hero. This is an action which strengthens the faith and hope in the reason of man, and in the 'boundlessness' of his free action which signals human progress. The tears and wailing tremoured off by the spell of grief are soon found with-held within the mind of the mother as well as Kesava Pilla the hearer, because of the upsurge of

energies released by the crucial political judgment that 'here is a case of sublime, or human progress,' in the bali-act of the *veera*.

1. The presentation provided by the narrator here leaves sufficient traces of the eruption of the feeling that invariably disrupts the 'self-hood'. The articulation of the actors is found interrupted or suspended by the tumult of the feeling which could also be seen as signalling the case of the sublime:
2. There is a derailment of verbal presentation, and the words fail or stutter, phrases turn 'figural' on the part of the witnesses. The listener is unable to utter any words and it is his body which 'immediately' and negatively speaks. When he starts speaking after undergoing this tumultuous occurrence, he could only stutter, his throat choked by emotions. This would conform to the 'manner' of the negative presentation that is denotative of a sublime instance.
3. The 'feeling' evoked is not affected by any 'interests' or inclination. It is a 'pure' feeling without producing any 'affectation' or inkling towards any object external to the mind of the receiver.
4. The identification with the '*veera*' is so intense and passionate that Kesava Pilla sees his own self in the act of the hero; he instantaneously adopts in his mind the mother of the hero as his 'new mother'; and there escapes a mental oath from his interior that he would fulfil the wishes of the new mother. The sublime feeling 'immediately' evokes a sense of debt and an oath of obligation which is dissimilar to the sense of duty evoked by a moral law or 'desirous will'.
5. As the bodily expressions of Kesavapilla shows, the energy discharged by the emotion is tremendous and enduring. It releases waves of political enthusiasm in the mind and body of the hearer which exceed the state of mere exaltation marked by the pathetic symptoms of a 'delirium of ecstasy'.
6. There takes place an identification in the mind of the hearer with an ethnic community or a lineage of valiant men. This could be seen as another important factor that strengthens him as well as the courageous mother to suspend the tears and wailings surging within their mind.
7. The catastrophic eruption of the feeling makes a disruption in the subjectivity of the actors, especially the King and Kesava Pilla, and they are reconstituted as new selves or non-selves by this 'feeling' which could be discerned as the 'subject' here.
8. The folkloric and novelistic phrases here come into a constatory and agitative union marking the heterogeneity of the presentation.
9. The subjective feeling of the 'occurrence' of a 'community without communication' bursts out of the recoupling of these two genres, times and events.

The heroic death or the sacrifice of the *veera*, the intensity of the responses shown by the witnesses like the King, the mother of the *veera* and finally



Kesavapilla to it, and the deeply emotional and vibrant presentation of the story provided by Bhagavatiyamma in its folk-loric, colloquial exuberance, altogether signal that here is a case of the sublime. The aesthetic intensification of the retelling of the story, the de-forming and de-structuring of the multifarious genres and phrases involved in this catastrophic *leela* of presentation, and the radical heterogeneity and the 'dynamic synthesis' of heteromorphous genres and phrases achieved in the novel all confirm the judgment that 'it happens' in the historical romance. Instead of a sensation of 'beauty', it stirs the political enthusiasm characteristic to the aesthetics of the sublime.

There happens the 'failing of space and time' in the presentation of the sublime. It is compatible with the 'formless'. As shown earlier, this feeling or emotion should be distinguished from the feeling evoked by seeing beautiful forms of nature or literature.<sup>27</sup> This is a 'sentiment of the mind' tremored up by the flashing 'presence' of the Idea of pure practical reason, Law and Freedom. The beautiful is a sentiment that proceeds from a 'fit' between nature and mind, while the sublime is a sentiment of the mind.<sup>28</sup> This 'marriage' is broken by the sublime. "The Idea of pure practical reason, Law and freedom, is signalled in a quasi-perception, right within the break-up of the imagination and therefore just as much via a lack or even a disappearance of nature understood in this way". "The sentiment of the mind, signifies that the mind is lacking in nature, that nature is lacking for it." "It feels only itself." "The sublime, as Lyotard" suggests, is the sacrificial announcement of the ethical in the aesthetic field." It requires that imaginative nature (inside and outside the mind) must be sacrificed in the interests of practical reason... This "heralds the end of an aesthetics that of the beautiful, in the name of the final destination of the mind, which is freedom." The political aesthetics of rajyam therefore never rests on an aesthetics of beauty but on that the 'sublime'.

The response of the actors, towards the event of the sacrifice of the *veera*, invariably denotes their immense sensitivity or 'passability' towards the reception of this 'sublime feeling.' — the 'donation of the Infinite or the Being.' It is also

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<sup>27</sup> Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 113

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

implied that this graceful state of becoming a witness to the 'infinite whole' of the Idea, immediately further urges Kesava Pilla, the recipient here, to presuppose a vertical lineage of greatmen (*mahapurusha*) who were intensively receptive and 'passable' to the turbulence of this occurrence. This vertical community rises out of the aesthetic turbulence of the 'sublime' which is invented by him as the locus of his identity. The politico-spiritual sensitivity, devotion and commitment shown by the *veera*-actors towards this Idea of the *rajyam* (as a matrix of the sublime), therefore brings forth the possibility of the 'formless' formation of an 'indeterminate', 'aesthetic community' prior to any communication or conceptualization. It is around the radius of such tumultuous 'occurrences' of the sublime that the *veera*-lineages or communities burst out into quasi-perceptual, quasi historical existence. The bond of debt felt to this gracious 'gift' of the Absolute or the 'negative delight' of the sublime in the here and now, brings forth the radical imagination of a 'higher accord' of people. The political aesthetics of the sublime implicated in the negative worship of the *rajyam* in other terms leaves the traces of a dynamic reflective community marked by its incessant vocation of pursuing, waiting for or welcoming the eruption of this divine 'donation'. The *rajya*-community brought forth by the sublime feeling could not be seen as a data to be accommodated into a schema, or an empirical object which might be conceptualized according to the Hegelian discourse of logical speculation. It could neither be conceptualized as a nation-state nor a pastoral welfare society (a land of 'charity piety and truth' as Mateer, the missionary-historian had substituted it). Never be it a determinate community constituted by the discursive and communicative network of a colonial modern regime. Rather it could be viewed as a 'sensus' community which comes into being by the shared feeling of a 'higher accord' in spite of discord that exist on the faculty levels.. It is the *dharma rajyam* of heterogeneous genres, phrases and faculties. The term *rajyam* or *rajya* as their etymological roots suggested implicated the act of *ranjana* (fair linking) signifying the act of linking, of the selves, times forces or phrases. The term *dharmam* subsequently suggested the idea of 'just linking' which facilitates the heterogeneity of the linked. The idea of the *Dharmarajyam* therefore implicated the site of the dynamic linkage or assemblage between heterogeneous genres, phrases, times,

selves and others. It involved the process of the complex coupling between the 'Infinite' and the 'finite, the 'sacred' and the 'secular' the 'history' and the 'romance'. Due to these radical political implications of the terms *dharmam* and *dharmarajyam* the people held it to their heart, incessantly pursued it, and struggled and sacrificed for it, at the various junctures of their resurgence. However, these have turned out affect-phrases or differends under the new regimes of power and knowledge. These could therefore be delivered only in 'negative' forms or 'formless forms' and only in conditions of radical heterogeneity as attempted by the 'phrasal politics' of the historical romance.

The 'dissensus' or 'spasm' occurring among the faculties of knowledge — the 'true' split of thought and words (felt at the spell of the 'sublime' feeling) — the dissonant and tumultuous unity and the dynamic synthesis of heterogeneous people, forces and phrases signalled a 'supreme or supersensible state of union'. Most importantly this was brought forth by people's contemplation of the Idea of the 'absolute'. This could therefore be paradoxically called a 'dissensus' community pledged and obliged to this matrix of the Idea. It called forth a politics of inventing 'sign' — the presentational politics of 'recalling', 'anticipating' and 'signalling' the Infinite. The historical romancers christened this politico-spiritual matrix of the 'sublime' as *rajyam* which was anchored on the Idea of 'absolute' reason and which erupted in the here and now of the (*veera*) people.

#### ***10. Identity as the Gift of the Sublime***

The sense of identity therefore bursts out in the thought of the *veera* recipients of the historical romance as a paradoxical feeling of 'oneness in many' (or a 'manyness in one') called forth by the catastrophic interruption of the 'sublime'. The radical contribution made by the historical romance to the cultural resurgence of Malayali people (never to be seen as an empirically determined community) is its radical invention of the identity of a Malayala *rajyam* around the locus of such tremorous eruption of the sublime feeling. The 'politics of the sublime' signalled by the historical romance brings out the traces of a radical lineage of *veera*-community. The *veeras* herald the 'aesthetic' 'spiritual' politics of waiting for, greeting and celebrating this 'donation of the absolute', in their *veera* acts of *yuddham*(war) *aradhana* (worship) *leela* (play) *utsavam* (festival)

and *bali* (sacrifice).

The identity, in the context of the *rajya*-people marks the sensation of a super-sensible field of unity called forth by the radical contemplation of an Idea. The historical romance illumines that the identity of the Malayali people (or any community in its radical sense) might be sought not in any concepts, images symbols or ‘cognitive phenomena’ or any representations ascribed to ‘schema’, ‘types’ or ‘cases’ as attempted by the innumerable sociological or historical studies of our times. On the contrary it should be traced out at the epi-center of the occurrence of this feeling of the ‘differend’ and the negative presentations demanded by it, and the ‘im-mediacy’ of the historical bond of debt brought forth by it on its recipients. In Kantian terms it might be viewed as an object of Idea, which cannot be located or presented in cognitive or speculative discourses or the beautiful forms agreed upon by schools of taste. Identity as a sublime feeling invoked by the reflection of an Idea could therefore be inscribed only in the ‘formless forms’ or signs. The Malayala *rajyam* of the historical romance signifies a tribunal of reflective judgment which could possibly appear only at the indeterminable juncture of the political, aesthetic struggles.

The enthusiasm unleashed by the ‘sublime’ emotions of the *rajyabhimanam* might be differentiated from the exaltation produced by mania or dementia or emotional delirium. The aesthetics politics of the *rajyam* was neither founded on any drives of libidinal ecstasies often represented by certain cults or creeds nor on any discursive programming as in the case of the civil-subjects of the modern nation-state. The political enthusiasm evoked by reflective judgment marks a fresh release of energies bringing forth a ‘higher accord’ of heterogenous phrases forces and fields in the sphere of faculties of knowledge, thought, and the life-practices of the people. As it was called forth by the Idea of absolute reason it endured in time and triggered off radical political actions on the part of the people. It was the upsurge of this feeling that capacitated the *veera* people to transgress the limits of the times. The historical romance discovers signals of ‘progress’ in this feeling of enthusiasm, unleashed by the *rajyaradhana*.

The politico-aesthetic judgment of the ‘sublime’ and the sense of identity called forth by it would invariably lead one in to the abbeys of presentation. The

presentation of 'identity' as a sublime idea could therefore occur only as a note of dissensus or dissonance. It would sow disruption to the faculty agreements and sabotage all sorts of consensus, regimes of representations, communities forged by communications, concepts, schemas and subjects. Identity or unity here is a paradoxical one. It actually comes forth out of a discord that takes place in inter-facultary relations, a breach of the pact between the 'sensible' and the 'intelligible', the 'presentable' and 'conceivable', and the faculty of 'imagination' and 'understanding' at the instance of the eruption of the 'sublime'. The Identity in another sense is inscribed by the historical romance as implicating a sensation of radical dissensus, the 'otherness' or 'differend'. It is situated as a point of transition between the selves and the 'others', a passage between them rather than a Being in-itself or a corporation of selves or subjects which exclude the 'others' from its ambit.

The historical romance therefore had effected a progressive shift in writing the identity of the Malayali people. It paradoxically marked identity as 'difference' or a 'dissonant' unity which required the invention of a 'negative aesthetics' or a 'negative worship' for its presentation. This was one of the crucial points of its divergence with the discourses of identity launched by the modernist historians, sociologists and administrative apparatuses. The 'occurrence' was reduced into a concept, a program or a determinate phenomenon by the latter. The modernist epistemology embarked on a procedure of knowledge which homogenised, standardized and discursivised the heterogeneous selves, times and phrases according to the determinate laws of the hegemonic discourses. The current narratives on identity and nationalisms in short has blacked out the 'differend' involved in the conflict.

