

Library Copy

**THE PANIYA SENSE OF THE WORLD: TIME, SUBJECTIVITY AND
COMMUNITY IN TRIBAL PERFORMANCES IN WAYANAD**

**Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in
Partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

VINOD. K. K.



**CENTRE FOR ENGLISH STUDIES
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND CULTURE STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067
INDIA
2006**





Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067, India

Date: 21/7/06

CERTIFICATE

This thesis titled "*The Paniya Sense of the World: Time, Subjectivity and Community in Tribal Performances in Wayanad*", submitted by **Mr. Vinod K.K.**, Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

(DR. SAUGATA BHADURI)
SUPERVISOR

(DR. FRANON MANJALI)
SUPERVISOR

(DR. GJV PRASAD)
CHAIRPERSON

Date 21/7/06

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This dissertation titled "*The Paniya Sense of the World: Time, Subjectivity and Community in Tribal Performances in Wayanad*" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.



(Vinod K.K.)
M.Phil Student
CES/SLL&CS
JNU

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to my supervisors Dr. Franson D. Manjali and Dr. Saugata Bhaduri for their indispensable and insightful comments and corrections. I must not forget to record, here, their leniency and encouragement that made my attempts fruitful. I must also thank the Chair Person of our centre Dr. Makarand Paranjpe for saving me, on two occasions, from most difficult of situations.

I owe a debt of gratitude to -

Raja for sending me the most valuable of my research documents, Satheese for his timely help and for allowing me to disturb him, Ratheesh Vasudevan for recording the ritual I badly needed, Mr. Kunjappan who allowed me to record the ritual performed at his ancestral home, Gibu and Kalesh for their amazing willingness to help me with the computers, Sareena for reading my first chapter, researchers and teachers at KIRTADS, Calicut, for their willingness to share the institute's research documents with me, my uncles Padmanabhan, Prabhakaran and Raveendran for their readiness to extend a helping hand during different phases of my research, Dr. PKS Pandey of our centre for his valuable suggestions relating to my research.

Swaralipi, Amit, Simmy, Tianla, Gunjeet, Jhelum, Shoubik, Swapnalekha, Kundan, Moola, Uday, Sachin, Rajeev Aricat, Ashique, Illias Hussain, major Sivadasan and his loving family, Sensi K P Raveendran, my friends and teachers at St Thomas' College, Trichur, my cousins, relatives, and well-wishers (admirers and enemies as well, if at all I have some!) in Wayanad and other places. My numerous friends in JNU, Delhi and Kerala (I assure you that I will be indebted 'forever' to all of you especially to those from whom I borrowed money!) the friendly Library staff at Teen Murthy, Sahitya and French Centre Libraries in New Delhi, Rawatji of our centre for being so affable to us.

- My university for two reasons: 1) for providing me the best of places available anywhere 2) for troubling me and my research, simultaneously, like a naughty boy, without allotting me adequate funds to go by.

- Chaity for many reasons.

- The cultural living of the Adivasis of Wayanad for motivating these words.

- The difficult days I spent.

I acknowledge that it is only because of my family that I could manage all these academic endeavours. I remember, with love, my grandma, father, mother vijitha and Vidhya for everything.

Finally I am indebted to you, dear reader, for your kind considerations!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
Preface	1-8
Chapter 1	9-34
A Historiography for the ‘Other’: Positions, Places and Methods of an Ethno-Sociology for the Paniya, to Begin with.	
Chapter 2	35-52
Subjectivity and Performance: a Study of the Mythical History	
Chapter 3	53-81
At the Ka#kapolay: the Living, the Dead and the Ritual	
Chapter4	82-96
Towards a Political Lore	
Chapter 5	97-100
Conclusion	
Bibliography	101-106

PREFACE

1

In a hamlet, dominantly a tribal one, in the month of May, a Paniya peregrination starts toward a nearby temple. The temple in question is associated with the Paniya in some way though it being a non-Paniya one. Whether the temple is a Paniya one or not is not our topic here. The Paniya journey towards the temple is noted precisely because the way it is carried out is different. The group includes everybody; old, young, kids, male, female, diseased. It takes about 15 k.m. walk to the temple situated outside the village. A bus service, to that effect, seems to have been rejected by the travellers. The temple is known for its folk rituals in which the Paniya participate. Villagers, tribal and non-tribal, are part of the whole temple-related ritual narratives performed during the festive occasion. The path the tribal commuters have opted for the peregrination offers a rough journey for it being wild and coarse. The whole night's walk makes them famished and tired at the time of their arrival at the temple. Within an hour or so after the performance's commencement, they walk back the same way with the same cohort. On the other hand, the non-tribal villagers avail themselves of the bus service, the method one of us would have opted for. It is important to note the non-tribal perspective on the tribal journey. To such a viewer it is an absurd activity, foolish yet interesting. The interpretation given by a Paniya, but, is altogether anew. It is something like 'it's what the ritual is all about; walking with the kinsmen; the community, in the light and in the dark, singing a song...' The contradiction in these two points of view is something that motivated one theoretically. Once the next story is finished we will be able to speak about it a little bit more.

2

This story emanates from a performance happened at a public function as part of a bid to promote tourism by a governmental agency. A *thira*, closely connected to the Paniya, was being performed. The connoisseurs of the performance; people from different places, watched it and dispersed. To my amazement, there remained a couple

of Paniya expecting the performer to come down to walk towards them for giving them an oracle in his frenzied state, distributing among them the religious rice grains as such were the ways the performance was concluded elsewhere. It did not happen in the ritual in question. This amazement of the Paniya is something that we are amazed at. Aren't we living in different worlds if not corporeal, aesthetic?

What do I seem to have attempted to narrate through these stories? I wanted to point out a missing link between two modes of living; two worlds – 'the modern world' (the 'modern world' addresses itself so) and the 'non-modern world' (the 'modern world' addresses it's other so). Is tribal way of living different form others?

This question might find a positive 'yes' as an answer. Unfortunately our inquiry does not stop there. It does not stop there because those who stopped there in the past-some of our precursors in similar investigations- ended up in the exotification of the tribal. It comes to the memory, something relevant to what we are speaking about now, that once an advertisement campaign - again by a governmental firm - showcased the odd looking Paniya before their leaking, thatched huts and over the snapshot read the unique selling proposition, a widely published one, of the state tourism department. Are we attempting at such an establishment of difference? Obviously, that has never been and will never be the goal for us.

As part of the project, when roamed around Wayanad, where this writer also is born, it came to my observation that such projections have become a big industry. The Non-Governmental Organizations (N.G.Os) loom large out of the grants of divergent kinds allotted by different governmental as well as non-governmental establishments for the tribals of Wayanad. These grants, as far as my understanding goes, reach the NGOs. Out of the multi-storeyed mansions of these NGOs a meager portion of such funds comes out and goes to the tribals. The 'tribal development' of the NGOs is not very different from the erstwhile colonial advocates' 'tribal emancipation'. We began this part of the preface by asking the question of difference. If a mere difference leads us to make ourselves 'differentially superiors', the difference claim will have to be ignored for stopping ourselves from becoming a metaphorical 'NGO' cashing in on the difference.

On the other hand, the universalistic claim seems to be convincing for many.¹ This claim following the European values of egalitarianism denies any difference between the two modes of living. It continuously and cogently suggests ‘a sameness’ applicable for all. Let us here; go back to those two stories described at the outset of our discussion. Would those Paniya have walked to the temple had there been no difference? Could they have waited for a professional performer (unlike in the traditional *thira* performances) to walk towards them to distribute among them the customary rice grains had that not been a performing tradition? The universalistic claim fails here to come up with a theoretical answer. Both these extreme positions are not without stark drawbacks. Arriving at an answer too is problematic nonetheless.

The idea of a ‘common culture’ appears to be as elitist as that of the ‘exotic culture of the other’. Where do we place a tribal culture then? Should we place it between the common and the exotic? This does not sound to be sensible and hence not mooted for the concerns of our discussion. I would like to cite Terry Eagleton to give an idea of the postulation we have taken up, as a methodology, throughout this work:

Culture is not only what we live by. It is also, in great measure, what we live for. Affection, relationship, memory, kinship, place, community, emotional fulfillment, intellectual enjoyment, a sense of ultimate meaning: these are closer to most of us than charters of human rights or trade treaties.²

‘It is time, while acknowledging its significance’, to ‘put it (the culture) back in its place’ according to Eagleton. Interestingly enough, our discussion starts only after putting the culture back in its place.

Here, what disturb me are, again, questions regarding the same culture once returned to its place. Does it have many places? That was the whole debate about ‘a common culture’ which was not amicably resolved. Our postulation on the other hand, does not envisage one nor does it argue for many but questions the innocence behind the want

¹ I am reminded of what a teacher at KIRTADS (Kerala Institute for Research, Training and Development Studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes – Calicut) told me in a personal conversation. When pressurized to ‘show’ the ‘unique’ tribal characteristics through writing and otherwise by the system, he had to freak out to tell ‘there have never been so many differences, don’t assign me the job of making some.’

² *The Idea of Culture*, Terry Eagleton, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, 2000, p.131. Eagleton writes this in a totally different context. He arrives at this conclusion through critiquing T.S. Eliot’s notion of a common culture.

of counting it / them. It too involves dangers. A supremacist culture is all set to devour its 'others' and to unify the differences. Ignoring the juggernaut of its presence would be as detrimental as supporting it. The argument placed here is: 'the counting' could be the first of the steps the supremacist, unifying ideology might take up. In such a unified version only 'what we live by' will be 'the culture'. We take a turn from here. We give stress to elements other than mere a 'living' in a modernized world. In this, memory does matter so do place and community. Can a unifying culture share memory, place and togetherness with a 'to be unified' or 'smaller' one? If we say 'yes' it will be equal to say that the pangs of a Dalit can be shared, with equal force, by a non-Dalit, the Paniya experience of slavery can be shared by a settler, the trauma of a Jew can be experienced by a non-Jew, the experience of being a woman, surrounded by an oppressive patriarchy, can be shared by a man.

Again we are not safe. Now the next and extremely troublesome question could be about the invention of those elements which are special to the communities in question (here Paniya). Are we going on inventing categories? We are not; precisely because each 'category' might have a proportion applicable only to it. By 'proportion' what we mean is the combination of such elements. The disarray of these proportions, in the first place, rejects truth claims. It is to say that a debate on the 'Paniya performances' is possible only because truth claims are not. To explain oneself a bit more, the politics behind the truth claims is not plausible. If the truth claims appear to be valid without doubt, any attempt that might not fit in its trellis will be an invalid exercise to them.

Let us explore as many possibilities as possible. Our argumentation is getting complicated. It's contradictory as well. For example, as certain spheres of experiences cannot be shared by everybody how will the 'everybody' be able to articulate them? This particular query seemed to have troubled not only this humble debate we are engaged in; but more sophisticated post-colonial debates. Such debates arrived at an answer when 'the subaltern' is identified as incapable of speaking. His speech, as a must, is to be represented. Representation is done with or without the sharing of experience.

To speak about another possibility, our claim for a ‘secular depiction’ can be refuted by citing the story (2) mentioned in the beginning. We might well belong to those group who left the place immediately after the completion of the performance without hoping for the rice seeds to be distributed or we could see ourselves among the non-tribal bus goers to the temple who would not risk safety opting for a coarse path through a dense forest. As no possible answer is found for this teaser, one might save one’s face by saying that such recognitions are of greater value than any answer (the failure to arrive at one not withstanding). By showing the failure of a Lévi Straussian method to theorize the Nambikwara tribe, we seemed to have addressed the failure of an attempt of this sort. Apart from this in the third chapter where the ritual ‘*Kākapolay*’ is dealt with, it is clearly expatiated that even the presence of this writer’s camera embarrassed the performer that might have contributed to his ‘failure’ to become ‘sufficiently possessed’ (this status is otherwise theoretically dealt with). In short, the self-criticism involved in the course of our argumentation is validating its stand against the truth claims. Nevertheless, where do we situate our argumentation?

This argumentation does not have a place to fall back on, a theory or an ideology. Without a single exception, each theory and ideology appeared to have practised its politics. Hence a complete dependence on any would rob us away from the intention. It seemed to us that, on occasions, even a single story told to us by a common man rises to the level of a theory giving us a breakthrough in the research of ideas. The *Keeyuloka* myth was known to me well before the research (note that *Keeyuloka* - the netherworld - means ‘underworld’; the world below the world. It is not ‘the world above the world’ where the heaven is supposed to be in the Hindu myths). But the whole idea of *Keeyuloka* has been tremendously changed when a Paniya priest spoke about the necessity of the death rituals. The *pei*,³ the spectre, according to him, wouldn’t be interested in stepping into the *Keeyuloka* precisely because his existence as a slave would continue there as well but this time under the spectre of his earthly master. According to the myths if the ritual is not observed, the reluctant *pei* will become a *chudala pei* -wandering ghost - disturbing his own (former) kinsmen. Such rituals are allowed to be performed (by the master), during the colonial era, only after the reaping of paddy is done at the masters’ place. Either way, the disturbance is

³ In Paniya myths, the spirit of the dead person is known as *pene*. Adiyas call their spirits *pei*. In this work we use the term *pei*.

reserved for the community. No theory could give the insight of such a colonial myth. Hereafter we will speak of the chapters that will follow the preface and the methodology adopted in delineating them.

The first chapter is a taking of a general stock of the situation. The endeavor is to put the whole discourse in perspective. The chapter, like a vagabond, visits many places. Its intention throughout the course has been to point out how from colonial era to the contemporaneity, attempts have been made to appropriate the tribal space ideologically. Such narratives are generally, by certain notions, prevalent among the 'general sphere'. This sphere, we think, emanates from cultural anthropology and ethno-sociology. These two social sciences, we are not very well versed with, are taken up for they have claimed that they dealt with man; thought of him and defined him. These two not only kept a Eurocentric bias, against the defined, at least as far as Paniya are concerned, but took sides with the local master. Their 'man' is an objectified, defined, 'ready-to be-sold' human specimen. If the 'beating around the bush' characteristic of the chapter is pardoned, the points to this effect will come to light.

The second chapter is, going away from the socio-anthropological investigation of the first chapter, an enquiry in to the mythical stories of Paniya origin. Such stories play the most crucial role in the way the Paniya identify their community. These myths not only form the foundation of their communal living but act as tools for tracing the trauma the Paniya underwent. There are no 'foundational myths' as such but conglomeration of myths, which we can call as 'event(s)', acting as signifying narrative(s). They are not only the events of the past but of the present and some even of the future. The force they generate, the pains they conceal within are beyond our description and hence they are quoted. To speak of such a very interesting event, we must consult a story such as the (hi)story of the woodpecker (see chapter second). The story speaks of the origin of woodpeckers, but in this story the heroine thinks 'if I were a woodpecker, I could eat these fruits' and the story is concluded as 'that's how woodpeckers were born'. What does the innocence involved in the narration speak to us? What does the logical incoherence seems to have depicted? We shall see, out of these words, that the woodpecker becomes a person rather than a person becoming a woodpecker. The birth of a woodpecker gives rise to a clan of woodpeckers ('that's

how woodpeckers were born'). This theme will be very clear if, once again, we think of the birth of a woodpecker already born.

Chapter third is an attempt to interpret the Kakapolay ritual recorded for the purpose of this debate. It is recorded sometime in the foggy February of 2005. Half of the ritual is performed on night and half on day. As we value the ritual more than the debate on it, the debate remains to be one among many ways of interpreting it. The positions clarified somewhere in the preface would be applicable for this chapter as well. The only idea behind taking up such a laborious task of recording it is very lucid: instead of searching books on the Paniya why not search a cultural text by them? Even if the interpretation fails, the text at hand will not. It will remain as a document for the generations to come. Kakapolay is the least performative but the most intimate of the Paniya rituals. As a cultural text, there never was a study. The text is important because the text is a space where the myths are alive, where they are performed. It, hopefully, provides us such a vast, yet not fully explored, space for discussion.

The fourth chapter too is a result of an attempt of the same kind. Though it being a hastily codified chapter, some of the songs mentioned are collected only for the current purpose. More than making an endeavor to divulge the message in the lore, bringing them before the eyes of the reader is the target set here. The translations which are done into a different language might sound uncanny but care is taken not to misrepresent the lore. What is more motivating is the realm of heuristic erudition the lore offers. For example, a song, a little girl sang to us goes:

How many times I dreamt

How much I enjoy

To husk the Kanna rice of the field

Freshly reaped and shining. (See chapter two).

If we study the 'handed down' character of the folklore, the desire of an elder woman to cook the 'Kanna rice' (a special variety of rice) of the master's field (where they work) will be seen as conveyed to a young girl. Kanna rice might not be an unattainable good for them anymore. Hence the desire is a memory; in other words, memory of a desire.

The preface is concluded with many more things left unspoken. Probably, they would be spoken better by the ritual or by the lore or by somebody else. The reader of these lines is envisaged as more imaginative than this very debate itself.

CHAPTER 1
A HISTORIOGRAPHY FOR THE ‘OTHER’:
POSITIONS, PLACES, AND METHODS OF AN ETHNO-
SOCIOLOGY FOR THE PANIYA, TO BEGIN WITH.

Some Paniyas are believed to be gifted with the power of changing themselves into animals; and there is a belief among the Paniyan dwellers in the plains that, if they wish to secure a woman whom they lust after, one of the men gifted with this special power goes to her house at night with a hollow bamboo, and encircles the house three times. The woman comes out, and the man changing himself into a bull or dog, works his wicked will. The woman, it is believed, dies in the course of two or three days.¹

As part of the taking stock of the written historiography of the Paniyas, to begin with, one has to have recourse to the British records. The epigraph, chosen deliberately, does evince, in its entirety, certain characteristic traits of a mythic portrayal. It is likely that an occult myth of this kind existed; but very unlikely in the communal imaginary of the Paniyas-something the epigraph seems to have claimed. To further the argument, accounts that correspond to the earlier one – a concatenation of which formulates the discourse in its normal course – have to be traced. Thurston's convinced first person narrative unflinchingly attempts at the re-creation of a larger myth connected to Paniyas:

Their mode of procedure ...is evidenced by two cases which had in them a strong element of savagery. On both these occasions the thatched homesteads were surrounded at dead of night by gangs of Paniyans carrying large bundles of rice straw. After carefully piling up the straw on all sides of the building marked for destruction, torches were, at a given signal applied, and those wretched inmates who attempted to escape were knocked on the head with clubs, and thrust

¹ Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India .Vol. vi*, Cosmo publications, New Delhi, 1901, (Rev.) 1975, p.63.

into the fiery furnace.²

These myths are reinforced foregrounding the canonical portrayal of Paniyas as a clan of concupiscent vampires as in the first case or a macabre band of predators as in the second, the chronicle does justice to the canonical gaze, hatefully cast on the tribal, in support of which it seems to have been generated. Thurston's investigation of the "*domesticated*, Paniyan if well paid, is honest, and *fit to be entrusted* with the responsible duties of night watchman"³ is reinforced by Logan⁴ who demands the *Chetti*⁵ land owners "to send their *Paniyans* out in search of information".⁶ Logan's description emanates from the preconceived general notion of an ahistoric people whose historiography he was attempting at. To Logan the high caste *Nairs* of the plains, the regionally privileged *Chetti* land owners of Wayanad or the *Paniya* slaves did not make much difference though he was keen on observing the hierarchical structures of power. His sweeping annunciation reads:

If foreign peoples and foreign influences had not intervened it might, with almost literal truth, have been said of the Malayalis that happy is the people who have no history.⁷

The British era is marked as the 'beginning of history' structured on the lines of the colonial and feudal 'historeability'. As the tribals fall at the bottom of the hierarchal structures of power, the question pertinent to their historicity does not arise though an

² Ibid. p.61

³ Ibid. p.59. emphasis mine.

⁴ William Logan, *Malabar* [in two volumes] Asian Educational service, New Delhi, 1989, and *A collection of Treaties Engagements and other papers of importance relating to British Affairs in Malabar*, Madras Civil Service, Calicut, 1879.

⁵ The *Chetti* community is believed to have migrated to Wayanad from Tamil speaking areas centuries ago though exact historical evidence pertinent to this is not available. They are considered as indigenous people though. They had been, throughout the history of Wayanad, land owners, thus, acting as the feudal lords. To take an example, the popular expression which identifies the *Paniya* slaves of the erstwhile *Chetti* masters *Chetina Paniya*, literally means both 'the *Paniya* of the muslims' and 'the *Paniya* of the *Chettis*'. This is true of *Paniya-Kurichya* relationship; the latter despite being another tribal group, maintained traditionally, *Paniya* slaves as well as the discourse of a master- slave relationship with them.

⁶ *Malabar*. op. cit., p.548. The information that Logan seeks here is the whereabouts of Pazhasi Raja, a king in Malabar, who with the help of tribal fighters was engaged in a guerrilla war against the British from the forests of wayanad. The British finally located him as a result of which he performs a valorous *hara kiri* before they could detain him. The British myth of the cheating *Paniya* seems to have been conspicuously shown here.