This would amply explain why the identity of a Malayala *rajyam* never 'happens' in the histories or sociologies innumerable produced in our time. Instead, 'it happens' in the 'negative aesthetics of the historical romance of C.V. The Fruedian discourse of desire and the Hegelian dialectics ( and the diachronic scheme of history produced by it) therefore fail to do justice to the historical romance of Malayala *rajyam*. It is also improper to explain it in terms of symbolic practices because they are the hypotyposes or signs which move simultaneously

across the past present and future. The aesthetic reflection of the sublime as propounded by Kant and as reinvented by Lyotard provide certain insights to confront this dilemma in-laid in the modernistic knowledge. The 'negative philosophy' of the sublime allows us to deconstruct the notions of 'identity' and 'nation', cirulant in our age. It discovers the 'manner' of reflection that would enable one to witness people's romance with Idea, that is at stake in the *rajya*-politics. Romance here does not implicate an act of wishfulfilment or a gratification of a desire here but a carnival of resistance against the powers of the times, a catastrophic, self-disruptive' adventure after the idea of Infinite in-laid in the sign of the *rajyam*.

## **Part-2: An Evaluation of the Narratives of Reform**

The thesis now attempts a self-reflection (or a 'reflective evaluation') on the 'manner'<sup>29</sup> of the interrogation carried out, the conclusions provisionally arrived at, and the judgments indeterminately made, on the conflictual narratives of reform, that emerged in Tiruvitamcore, during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Three important streams of thought or narratives which constitute the core of what might be called the Malayali reform or renaissance are re-examined. This is done according to the perspective of a 'cultural history' which is still in its infancy. However it provides the most appropriate ground of confronting the dilemma that shrouds the modernist modes of enquiries especially made on the issues of 'identity' 'power' and 'progress', in our age. The first of these, the missionary narratives of reform, has not been dealt with in detail. Yet, it is in reference to it and juxtaposed to it that the two others, the Guru-discourses of socio-religious reform and the political aesthetics of the *rajyam* are discussed. The former as the initiator of reform in its Euro-modernist sense, constituted the superarching norm of the reformation in Keralam. It is therefore viewed here as the

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<sup>29</sup> Lyotard distinguishes the term 'manner' from the terms 'principle' and 'method' in following terms.:

"However, aesthetic judgment conceals, I would suggest, a secret more important than that of doctrine, the secret of the "manner"(rather than the method) in which critical thought proceeds in general. The manner (*modus aestheticus*) possesses no standard other than the *feeling* of unity in the presentation," the method (*modus logicus*) "follows definite principles". "Fine art... has only... a manner (*modus*) and not a method".Francois Lyotard, *The analytic of the Sublime*, 6.

master narrative or the hegemonic discourse of reform which officially offered the rules and principles and the determinate procedures of knowledge supposedly required to judge the cases of reform or progress.

### *1. The Missionary Narratives*

The crucial role played by the missionary narrative in pioneering a colonial - modern mode of reform was that of a knowledge agency which relinked the colonised and the coloniser, the 'civilized' and the 'primitive'. The colonial modern Order, along with its administrative apparatuses, relations of power, regimes of knowledge and laws of market made an in-road into the 'selves' of the native people by the means of these narratives. The missionaries, the priests or prophets of 'knowledge', offered the promises of a 'welfare' state. Their offer was a progressive site of history in the endeavours of profit and productivity though it demanded in turn obedience, complacency and adaptability on the part of the 'subjects' to its regime of command and control. Their mission was to tutor and manufacture the 'civilised' selves, conforming to the laws of 'Father', the new Order.

Significantly, what the missionary entrepreneurs mainly brought with them were certain devices—namely the chapals, the schools, the hospitals, printing press, journals, textbooks, lexicons dictionaries almanacs etc.—of producing and legitimizing a discursive enterprise of knowledge. A new knowledge of time as well as a technology of conjuring up this 'new time' was first imported to the 'Malayali' minds. This 'exotic' hegemonic 'time' mastered and regulated the heterogeneous other 'times' under its supervision. 'History' as a genre was found to be the most effective technology of writing the 'new time' over the native times writing them off as times of aberrations or anomalies, the 'primitive' 'pagan' 'barbaric' or 'savage' times. The latter was marked as the phase of backwardness in the linear progression of the temporal schema produced by it.<sup>30</sup> The new mode of 'time' thus consecrated by these clergies of knowledge was a 'time' which was thoroughly conceptualised and structured by the 'serial' 'diachronic' scheme of

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<sup>30</sup> Exemplary instances of this would be found in the works of Mateer. Rev. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* (1883, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1991); and *The land of Charity—A Descriptive Account of Travancore and Its People* (1870, New delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1991).

progress.

The missionaries who were the traders/warriors/teachers of the 'new time' and new knowledge could therefore be held as the founder-fathers of the new identities, selves, unities and communities, an amalgam of which constituted the 'imagined community' of Modern Keralam. The native selves were proselytised into new subjectivities by purging their selves through the procedures of knowledge. They were given rigorous tutoring on the conceptual operations of the new knowledge. The missionary-Gurus taught the people/students how to deport the old times, traditions and phrases of the past into the danger zone of the 'other', how to exclude the 'others' out of the new organisation of 'selves'. Reform therefore meant the production and reproduction of the selves and communities and the power/knowledge relations engendered by the missionary discourses which banished the 'differend's produced in the conflict. The 'cognitive', the 'logical' or the 'speculative' modes of knowledge and judgment got upperhand. The missionary pundits wrote time and progress conforming to the rules of the 'providential' modes of history hybridised with the Hegelian genre of speculative logic. The new Malayali subject was born out of these discourses of history, sociology, medicine and law and the administrative and the communicational procedures of the new Order. The subject was put into the position of a knower, a studious 'will', an I, or an ego who judged things according to the procedures of cognitive or descriptive genres.

The reform movement initiated by the missionaries turned the whole country into a large School, a Convent where one was rigorously schooled in a particular mode of receiving and reproducing knowledge. The 'people' reduced into the stastical and sociological concept of population were held as comprised of 'row' 'savage' selves required to be rigorously reformed or tutored in order to get promoted to the status of the 'normal' or the 'civilized' citizens. The subject was expected to be a novice of the elaborate procedures of knowledge, , or an apprentice to be trained and supervised, (whose probation never comes to a completion in his life), a patient to to be cured, or a sinner (in terms of the 'secular theology' of history) to be incessantly purged off his guilt by the cathartic operations of 'confession', 'expiation', 'prayer' etc.



The war of knowledge launched by the missionary narratives was chiefly targeted against the religious and political faiths of the indigenous people.<sup>31</sup> The gods and goddesses and the multiple deity-forces, were subjected to discursive-witch hunting. They were abused and scapegoated as the roots of all evils. The idols and the local shrines — the *kavus*— were at times demolished.<sup>32</sup> The *rajyam* and its veera-politicians also were subjected to this discursive operation of the annihilation of the ‘other’.

The indigeneous phrases and times were either prohibited or brought through the procedures of ‘substitution’ or ‘translation’ in to the universal codes of the colonial modern knowledge. The *rajyam* was translated into a ‘nation-state’. It was held as a substitute for the determinate ‘historico-political’ or social entity formed around the new discourses of time. It began to be signified as an amalgam of caste-communal identities produced and integrated by the machination of the new mode of knowledge and administrative procedures. The strategical operation of translation thus implicated the discursive violence of substituting the ‘unsubstitutable’, reducing the ‘irreducible’<sup>33</sup>. It was one of the chief means by which the missionary narratives successfully effectuated its primal project of phrasal-reform. The seductive operation of translation which complemented the missionary project of the discursive annihilation had been more effective in the

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<sup>31</sup> Rev. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, 353.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 396- 399; *The Land Of Charity*, 189-190, 200-212.

<sup>33</sup> An exemplary instance is the translation of the concept of *dharma rajyam* or *dharmabhoomi* into “the land of piety, charity and truth” by Rev. Mateer. Mateer writes: “We rejoice to picture ourselves the period when the material resources of that rich and beautiful country shall be developed, when manufactures shall be introduced, and national commerce and intercourse with other countries be widened and extended - and all consecrated to Christ; when the talents and energies of the rulers and statesmen, the poets and historians, now devoted to the service of false gods, shall be imbued with revealed truth, and used to the glory of God and the highest good of man...when the various castes and peoples of India shall be fused into one great people, exemplifying as a whole the various excellences which even now glimmer forth in particular classes — the commanding intellect of the Brahmans, the shrewdness and business capacity of the Sudras, the humble laboriousness of the Shanars and Pulayars, the self-denial and devotion of the ascetics, the simplicity and hospitality of the hill tribes, the indomitable vigour and courage of the Mohammedans; when the religiousness and liberality now evinced in the support of the temples and worship of false gods, and the punctual attendance on the religious festivals, shall become true holiness and practical piety; when kings shall be nursing fathers and their queens nursing mothers to the church.

Then shall Travancore indeed be what she is now fancifully denominated by her people, *Tiru-varung-kodu*—the Sacred, Prosperous Kingdom; *Vanji Bhumi*—the Treasure Land; *Dharma Bhumi*—the land of Piety, Charity, and Truth.” *The Land of Charity*, 368-370.

sense that it sanctioned and sanctified the duplicisation of the selves and the substitution of the heterogenous phrases. The phrasal violence involved in it was masked and therefore escaped the detection of the subject. As a result, the new subjects became the victims of a disguised war on their selves and phrases. At the same time their victimhood could never be proved in the tribunal of the modernist knowledge because it knew only the language of the victors. The victim in other words was forced to use the laws and languages of the victors in order to plead for justice. S/he had to duplicise his phrases by translating it into the language of the victor. The victim-phrases could never be heard by the discursive tribunal of the colonial-modern Order. People were deafened of the 'differends' produced in the missionary-modern operations of knowledge. They substituted the political aesthetics of the '*rajyam*' to become the subscribers of the 'promised land of history', the utopia of a pastoral, welfare state or the realistic social fiction of 'national progress' conceived linearly, and determinately. The heterogenous site of Idea is being reduced to a homogenous horizontal unity, a unity achieved at the cost of the differences or the singularities of the people's phrases times and faiths. The idea of the 'unitve whole' of the people signalled by the *rajyam* was fragmented into competing identities, communities, classes or castes which were to be finally 'synthesised' by the concept of a welfare state. The *rajyam* was reconstituted in this fashion into a united front of allegiances, interests and powers, classified and statistised according to the new criterions of knowledge. The fragmentation of the *rajyam* reached its ultimate phase when it was got partitioned into caste-community 'corporations' and caste-identities. The romance was ultimately debarred from the site of history. The missionary-modern-pundits invented history of 'factions', or 'fragments' or the the factional histories of embattled castes, and *varnas*. These 'fragmentary' histories, in the context of Keralam, themselves triggered off series of caste fueds and riots in civil society. The social fabric had now been polarised into *savarnas* and *avarnas*, *eezhavas* and *nairs* and various castes and subcastes. These polarities were identified and consolidated by the knowledge processes of the sensus and survey, the sociologies, ethnographies and histories of the 'ethnic' communities and groups constituting the 'population' of the native country. The whole history of the Malayali reform was

retold in terms of the battle of identities. The missionary and administrative discourses re-constituted the identities according to the caste-*varna* affiliations and positioned them in oppositional terms. This could also be seen as the historical beginning of the 'politics of litigation'<sup>34</sup> which determined and defined the political practice of the 'leftists' as well as rightists', the 'progressives' as well as the 'regressives' in the modern Keralam. It was the missionary discourses that had first exposed the trauma of caste or *varna* relations (in its modernistic sense) that segmented the native society. However, the strategies of displacement and containment carried out by them have only aggravated the original trauma<sup>35</sup>. The victimised races, castes or communities identified as such by the missionary discourses emerged litigants demanding compensation for the wrongs undergone by them. 'People', a term which is an object of Idea was illegitimately translated or reduced into the concept of 'population' — a statistical totality of empirical individuals or selves which displaced the sense of 'infinity' and 'heterogeneity' inlaid in the idea. The caste-riots, and the revolts of the lower caste like the 'breast-clothe' movement of 1859 should be seen in this sense as the earliest instances of the rise of litigational politics in Keralam. It was the missionary-modern- mode of reform which stirred the riots. As it was often the case with the 'litigational' or 'compensatory' politics of modernism, the caste-riots could never bear witness to the 'affect-phrases', never confront the trauma of casteism or *varnic* order. On the contrary, they could only repeat or reinforce them because they missed the realm

<sup>34</sup> "The difference between a differend and a litigation is crucial to Lyotard's argument. A litigation is a dispute that takes place according to a single and determinate rule of judgment. A differend, on the otherhand, is a dispute between at least two radically heterogenous or incommensurable language games, where no one rule can be invoked in terms of which to pass judgment, since that rule necessarily belongs to one language or the other. In litigation, the accuser and the accused speak 'the same language' as it were, recognize the same law. In a differend, they speak two radically different idiolects". Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London, Routledge, 1991), 117-118.