⁷ Ibid. vol.1, p.vi

ahistoric past – for it being undeniably connected to the generality of [any] common populace – goes through on the nod. This lineage of a chaos - ‘masquerading as history’ -contradicts in Thurston. Thurston begins his article on Paniyas denying a possibility of their African connections on lineage but concludes it by recording the physical measurements that approximate the measurements of ‘long limbed African negroes’ [Thurston p.71]. The Imperial Gazetteers’ chroniclers declaring their overt political motive of reconnaissance involve themselves in the historicization of the Empire within the precincts of which its subjects, both historic and ahistoric, are located. The first ever such attempt is directed at an imagined re-creation of Nation which was to be followed by a colonial narration of the past and the stratification and re-configuration of the populace as freely as it suited the hitherto unknown history fabricated by the coloniality: “For many years India was not known, even to its early inhabitants by any single epithet which would embrace all her tribes and castes”⁸

The idea of *Bharatavarsha* is thus, it argues, just a construct on the basis of the urns unearthed at the Indus valley. Demolition of history generates enough scope to reconstruct it and to dismantle any claim from the side of the historicized working as an anti-thesis of the colonial project of culturization preceded by the historicization. This ideology working as an emancipatory machinery is exemplified when an ‘ahistorical India’ is linked to the ‘cultural world’ outside as a result of its colonial unification:

India can no longer be considered apart from that wide hinterland of uplands and mountains which flank the low depression of the Indo Gangetic plain. Economically, politically and physically, the India of today must be held to include those outlying territories over which Indian administration extends its control.⁹

Civilizing the nation intrinsically attempts at civilizing its populace. Apart from the chroniclers’ ideology that defines Christians as *Pariah Christians*, the early tribal attempts at joining the wider public space outside is marked as the ‘beginnings of

⁸ *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol.1, *Indian Empire Today and Tomorrow*, printers?, New Delhi,1907, p.5

⁹ *Ibid.*

actual culture' as the 'original crudities' like the 'pure Dravidian' blood, tribal deities etc. are lost in the process.¹⁰ A mourning for this 'loss' presupposes a civilizational mission as an aftermath out of the success of which such necessary by-products *positively* emerge. Such a wailing repeatedly appearing in the canonical records depicts a slightly dejected civilizer for not, anymore, being able to cast eyes on the 'pure savage' he/she was - an exclusive interest of the ethno-sociological studies conducted in the nineteenth century after the fashion of the European anthropology. Ashish Nandy elsewhere writes to define the colonizer's primary task of civilizing: "Colonialism minus civilizational mission is no colonialism at all. It handicaps the colonizer much more than it handicaps the colonized."¹¹

Any attempt to historicize a society necessitates an affirmation of its mythical ahistory, a desiccate and once-upon-a-time impossibility, which is subjected to the scientific mythopoeic breakdown of modernity. Modernity's self portrayal as 'historic' as opposed to the mythical and [hence] ahistoric societies validating its 'scientific methods' which are tested to be foolproof to evaluate its mythical counterparts' culture [the tool here is cultural anthropology], myths, and whatnot. These *scientific tools*, collectively, along with the power of a 'traceable cultural history' validate the modernity's claims for being an authentic representative of its other. Constructions as well as analyses are duties bestowed upon the modernity and are, thus, more scientifically crucial than the very societies they represent. (see Nandy 1983, p.60) It creates a plausible other narrated in the language of binary oppositions.

As Louis Dumont and Nandy observe the Dalit/Adivasi/the colonized become tools for the elite's/colonizer's representation of themselves as historical societies with a mature 'human self-consciousness' in contrast to an earlier 'second rate consciousness' attributed to such societies (see Nandy 1983, p.60).

Marx's general perspective of India as "small, semi-civilized communities"¹² typifies

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 312. Here descriptions of how some tribal groups converted themselves into Hindu castes as in the example of the Bhumiji tribe in Bengal, Rajabansis and other tribes in the northern India which have been converted into Hindu castes like Rajput caste to get a fillip to ascend the social ladder set inside the Hindu matrix.

¹¹ Ashish Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of self under colonialism*, OUP, New Delhi, 1983, p.11

¹² Marx quoted in Nandy p.13.

the Indian modernity's conceptualization of tribals. When Marx sees England as the "unconscious tool of history", the civilizing cultures in India view themselves as the conscious, sophisticated mechanisms whose nuanced cultural appropriations assimilate societal fragments into the mainstream. Catherine F Ling¹³ argues 'refining' the 'heathen' is to lead him from darkness to light; *thamasoma jyoythir gamaya*.

Thurston in his *Ethnographic Notes*¹⁴ records the Nayadi tribesmen who in the scale of pollution held so low a place that nobody condescended to touch them - escaping from the polluting socio-psycho-physique permanently attributed to it by converting to Islam. Thurston, sociologizingly observes it a permeated fixity validated by the Islamic trellis now imparting to it social mobility.

Sociologising the Exotic: Socio-Anthropology and Ethno-Sociology

Socio-anthropological analyses of the community necessitated a parading of its ordained existential differences as continuously been pitted against an erudite and sophisticated modernity. The pre-requisite for such a discourse of classification has become understandably the establishment of ontological differences, linguistic, physical and cultural as these nuances are set to route the reader to the culture 'inseparably distinct.' The self positioning, aimed at the creation of the 'other' at different levels refused either to recognize the marked 'other' and its cultures having a status on a par with its own or to incorporate it into the modernity's 'we' and 'ours' written in capital letters.

Thurston's account of Paniya language as a "*debased Malayalam patois* spoken in a *curious nasal sing-song*, difficult to imitate"¹⁵ was later to be reiterated by Luis who calls it "*very corrupt dialect of Malayalam...which is difficult to understand*"¹⁶ and Panikkar "the Kadar language is Tamil and their various dialects are *so curious and difficult* that even Tamil-speaking people cannot correctly understand them."¹⁷

¹³ Catherine F Ling, *Sunrise on the Nilgiris, the story of the Todas*, The Zenith Press, London, 1885.

¹⁴ Edgar Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1907, rep 1975.

¹⁵ Thurston, 1901, p.62, emphasis added.

¹⁶ AAD Luis, *Tribes of Kerala*, emphasis mine. (this book has not been mentioned before, and so it needs the full reference)

¹⁷ Gopal Panikkar T K, *Malabar and Its Folk*, Asian Educational service, New Delhi, 1983 (first

Something to this effect, Baby portrays the idea of ‘teaching’ through the Tamburan’s conversation with his slave, Lakshamanan:

Tamburan : Ah say Ah

Lakshamanan: Aha

Tambura : Do you know what that means? Ah means Brahma the creator. He created this universe. Then he created the four castes from his forehead, from his mouth his chest and his limb reprehensively. And then, all the rest was created for our sake – then you, the out castes! Do you realize that?¹⁸

Baby shows the progression of an established debased language which is ‘teaching the correct language’ what, here, Tamburan (the Lord) seems to have done. This language does carry with it a history of the master as well. Elsewhere Baby quotes an Adiya song which warns the dangers of the masters’ language:

Evuthachante evuthu nee padikonda, Evuthachan Evuthachante evuthukolu
kontu thachu nite bhasha keduthikalayum

(Do not go to learn writing from the scribe. He will strike you with his writing rod and destroy your language.)¹⁹

The vulgarization of language, as done in the socio-linguistic surveys, leads us to witness a phenomenon – something that Benedict Anderson observes as the establishment of ‘truth-language’. Phrases like ‘difficult to understand/imitate’ presuppose a non-Paniya reader, whose language is juxtaposed and looks at the community as an exotic coven placed below human rationality. Thus the assertion of a truth-language simultaneously validates a truth non-language if at all the phrase is possible. It is to say that, borrowing an expression from Anderson, the ‘ourness’ is imagined as opposed to a crystal clear ‘theirness’. The ‘pure language’ as a tool for maintaining the hierarchically set linguistic power structure, remained unchanged as

publication 1900) Kadars are another tribal community inhabiting in the Cochin and Calicut districts of Kerala, emphasis added.

¹⁸ KJ Baby, *Nadugadhika*, Visthar, Bangalore, 1993, p.41.

¹⁹ Ibid. p.29. An Adiya (close to the Paniya community) mother is narrated as singing this song to her children.

the vernaculars in general and Paniya language in particular did not seem to have challenged the masters' language. Anderson observes, on the other hand, the dethronement of pure- languages in the west by Creoles both by the influence of the Reformation as early as in mid 1500 when print media thrived, and by the solidification of Creole identities that augmented their political assertions in the centuries followed as seminal for the emergence of nationalisms.

A regional manifestation of this global phenomenon of debilitating the 'thrust-upon-truths' as happened in wider colonial spaces couldn't have happened in the insular space of a tribal language as the British colonialism didn't have a direct leverage in the tribal cultures, in the main. On the contrary, the duplicitous fixity of the tribal identity as defined by outside cultures had validity even among the defined.

K J Baby quotes a line from a Paniya song, the narrative dimensionality of which typifies the internalization of the colonial myths by the colonized: "*nanka chathikkalla thantha chati*"²⁰ (we are the lowest caste, lower than all castes, clans). Baby observes the caste conception, an appearance of which in the tribal lore is a comparatively new and 'added'²¹ phenomenon, formed in the tribal psyche when a society structured on caste lines at the bottom of which Paniyas are yoked emerged in the contemporaneity.

The habitation, both territorial (Wayanad, the hilly district of Kerala) and transactional (cultural, linguistic social), has been mutated to the extent of dismembering the tribal self from the erstwhile master-slave paradigm by the onrush of migrants into the geography. The colonial tenet of the pure and the polluted – the *jenmi* (master) and the *Jenmams* (slaves) – has been discomposed demolishing the singularity claims of the former.

The sociological/anthropological analysis of the community necessitated a parading of its ordained existential differences pitted against an erudite and sophisticated modernity. The prerequisite for such a discourse of classification has become, the

²⁰ Ibid.p.9

²¹ Ibid. Baby employs the word 'added' .He seems to have suggested that the 'caste consciousness' among Paniyas is not spontaneous but rather an influenced, thrust-upon one which had undergone a strong internalization process.

establishment of ontological differences²², physical, linguistic, cultural and geographical. These nuances are set to route the reader to cultures ‘insuperably distinct’. The self positioning, aimed at the creation of the ‘other’ at different levels, refused either to recognize the marked ‘other’ and its cultures having a status on a par with its own or to incorporate it into the modernity’s ‘we’ or ‘ours’; if at all it did, it assimilated the latter and disregarded any individuality associated to it. Any such constitution (of an outlandish ‘other’) could well be an imaginary fabrication²³ far from the marked off living concourses. Edward Said observes refuting the geographical dissimilarity of the ‘races’ sifted out from an “us”:

It is perfectly possible to argue that some distinctive objects are made by the mind, and these objects, while appearing to exist objectively, have only fictional reality. A group of people living on a few areas of land will set up boundaries between their land, its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call ‘the land of the barbarians’. In other words, this universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is “ours” and an unfamiliar space beyond “ours” which is “theirs” is a way of marking geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary.²⁴

Lévi Strauss’ analysis of evolutionist and diffusionist interpretations of anthropology –the former taking its cues exactly from the evolutionism in biology leading to position the western civilizations the most advanced in their chronological progression and the ‘primitive groups’ as ‘survivals of earlier stage’ the latter, on the other hand, diffusing and comparing individuals reconstructed with ‘fragments borrowed from different categories’ – seems to have re-located methods of analysis. The logical classification of the ‘primitive groups’ reflect, in the evolutionist method, their ‘appearance in time’. Lévi Strauss refutes the legitimacy of the evolutionist method by disregarding any transverse and simultaneous acculturization across

²² Edward Said interestingly observes: “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the occident’ ”. See, Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Parthenon, 1978, p.2

²³ V G Kiernan (quoted in Said) calls these imaginary caricatures of the east as “Europe’s collective day dreaming” which is true of any such portrayal of an exotic community. See, *Orientalism*, p.52.

divergent and dissimilar communities. Lévi Strauss proves it by bringing into light two unrelated tribal groups, one being the Eskimo that, according to him, happened to be technically consummate but sociologically indigent, and the other being the native Australian people about whom the reverse is true. The point made here, obviously, does disprove a time centered theory of tribal existence. On the other hand, the diffusionist never succeeds in 'building more than a pseudo-individual' since the spatio-temporal coordinates are assembled more or less fortuitously as against a 'true unity' supposed to be inherent in the object in question.

To undercut the erstwhile models of analysis meant, to Lévi Strauss, a re-construction of a discursive yet positively alterable parallel – a structuralist nonpareil – whereby an analogous or contradictory transaction is possible. Such studies, to him 'deceived us' for being apparently ill-equipped to decipher the conscious or unconscious processes by which man acquires 'concrete individual or collective experiences' which include man's establishment of new social institutions by invention, modification or borrowing. Lévi Strauss' parallel presupposes 'universally valid' conclusions to be arrived at as corollary to the 'objective study' preferred to the former interpolating appropriations. This strategy, set in the synchronic and diachronic methodologies, deployed within its matrix a double assertion astride a dividing line – an accomplishment which would coronate sociology among social sciences as a messianic prediction would argue.²⁵ The hybridized space of Lévi Strauss – a creation which as against an 'out there originality' – relied upon the binary oppositions it resorted to schematize into a holistic and integrative sortie.

In the constituent units of an institution, Lévi Strauss sought conceptual equivalents to the linguistic phonemes and morphemes to enable oneself to draw 'correlation, permutation and transformation' and to establish homologies between institutions foreshadowed by a reduction of the cultural aspects to 'structural elements'.²⁶ The ostensible disengagement of the Lévi Straussian model from analyzing the social institutions –understandably the tribal ones are dominantly included in the schema – the traditional way with a goal of extirpation which, enigmatically, ended up,

²⁴ *Orientalism*, p.54.

²⁵ Claude Lévi Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Clair Jacobson, Basic Books, New York, 1963. p.3.

²⁶ See. *Ibid*, p.x .A parallel creation of an appropriating strategy – a *modus operandi* – is posed to be the logical alternative of the subjective interventions.

administering the principles of rarefaction. Myths, as 'gross constituent units' are 'identified and isolated' when an analogy is foregrounded between myth and language, and observe "economy of explanation; unity of solution and ability to reconstruct the whole from a fragment as later stages from previous ones"²⁷ constructing a 'social structure' orchestrated to periodicize the ancient/ primitive cultures incorporating its arena primitive art and myth - Lévi Strauss argues... "the term social structure has nothing to do with empirical reality but with models which are built up after it"²⁸. The Lévi Straussian 'built-up models' give rise to an unalterable 'the social model' in anthropological confrontations.

The very idea of identification via a fieldwork undertaken by an omniscient anthropologist is criticized by Derrida:

The battle of the proper names follows the arrival of the foreigner and that is not surprising. It is born in the presence and even from the presence of the anthropologist who comes to disturb order and natural peace, the complicity which peacefully binds the good society to itself in its play. Not only have the people of the line imposed ridiculous sobriquets on the natives, obliging them to assume these intrinsically (hare, sugar, cavaignac), but it is the anthropological eruption which breaks the secret of proper names...²⁹

Here the anthropologist's, the truth seeker's endeavour to interpolate into the 'pure space' distracting its play in its natural course has been criticized. The attempted unveiling of the concealed truth, the craftiness the anthropologists could achieve is just an appropriation by the foreign element which is both anthropology and the anthropologist. Anthropology the discipline, giving false names (hare, sugar, etc.), temporalizes its 'objects' whereas the mere presence of the anthropologist violates the space he is in:

The mere presence of the spectator, then, is a violation. First a pure

²⁷ Ibid, p.279

²⁸ Ibid, p.211.

²⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, G.C. Spivak (trans.), Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, New

violation: a silent and immobile foreigner attends a game of young girls...violence appears only at the moment when the intimacy of proper names can be opened to forced entry... The mere presence of the foreigner, the mere fact of his having his eyes open, cannot not provoke a violation...³⁰

Derrida analyses the Levi Straussian picture of the Nambikwaras being taught writing by the anthropologist. Entering into the Nambikwara space, the anthropologist teaches them writing as a response to which the Nambikwaras draw 'imitative, amusing and wavy horizontal lines' on their calabashes. It appears no less than a play the anthropologist sets for the natives. Derrida criticizes Levi Strauss' argument that the Nambikwara could not know what writing is because they translate 'writing' as 'drawing lines' (an aesthetic activity for the Nambikwara), which presupposes 'writing' for a non-Nambikwara is 'proper writing' (an erudite activity).

As Derrida points out this categorization stems from isolating aesthetic values which is to term writing as 'properly speaking'. The knowledge of writing, hence, stands for the knowledge of the anthropologist, his all inclusive erudition; his sense of aesthetic- unaesthetic activities. This erudition is set to be poured down upon the natives by means of interactive coercion (like interpolating children's game to know the proper names), Preaching (teaching writing). The apparent violence (presence of the foreigner, his activities) objectifying the 'other' marks the only intervening and possible sequel which originates from the 'knowledge of ignorance' (Nambikwaras are without writing, they don't take proper names); a violence all the way through. This turns to be violence as the foreigner does re- shape and re-orient the space – a point of contention in Derrida.

The Lévi Straussian model restrained the 'primitive life' inside the lexicon of temporality with its conjectures stemming from a spatial immediacy despite its being a non-fixable continuity constantly been distorted. The earlier discussed elements of society – little, singularized splinters potentially equipped with narrativity – were later on to be taken up by Louis Dumont. Dumont's accounts of caste, in its hierarchical

Delhi, 1994. p.113.

³⁰ Ibid.

tessellation, proposed it as an interactive structure without which the dialectics of purity-pollution would have been unviable. It follows suit the pre-Straussian diffusionism ideologically (to it, Vedic tradition forms the foundation) and the post-Straussian dispassionate and ‘scientific’ observation methodologically. Dumont’s arguments not only do contradict but traverse synchronous yet unrelated and abstruse paths:

...putting ourselves in the school of Indology we learn in the first place never to forget that India is one. The very existence and influence of the traditional, higher sanscritic civilisation demonstrates without question the unity of India. One might even think that it does not only demonstrate but actually constitutes it. But this last statement is too narrow, at any rate for the sociologist, because as we shall see, the lower or popular level of civilization as not only to be recognized but to be taken as being in some way homogenous with the higher one.³¹

The point being made here is the overt, pre-determined positing of multi-singular civilisational infrastructure under a unifying yet detached singularity. The ‘Vedic science’ instrumental to the unipolarisation, does not, however, allows its own ‘singularity’ to be interpolated by the ‘low’ counterparts scattered around but manages to occupy an overarching position homogenizing ‘altercations’.

Dumont sets his theoretical recipe for his ethno-sociological investigation at the outset. Dumont’s theory postulated a unity of India with its rubrics (re)defining the indigenous cultures. Without such a postulation, he believed, no sociology could be attributed to India except a vague geographical one. Following the Lévi Straussian model, Dumont disregards the former social anthropologists’ attempts at concentrating on ‘local substratum’, i.e. the tribal life worlds situated in the geography, which Dumont later on identifies as Indian ethnical geography. To explain oneself a bit more, taking recourse to two figures representing Dumont’s theoretical configurations³² wouldn’t be all that futile.

³¹ Louis Dumont, *Religion/politics and History in India, Collected Papers in Indian Sociology*, Moulton Publishers Paris, 1970 .p.4.

³² These figures are drawn on the basis of Louis Dumont’s chapter *For Sociology of India* in his book *Religion/Politics and History in India, Collected Papers in Indian Sociology*. However, Dumont doesn’t provide us with any such pictures. His book *Homo Hierarchicus*, in which he to be quite

EARLIER POSTULATE

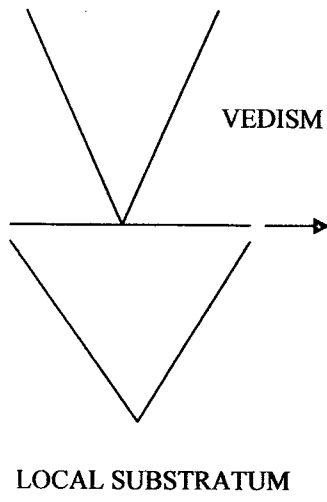


Fig. A

DUMONT'S POSTULATE

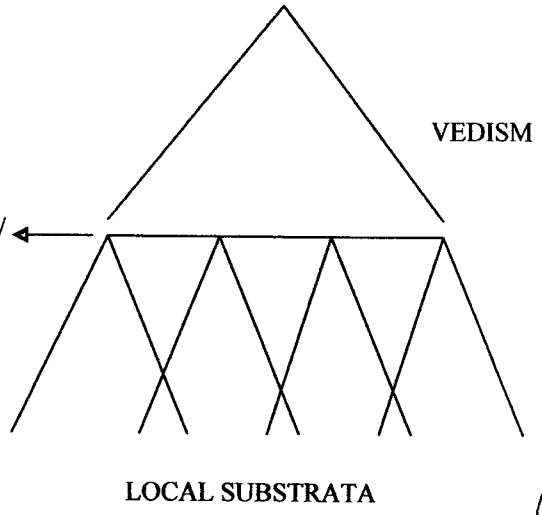


Fig. B



TH-13550

The figure A does exemplify an earlier method of the local substratum towards which the early ethnologists turned their attention. Ethnic communities forming the local substrata serve a holistic insight into the wider civilization (here the Sub Continental civilization). The imperviousness of the cut-off-from-the-mainstream fragments (the local substrata) achieved by being in a metaphorical 'Africa or Melanesia' (thus a proven originality) served the local substratum (the aboriginal, indigenous groups) with authenticity; turning it into an unquestionable anthropological good. Any such substrata, thus, could reflect a vicarious past of the modernity – the way it would have behaved in its infancy. Vedism, here, is just one among the strands come from above. Local substratum seems, vaguely, to represent a pre-Vedic time-spot though it is demarcated ambiguously.