<sup>35</sup> The concept of the Dravidian-Aryan conflict incepted by the missionaries especially like Reverend Robert Caldwell and others in the ethnographies and philologies of Tamilakom is an exemplary instance of displacing the true conflicts into disputes for 'litigation'. V.Ravindran, "The Unanticipated Legacy of Robert Caldwell and the Dravidian Movement", *South Indian Studies*, No.1 January-June 1996 (Kochi, Chithira Publications 1996), 83-84; The 'indigenous ethnic communities held to be the 'original' race and were placed in the lower strung of the caste-hierarchy were traced to be the 'affected' or victimised ones and were raised to the status of litigants or plaintiffs demanding compensation for the wrong undergone by them in the past either by the onslaught of the Aryan race or the Brahmanical *varna* regime of the native society.

of Idea which was paramount to the questions of 'self', 'identity' or 'community'. Identities were constructed as empirical objects or phenomena which could be packaged in a statistical or sociological schema of population as 'selves' or communities with their brand names. However, the modernist historians who resurrected these caste-riots or wars of communities as the progressive episodes of reform<sup>36</sup> had never given critical attention to the crucial role played by the missionary regime of knowledge behind them..

The logistics of schooling employed by the missionaries implicated a regimentation of phrases — a war of knowledge. It installed the cognitive, conceptual, or the discursive modes of knowledge, at the sanctum sanctorum of the people's mind. It sanctified the truth-claims, norms and procedures of the self-legitimationising discourses of modernity. All the other genres of thought were expelled from the purview of knowledge. It detained the heterogeneous streams of thought, the reflective manner of judgment and the whole matrices of Idea that enlivened the people's culture. The folkloric, epic, spiritual, mythic and aesthetic traditions of the natives which sustained these matrices of Idea in the subterranean layers of indigenous mind were kept aloof as dangerous and retrogressive zones of thought.

The tribunal of the missionaries could therefore be found guilty of neutralising the conflicts into 'disputes', substituting the silent phrases of the people by the discursive 'voices', and ultimately debarring the people from the crucial task of 'reflective' judgment. These were the costs to be paid by the new subjects for civilizing and re-forming their selves according to the dictum of the missionary regime of knowledge. There was no law-court, no competent tribunal where the victims could plead their cases in their own phrases. The wrong done to the people who were the 'affected' or the 'victims' was irremediable.

The discursive processes of translation and substitution launched by the missionary regime of knowledge entailed the metaphysical operation of transcribing the 'other' into the 'same' by the means of dialectical synthesis. An

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<sup>36</sup> R.N.Yesudas, *People's revolt in Travancore* (Trivandrum: 1975); N.K.Jose, *Channar lahala* (Vaikom: Hobby Publishers, 1979); Robert L.Hard Grave, Jr, *Essays in the Political Sociology Of South India* (New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 1993), 146; P.K.Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charitram*, (Tiruvananthapuram: Kerala Bhasha Institute, 1987), 480-481.

exemplary instance is the translation of the paralogical phrase '*rajyam*' into the concepts of nation-state or welfare state, as done by Mateer. The *rajyam* ie., the 'affect-phrase' is emptied of its matrix of Idea, its singularity and heterogeneity by this phrasal re-form. The faiths and cults of the people were verified, scrutinied, classified and judged according to the protestant stipulations. The whole enterprise of re-form was inscribed as a recurrence or repetition of the biblical events. The missionaries identified themselves with the prophetic lineages of the Judaic traditions who fought the 'heathens' or the 'pagans', the 'evil' practitioners of 'savage' cults on behalf of the monotheistic Father God of Mosses. The 'others,' the different, and the 'heterogeneous' were exorcised through a violent program of inquisition and discursive reduction dismissing such cases as 'anomalies' 'antinomies', or 'aberrations'.

The project of subjectification carried out by the missionaries was inseparably linked to the strategical operation of depoliticising the people. The indigenous polity, political practices, and ideas associated with all were outrightly denounced as 'uncivilized', 'primitive' or redundant by the missionary historians. Tiruvitamcore was a 'barbarian civilization' according to Mateer.<sup>37</sup> To the missionary scholars, the *Dharmarajyam* as traditionally cherished by the native people never 'occurred' in the past and was not possible to be realised in the present or future. If it were to be realised it had to be supervised by and subordinated to the missionary mode of faith and knowledge. The missionaries charted out a program of protestantising the selves and polity and transforming them to pastoral welfare society. By paraphrasing the term *Dharmabhoomi* as a 'land of charity, piety and truth' Mateer projects the protestant designs of a welfare nation-state ordained by its providential mode of history.<sup>38</sup> The translation here exterminates the political matrix of idea involved in the phrase *dharmarajyam* and restructure it according to the protestant axioms of state. Consequently the *rajyam* submerges as an 'affect-phrase' or a 'victim-phrase' in the histories written by the missionaries as well as the modernist historians who could never sever their bondage to the hegemonic discourses of missionary modernism.

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<sup>37</sup> Rev. Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*, 356.

<sup>38</sup> *The Land of Charity*, op.cit., 368-370.

## 2. The 'Princely History' of Sankunny Menon

The 'counter-histories' also emerged which challenged and countered the judgment made by the missionaries against the native political tradition and its 'Kingly polity'. An exemplary instance was the 'princely history' of Sankunny Menon<sup>39</sup> which defended the *rajya*-state from the defamation it underwent in the missionary histories. The politics of 'self-respect' involved in this eulogization of the indigenous kingdom should not be overlooked. What happens here is just a reversal of the equations of power and the positioning of the parties of dispute. Significantly the mode of argument and judgment, carried out here is more or less same with that of the missionary history. The modernist historiography, including the counter-histories of the natives, could only repeat and therefore aggravate the injustice made to the *rajya*-phrase. It displaced the political conflicts involved in the politics of *rajyam* into a dispute for 'litigation'. The whole focus of Menon's work was put on proving that Tiruvitamcore was a 'progressive' and 'righteous' nation or civilization – "a land of charity piety and truth" – as a reply to the missionary allegations against it. It established fictitious continuities in the dynastic geneology of the kingdom and replenished it with whatever things it lacked according to the missionary history. The 'progressive' historians of the later

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<sup>39</sup> "All these nations were treated very kindly and with respect by the king of Travancore in times when European nations were but half-civilized. The kings cultivated the acquaintance and friendship of the Europeans and gave to each and everyone of them the valuable products of Travancore especially pepper, without showing partiality and without giving cause for quarrels among them, though at that period a strong spirit of rivalry prevailed among European nations and they were constantly at war with each other. (83); "Most of the Travancore kings have ruled the country with wisdom and valour, surmounting all oppositions both from the feudatory chiefs and from foreign invaders, and governing the kingdom satisfactorily. Though there are no details of the reigns of some sovereigns on record, yet it may be stated without fear of contradiction, that the sovereigns of Travancore had been generally gifted with wisdom and a high sense of duty, and that almost without exception, their mental culture has been of the highest order.

Almost all the sovereigns of Travancore are distinguished, more or less, not only for their princely accomplishments, but also for their princely accomplishments, but also for the production of various Sanscrit works on Philosophy, Metaphysics, History, Religion, Music, The Drama, &c., while their governing abilities were and are seldom equalled by the native kings of India.

These sovereigns kept pace with other nations in the art of good government, and their wisdom and good principles were known and testified to by several European nations, in the earliest days of their intercourse with India (84). P.Sangoonny Menon, *A History of Travancore*, (Tiruvananthapuram, Government of Kerala, 1983), 83, 84.

period, despite a drastic change in the phrases, concepts and terminology, also followed the same track. The *rajyam* was viewed by them in terms of a 'feudal state', or a 'centralised modern state'<sup>40</sup>. They would also call it a 'trade' state, a tributary kingdom or a vassal state of the British<sup>41</sup> or whatever may be suited to their purpose. They were in short reproducing the Euro-modern syllabi of the history of 'state formation' in the native context. The historical romance in contrast, reopened the case of the *Dharmarajyam* leaving it open as a 'differend' and providing it a negative presentation. If the *rajyam* never 'happened' in the missionary or modernist histories it 'happens' as an irrepresentable drama of 'happening' in the historical romance.

The sense of shame and guilt inflicted by the missionary discourses, by its projects of defamation and denunciation of the whole traditions of the indigenous culture traumatised the minds of the native subjects. It invariably created a void or a spasm in their social existence turning them into split selves. The following account provided by A.R. Rajarajavarma, the veteran critic and scholar of modern Malayalam literature would reveal the intensity of the intellectual and spiritual crisis undergone by the native middleclass in the face of the 'civilizational clash' that stormed the minds of the Malayali people.:

God had destined our life span to be in a period where two powerful civilisations are clashing face to face. One of them is born and brought up in the native place, and not decadent or weakened as some might have misunderstood; on the contrary, it is the one that has gained more venerability due to its age and specific wisdom. The other is one which has come from the west, which is merrying in youthful spirit, with a pleasant *swastivada*. It decorates the world with artifices of music and literature, without taking into account their negative consequences. And the welfare of the common people among us is dependent on the ultimate outcome of this contestation. We have to consider the forces of each one of the contestants. *Our task today is to direct the turn-out of this competition towards the acceptance of an attitude which uphold a nithyata or eternity of our*

<sup>40</sup> A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Marthanda Varma – Adhunika Tiruvitamcorinte Udayam*. (Tiruvananthapuram: Department of Cultural Publications, Govt of Kerala, 1990), 9,118-133; K. Sivasankaran Nair, *Venadinte Parinamam*, Thiruvananthapuram, Department of Cultural Publications, Govt of Kerala, 1993, 263-287; For a discussion on the stateformation of Tiruvitamcore see K. N. Ganesh "The Process of State Formation in Travancore", *Studies in History*, Volume vi Number 1 (New Delhi, Sage Publications January-June 1990), 15-33.

<sup>41</sup> E.M.S.Namboodiripad, *Kerala Society and Politics, An Historical Survey* (New Delhi, National Book Centre, 1984), 53.

*people by coping with the future, in such a way that it is just a fellow successor or companion of a past, never making it (the past) a mere myth.*<sup>42</sup> (Italics added)

The realisation of this historical trauma evoked an urge for enquiring alternate modes of reform that would uphold the sense of honour and self-respect of the native people, their right to judge their destiny in their own terms. This was the cultural scenario which offered the ground for the emergence of the alternative narratives of reform namely the Guru mode of reform on the one hand and the historical romance on the other in Tiruvattamcore. It was through their contestatory engagement and negotiation with the missionary mode of reform that these alternative narratives reinscribed the ideas of reform and progress in indigenous terms transgressing the laws of the former at various levels.

### **3. The Guru-Narratives of Reform**

The Guru-narratives of reform marked the first radical encounter made by the native people to transgress the trauma of faith undergone by them in the colonial modern conditions. Most importantly they retrieved the native people's right of judgment in the case of spiritual faith. Reform to them was not a violent rupture with indigenous traditions, a surgical operation, an 'amputation'<sup>43</sup> or disowning of the pasts as the missionaries professed, but a resurrection of the

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<sup>42</sup> A.R.Rajaraja Varma, *A.R.Raja Raja Vermayude Tirnjedutha Prabandhangal* (Chenganasserry: Renjima Publications, 1987), 267-268.

<sup>43</sup> Reform is a process of cultural or spiritual amputation, of a useless or malignant organ/memory/tradition/bad faith which is considered as the only possible means for the survival and cure of the patient/native/self. As a self-verdict on the evils and superstitions of the natives, the testimonial of a native intellectual—a Brahmin judge—himself is produced by Mateer: "In an English lecture on "Our Superstitions," delivered by a Brahman judge not long since to large native audience, with a high Brahman magistrate occupying the chair, the lecturer, in closing his address, touchingly and impressively referred to a striking incident which had occurred, a fisherman having had both arms amputated in the Mission Hospital after a hard struggle in the sea for life with a ferocious shark. "Our case," said the lecturer, "is exactly similar to this fisherman's case. *While we are sunk in the ocean of ignorance, the shark of superstition seized us strongly, and we had to fight against it for our life. The wave of English education has brought us to a place of safety with a little life. It is absolutely necessary that we should save our souls from being condemned to Hell. To do this we, like Michael, must undergo the amputation of the crippled and diseased mind, however painful the operation may be. Let us then kneel down and pray to the Great Doctor of doctors to do the operation, and make our souls healthy, so that they may become fit to enter His Kingdom.*" (Italics used by the Researcher) Reverend Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* 398. The native tradition/self and history is, in short, synonymised with a 'crippled or diseased mind' which has to be amputated urgently for preserving 'their souls healthy'.



radical traditions of the past accompanied by the rejection of the *varna-jati* regimes of the traditional society.

### 3.1 *Sree Chattampi Swamikal*

The radical thrust of the Guru narratives of reform lied in its resistance to or the critique of the knowledge - regime of the missionary modernity and the laws of the existing modes of subjectivities. It questioned the missionary subjectivity on the one hand and the *varnic* or *jati* identity imposed by the traditional Hindu society on the other. The polemical discourses launched by Chattampi Swamikal against the missionary discourses of faith in his *Kristumatachedam*, against the supremacy of the Brahmanical regime of knowledge in his *Vedadhikara nirooppanam*, and against the *Nambootiri* hegemony over the indigenous matrix of faith and society in his *Pracheena Malayalam* were exemplary instances. Swamikal even produced a critique of Sankara's interpretation of the *Brahmasutra*. He unmasked and attacked the Brahminic *varna* leanings of Sankara in his *Vedhadhikara nirupanam* and *Pracheena Malayalam*.<sup>44</sup> *Vedadhikara nirupanam* established that it was the knowledge of the self (*Atma*) or the absolute which constituted the core of Vedas. By depriving the right to learn Vedas the Brahmins had been robbing off the other varnas their right to think the 'absolute' and reach self-realization.<sup>45</sup> The Sudra's right to learn the Vedas was asserted on the basis of the sastric and traditional texts and indogeneous logical procedures and precedences. In *Pracheena Malayalam*, Swamikal denounced the status of the *sudra*-hood attributed to Nairs, one of the prominent communities of Keralam and countered the Brahminical claims of spiritual and ritual superiority and proprietorship of land, temples and wealth in the country<sup>46</sup>. A historical exposition of the pre-brahminic glories of the Malayali people was attempted. The *dharmic* thrust of the early inhabitants of Malayalam was traced out to the *Nakas* — whom he glorified as an ideal society— of the ancient period.<sup>47</sup> Swamikal constructed a theory of 'origin' which held the *Nakas* as the predecessors of the present-day

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<sup>44</sup> K. Maheswaran Nair, ed., 1995, 430-439.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 461-509.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 306-366.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 367-392.

Nairs. *Advaita chintapadhati* was a philosophical or logical treatise on the spiritual contemplation of the absolute knowledge (*jnana*) which was equalized to *Brahma* the Infinite. The *jnanic*, *advaitic* or *saiva siddhantic* traditions of the Dravidan Tamilakom, were retrieved and a radical negotiation between the *advaitic* and *siddhantic* traditions was attempted, The *Tatvomasī mahavakya* was reread in a *saivaadvaitic* perspective.<sup>48</sup> The *saivic* implications of the *asi* phrase was repossessed thereby adding a third dimension, the *saivic* dimension, to the discernment of the relation of the self and the Other — the *tvom* and *tat*, the immanence and transcendence, the *jeeva* soul and the absolute. By highlighting the *asivakya* as the key-phrase of the equation which conjoined both the other two instances of *tat* and *tvom* he relieved the contemplation of the unity of ‘self’ and the ‘Other’ from its dualistic problematic. The *asi* phrase which literally meant ‘is’ or ‘to be’ was placed at the pedestal of the ‘*Mahavakya*’, retrieving the sense of the *saivic* ‘occurrence’. It implicated a state where the unity of the self and the Other was achieved in the here and now of the spiritual introspection.

The Guru-movement’s affiliation to the Dravidian self-respect movement that made upheavals in Southern most India was revealed by the radical critique of the Brahminical supremacy and the affirmation of the pre-brahmanical heritage of the indigenous people attempted by it. It was the *Jnanaprajagaram*, the association of the scholars of the period which seemed to have exposed Chattampi Swamikal to the socio-religious and cultural resurgence that shook the Tamil regions.<sup>49</sup> This intellectual circle brought him into contact with the scholars like Sundaram Pilla who had leanings towards the Dravidian Self-respect movement. The polemical works produced by Swamikal, in short, affirmed the dignity and honour of the *sudras* or the people belonging to the lower strata of the Brahmanical social order especially the Nair community. It was the regime of Nambootiri Brahmins that had been found guilty of assailing and ruining Nairs.

### 3.2 *Sree Narayana Guru*

The *saivadvaitic* contemplation of the identity of the *jeeva*-self and the the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.,603-618

<sup>49</sup> K.Bhaskara Pilla, op.cit., 27-28.

Absolute Self had more importantly provided a zone of thought which deconstructed one's worldly self, one's socially or discursively constituted subjectivity. It explored a realm of the Idea of the 'Absolute' which exceeded the finitive or speculative logic of the missionary knowledge. The *jeeva*-self was invented to be identical with the 'Absolute Self' that was *Brahma*. Such an introspection of the self — as intrinsically in union with the unlimited, unlimitable and irreducible state of the 'Infinite'— provided fuel for thinking beyond the colonial modern subjectivity, offered a liberative or emancipative vision of the selfhood. The idea of one's own self as identical with the Absolute Self, the *Sivam* — the integral state of *sat*, *chit* and *anandam* (existence-effulgence-bliss) — might be traced out as one of the chief ideational forces that propelled the politics of self-respect in Keralam. As argued earlier, it was this *saivic*, *subha*-narrative (auspiciously and joyfully ending) of the progression and realisation of the self which served as the energetics of the socio-religious reform kindled by Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru. They repossessed the *advaitic* reflection which proceeded with the discriminative contemplation of the 'finite' and the 'Infinite'. The narrative strategies of *adhyaropanam* and *apavadam* used by the *advaitins* to present it were retrieved. These modes of contemplations were reappropriated as radical means of critiquing the world, society and 'historical regimes' of the times. It was this critical introspection of world and society which led Chattampi Swamikal to vindicate the victimhood of the *sudras* or *nairs* and reinscribe them as alternative subjects — or the objects of a sublime Idea of *sivam* —rather than the empirical castiest selves.

The ascetic and anarchic vision of the world, characteristic to the *Saivaadvaitic* tradition of spirituality, might be seen as one of the chief factors which prevented Swamikal from directly launching any projects of socio-religious reform. However, Swamikal did establish a dynamic rapport with the middle class familial people whom he taught the *saivadvaitic* ideals of self-liberation. The importance of the familial life was acknowledged in augmenting a community of the *saivic* selves. The *Garhasthyam* or the familial life to him implicated the sacred site of the union of the principles of *Siva* and *Parvati* or *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. Swamikal's disciples, however, came forward to initiate reform among the Nair

community. Neelakanda Teertha Pada Swamikal worked out a project of *achara parishkaram*' (ritual reform) and Teertapada Paramahansa Swamikal was esteemed for his pioneering role in initiating the *dharmic* resurgence of the people mostly belonging to the Nair community.

The contemplation of the 'Absolute' as done by Swamikal, however, was confined to spiritual phrases and genres and was constrained by the ascetic or the *saivadvaitic* disinclination towards a deeper investigation of the social or political realms. The liberative spiritual story of the 'self' was not linked to or complemented by a radical political judgment or a vision of a society which would transgress the caste, community affiliations of the period and would resist the laws of the 'world' mainly mediated by the colonial modern order. The Nair identity which Swamikal projected as emblematic of the ethnic or cultural ethos of the Malayali people exceeding caste and affiliated to the *saivic* ideals of self was however interpolated with the empirical concept of a Nair-caste-identity. The latter signified the new subjectivity that was reconstituted by the colonial conditions. It was this apolitical and ascetic nature of the Swamikal's teaching, its diversion from the political matrix of the *rajyam* which seemed to have distanced C.V, the historical romancer from the spiritual vocation of Chattampi Swamikal. However, there seemed to have taken place some sort of dialogic engagements between C.V. and Teertapada Swamikal,<sup>50</sup> the disciple of Chattampi Swamikal, who attempted to launch a dynamic programme of reform linking the spiritual social and political realms of the people. Anyhow, it was his basic dissention with the ascetic thrust of the contemporary reform movements which prompted C.V. to carry out incessant struggles against the ascetic or apolitical ideologies in his socio-political and aesthetic practices.

The *saivadvaitic* narrative of the 'Absolute' (as *satchit anandam* and *sivam*), along with the practice of reform inflamed by it, reached its utmost intensity and culmination in the teachings and career of Sree Narayana Guru. Guru, who might be called a *saivadvaitin*, par excellence. He brought down the contemplation of the 'Absolute' towards the 'worldly' or the socio-historical existence of the people and

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<sup>50</sup> Sree Vidyandatheerthapada Swamikal and Pandit Sri C.Ramakrishnan Nair, *Sree Teerthapada Paramahansa Swamikal-vol-1*(Teerthapadaapuram: Teerthapadaashramam, 1980), 438-441.

induced a negotiation between the 'social' and 'spiritual' and the 'worldly' and the 'divine'. Guru emerged in the socio-historical scene as an accomplished yogi who descended from the summit of the mystic union with the absolute towards the 'worldly life' driven by his compassion and love towards his fellow-beings. This descent might be seen as necessitated by his irresistible urge for presenting the Infinite — in lieu of the donation of the divine occurrence — in his contemplative actions.<sup>51</sup> The installation of the *sivalingam* in Aruvippuram marked a great event in the history of Malayali-reform. It was nothing less than a radical appropriation of the vital traditions of indigenous faith, by a yogi hailing from the lower strata of the varna-society. It might also be seen as a radical instance of the 'negative' worship in the sense that it installed the 'formless form' of the Absolute — an icon or a phallus of the 'Infinite', a sign of the Sublime. It effectuated a transmutation of the indigenous faith by purging it off its sensual 'affectations', 'interestedness' and ritualistic dictums. It reoriented the religiosity of the lower caste people traditionally anchored on vile passions, sensual and material interests towards the matrix of Idea — the limitless domains of reason. (The spiritual energetics of the *saiadvaitic* contemplation of the Absolute and its spiritual energetics were thus repossessed which rejuvenated the people's faith. by the spiritual energetics of). The enthusiasm produced by this event which marked a 'negative' or parodic worship was so amazing that it became the nucleus of a new religious sensibility. It marked the eruption of the spiritual energetics of *saiadvaitam* in the force-field of the socio-religious re-form in Kerala. It might also be held as the last event in the resurgence of the *saiya-advaitic* mode of reform because what took place afterwards was a process of mere reproduction or representation of this 'affect-event' as demonstrated by the organizational project of building shrines temples and institutions. The contemplation and negative presentation of the Absolute as implicated in the event of the inception of the *sivalingam* in Aruvippuram did induce the 'sublime feeling' among the minds of the witnesses. It was a rare occasion in history when the people witnessed the descent of the 'sacred' in to the 'human'-plane and the ascent of the 'human' towards the 'sacred' or the

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<sup>51</sup> Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru* (Varkala: Narayana Gurukula Foundation, 1990), 16-18.

realignment of the 'sacred' with the 'historical'. More over, it demonstrated how a devotional or contemplative act or an indirect presentation of an Idea could produce waves of enthusiasm among the people.

A noticeable shift or a rupture occurred in the life of Guru as elaborated earlier, with the establishment of S.N.D.P Yogam in 1903 with Guru as its permanent patron. The *kshetrayogam* of Aruvippuram was thereby transformed into a joint stock company of reform. It marked the entry of Guru in to the social scene where he collaborated and negotiated with the social, institutional and administrative powers of the time. Guru here began to reconcile the *saivic* idea of the Infinite with the conditions of the society structured by the Colonial modern order. He made a pact with the elite Ezhava leaders of the period in a joint venture to reform the indigenous society and to uplift the downtrodden people especially of the lower strata in the *varna* structure. The 'S.N.D.P.' phase therefore marked a short term marriage of divergent interests, forces, and modes of reform, namely, one implying a vertical, non-linear vision of reform as held by *saivadvaitic* narrative, and the other, the horizontal linear and discursive mode of reform which might be called 'the company mode of reform'. The latter was basically anchored on missionary narratives. Of course this alliance provided Guru a new vista of action to reach the 'public', educate the new subjects and to effectuate his *saivadvaitic* ideals of progress and re-form in the society. If Guru was bent on using the Yogam as a medium of the dissemination and execution of his ideals of socio-spiritual regeneration he was in turn held as an instrument for popularising and legitimising the 'company mode of reform', engineered by the elite leaders of Ezhavas. The joint venture offered Guru a large exposure into the newly constituted social spaces, and an accessibility to the agencies of knowledge, like the print media and the educational and organisational net work, reconstituted according to the new Order. The institutional turn taken by Guru in this second phase seemed to have also inflicted a schism in the personality of Guru who is now found torn between the spiritual vision of a *saivadvaitin* and the organisational drive and social activism of a missionary reformer. The narrow community interests of the elite Ezhava leaders and the 'disinterestedness' of the uncompromising *saivadvaitin*, avowed to resist the strictures of the contemporary

regimes of caste and religion, soon came to a clash. The elite eezhava leaders who drove the 'joint-stock company' of reform and who were cynical towards the *saivic* ideals of Guru were set on a programme of appropriating and capitalising the spiritual charisma of Guru for their own benefit. The contestatory attitude taken by Guru towards the 'company' mode of reform and its preoccupation with caste-community interests soon antagonised the leaders of the Yogam. Consequently Guru's honeymoon with the 'company' mode of reform soon came to a halt and the couples got divorced after a shortwhile. In 1915 Guru took back the wealth and properties bequeathed by him to the Yogam and in 1916 he sent a letter to Palpu revealing his total disavowal with the Yogam and his intention to dissociate with it.<sup>52</sup> Guru's separation with the Yogam became total when he founded an association of the monks called *Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalona Sangham* in 1928.