On the other hand, figure B illustrates Louis Dumont's parallel mode of ethno-social knowledge production where Vedism comprehensively claims the initial as well as the developmental in the present day hermeneutic of the uni-polar society it meticulously delineates. It could well strike a balance between the imagined unifying base and its mutually opposing superstructures. This flattening Vedic progenitor superimposed on the mutually contradicting offshoots, points out the creation of a

comfortably settled in his theoretical matrix, hasn't been considered for drawing these pictures.

repressive egalitarianism.³³ In this picture, however, the local substrata, as represented by many a triangular figure, merge into the India/Hinduism *vedicised* to implicate a singular genealogy.

When Dumont speaks of the ‘largely illusory character of Indian diversity’, he was legitimizing the imagined unity inherent in India to institutionalize its historiography. The seeming indeterminacy of the Indian unity envisaged is attuned to the morphogenetic and heuristic praxis – reduplicating its very foray into a cultural ‘levelling’ – manifests a total, social mosaic hegemonically fabricated.

The model that Dumont adopts for studying caste and its socio-cultural reverberations is typified in his examination of the Tamil god Aiyandar situating Him within the modular perimeters of his temple.³⁴ The study of the god and the pantheon he belongs to happens to be an oblique reference to that of the *Brahmanism*, the *Brahmanically* structured Hindu religion: “I propose ... to study the god less in himself than in the relation he maintains in the village pantheon”³⁵

His keen analysis traces obvious marks of an Aryan-Dravidian dichotomy simultaneously co-existing in the space in question. The main deity, Aiyandar, is distanced from the meat-eating attendant gods (a sacrifice is performed to propitiate the attendant gods whereas Aiyandar is a vegetarian entity settled peacefully in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple). The structure of the divine order, is suggested by Dumont, is to be considered in relation to the order. Thus the vegetarian god’s hierarchical positioning, his interpersonal discourse with the meat-eating men.³⁶ This ‘representational’ temple system (of the one outside) caters an early identifiably in lower gods. For instance the god KaRuppaN (namely black god) a lower counterpart of Aiyandar is meant to be closer to his human representations. The critique being

³³ Referring to an individuals will to pleasure and thus to (assert) difference, Theodor W. Adorno in *Culture Industry* (See p.126) terms it ‘repressive egalitarianism’; an ‘if-you-only-knew devise’ which caters one-dimensionality.

³⁴ In the second chapter that deals with Aiyandar in *Religion/Politics and History in India, Collected Papers in Indian Sociology*, Dumont offers a layered argument on the relational process of formation. It follows the Levi-Straussian structuralism with ‘socially validated’ oppositional ‘behavioural patterns’ added to it. Here arises the whole idea, which is incomprehensible, of a lifeless, dispassionate structure of the sociologist appropriating a passionate, oppressively present social tradition which caste is in India.

³⁵ Ibid. see p. 29.

³⁶ Ibid.p.28.

made here is in the structural locatedness of the social hierarchy which, even though dispassionately, validates it as a necessary ontological (pre)condition true at each given point of time frame it fits in. As discussed above, this unified structuring is done establishing the binary oppositions located inside the Hindu system where the relegated other is compliant and subservient.

The Lévi Straussian and Dumontian models of socio-anthropological analyses have been problematized by Bernard Cohen and Elvin Verrier. Cohen's critique of the colonial and glorified picture of a fair-skinned anthropologist working among dark-skinned people undercuts the 'clan' based anthropology:

The anthropologist posits a place where the natives are authentic, untouched and aboriginal, and strives to deny the central historical fact that the people he or she studies are constituted in the historically significant colonial situation, affirming instead that they are somehow out of time and history.³⁷

Cohen's accusation of the anthropological comparison for holding time and history constant as a corollary to which 'what is observed or read about in a spatial metaphor' is structured by classificatory schematization, discreetly discounts the former romantic reaction of aboriginality. Something to this effect, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak³⁸ questions the Indigenous Knowledge Systems of South Africa Trust's haulage of the data of indigenous knowledge systems as "an unquestioned good, and that there need be no attention paid, beyond the description attention of anthropology and archaeology to how these knowledge systems can supplement the imagination of the global"³⁹. In Verrier Elvin, we have a philanthropologist, who caricatures the tribal as the Noble Savage. Elvin's psychological inquisition of the bastardization of Caliban in *The Tempest* followed the anti-Noble Savage rage of Charles Dickens who declared the idea of Noble Savage as a fable, his happiness a 'delusion', and his nobility nonsense. Dickens' point against the sentimentalizing over

³⁷ Bernard Cohen, *An Anthropologist among Historians*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987. p.19.

³⁸ *Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Postcolonial Studies*, vol.8, no.4, 2005.pp.475-486.

³⁹ *Ibid.*p.484.

the western myth of the Noble Savage, becomes, in Elvin, an antithesis of it as Elvin's internalization of the 'tribality' viewed them as an adaptable model for an internally incoherent modernity. Elvin, however, does explicate the mythological figuration of the tribal in the ancient Eastern texts like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, taking the *sabari* myth from *Ramayana*, where the instance of a decomposed, distorted collectivity begging for the grace from above is brought into light. Both the western pastoral tradition which Calibanized⁴⁰ the other and the Eastern one which exoticised the tribal collectivity progressed disjointedly towards vilifying the tribal as against an erudite Western individual (Prospero an individual whereas Caliban, Sycorax and Ariel together form a collectivity in *The Tempest*) or against an Eastern kingdom administered by a king whose teleological power kept a historical and individually authenticated people under its precepts of exclusivity. The maneuvering martial exchanges between individuality and a rudimentary collectivity, a *kingdomised* society and the barbaric, hermits of a mythical Dandaka forest and the tribal marauders contribute to the core framework for a long drawn picture.⁴¹ Civilizing Sabari in *Ramayana* becomes the part of an aesthetically sought out differentiation with its reverberations impinging upon the discursivity inexorably.

Verrier Elvin's avowed experimentation discerned the 'in-depth' 'childlikeness' which could become a 'childishness' when resorted to violence and diagnosed its original and curable crudities: "When a man breaks a long fast, he is not immediately given a full meal; he takes a sip of orange-juice. Otherwise he may fall seriously ill."⁴² Elvin's point of contention here seems to rectify the (ac)culturization process initiated by the North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) among the tribal groups in the North Eastern region. Elvin's anthropologising seen from this angle invents the "modernity's child" yet to be refined, recast and assimilated into the monopolizing and hegemonic mode of civilization. Elvin, conspicuously, holds a better position as he doesn't subscribe to any condescending method when dealing with the tribals. His internalization of the tribal by living in India and marrying a tribal person seemed to have led him one step ahead of the redundant colonial idea of going into the 'field'

⁴⁰The word *Caliban* is derived from *Carib*, an aboriginal community supposedly cannibalistic. (See Verrier Elvin, *Philanthropologist, Selected Writings*, Nari Rustomji (ed.), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1989.)

⁴¹Verrier Elvin, *Philanthropologist, Selected Writings*, Nari Rustomji (ed.), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1989) p.217

are highly educated and disciplined and lead a corporate communal life which I think, is far better than the caste ridden society from which we suffer.⁴⁵

This erudite Nehruvian approach, which sees the *tribality* in terms of equality, hence sees its merits in modern education and the casteless social practice which Nehru wanted to be practised in modern India, and thus, is not without the elements of universalizing values of the nationalist agenda. S.W. Kellet in the introduction of the book declares the goal to assess the extent to which Indian gentlemen of education internalized the science of the west and “in its light modifying their views of Indian life and tradition”⁴⁶. It corresponds to what Baby seems to suggest in the narration of a slave being taught by the master.

Gopal Panikkar brings the Hindu myth regarding the creation of Kerala in which Parasurama, an incarnation of lord Vishnu in the form of a Brahmin, throws his sieve along the surface of waters which resulted in the sea receding to bring forth the geography of Kerala into visibility. Parasurama who eliminated the Kshatriyas out of his rage fills the place with Brahmin families he brings in. Panikkar locates Malabar as an exotic geography comparable to the European country of Scotland as the place is full of ‘ridiculously superstitious people’ who believe in spirits. Adivasis are introduced as: “They are a debased and ignorant race, as timid as hares at the approach of human beings.”⁴⁷ “They have no peculiar customs worth recording”⁴⁸ and “they are every year increasing in number, and threaten to swamp the country”⁴⁹.

Panikkar ‘proves’ the ‘inherent slavery’ in these people by showing an imposed on practice initiated by the feudality:

The slavish, nature of these races is illustrated by the following and like forms of address employed by them. They still speak of themselves in the presence of superior races as *Adiyangal* i.e., he who lies at (your) feet. When speaking of their eyes, hands or other

⁴⁵ Nehru quoted in Elvin, 1989, p.241.

⁴⁶ Gopal Panikkar T K, *Malabar and Its Folk*, Asian Educational Service, New Delhi,1983(first publication,1900)

⁴⁷ Panikkar, 1900, P.154.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

armed with tape recorder and a notebook. Such a study amounted to an equalizing attempt and discovers three cardinal values 'common to humanity': "piety, benevolence and self control" which are "fundamental to all peoples whether semi-civilized or totally savage." The picture of an equalized Noble Savage becomes clearer in Elvin: "The good and noble life was to be lived not in towns and cities but in the solitude of the American forests or south sea isles"⁴³

The political side of the secularizing tendency as such seemed to have motivated Elvin at a time when the state eagerly assimilated political, social and cultural diversities keeping in mind the sole goal of achieving a unified India secularly disregarding the identities under the imminent threat of an anti-national ethnic politics threatening the precariously set secularized, governably unified, political geography of the new country.