The third phase of Guru's life, as elaborated earlier, was marked by a sense of disillusionment with the activities of the organisations founded by himself and his disciples. He could sense that his disciples, mostly absorbed in the power-games of the period, were quite incapable of resisting the seductive operation of the relations of power/knowledge predominant in the period. Distressed with the narrow-mindedness and the casteistic prejudices of his associates, Guru soon felt himself a stranger in their company. The reports of his second journey to Tamil Nadu and Srilanka reveal the suffocation and displeasure felt by him in the presence of his disciples and devotees who represented the new subjects of Keralam bred on missionary modern discourses. As a result, Guru even refused to come back to Keralam during his sojourn in Sri Lanka and TamilNadu.<sup>53</sup>

The S.N.D.P. phase of 'socio-religious' reform, of course, was successful in effectuating the projects of the 'company' mode of reform among the Ezhava community. Schools, hospitals, firms, printing press, journals, and various allied establishments were built up according to the axioms of the missionary mode of reform. The Ezhava community could redress many of its common grievances to a

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<sup>52</sup> P.K.Gopalakrishnan, *Sree Narayana Guru: Viswa Manaviskathayude Pravachakan* (Thiruvananthapuram: Prabha Book House, 1992), 162.

<sup>53</sup> Dr. K.Sreenivasan, *Sree Narayana Guru* (Trivandrum: Jaysree Publications, 1989), 168.

great extent, and even gain an upperhand in the relations of power, in acquiring wealth, prestige, and economic advancement. However, it was the material interests of the new middleclass which were mainly safe-guarded and promoted by the Yogam. As a consequence of this, the benefits of 'reform' never reached the lower strata of the community. To the elite leadership of the Yogam, reform meant a profitable business enterprise and community meant a company which would yield massive return or profit at least to the class which engineered its targets. Yet, the office-bearers of the Yogam could realise the use-value of Guru as the generator of ideas which released social energies and promoted feeling of fellowship and unity among the members of the community. The 'company' reformers of Yogam got success in mobilising the spiritual enthusiasm emitted by Guru for widening and coalescing their organisational network and legitimising the industrial enterprise of reform launched by them. They were also successful in re-constituting the majority of the members of the community, as the consumers and reproducers of the 'company mode of reform'. The subtle differences and the inner contestations that took place within the Guru movement of reform and Guru's dissensus towards the policies of the Yogam had never been given due importance by the modern historians. The modern historians who foreclosed the spiritual, philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of the Sree Narayana Movement could only produce the mega-narratives of the institutional victory of S.N.D.P. movement and the social and organisational practices of Guru. The radical resistance made by Guru in the field of the spiritual, philosophical or aesthetic contemplation of the absolute, the phrasal or generic struggles carried out by him in the level of Ideas and faith had never gained the attention of the historians of Malayalee reform. As a departure from this tradition, the thesis would detach the story of the movement of S.N.D.P, from the core of the Guru-manner of reform and examine its deviation from the higher ideals of reform and progress envisaged by the Guru narratives. The 'company mode of reform' embarked by Yogam was, in short, incapable of resisting the conditions of a 'colonial modern order' and the subjectivity offered by it. The people who engineered it were the victims of the procedures of knowledge tutored by the missionaries and the 'litigational' politics initiated by them. They could never go beyond the strictures of the caste-



community ordained by the new Order. Consequently the company reformers of Yogam turned out to be the indigenous agency of reinforcing the missionary subjectivity. The elite leadership of the Yogam had already internalised the missionary mode of reform which classified, conceptualised, and partitioned the native society into warring fragments of caste and community interests. These procedures of knowledge had been mainly instrumental in depoliticising the native selves. As a result of this, the 'programmes' of reform, carried out by Yogam ended up in the solidification of caste community relations and identities. Evidently, this would mark the deviation taken by the company mode of reform from the proposed ideals of the Guru-narratives.

The complacency shown by the leaders of the S.N.D.P with the 'colonial modern' regime is revealed by their reluctance to make a political critique of the British rule and the new social Order incepted by it. They were in general preoccupied with eulogizing the British empire and its administrators as emissaries of providential grace.<sup>54</sup> Their casteist orientation prevented them from realising the importance of a common struggle for the political self-determination and the autonomy of the people as a whole. They kept aloof from the Idea of the *rajyam*, the political matrix of the native people that offered the imagination of a 'higher accord' of people. They were in short incapable of making linkages with the aesthetic or 'sensus' community of the *rajya*-people that transgressed the caste-community relations of the period.

The Yogam's attitude towards the policy of conversion also revealed its inherent conformity with the missionary project of proselytization. Though they did not fully accept conversion in its religious sense they held it as a law for reforming the selves in cultural, phrasal, or social terms. The internalization of the missionary logic of conversion implied the acceptance of the principles of substitutability and exchangeability of traditions faiths histories cultures and selves. It was this missionary syndrome that had distanced the rank and file of the Yogam from the political traditions of *rajyam*. Even the option for religious conversion was kept in reservation by the Yogam as a strategical weapon to negotiate and legitimate the 'litigational' politics carried out by them around the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 80.

caste subjectivity. The bargaining and negotiations done by the leaders of the Yogam with various religious heads and groups for profitable terms of conversion after the *Samadhi* of Guru would demonstrate the divergence between the policy of Yogam and the Ideals of Guru. It testifies to the hollowness of the company mode of reform.<sup>55</sup> Instead of initiating a radical political critique of the caste-community relations of the time the company reformers of Yogam took recourse to a politics of caste-reform abandoning the political judgment on the existing relations of power. They were incapable of working out a higher accord of the heterogenous people. On the contrary they launched a program of the proseletisation of selves in cultural and phrasal terms. They took up the politics of litigation demanding compensation for the grievances of the past in the forms of more incentives and opportunities, more reservations in appointment and more power. They substituted the *saivic* ideas of Absolute (as the conglomeration of the principles of *sat chit anandam*) for the abstract concepts of ‘happiness’ ‘welfare’ and ‘progress’ offered by the missionary mode of knowledge. The realm of the Idea was thereby reduced and displaced into satisfiable and programmable phenomena.. The *saivadvaicitic* vision of Guru was pushed to the margin by the official discourses of reform produced by Yogam. The ‘differends’, in short, were coopted and neutralised by the discursive network of colonial modernity and its ‘litigational’ politics.

The thesis here puts forward the argument that the Guru reform could not be reduced to the organisational history of Yogam and the Guru-institutions and that the company mode of reform ran counter to the Saivadvaicitic ideas generally held by the Guru-narratives. It contests the modernist histories which prioritise the institutional activities of the Yogam and explain the whole movement in terms of them leaving the philosophical or the aesthetic core of Guru-narratives as insignificant. The official discourses produced by the Yogam and the associates of Guru caricatured him in the image of a missionary. The parodic and philosophico-poetic phrases of Guru were subjected to the strategical operations of ‘substitution’ and ‘translation’ characteristic to the discursive operation of missionary reform. Guru was totemised and his phrases were sloganised as consumable cultural

<sup>55</sup> K.G. Narayanan, *Ezhava-Teeya charitra padhanom*. (Kayamkulam: Anaswara Publications, 1984), 533, 537; N.R. Krishnan, *Ayithochadanam Adhava Kshetrpraveshanam* (Turavoor: Sree Narasimhavalasom Book Depot, 1963), 136-137.

objects of the print-market. The saintly image of Guru was used by the middle class elite of the Yogam as an emblem of the consensus that prevails in the the community. The Guru-image was used for legitimising the company mode of reform and the community politics built on the homogeneous, horizontal unity of the caste selves.

The textual transformation undergone by one of the most popular aphorisms of Guru, the 'One God, One Caste and One Faith for Man' demonstrates how the operation of paraphrasing and sloganising could kill the heterogeneity of the Guru-phrases. The affect-phrase 'oru'(oneness) is reduced to the postulates of a homogeneous horizontal unity of selves by the modernist regime of reading. The paradoxical intonations of the phrase are dismantled. The phrase is conveniently read as, denoting the modernist modes of 'unities' and 'accords' forged out around the relations of caste. The readings provided by the modernists have focussed on a unity, which curtailed the heterogeneity and differences of the peoples phrases and faiths.

The thesis makes a crucial deviation from the usual practice of inscribing the Sree Narayana movement of reform exclusively in institutional or communicational terms. The contention here is that the vitality of the movement lies outside its institutional or discursive boundaries, i.e., in the parodic, negative phrases put forward by Guru in resistance to the strictures of the caste and the new 'subjectivity' constituted by the colonial modern discourses. One has to plunge into the *saivic* aesthetics of the 'sublime', reinvented by Guru in order to explore the radical thrust of the Guru 'manner' of reform. It is the aesthetic matrix of the Guru-phrases, his poems and philosophical reflections, his jubilant struggle to present an alternative subjectivity going beyond the caste-community norms of the period that would be viewed as signalling the vibrancy of the Guru-movement of reform. This is demonstrated by the dialogic relationship maintained by him with Chattampi Swamikal and his disciples hailing from the Nair community and his dynamic association with the people who were lower in caste-status to Eezhavas. The greatest contribution of Narayana Guru (as it is also the case with Chattampi Swamikal though in a different level), to the socio-religious awakening of Malayali people lies in his reinvention of the *Saivadvic* contemplation of the Idea of

‘Absolute’ and his attempt to re-link it with man’s worldly or social resurgence.

The cultural history of the Malayali reform as attempted by the present thesis would esteem the philosophico spiritual poems and prose tracts of Narayana Guru as marking the crucial field and mode of cultural or phrasal resistance. These aesthetic or philosophical reflections might be held as constituting the core of the Guru-manner of reform. They provide clues to the inner conflicts and dilemmas gone through by the Guru-vision of the world. They would reveal the subtle negotiations and contestations carried out by Guru with the heterogenous traditions of the past and the contemporary narratives of faith, and the inner struggles that took place within him against the sensual ‘affectations’ or the call of worldly inclinations, passions or desire . They heralded a new vision of God, the Infinite, who is reinvented as infinitively graceful, benedictive and lovable in the sign of the *Sivam*. The God emerges in the poems of Guru “with form without form and in formless form” (*aruvayuruvay aruvuruvay*).<sup>56</sup> S/he is both male and female father and mother both *saguna* and *nirguna*. It is this contemplation of Infinite as indivisible, non-dual, formless and with form (or with a formless form), irrepresentable or only negatively presentable which mark the radical turn (of Idea) heralded by the Guru-narratives in the cultural history of reform in Keralam. Moreover, it is this radical contemplation of the Infinite in its oneness within itself and its unity with the finite world derived out of it, which made it possible for Guru to challenge the casteistic ritualistic regime of the period. This *saivic* matrix of Idea might be esteemed as the driving force of the socio-religious reform as carried out by Guru. However, the former is sidelined by the modernist scholars as a mere appendage of Guru’s reform activities. Without going through the poems and philosophical treatises of Guru it is impossible to realize the depth, intensity and the paralogic complexity of the Guru-reform. These aesthetically fertile phrases have been ‘indifferently’ read by the modernist writers who subscribe to the rules of the missionary narratives of reform. One witnesses the radical vision of God, and faith upheld by Guru in these aesthetic or reflective genres. They go beyond the conventional or even *Sankaradvaitic* versions of non-dualism and the

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<sup>56</sup> *Tevarappathikangal*, T.Bhaskaran ed. *Sree Narayana Guruvinte Sampoonakritikal* (Kozhikodu: Mathrubhumi, 1985), 557.

Hebraic-missionary concepts of a monotheistic Father God. Certain important aspects of the *Saivadvaitic* aesthetics as reinvented by Guru are examined below:

- 1 There incessantly took place an inner negotiation and interanimation between heterogenous modes of thinking the 'Absolute', namely the *advaitic*, *saiva siddhantic*, *kashmeeri saivic*, *visishtadvaitic* and *saktheyic* traditions of thoughts and practices<sup>57</sup> leading to a transmutation of faiths. The identity of the *jeeva* self and the Absolute Self as postulated by the *Sankaradvaitic* schools of thought was complicated and vitalized by more complex and paralogic principles of unity and difference. The culmination of this process of inner contestation and dialogic interaction might be discerned in the poems like *Atmopadesha satakam*, *Daiva dasakom* and the philosophical treatises like *Darsanamala*.<sup>58</sup>
- 2 The 'paralogic' and 'differential' unity between God and *jeevas* and the synthesis of the *saguna* and *nirguna* modes of devotion — as retained from the *Saiva siddhantic* or *Visishtadvaitic* traditions — would mark the radical deviation taken by the Guru-aesthetics from the hegemonic streams of 'reflection or devotion. It differed from the conventional *Advaitam* as well as the ritualistic brahminical Hinduism with its *jati varna* regime. It also turned against the 'polytheistic' and superstitious modes of local cults and creeds. The *maya*-vision of the world and the principle of *vivartam* propounded by the traditional *advaitam* — which denounced the world as an illusion or a source of abject 'horror', 'meanness' and 'disaster'— were contested..
- 3 The Guru-phrases reinvented the *saivic* intensity of Dravidian spirituality which eroticised the relation between God and world, the deity and devotee and the 'Infinite' and 'finite'. God was held not merely an object of knowledge but also an object of love and joy. It was this principle of the love and blessing grace of God, which had eroticised the whole vision of devotion and God held by Guru. The hymns to Siva, Devi, Subrahmanya and the devotional poems

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<sup>57</sup> For a detailed examination of the influence of these heterogeneous thoughts of Indian traditions in the teachings and practice of Sree Narayana Guru see, Dr.A.Padmanabha Kuruppu, *Sree Narayana Guruvinte Sahithyavum Darsanavum* (Kozhikodu, Mathrubhumi Printing and Publishing Company, 1989), 22-59.

<sup>58</sup> T.Bhaskaran op.cit.,325-406, 407-479; 238-242.

like *Tevarappathikangal* etc revealed the *saivic* passion characteristic to the *Siddhar Patals*. They retrieve the intensity of the Dravidian *bhakti* aesthetics of the Tamilakom. It reinvented the *Ekantika* (oriented towards a single God) mode of *bhakti* and the *prema bhakti* (which is also associated with *jnana* Bhakti) from the radical devotional movements that emerged in India especially in Tamilakom during the ancient and medieval periods.

God emerged as an object and subject of a sublime Idea in the above-mentioned poems of Guru which radically differed from the concepts of God — as a mere object as well as the means of gratification of vile passions, sensual interests or desires — as subscribed by the common people. The third verse of *Tevarappatikangal* for instance presented the radical difference of the idea of God where he defined his favorite God as a state of great silence (*makamounam*):

It is the state of great silence which dawns after the total subsiding of ego, whom I hold as my dear-most God; it is the paramount state of silence where the whole sensation of *Panchabhootas*, forest, space, sorrow, sin, inclinations, (*vasana*) are shed off. It transcends time; it is radiant as a ray of light; it is a state which is similar to an ember of knowledge where there is no coal; it is a state of silence where even the roots of the relations with relatives, and teachers are torn off.<sup>59</sup>

The fourth verse defined God as the ultimate gem of a teacher or a king who appeared when one accomplished the ultimate spiritual state. This was a state that was totally freed of all the illusions and the conditions of dualities:

He is my God who emerges before one as the saintly teacher or a king at a state when one is no more tied up with millions of deities (*muppathumukkodi*), the differential notions of *trimutins* are shattered, the lotus in the mirage of this dualistic world of attribution is torn off, and when the differences between the three principles (*pasu, pasam* and *pati*), three *pazhs*, (*jeevappazhu, parappazhu, mayappazhu*) and three *muktis* (*samipyam salokyam and saroopyam*), are severed.<sup>60</sup>

The fifth verse hailed God in its paralogic phrases as the compassionate one who was intractable by word and mind. He is glorious and self-luminous light,

<sup>59</sup> T.Bhaskaran ed., *Sree NarayanaGuruvinte Sampoorana Kritikal, Tevarappathikangal*, 3d verse. 576

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 577.

formless yet filling up wherever our gaze reaches. He is the wondrous destination of our gaze and subtler than the subtle.<sup>61</sup>

4. In contrast to the *Mayavadins* or the traditional *Advaitins* it affirmed the importance of the world and human life by divinizing the whole world and its beings, as the holy medium or body of God, the infinitely compassionate. God is the Sun who rises on the transcendental celestial spheres in cosmic as well as micro cosmic dimensions. The whole world, its beings, human self and body were signified as constituting the holy body of the God, the primordial Sun.:

The inner organ, the senses, and counting from the body  
The many worlds we know, are all, on thought, the sacred form  
Of the supreme Sun risen in the void beyond;  
By relentless cogitation one should attain to this.<sup>62</sup>

The complex and dynamic unity between God, the Infinite and the finite world was brought forth in the several verses of *Atmopadeshasatakam*, *Daivadasakom*, etc.

5. The whole story of creation and the worldly reality was explained in terms of the aesthetic spiritual principle of divine *leela*. The world and its beings were held as the part of a cosmic drama, the holy dance (*tiruvilayadal*) of benediction performed by *Siva*, the Infinite:

Half-a-second is what makes the primordial hub  
Of the car-wheel, mounted whereon, the world rolls on;  
Know this to be His divine sport, beginningless  
In the domain of consciousness ever going on.<sup>63</sup>

Dance, cobra, dance!  
Thy burrow seek and witness  
The bliss of grace in wild display.  
Dance, cobra, dance!<sup>64</sup>

6. The erotic and aesthetic principle of God and creation mentioned above was

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.,578.

<sup>62</sup> Atmopadeshsatakam, trans. by Nataraja Guru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*, 445

<sup>63</sup> Verse 34, Atmopadeshsatakam, Trans. by NatarajaGuru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*,567

<sup>64</sup> Kundalini-paattu, Atmopadeshsatakam, trans. by NatarajaGuru, *Life and Teachings of Narayana Guru*, 321

complemented by a philosophical contemplation of the 'Absolute' which transported the former into the domain of a sublime Idea. The whole erotics or the agonistics of devotion was thereby affiliated to the matrix of ultimate reason or the contemplation of the idea of 'Absolute.' The myths of a personified God of form was deconstructed inventing God as an absolute state of self-awareness or thought, as absolute knowledge where the *triputees* (tripartite divisions) of the 'knower', 'knowledge' and the 'object of knowledge' were extinguished, the three merging into one. *Arivu, bodham, velivu, paravelivu, nadunila* or *maunanila* of mind, *tureeyam* or *tureeyateetam* were the phrases used to negatively signify God or the state of union with God. The state of God-realisation was equalised with the absolute state of knowledge which was immanent as well as transcendent to the self of the aspirant. This was not held as something outside or beyond the core of one's self. It implicated the state of thinking at its own, at its absolute. The imageries of the radiant Sun, (*sooryan*), the primordial ocean, fire, the air, or the firmament were used to inscribe the states of the catastrophic realisation of the knowledge of self within the course of one's act of thinking or knowing. They shattered the textual associations of the term knowledge. The realisation of one's own self as identical with the universal self or the unification of the devotee with God, the Infinite, through the spiritual or philosophical contemplation of the 'Absolute' were held as the ultimate aim of human life. It was on the substratum of this faith that the whole vision of reform and progress envisaged by Guru was founded. However such a serene vision of self and knowledge demanded radical critique of, and the resistance to, the contemporary laws of subjectivity and social order. Perhaps, this was a fact which was conveniently discarded by the SNDP mode of reform on the one hand and the *sanyasisangha*-style of spiritual programming on the other. The marriage between the 'worldly' and the 'divine,' the 'social' and the 'spiritual' professed by Guru<sup>65</sup> actually implicated a pragmatics of achieving the ultimate state of

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<sup>65</sup> The instruction given by Guru during the period of the founding of Sivagiri Madhom, and which was later published by Kumaran Asan in 1908. "Human beings, as a whole, yearn for happiness. It is the goal of all sorts of organisations which work in terms of worldly and spiritual affairs. The souls of men prize that happiness which lasts forever rather than the



self-realisation, the unification of the finite self with the Infinite. This paramount ideal however, was being reversed and displaced both in the 'company' mode of reform and the *sanyasi-sangha* mode of spiritual vocation. The priority was given to the material welfare and social advancement of the community. The principles of profit and productivity became the chief goals which replaced the contemplation of the Absolute. The *saivaadvaitic* vision of God and knowledge or the domain of Idea was in short pushed towards the margin. If the spiritual and aesthetic phrases of Guru were still preserved by these institutional agencies it was only because of their use value as means or sources of energy, as 'cultural capital' or social investment. It was the realisation of this setback, which tormented the mind of Guru in his final phase of life.

7. A third instance was brought into the non-dualistic relation of the unity between the God, *Brahma* or the absolute and the *jeeva*-self: the *aparan*, the 'another-self' or the fellow-being.. This was a radical turn in the spiritual contemplation of the 'Absolute' which was traditionally confined to a relation of unity between the 'self' and the Other — the Being or 'Immanent' and the Transcendent, the finite and the Infinite — which excluded 'others' or 'another one'. To recall the 'another self or the fellow-being in this 'self'-sustained and 'self'-realisable state of the eternal bliss suggested the importance given to the 'worldliness' or to an ethnic and ethical chord of the beings. It invariably implicated the retrieval of the individual being's identity with the 'species-being'. Significantly, this wider orientation was found missing in the conventional modes of *advaitic* thought which seemed to have reduced the whole issue of contemplation and devotion of the Absolute into merely an individual or private affair. This ethnic orientation countered the asocial or apolitical mode of spiritual practices which ousted world and its beings from

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sensual pleasures which are ephemeral... The "temporal" and the "spiritual" are not different. In reality, both of them act according to a single goal. The body enjoys happiness due to the coordinated activities of its whole organs. Likewise, for the attainment of the state of happiness which is the ultimate aim of human kind, there requires the coordinated action of the whole practices related to the spiritual and worldly realms". Translation here is done by the present writer from Malayalam. Dr. T.Bhaskaran, op.cit., 1.

the purview of the unity of the self and the Other, and took all the ‘other’ instances for granted. In *atmopadeshasatakam* Guru added the instance of the identity of the ‘other self,’ the ‘self of the fellow being’ to the equation of the unity between the *jeeva*-self and Other, the Absolute Self. Guru was there linking a new phrase of ‘another-self’ to the erotics of self and Other:

Earthy factors shall come to be evermore;  
 One alone remains not subject to becoming;  
 What we know, what it is, what we are, are that same;  
 And all others too remain conforming to its form.<sup>66</sup>

The ‘we’ as well as the ‘others’ are identified with the Infinite which is imperishable and unconditioned by the time and space. This another self or the fellow self which is added into the unity between the self and the Other or the Infinite marks out the importance of a species-site or an ethnic accord of the ‘selves’ and ‘others’ in the pondering of the ‘absolute’. It anticipates a social or cultural matrix of selves and others beyond the conditions of ‘communication’. Guru called this higher accord of ‘selves’ and ‘others’, a *samudayam* a ‘species-site’ which he held as offering the ground for the unity of the triple instances of the ‘Other,’ the ‘jeeva-self’ and the ‘other selves’. However, the term lost its spiritual or ethnic dimensions when it was displaced by the concept of a caste-community corporation offered to it by his disciples — the ideologues of the company mode of reform— as well as the modernist writers.

Idea of this triple unity called forth the ethics of cultural action, an erotics of a contemplative or devotional practice, without ‘interest’s. Such actions were marked by heterogeneity and could be seen only in terms of ‘assemblages’ of the heterogenous dimensions of action pertaining to the ‘spiritual’, ‘aesthetic’, ‘social’, ‘ethical’, ‘libidinal’ and ‘philosophical’. The famous verse of *Atmopadesa Satakam* which stated the primal principle of Guru-reform, should be read in the context of this problematique:

What here we view as this man or that  
 Reflection reveals to be the Self’s prime form;  
 That conduct adopted for one’s Self-happiness  
 Another’s happiness must also secure at once.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> AtmopadeshaSathakom- 66<sup>th</sup> verse-Natarajaguru-639

<sup>67</sup> AtmopadeshaSathakom 24<sup>th</sup> verse- Natarajaguru 549

It asserts that the action done for self-happiness should invariably bring happiness to another self (*aparan*). In other words, one could testify 'self-happiness' only in terms of the happiness of the 'other' or 'another self'. The self is inseparably intertwined with the 'other'. This principle of identity between the self and others, self-love and the love of the other announced that the *advaitic* doctrine professed by Guru had been freed from the philosophy of the Being or the Self as professed by some orders of *sankaraadvaita*. The aspirant here is not a private soul severed from the socio-cultural matrix of people, nor a public self wedded to the new Order, but a self which is one of the instances of the triple unity envisaged between the self, the Other, and the 'another-self'. However, the 'manner' of action envisioned here should be distinguished from the principles of social actions professed by the missionary narratives according to the principles of productivity and profitability. The term 'self-happiness' as used by Guru had nothing to do with the missionary modern concept of happiness as the gratification of needs and 'interests'. The term action here implicated an 'interestless' yet liberative act arising from the reflection of the 'absolute'. It erupts out of a sense of freedom and justice oriented towards the union of the finite and the Infinite. Such actions called-forth by the reflection of Idea never conformed to the mutually competitive and antagonistic relations that conditioned the activities of the new subjects and newly 'civilized' communities.

The *saiva-advaitic* vision of God and world provided by the Guru narratives made great upsurge in the cultural practice of the Malayali People. The poems of Kumaran Asan, marked by their spiritual angst and the conflictual engagement between the matrices of Idea and desire, the philosophical writings of Nataraja Guru, who have attempted to bring out an 'integrated science of the Absolute'<sup>68</sup> on the basis of deeper reflection of Guru's philosophy, and the works of his disciple Nityachaitanya Yati, all would provide exemplary instances of the impact of the Guru-phrases on Malayali sensibility and culture. The contribution of the Guru narratives lies in reorienting the faith devotion, thought, and actions of

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<sup>68</sup> The title of the famous philosophical work of Natarajaguru, one of the disciples of Sree Narayana Guru. Nataraja Guru, *An Integrated Science of the Absolute*, (Varkala: East-West University of Brahmaildya, 3 Vols. 1977).

the people towards the matrix of Idea. A bold attempt is made to link the 'worldly' and the 'otherworldly' the 'sacred' and the 'secular'. The phrases of the 'Infinite' were brought down towards the 'temporal' or the 'material'.