It is interesting to note how two early prime ministers looked at the tribal issue though both meticulously followed the nationalizing project. Indira Gandhi's idea of 'opening up' a possibility for tribal-non-tribal cultural interaction raises doubts on the issue:

How would this opening-up affect the valley and its attractive people?
Would contact and competition with the *clever people of the plains* not
destroy their *charming naiveté*?⁴⁴

This opening-up of a culture of the erudite for a benighted, naturally charming people evinces the cultured masters' 'sympathetic' attempts at civilizing. On the other hand, Jawaharlal Nehru seemed to have ignored any difference between the tribals and the people of the plains as he eagerly waited for any (revolutionary) social move that could bring every Indian under the same categorization of Indian modernity. Nehru, who hated caste, idealized the casteless tribal system a model for the India he envisaged:

...I can say with complete honesty that some of the tribal people have
reached a high degree of development, in fact I have found that they

⁴² Ibid.p.235.

⁴³ Ibid.p.223.

⁴⁴ Indira Gandhi on the tribal people of the Kulu Valley, quoted in Elvin 1989, p.242.

members of the body they are required to call them old eyes, old hands &c. So also with rice, which they mention stone-rice. Their children are *kidangal* or calves, and their silver money copper cash or *chempin cash*. They call all Nairs *Thampuran* or kings.⁵⁰

The imposition of the inferiority of the feudality is the evidence of an ‘innate slavishness’ in Panikkar. The apparent power structures of the feudality that generate language as well as legitimate gestures are ignored by Panikkar to whom an internally originated truth justified them. K.J. Baby, on the other hand, brings the internalization of the colonial construct of the slave-master narrative by the Paniyas:

Ayyantadiyan nankalay

Mamundathadiyam nankalay

Maleladiyan nankalay

Chettiladiyan nankalay⁵¹

(We are the slaves of the Ayyans / we are the slaves of the Mamundas / we are the slaves of the lords of the hills / we are the slaves of the lords of the fields.)

Baby questions the notion of an ontological slave in this drama which Panikkar observed as coherent and latent veracity.

K Panoor in his *Keralathile Africa*,⁵² in a tone sympathetic to the tribal/adivasi people, depicts a varied picture of the divergent tribal groups in Wayanad. In the chapter that deals with Paniyas, he describes the feudal system of slavery which kept Paniyas as slaves both by the way of the governmental machinery and by the way of a religious compulsion.

Feudality’s earlier method of *Janmam* (to own a Paniya as a slave for life) gave way to own the Paniya slaves on yearly basis. This change had been centralized and controlled by the *valliyoorkavu* (see note on *Nippupanam* below) temple system. On such occasions Paniyas from all the parts of Wayanad would assemble and the feudal

⁴⁹ Ibid.P, 152.

⁵⁰ Ibid.P, 157.

⁵¹ Baby KJ, *Nadugadhika*, P.10.

⁵² Panoor K, *Keralathile Africa, Travel Notes on Tribals of Wayanad*, 1963 ‘Keralathile Africa’ literally means ‘the Africa in Kerala’. Being the first book of its kind, it offers a detailed

master would pick up their Paniyas for the next year's work – an activity for which the master has to bestow his slaves with *Nippupanam*⁵³ which ensures the receiver working for him for the next year. Any spatial escapade of the slave is scrutinized and invalidated by the goddess of *valliyurkavu*. Thus *Kavu* – a temple of the feudal master with a goddess moralizing the slave for the master – narrates how the structures of power are transformed into legalizing moral machinery. Baby interestingly formulates his novel *Mavelimantam*⁵⁴ tracing a court verdict sanctioning a Paniyan namely Kaippadan as a *janmam* in the year 1834, to show the governmental legalizing of the slavery system that commodified the Paniyan.

Panoor sarcastically observes the existence of slavery as an ineluctable preserver of the tribal communities as the master wanted to see the slave alive though leading a coarse life. Panoor as well as Sarma⁵⁵ show the Paniya superstitions becoming more detrimental to him than to the external practice. The portrayal of a superstitious Paniyan that supports the colonial construction of the 'barbaric aboriginal' is generated keeping into account the possibility of attributing the reasons of the poignant state in one's own idiosyncrasies.

Panoor sympathizes with the Paniyan causes whereas in Sarma they are objectified and located within the matrix of a larger system.

So far the Paniyan is trying to retain their tribal character; changes are bound to persist in their traditional social organization, economic pursuit, political behaviour etc. consequent on the changes in all spheres of human thought and activity. Despite governmental efforts for their economic uplift, this tribal continues to eke out a pathetic life in the midst of ignorance, indebtedness, and ill-health and above all

sociological study of the tribal people in Wayanad.

⁵³ *Nippupanam* stands for Money given to a slave as part of legalizing the contract which would last a whole year following the moment of the slave's acceptance of the money. Any breach of law would bring the slave horrific physical, legal and moral torture. The physical punishment of a run-away-slave would be initiated by the Lord himself whereas the legal one by the early British state, the moral one by the Lord's goddess Valliyoor Amma at whose temple (which is known as *Valliyoor kavu*) the contract is agreed upon. She, assuming a fiery *Kali* like face, brings the 'breacher of law' back by following him/her everywhere he/she goes even in their dreams of freedom. This temple based functioning of slavery is termed as *valliyoor kavu system*.

⁵⁴ Baby K J, *Maveli Mantam*, Current Books, Thrissur, 1991. See appendix of the book to read the court verdict.

⁵⁵ Sarma K N K, *Communication: Note on the Paniyans of Kerala, Man in India*, 1992; 72(3) pp.359-

unhealthy economic practices.⁵⁶

Arguments on the lineage of Paniyas are varied and often take an easy recourse to generalised statements. Following Thurston, *Kerala caritram* endorses the Paniya lineage: “The Paniyan in Malabar, with flat nose and frizzy hair is almost a Negro”⁵⁷ This when seen as a larger project of alienation assumes social and cultural roles. The same book warns against forming any ‘scientific claims’ as any such evidence to this effect hadn’t been available. Kerala according to the book is diverse as it carries “barbarian folk eating crude food”. The history – a history that narrates the story of the cultured populace of the plains – it is depicted, had been a history of conflicts between the “Polyandrous and the polygamous systems and the people who follow the systems...However, the system of polygamy is rejected in this epic by, Rama himself.”⁵⁸

Rama’s (who is a Hindu god in the first place) rejection of the widely practised system of polygamy, which is assigned to the tribal people epitomizes the ‘othering’ ideology re-illustrated when the mythical figures are brought in. This observation on the Ramayana cultures that centres round the iconic figure Rama is closely connected to the other mythic figure Parasurama whose story of *Brahmanization* has been described earlier. The *first Brahmanization theory* shows the indigenous as the invader.⁵⁹ Thus the very process of culturally alienating the indigenous (by claims on an African lineage) shows the theoretical foundation of a broader idea of depicting ‘the other’ whose geographical proximity is a result of an assumed ‘earthly tremor’ – a pre-historic calamity which ‘shipwrecked’ the Africans on Indian shores. The cultures of the shipwrecked hence remained totally unconnected, alien and always sub-standard. The dichotomy of pre-slavery, post-slavery periods establishes the self-same unconnectedness with its dialectics; the former watching the tribals as slave

364.

⁵⁶ Ibid. P.364.

⁵⁷ *Kerala caritram, Compilation of Kerala History*, vol.1, Kerala History Association, Cochin,1973. p. 819. Translation mine.

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid. See page, 811. Here the Parasurama myth of the destruction of Kshatriyas by Parsurama who himself is a Brahmin, is described as the ‘true story’ and the Parasurama, a facilitator of the brahminic culture as he himself brought Brahmin families to Kerala from places far and near. Thus, those who followed the ‘first inhabitants’ are categorized generally by the myth as ‘invaders’ or euphemistically, ‘intruders’. The Aryan – Dravidian myth is reversed in the second part of the myth whereas the early part (Brahmaanisation) re-narrates the Brahminical conquest

races, the latter as inferior infants.

The differentiation and its duplicity, especially in the post-slavery period – a term contentious in its applicability – has become hardly visible when the cultural interactions with the ‘people of the plains’⁶⁰ and with the settlers have changed the whole discourse of power as related to every day living. K Panoor narrates an interesting example to portray how caste, a Hindu system, is internalized by the tribal people meticulously mimicking the ideology of untouchability. His account on visiting a Kurichiya tribal village reads:

I visited on the day a basic school for Kurichiya⁶¹ children situated in a lonely place of the kannavam forest. I was experiencing the innocent world of the kids as I was gleefully interacting with them; all of a sudden, casting a baffled look at the door, the kids went restless and started murmuring to each other something unknown to me. In less than no time, they all left the class room without taking anybody’s permission; leaving the teacher and me alone in the class room. Then I found an effeminate figure ineluctably standing at the door. This man has come as he was informed that somebody who helps Harijans to facilitate government aid to build houses had come to the village. The teacher still stood thunderstruck. He spoke after a shocked silence he has been observing for some time: ‘the kids are so baffled that a Pulayan⁶² had polluted their school by his touch. They have all gone to take their purifying baths’⁶³

The internalization of caste undercuts any purity claim as it is believed to have been valid in tribal societies. The apparent in-between stature of cultures defies itself to be defined and categorized under identifiable sections. It, thus, becomes something

⁶⁰ The settlers who occupied Wayanad during early forties make another huge change. The settlers’ culture changed the whole discourse of an erstwhile feudality. The intention, here, is to see how the feudality and the Hindu discourses influenced the tribal way of living.

⁶¹ *Kurichiyas* are a tribal community of hunters and gatherers in Wayanad who claimed themselves as the *Malanamboodiris* namely ‘the Brahmins of the hill’. They were keen on observing untouchability with other communities including those of the Hindus in the plains. The point being made here is, this practice cannot be but a mimicking of the wider system outside the tribal one.

⁶² *Pulayan* is not a tribe. It was treated as an untouchable caste by the Brahmanic system.

⁶³ Panoor K, *Keralathile Africa*, National Book Stall, Kottayam, P.63. Free translation mine.

completely diversified and escapes generalized definitions. The orientalist and essentialist reading breaks down as the cultural interactions worked against the theory of the 'pure tribal'.

The Paniya narratives seem to suggest that they were enslaved at a rather primordial food gathering stage. The primordiality, however, proves to be a thrust upon one as it is rigorously attempted to maintain the Adiyas, Kurumas and Kurichyas whose myths and cultures often refer back to their kingdom and a culture particular to them.