The Guru movement of reform however could not bring out any substantial 'progress' in the socio-cultural and the historico-political' relations and practices of the people. It did not venture upon a radical political critique of the laws of the colonial modern order. Rarely did it partook in any struggles fought for achieving the goals of political self-determination and liberation of the native people. It excluded the 'political' phrases from its introspection of the Absolute which affected the 'heterogeneity' required for the reflection of the 'absolute'. Though the Guru-narratives sympathized with the 'world' and the worldly beings it could not problematize the instances of the 'worldly' or the 'social' which were taken for granted as static or transparent phenomena. Guru and his disciples could not deconstruct the discursively privileged zone of the 'social' which actually implicated the newly reconstituted space according to the laws of the colonial modern conditions of the period. They could not complement the critique of the native tradition initiated by themselves with a critique of the political dynamics of the colonial order. This would betray an implicit complacency towards the imperial regime of the British. Guru, at times, and his disciples in general, produced eulogies of British administration in their public and private statements praising it as a God-sent boon for the upliftment of the lower caste-people.<sup>69</sup> In a parodical phrase Guru even equated the British as the Gurus of the down-trodden castes in the sense that they were the initiators of the emergent spiritual resurgence in India.<sup>70</sup> The native kingdom as a whole was written off as a decadent *savarna* regime and was condemned as a great obstacle to the new programmes of caste reform. There was no attempt to link the *Saivadvaitic* principles of liberation and realization of self and the reformist practices engendered by it, to the radical political traditions of *rajyam*. Perhaps it might implicate the distantiation felt by certain communities in the lower rungs of the caste-varna-structure of the country from the vital traditions of the *rajya*-politics. However, the ascetic thrust of the

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<sup>69</sup> Dr. K.Sreenivasan, op.cit.,80.

<sup>70</sup> P.K. Balakrishnanan, op cit., 162.

guru-vision, Guru's association with the Ezhava elites who were nurtured in the missionary narratives of reform prevented him from undertaking a deeper reflection on the 'worldly' or the 'social' realities of the period. Guru therefore failed to provide a political orientation to his spiritual contemplation of the Absolute. The Guru reform, in short, was incapable of envisaging a higher and broader unity of people surpassing the caste-community identities reconstituted by the present regime. Though idea of '*samudayam*' putforward by Guru exceeded the caste-community union reconstituted by the present Order it excluded the 'political' from its ambits. Although Guru seemed to have upheld the idea of the identity of the Malayali people<sup>71</sup> exceeding the caste-community barriers, he viewed it exclusively in terms of a 'socio-spiritual' space or phrase emptied of its political matrix.

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<sup>71</sup> T. Bhaskaran, ed and compiled *Sree Narayana Guru Vaikhari* (Perumbavoor: Kunnathu Nadu S.N.D.P. Union, 2000), 101.

## CHAPTER – VII

### CONCLUSION

*Thariykillā manam tellum  
Pakaykaa ranabhoomiyil  
Mariukkum jnan ninakkayi  
Mangalaadarsa Deevathe!*

(P.Kunjiraman Nair:*Narabali*)

(With a mind unperturbed  
And unwavered in the battle field  
I would die for you  
Oh! my deity of auspicious ideals!).

... is it possible, and how would it be possible, to testify to the absolute by means of artistic and literary presentations, which are always dependent on forms? Whatever the case may be, the beautiful ceases to be their 'object', or else the meaning of the word is indeed subverted.(Lyotard:1995), 53

This chapter brings out the crucial differences between the historical romance and the missionary narratives of reform on the one hand and the Guru narratives on the other. The phrase historical romance, as used in the thesis, does not refer merely to the texts or novels produced by C.V. Rather, it comprises of the whole courses of generic experimentation, the political agitation launched against the *Videsheeyamedhavithvom*, (foreign dominance), the struggles fought for accomplishing 'self-rule', and the reform activities carried out within the social and communitarian levels and beyond them. The historical romance, in short, encompassed the whole sorts of discursive or phrasal struggles, carried out by C.V. and his colleagues, through the means of heterogeneous genres like journalistic articles, 'memorials', petitions, political tracts, satires, farces, social and historical novels etc., especially on behalf of the sublime Idea of *rajyam*.

The historical romance, as explained in this thesis, initiates a radical 'manner' of writing 'identity,' 'culture' and 'time' which invariably exceeds the missionary/ modern projects of reform. Though it has produced a critique of the pasts and traditions of the indigenous society as vehemently as done by the missionary / Guru modes of narratives, it differs from both of them in its radical mode of contemplating the 'times' or traditions of the people and in linking/

presenting them in a dynamic manner. The contention here is that the aesthetics of the 'sublime' presented by the historical romance marks the most crucial site of politico-cultural resistance against the laws of the colonial modern order, the subjectivity produced by it, its regime of knowledge and time and its modes of representation, and reproduction. The *rajyam* (as historical romance) implicates the radical site of political judgment reclaimed by a people subjected to the colonial regime. The *rajyagatha* sung by the historical romance places *rajyam* as the existential locus of people's life and the secular sanctum sanctorum of people's unity. It emerges there as the altar and the sacred shrine of the people's idea of divinity and Infinity. The 'Infinite' and 'finite', the 'sacred' and 'secular', the 'historical' and 'spiritual', the matrices of 'reason' and 'desire', 'past' and 'present', and the heterogeneous phrases, forces and times invent there a middle point. Moreover, it is worshipped in 'negative' terms as the 'sign' of a sublime idea of the 'Infinite'. The aesthetic judgment of the sublime involved in this *Veeragatha* of *rajyam* invariably sabotages the hegemony of the cognitive or descriptive phrases over the heterogeneous fields of judgment. The historical romance in short presents an alternate manner of thinking the 'self', 'people' and 'nation' and a radical mode of contemplating the 'absolute' in the historico-political 'now' of the people.

The following points would elucidate how the historical romance radically intervened in the cultural or political sensibility of the people and heralded an 'aesthetic' turn in the 'historico-political' orientations and practices of the Malayali people.

1. The *rajyam* is invented as a 'quasi- historical' and 'quasi- spiritual' object of an Idea or a 'sign' of the sublime. The sublime erupts in the course of the political contemplation or the 'negative worship' of *rajyam* as carried out by the *Viira* people or the historical romancers.
2. It is through a dynamic reciprocation of heterogeneous times, mainly that of the so called *dharmic* epoch of Marthandavarma and the Dharmaraja and the historical present of the narrator, that the 'sublime' temporality of the *rajyam* occurs. The 'serial' or the 'diachronic' 'time' of history is broken at the eruption of the 'sublime' temporality - the time of the Infinite - which in turn

triggers off drastic changes in the course of historical events. The catastrophic flood of times and forces released by the *bali* of Kunchaikutty Pilla prevents not only the advancement of Tippu's army to Tiruvtamcore but also the onward march of the horizontal, linear time. It is this indeterminate concordance of the 'finite' and the 'Infinite' that arouses the sublime feeling.

3. The Idea of the *rajyam* is presented as a radical alternative to the hegemonic concepts of modern nation-state based on the horizontal, homogenous unities of 'subjects'. It shatters the laws of the new subjectivity ordained by the relations of power immanent in the print sensibility and the communicational networks. The historical romance worships *veeras* as the alternate-subjects who counter and transgress the image of the new 'selfhood' offered by the missionary and administrative discourses of the period. Instead of an 'imagined community' of the consumers of the cultural artefacts produced by the print market, it presents an irrepresentable idea of a higher accord of people brought forth by the 'sublime' feeling of the *rajyam*. Unlike the determinate and 'consensus' communities of modern nation, it brings forth a paradoxical 'community without communication'. The '*rajyam*', in short, implicates a 'sensus community' brought into existence by a feeling of 'negative delight' which also testifies to a 'sensation' of 'dissensus' aroused in the faculty relations and discursive realms. As it is founded on dissensus rather than consensus, and as it is marked by a tumultuous agitation in sensation before it is being regulated by 'consciousness', 'memory' or 'experience', it might be held as indeterminate, irregular, and intractable in historical terms.
4. A lineage of the *Veeras* is catastrophically brought forth. The *Veera* is a 'romancer' of Idea marked by his intense receptivity or 'passability' towards the occurrence of the 'sublime', which he receives as the 'donation' of the 'absolute'. It is his incessant resistance to the laws of the socio-political or cultural conditions of the period on behalf of a sublime Idea, which differentiates a *veera* from a *paura* or the subject of a nation-state. The historical romance in that sense is a *veeragatha*. It negatively worships the *veera* lineage that comprises of the characters like Anantha Padmanabhan, Raja Keshavadas, Kunchaikutty Pilla, Subhadra, Savitri and others who fought for



the cause of the *rajyam* and were ready to sacrifice their lives in their romancing with the Idea of the *rajyam*. The *rajya*-people, the active spectators, connoisseurs and actors of the aesthetic political drama that is the *rajyam* are, in short, held as the object of worship. They are hailed to be the champions who had really set the stage for this historical romance of forces. And it is their intense receptivity to the matrix of Idea which would mark the progress achieved by them in terms of the 'culture of skill' (which Kant tells us as preparing the ground for the contemplation of the idea) that possibly brings out this 'dissensus' community of the *veeras*.

5. It counters the ascetic orientation inlaid both in the missionary and the Guru narratives of reform (though in different planes) and radically politicises the discourses of reform. Though it (the historical romance of *rajyam*) shares some of the universal ideas of social change and reform initiated by the missionary discourses and carries out the critique of the decadent traditions of the past, it differs from them especially in its affirmation and retrieval of the radical traditions of the past. It de-structures and de-ritualises the spiritual phrases and re-links them with the 'political'. The story of Haripanchanana brothers in the *Dharmaraja* alerts us of the disastrous effects of the unwarranted mixing of the genres of the 'political' and the 'spiritual', and the intrusion of the fake asceticism in to the 'historico-political' affairs of the people. The dangers of the politics of seduction and intrigues launched by the *sanyasins* are brought forth in the non-linear temporality of the historical romance. This should be corroborated with the opposition raised by C.V. against the move among the community of Nairs to delegate a *sanyasi* or spiritual head as the supreme authority of reform. Although the historical romance imbibes the spiritual intensity and erotics of the *advaitic*, *saivasiddhantic sakteyic*, *vaishnavic* and various traditions of indigenous spirituality, the political mysticism of the *rajyaradhana* marks a radical turn in the cultural history of devotion and political action. The crucial difference of the latter from the former is brought forth when the narrator contrasts the devotional or spiritual practice of Ananda Padmanabhan, his worldly or political orientation and compassion from the extreme asceticism of Pattanathu Pillai the great *siddha* saint of Dravidian

*saivism*. The political and worldly thrust of the *rajyarahana* comes to the forefront in this portrayal of the *veerabhakta* or *rajyabhakta* in contrast to the *saiva siddha*. The paradoxical doubling of heterogeneous realms that takes place in the phrases like *swarajya kshemasiddhi* (accomplishment of the welfare of *swarajyam*), *atmatyagikal* (those who renounce their self and life), *samsaranivrutti* (liberation from the worldly bonds), *udaarakarunyam* (extreme compassion) *avadhhota*, (wandering Yogi) etc., would mark the radical shift in devotional vision and practice. This would implicate a new sort of *siddhi*, which does not confine to the realm of the religious or spiritual but also embraces the realms of the political, secular or worldly. They demonstrate the 'dynamic synthesis' and complex assemblages of the heterogeneous genres achieved by this new devotional spiritual movement which is also political in its deeper sense.

It is its affirmation of world or 'worldliness' as a ground of the struggles carried out for the realisation of one's *purusharthas*, (goals of one's life) which distinguishes the political spirituality of the *rajyam* from the 'ascetic spiritualism' of the traditions and the inverted asceticism of the missionary faith. The *bali* of Kunchaikutty Pilla and other *veera* actors implicates an affirmation rather than renunciation of life. Kunchaikutty Pilla's return to the home country from his ascetic or mendicant life and his joining of the service of the *rajyam* demonstrate this fact. Diwan Raja Keshavadas who instructs Pilla on the importance of the political service of the *rajyam* as one of the important means of realising *moksham*, is held by Kunchaikutty Pilla, the '*viira siddha*', as his political Guru. "Nourish your inner self with love and valour (*pranayam* and *paurusham*)", this was the advice given by Kunchaikutty Pilla to Trivikrama the captain of the Tiruvitamcore Royal army. He at times mocks at the passive and defeatist modes of *bhakti* and asceticism that would lead one to 'withdrawal' and submission. The heterogeneous 'manners' of devotion practised by Kunchaikutty Pilla bring out the radical pragmatics of political spirituality of the '*rajyarahana*'. The 'worldly' dynamics of the political mysticism of *rajyarahana* is endorsed by the *veerabhakti* mode of devotion carried out by the *veeras* of *rajyam* for whom war or resistance is a manner

and accompaniment of worship.

6. The dualities which are oppositely placed in the colonial modern order are metamorphosed into pairs, doubles or assemblages by the catastrophic mediation of the Idea of the 'Absolute'. Consequently, the 'political' and 'spiritual', the 'past' and 'present', the 'history' and 'romance', the 'finite' and 'Infinite', the 'sacred' and 'secular' emerge as mutually complementing yet subtly contesting pairs or doubles bringing forth a paradoxical or tense unity. An exemplary instance is the complex metaphor of *naranaaraayana relation* as used by the narrator to present the mutuality of the relation between the *raja* and *mantri* or the god and the devotee. The terms such as *narabhadraali*, *raashtriiya saayujyam*, *siddhabalishtata*, *veerasiddha*, *vaishnava paasupatam* demonstrate the process of incessant pairing that takes place between realms, phrases and times in the historical romance as well as in the works produced by C.V. and his colleagues. A revealing instance of the pairing of heterogeneous 'time's, 'selves' and phrases signalling the catastrophic 'occurrence' of the sublime feeling would be found in the '*Dharnaraja*'. The spiritual and political illumination that occurs to Keshava Pilla is alluded there to the spiritual enlightenment spontaneously accomplished by Suka the founder of the *Bhagavatha* or Bhakti movement by birth.
7. A crucial struggle is launched in the field of presentation or linking phrases which strikes at the citadel of the modernist regime of representation. The aesthetics of the *sublime*, unleashed by the historical romance counters the aesthetic conventions of 'beauty' and 'taste' on the one hand and the discursive or communicational regime of modernity on the other. It provides a 'negative presentation' to the sublime Idea of the *rajyam*. A limitless or 'formless' presentation is thus provided to a sublime Idea which is absolute and limitless. Reform as initiated by the historical romance therefore implicates a movement of 'de-formation' by its process of breaking the 'forms' 'structures' and 'conventions' that reign the hegemonic movement of reform initiated by the missionary narratives and the ritual regimes of the traditional society.

'Negative presentation' in the case of historical romance of C.V. signifies a minimal or indirect presentation or a paralogic or parodic presentation. It shatters

all types of 'formal' conventions and assurances, whether they belong to the aesthetic, political or spiritual realms. The *rajyam* which is the sign of the sublime is, in short, presented in a 'formless form'. When Azhakan Pilla, the untameable *viira* warrior, enters the palace and pours forth his *Naanchinaadan* dialect, we witness the outburst of an ethnic laughter. It disturbs and disrupts the 'order' and the 'orderliness' that shrouds the court etiquette, the protocols, and the courtly rhetoric of power. The irresistible out-flow of the *Naanchinaadan* lingo, which is being drunk joyously by the King pricing it as most dear to him as a divine language, pierces the air of 'official seriousness' and pompousness that usually distantiates the court-scene.

The *rajyam* there fore, emerges in the historical romance neither as an institution nor as a legal juridical phenomenon, but as the locus of a matrix of Idea. It is founded on a sacred emotion reigning the heart of the *praja* people. Phrases belonging to heterogeneous genres are re-assembled as epigrams, allusions, metaphors, metonyms, parodies etc and the aesthetic combinations of which produce catastrophic effects in narration. The verses mainly of classics, epics, myths, *puranas* or vernacular literature cited as title poems or epigrams create parodic effects when the novelistic events break the assurances or expectations aroused by them. If the eruption of the turbulent flood –'the *pravaahakaali*'– is presented as a ravaging deluge using the rhetorical devices of mythological or *puranic* traditions, the demise of Kunchaikutty Pilla is presented in the most minimal and intensive poetic/ novelistic phrases copulated with the 'yogic' and spiritual phrases. It is through the rhetoric of satire that the superstitious or decadent traditions of worship, the evil and violent practices of vile devotion, and the distortions of faith carried out by the ritualistic and priestly regimes of religion are exposed. If the *adhama kaali* of Parapaandai is phrased in poignantly derogative terms there emerges in the course of the 'negative worship' conducted by Kunchaikutty pilla which culminates at his bali. This in contrast is a *kaali* without form or in the formless form of a *pravaahakaali*, who epitomises the catastrophic time of the Infinite. Although the formal, ritualistic or clerical regimes of native faiths are mostly condemned and mocked, and although the religious or spiritual practices associated with the practices of *bali*, *yaga*, *yoga*, *pooja*,

*saktheyaa* or *tantra* are subjected to parodic laughter and critical attack, their ethnic energetic is repossessed by the historical romance relieving them off their formal regimes. The fierceness and the horrific beauty of the deities like Kaali catastrophically re-emerge in scenes of turbulent flood and the historical theatre of war fought by the people of Tiruvitamcore against Tippu. The deity-forces are purged off their 'forms' and 'icons' and reinvented in their 'formless' forms of the ethnic energies. They descend to the historical 'now' of the *rajya*-people as their allies and their war-mates as well as play-mates. War is shown as a *yajna* where the *rajya* people are shown to be waiting for their chance to offer their life as oblation to its ritual fire. The torrential flood evoked by the *Bali* of Kunchaikutty Pilla is shown as the scene of a terrific and tumultuous celebration of cosmic *bali* where various creatures, beings, the flora and fauna are the objects of sacrifice to be devoured by the *PravaahaKaali*. The flood scene is inflated to the level of a great mythological deluge – *pralaya* – which blocks and defeats the enemy forces. The narrator deciphers the flood as the *varunaastram* sent by Lord Padmanabha against the *agneeyaastram* of Tippu to safeguard the *rajyam*. The *Vaishnavic* Idea of the 'absolute' which might be located as the nucleus of the ethnic force field of the *rajyam* is realigned with the *saivic* and *saktheyic* force-phrases. It is this catastrophic rejoining of forces, phrases or energies which demarcates the historical romance from the Guru-mode of reform. The faith is freed of its ritualistic or formalistic shell and lifted towards the matrix of Idea. It is through a subtle invention of the 'parodic' or 'satiric' modes of linkings that the heterogeneous genres and realms of the 'political' 'aesthetic' 'spiritual' and 'historical' are 'de-formed' and dynamically 'reassembled' by doubling the inner vitality of each of them. The satire contests, critiques, balances and thus justifies the 'sublime'.

8. Worship is a manner of presentation as well as anticipation of the 'occurrence' of sublime in the case of the aesthetics of the historical romance. It is a sign (*signum, rememorativum, demonstrativum, prognosticum* in Kantian terms) in the sense that it "indexes, recalls and anticipates" the sublime. As C.V. himself revealed to us, his writing was intended to be a *pooja* of the heroic deeds of Raja Keshavadas, the greatest patriot of the *rajyam*. The worship as

presentation is, however, parodic or negative in the case of the historical romance. As the instances of critical and harsh mode of devotion shown by Mankoyikkal Kurup towards the King Marthandavarma implicate the worship invented by the historical romance is parodic or critical. The devotee there even dares to instruct the deity on the dangers of false or seductive worship. We might also find the traces of 'negative worship' in the paraodic or paralogic utterances made by Kunchaikutty Pilla in his conversation with King and Subhadra's retort to king's suspicions and moralistic pretensions. The negative or parodic worship launched by the historical romance is to be distinguished from the usual modes of worship on account of its radical heterogeneity. Worship here is simultaneously a political, spiritual, aesthetic, or libidinal act. It is a dynamic 'assemblage' of heterogeneous manners of actions namely 'war', 'play', 'festival' and '*bali*' (sacrifice) especially in the cases of the *viiras* of the historical romance.

9. The crucial contribution made by the historical romance to the 'historico-political' or the cultural self-reflection of the Malayali people lies in its invention of a Kerala Rajyam as the object of an Idea, as a sign of the 'sublime'. Keralam in the case of the historical romance does not refer to an empirical, determinate community of selves or 'subjects' brought forth by the print-sensibility and the administrative and discursive network of the colonial modern regime. It is not the brand name of an 'imagined' community of consumer-readers in its Andersonian sense; it is not a horizontal, homogeneous and monolingual community which we call a modern nation state with its relation of power/ knowledge and pastoral concepts of a welfare state. Perhaps it is in its radical dissension with those hegemonic modes of writing the identity of Malayalam that the historical romance makes its crucial intervention in the cultural history and the political sensibility of the Malayali people.

The 'aesthetic-political' reflection of identity in the case of the historical romance erupts at the occasion of the judgment of 'sublime' as a 'differend', which invalidates the historical sociological or dialectical modes of representation. As we have seen in the case of Keshavapilla, at the occasion of the hearing of the *balikkada* (story of sacrifice) of Kuruppu Kunchupiratty-the *veera* patriot of the

*rajyam*-the sensation of identity bursts out at the catastrophic event of the reception of the 'paradoxical delight' evinced by the sublime feeling. It is a 'negative' object of Idea, that could not be programmed, historicised or conceptualised and it already occurs prior to any communication, and verbal expression or cognitive operation of knowledge. Identity therefore emerges in the 'negative' aesthetics of the historical romance as a feeling of discord or difference evoking dislocation in the faculty relations. It witnesses a breach of the pact between the 'sensible' and the 'intelligible', the 'presentable' and 'conceivable', the faculties of 'imagination' and 'understanding', a hiatus in the serial schema of time, in the discursive and communicational procedures of knowledge. It is these crevices brought out in the representative or communicational structures of the period and the disturbances created in the sense, of linearity regularity and transparency provided by the missionary modern prose, and the print-sensibility of the consumer-readers that have frightened the dominant streams of modernist scholarship away from the historical novels of C.V., and the historical romance of the *rajyam* witnessed by them.

The Malayala *rajyam* or Keralam thus occurs in the historical romance as a 'quasi historical' and 'quasi spiritual' 'sensation' of a 'community prior to any communication and a dissensus community without any determinate criteria, if we can call it a community at all. It is devoid of any discursive consensus, 'constitution' or 'form'. It is founded on the locus of the judgment of the 'sublime' occurring in the 'aesthetic-political' self reflection of the people. As elaborated earlier, it is built on a feeling of debt called forth by the 'donation' of the paradoxical pleasure of the 'sublime' rather than on any sort of legal or constitutional obligations or moral laws. However, this dissensus or discord could be seen as the cost to be paid for the people's contemplation of the 'Absolute'. It signals, in fact, a higher accord accomplished in the faculty relations in terms of thinking and linking of phrases, peoples, forces and times. The higher unity of people envisaged by the Idea of Kerala-*rajyam* transgresses the caste, communitarian, religious, or regional constraints. It never conforms to the traits of homogeneity, uniformity, and integrity characteristic to the modern national polities. The unity or identity called forth by the 'sublime judgment' of the

historical romance, in short implicates a paradoxical or dissonant unity of heterogeneous phrases, genres forces, times, peoples without violating the singularity of each. If the 'paralogical' diction of the Kantian 'critique' of 'judgment' is adopted, then it should be viewed as a 'dynamic synthesis' or 'assemblage' of heterogeneous realms, fields, genres and temporalities brought forth by the Idea of the Absolute. Consequently, it is a site which conjoins the 'political' and the 'spiritual', the 'secular' and the 'sacred', the 'finite' and the 'Infinite', the 'libidinal' and the 'rational', and the 'past' and the 'present' in the 'here and now' of the historical romance of the people. Our reflection of the 'quasi historical' and 'quasi spiritual' occurrence of the idea of the Keralam however does not cancel out the historical 'reality' of an alternate politics of identity built on the contemplation and presentation of the sublime invoked by it. Rather, it would guide us to discover the tremendous energies released by it—the sublime thoughts—heroic deeds and devotions demanded by it from its adherents whom we call the *Veera*-selves or the 'historical romancers'. The feelings and sensations evoked by the idea of the Kerala-rajyam undoubtedly exceed the ethical or moral sense of obligation or obedience evoked by the 'representative' politics of modernity. The historical romance of Keralam thus reinvents a radical 'manner' of an aesthetic politics heralded by the *veera* people who find it their vocation to 'anticipate', 'recall' and welcome the 'soul-stirring' feeling of a 'painful pleasure' donated by the Idea of the absolute. The Keralam as a *rajyam* is thus constituted by the *veera* people who dares to make the crucial judgment of the sublime and invents sublime manners of presentation/ action on behalf of that divine donation of the 'presence.' This intense receptivity and sensitivity shown by the *rajya* people to the occurrence of the feeling of the 'sublime' signals the progress in the 'historico-political' and an advancement in the 'culture of skill' developed by people. It is in its attempt to reinvent or repossess such an aesthetic politics of the 'sublime', submerged in the noises and voices of the modern discourses and blacked out by the modernist scholars and historians, that the present thesis marks its point of departure from the dominant streams of the current scholarship.



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