The feudal power kept the socio-political space of the tribal subdued to it with the language of the master, the dialectics of his speech contributing tremendously to the hegemony; to take an instance, a folk song collected from a tribal settlement resurrects a feudal memory:

Chempathari kalathil nayi thoori Paniya

Chetteda Paniya, koreda Paniya,

*Ha haa hi ayi ayi yaa hi*⁶⁴

(The pure lawn [of thy masters' house] has been polluted by the excrement of a wandering dog. / cleanse the lawn thy Paniya, ho! / Purify the place thy Paniya ho!)

The act of a sacred place being polluted by animal excrement, and a mean servant cleansing the place depict a typical colonial feudality's exercise of power; the words 'chattered', 'koreda', are words yelled at a man in a lower position; the affix 'da' associated conveys the power element involved. It is not just an order exchanged from a master to his servant. The word 'Paniya' means a whole tribe; the tribe of people ordained to do menial jobs of this kind. When these lines are sung to us after a long gap since the death of the feudal slavedom, these words with the inherent resonance of power implicate the psychological impact of the erstwhile master on Paniyas. Here a self-fashioning on the basis of the defined (by the feudality) characteristics attributed to them is decipherable.

⁶⁴ An unpublished Paniya folk song collected from the Pampala Paniya colony, near Sulthan's Bathery, Wayanad in January 2006. Free translation mine.

The proper name, which is hidden by the Nambikwara tribesmen, is to Derrida a designation of appurtenance and a logistico-social classification. Thus he argues the attempt to unveil the 'truth' of proper name does not consist in revealing proper name but in learning the veil hiding a classification and appurtenance the inscription within a system of linguistico-social differences (Derrida, p 111) Thus here the revealed 'truths' become just 'abstracts'; abstracts of a system of appellations in Derrida. The anthropologist's attempts at the revelation of the secret of proper names are motivated. Thus the sacred place and its natural play are, instead of being revealed, violated by the gaze of the anthropologist as seen in Derrida. Any conclusion is bereft of a solution; a solution that could keep the eyes of an 'outside' ethno-sociologist away; his note books and tape recorders from a violating and defining gaze for his knowledge of writing stands for his knowledge of anthropologising any '*Nambikwara*'; his all inclusive erudition. Any such community becomes the "childhood of our race" (see Derrida p.108). This endeavour of taking stock of the written historiography too falls short of offering both a wider picture of the situation and to come up with any possible solution to the practice it has been attempting to problematise.

CHAPTER 2

SUBJECTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF THE MYTHICAL HISTORY

Teyyattam, the divine dance form in Malabar practised by different castes, seems to have contributed to, at least, some of the Paniya rituals in Wayanad¹. Somewhere in the Paniya performative narratives – both at its presentational and at the inherent structural levels, there is an undeniable element of fusion, a presence of an alien tradition now internalized. As any facile demarcation proves to be inadequate, the only option left seems to be to trace the myths and analyze the performances they generate. Such performances, as a whole, form the community as the myths being enacted are supposed to have bound the community together, narrated its history and validated the very performance itself. Could there, therefore, be a performance bereft of a myth in the background? The answer seems to be an unswerving ‘no’. Certain performances appear to have had, to any ‘field worker’ especially working among Paniyas, no myth as such to support themselves with. It could be, not to explain it away, perceived not as not having one but as not having traced one. Before entering into what Levi-Strauss and others thought about it, one could begin with the narration of an actual tradition still in practice.²

During a *Thira*³ performance at a non-Paniya temple, as a custom, one Paniya from each village is bestowed with, along with the oracle, a sheaf of rice as a sign of his and his community’s allegiance to the temple god. The head of the village receiving the paddy walks back to his hamlet. This is the crux of the myth; the performances, however, as one of them could motivate these words, are all assorted. One of those

¹ See Dilip Menon, *The Moral Community of Teyyattam: Popular Culture in Late Colonial Malabar*, *Studies in History*, 9, 2, n.s. (1993). See also ET Raju, *Penappatille Chettadiyar* (tribal study-Malayalam), Fedina Publications, Wayanad, 1999, p. 28. Dilip Menon locates a Paniya performer inside the performing space of Theyyattam as a clown mispronouncing and thus resisting all attempts to teach him. He identifies this as a part of a Paniya’s ‘everyday resistance’. E.T. Raju records that some of the Paniya performances are designed on the lines of Theyyam at a later point of time.

² This performance caught my attention in a village named Kottayil near Sulthan’s Bathery, Wayanad. The nearby Shiva temple, which is a non-tribal one, attracts tribals as well. The period of the colonial feudality had managed, successfully, to incorporate them into its performative matrix. Though it was done for the colonial purpose of subjugation, its impacts remain at the level of rituals and myths.

³ A performance identifiable with *Teyyattam*.

Paniyas, traditionally bestowed upon the responsibility of carrying the sheaf along unto the village, after every two hundred metres or so, puts the sheaf down somewhere in a dark corner and waits until the next day. It takes three or four days for him to take the holy bundle home. This seemingly absurd performance springs from a myth intertwined with an everyday snag of performing it in the more obvious way. The rice straws ritually handed over to the Paniya must be, in marked loci, exchanged with another who would be waiting. Finally, a different person would bring the holy bundle to the village, which is to be supplied to the members. Places are marked on its way for it is seen as a gift not to a single person but to a whole tribe. Doing it alone could be ineffectual and must be avoided. The practice of a lonely Paniya who is destined to do it, nevertheless, stems from a practical difficulty: his tribesmen do not subscribe to any such now extinct beliefs, and as a result, places marked for others are empty. On each day, he takes a roundabout way to reach the spot where the sheaf is hidden and takes it the next two hundred metres. Each day he becomes a different person; a relay runner passing on the baton to himself. His resumption of the work shows his self-effacement as well as the identification of tribality instead of individuality. The self is denied to be recognized or it is recognized only as part of a collectivity. The myth related performance of a group of people carrying the sheaf is theoretically achieved, or rather, technically founded on the lack of 'men actually different'.

Myth, as it is seen, self-fashions to become history. In this instance, it forms a tradition of performing a ritual. It is closely related to what Levi Strauss seemed to have argued in *Myth and Meaning*⁴. As far as the myths associated to the tribal societies are concerned, the element of community, its origins, beliefs et cetera appear to be retold and individuals either represent an apparent collectivity or become initiators of certain motives – something dealt with in the second part of this chapter. Levi Strauss concentrates on the American Indian communities like Kwakiutl, and Tsimshian and of their mythical histories – in which the element of practice is so inextricable in their mythical patterns⁵. Levi Strauss observes two aspects of the mythical history: (1) an(y) element in a mythical story could be transformed leading

⁴ Claude Levi Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, Routledge, London, 1978.

⁵ Ibid. pp.29-37

to the other element being rearranged accordingly; and (2) they (mythical stories) are histories which are highly repetitive.

The story, which I discussed, could be an entry point to the aforementioned two aspects. This performative narrative is not fully a myth transformed, nor are its other elements seemingly rearranged. However, they are just in the periphery whereas the myth of a carrier clan fully ceased to exist. The straws that united the clan at the temple (each member was to be provided with one or two straws which would be collected by an elder person to make a sheaf at the end of the ceremony; now a sheaf is given at the temple to a single person who struggles to carry it away) is now symbolized in the bundle awarded to a single individual. The concept of a mythical story could be figured working at an extremely different level from the one of a (mythical) performance. Hence, as the links between both are undeniable, fields where both of them similarly operate could serve the purpose of locating the nuanced spaces of the community's existential lives. What is said about myths seems to be true of performances related to it. Beyond just a practical aberration, this Paniya story could open up new topics of discussion. The earlier custom that seriously envisaged the unity of Paniyas vanished as slavery has come to an end officially; making any close observance of such a ritual invalid. The performer might well be an annual observer of an inherited ritual now redundant. This transformation may find, to speak of another possibility, its roots in the places of habitations multiplied in the contemporaneity making any such practice impossible; or in the very discourse that necessitated the ritual performances to fade away. In both cases, the ritual does not exist as it did at a(ny) given point of time in the past; with the dialectics of practising it unchanged. Though an exact motive could never be arrived at, the basic transforming nature of folklore is conspicuously demonstrated in the performance.

The repetitive nature of mythical stories could appear in different places affecting different people and even in different historical periods⁶. Each of these redundant

⁶ Ibid. Levi Strauss considers such repetitive patterns appearing in different societies either in simultaneous or in differential time spots as tools for observing the dominant characteristic traits special to such societies. He finds such recurred patterns extremely helpful for any study directed at assessing the myths to decipher their meaning. He compares two North American mythical tribal stories which, belonging to different traditions, one collected by a white field worker from the mouth of the Tsimshian tribal chief Walter Wright, the other by a Tsimshian chief (Kenneth Harris) himself in different places and times, conspicuously repeat certain motives as well as strategies (in telling them, in their structure, in message and thus in their repetitiveness.).

practices appeared, when in vogue, to have achieved the goals aimed at. Unlike the stories in which certain motives repeat, in performances, the ritual repeats in its changed forms. The old man's attempts at retaining the once active ritual, here is just a continuation of the old one, though with additions. Practically the gaps – that the ritual's absence makes – can be seen as potential places for new repetitive forms to come up; for example the Paniya ritual of *Dyvam kanal* ⁷. During a period when slavery existed, it was dependent on external and colonial factors. Whereas, the post-slavery period especially in the absence of forceful non-Paniya temple-related Paniya customs (connected to slavery), or at least when it became an optional one, gave to it a confident decidability. The idea of a god uniting the clan seems to have recurred here as well. More than just a new ritual replacing an old one, it is an old theme repeated in a comparatively new ritual. This repetitiveness is seen as an unavoidable urge by Habermas. ⁸ He observes that though the human race has 'removed itself even further from its origins', by way of a 'world-historical process', it has never been able to dissolve the mythic tendencies of repetition.

Performance seems to be, visibly, the living patterns re-enacted; something that is life itself. The onlooker not only becomes a performer while receiving a straw at a temple ritual or receiving an oracle from the priest in a community ritual. An oral retelling of the myth is superseded by a ritual as it is close to living.

This chapter will take up, in the first section, two myths of Paniyas contributing to a performance related to death. The second section will look at the myths related to hunger, which form the subjectivity element in Paniya living traditions, whereas the third will be an attempt to scrutinize, minimally, the political scenario that had a remarkable force to influence the dialectics of Paniya living.

1

⁷ *Daivam Kanal* literally means 'meeting the god'. It is a ritual performed by Paniyas in which the performer enacts the god suggesting remedies for the folk's troubles and conveying their worries to the god. This performance demands decorative performing dress as it is considered to be a replica of the (non-Paniya) Teyyattam performance. It makes this ritual different from the other Paniya rituals.

⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Twelve Lectures*, Frederick Lawrence (trans.), MIT press, 1987, p. 110.

Let us begin our discussion, here in this section, by citing two myths connected to death and hence, to the rituals performed upon it. The first one is a foundational myth acting as a centrifugal force. Its impacts that activate the performance in the ritual bind the community together leading to an insight to its subjectivity. The latter emanates from the former or rather from the unwavering and thus hopeless rootedness of it. The first one's primacy depends both on a chronologically set time frame and on the influence it imparts on the community in question. As the myth connects the very origin of the tribe, and represents its religious history, it becomes the co-myth on the Paniya obsequies a fortiori.

The first myth speaks of the nether world namely *Keeyuloka*; let us call it *Keeyuloka myth*. It is an illusory place, chaotic, where a Paniya must arrive at in his *pei* form. The guide, the omniscient demonic deity, supervising the *peis* in the *Keeyuloka* is Kalankankoranan who is a celestial counterpart of the Valliyuramma on earth. As on earth, the Paniya (here the *pei*) has to work for 'a feudal master', or rather for his spirit. *Peis* are mandatorily assigned the very master to work for in whose custody they had been on earth. Thus, the system, irrespective of the cosmological shift of geography, continues to exist. The only difference whatsoever is in the master now metamorphosed into a 'master spirit' to own the Paniya in the *pei* form. This myth, as one has stated, influences the rituals performed as part of the obsequies. It influences the *pei* as well. The *pei* finds it not very hopeful to transgress itself into the *Keeyuloka* as the system hesitates to change and (the *pei*) might linger around. It, however, is the responsibility of the community to send it forth to the *Keeyuloka* a failure of which might invite blasphemy and severe harm to it. Thus, a ritual trio is unavoidable.

The latter could be a continuation of the former. The situation narrated in the first, however, remains invariably the same without a single modulation made. Nevertheless, the *Keeyuloka* is a *trisanaku* in this one. A fleeting and transient place where the *pei* could avail itself of the possibility of a 'promotion' once the soul is 'purified'. A purified *pei*, after the corporeal and celestial slavery, reaches the coveted *mantam*.⁹ Here the community in its romantic secular form exists with the originators

⁹ *Mantam* has to be differentiated from *Matham* of *Matham polay*. The former refers a clan, an ideal one that does not exist anywhere. All Paniya communities seem to have aimed at the ideal communal living existing (only) in the imagined *mantam*. The latter could be used with the word *polay*, which

of the clan Uthapan and Uthamma living with it. It is a place where the community's performances are not interpolated, languages spoken, rituals carried on. Green forests with the mythical forts of Mudavan Kandan with the golden box open. If there is a heaven one could visualize, a heaven for the community, it is here in this *mantam* as the second myth narrates it.

A Paniya myth begotten, self-evidently, by a feudal source, speaks of the *Keeyuloka*, the netherworld, a place where a Paniya must enter upon new chores once his earthly ones are phased out. It does mean that the Paniya does not see any hope in getting his pangs of slavery transmuted into a pleasurable after life as a reward of his corporeal sufferings. We may perhaps infer from this that, as the *karma* is an invariably stark continuance here, the *pei*, the ghost of the dead might not avidly prosecute his/her peregrination into the *Keeyuloka* by himself/herself.¹⁰ Such a disillusioned *pei* is known as *chudalapei* – the wandering ghost – whose meanderings are deleterious to the community. To pre-empt the possibility of a *pei* becoming a *chudalapei* a ritual trio is customarily mooted: (1) *Tipolay* performed after seven days of a person's death, (2) *Ka kapolay* or *Karuveli* held after two years of one's death, and (3) *Matham polay* held in the third year of the death.

Going back to the quintessential myth related to death – the *Keeyuloka myth* – an interminable observance of the aforementioned obsequies falls upon the community; a responsibility to facilitate and validate the admittance of the *pei* to the *Keeyuloka*. The *Mathampolay*, the closing ritual, that finally opens up the doors of the other world for the *pei* was on occasions detained by the feudal masterdom, to be allowed to be performed once the reaping season of the paddy is over – something that accelerated the reaping.

The Rites of Passage, if unattained, would not only develop into a predictable parturition of a *chudalapei* but fetch the community blasphemy which could possibly take the form of an epidemic, a malarial outbreak affecting the clan. Presumably, it

means the final ritual of burial. *Matham*, taken separately, might mean 'a religious ritual'; though its meaning could vary.

¹⁰ This reluctance from the side of the *pei* is narrated to me by a *chemmi*, a Paniya chieftain, before he supervised and performed a Paniya ritual named *kaka polay* (see chapter 3 for detailed analysis of *kaka polay*.)

did hasten the reaping, as the community anxiously waited for the final ritual to be performed in time.

Within the community-centered living, an observance of the ritual trio becomes a mandatory routine for a non-communal life is beyond perception. A non-communal life falls short of living; a (non-)life of a *chudalapei* – sombre and wailing. Thus, the feasibility of a community beyond the palpable corporeality is the ostensible presupposition here. An originary myth connected to the first Paniya couples Uthapan and Uthamma – the progenitors of the clan – could be cited at work. The Paniya myth regarding death identifies *Keeyuloka* as a work place where *Kalankankoranan*, a celestial representation of the *Valliyuramma* (see chapter 1), is the supervising authority. *Kalankankoranan*, here acts the facilitator of *pei* slaves for the spirits of the masters for whose human representations the Paniyas worked on earth. As a replica of the myth regarding *Valliyuramma* in which She chases and brings back the Paniya run-away-slave by horrifying them on earth, on *Keeyuloka*, *Kalankankoranan* follows a run-away *pei* and makes sure the *pei* in question is candid and loyal to the master's spirit there as upon the earth. Thus, the Gods in both the worlds take part in the masterdom reassuring it an eternal annexure of a labour clan to it by keeping the Paniya as well as his *pei* in fetters.

A communitarian, imagined and diasporic clan situated somewhere else is headed by the very originators of the clan, Uthapan and Uthamma, Adamic and Evian figures of the Paniyas. Both of them, as another myth goes, were trapped by a Gowda master on earth – something that brought their whole posterity under the feudal yoke. It is important to note that the historical trap has not simply been set within a visible geography but rather in a psychological one permeating a phenomenological transgression of the after-the-trapping master-slave anomaly. The interplay between the actual living place and the post-death 'de jure masterdom' activated by an authentic, progressional (the Paniya of the earth becomes the *pei/ pene* of the *Keeyuloka*) itinerary already set, establishes physical as well as spiritual fixity with which the idea of communal memory is appropriated.

Another interesting observation, however, figures hope working at divergent levels within the matrix of celestial slavery. Here, the pangs of the work under the master (a persecution resultant of the wrong deeds on earth like longing to go out of the

master etc...) would be consoled by a Paniya Goddess *Amma Muthaci* who, nevertheless, is not bestowed with the power to exculpate the *pei* to free from its anguish.

The same reading retrieves the possibility of a hope in a heaven once the slavery in *Keeyuloka* is over. Thus, heaven, in this myth becomes the third and last of the 'worlds' the *pei* travels to and the only one where slavery does not exist. The time a Paniya spends on earth under a human master forms the first phase which is the first of an assumed seven layers covering the kernel, which heaven is. The second one, the *Keeyuloka* phase, which lasts for three years after a Paniya's death, demands a *mathampolay* ceremony to free the *pei* from it. The priest on earth assumes the role of a go-between, between the *pei* and its living kin, and between the layers the *pei* has to transgress and the *pei*'s self. The *pei* is enthused for it visualizes the kernel, the heaven, as the *mantam* of mind.

The priest, according to this reading, performs two 'descending' and 'ascending' liturgical renditions while carrying out the *mathampolay* ceremonies. The descending one, which is performed as an initial ritual, opens each of the seven layers (at times referred as 'doors') of the imagined *mantam* and the priest assumes the role of the carrier of the *pei* for whose sake the ceremony is performed. The priest becomes possessed by the *pei* and sings the *penepattu*. The priest's role as an agent between the *pei* and the community empowers him with the authenticity to narrate the history from the age of the great grandparents up to the *pei*, the trauma of the *pei* being terrorized by the master's spirit, the *pei*'s will to belong to the *mantam*, and the *pei*'s prediction via the priest of the imminent dangers the community faces. The ascending renditions begin only when the 'possessed' state of the priest ceases to exist. In this, he closes each of the seven layers of the imagined and heavenly *mantam* opened up earlier, beginning from the last one. The *pei* thus is ascended towards the *mantam*, which is beyond the seventh layer. The closing of the first one finalizes and ensures the entering of the *pei* into the *mantam* of mind.¹¹

Throughout the ritual the *Attali*, the priest, sings the *penepattu*, the song of the dead. *Penepattu* works as a mechanism that narrates not only the actions of the priest, the

¹¹ '*mantam* of mind' stands for an imaginary and ideal clan.

performer, but the history of the tribe. It is also a mode of interaction for the *pei* with its tribe. Dramatically *penepattu* functions like the Greek chorus, narrating actions as well as their importance on stage. The performing priest elucidates certain signs through verses:

Descending the first step
Descending the second...
Descending the seventh at last,
*Kandan's*¹² Golden Box has been opened
The *Ola* and *Ola* books,¹³
Knife and knowledge are taken out
For a minute and thirty-two seconds.¹⁴

This song signifies the priest's descending performance which brings down the *pei* from the Mudavan *Kandan*. The possessed priest sings a historical saga accompanied by rhythmic gesticulations. The ascending song happens, as already stated, only when the priest is no more in a state of being possessed. The same song is sung, here, in reverse:

Kandan has opened the golden Box
The *Ola* and the *Ola* books,
Knife and knowledge are put back
Untill the next *Utchal*¹⁵.
Ascending the first step
Ascending the second
Ascending the seventh at last,
Kandan's Golden Box is locked¹⁶

This performance, as seen here does not finally free the soul of the dead, as it is seen only as the second step towards freedom. The next *utchal*, the *Matham Polay*, brings

¹² Mudavan *Kandan*, in Paniya myths, is considered to be the godly preserver of knowledge and souls. It is believed that a dead person has three spirits, a wholeness of which forms his *pei*. Mudavan *Kandan's* mythical Golden Box contains knowledge related to the Paniya written in *Ola* (palm leaves) along with one among the three spirits of the *pei* in it. This spirit, along with the knowledge of performance, is brought down to the body of the performer as a result of which he becomes possessed by the *pei*.

¹³ *Ola* is a palm leaf used as paper in the earlier times. Such books are called *olathile*, *ola books*.

¹⁴ See. E T Raju, p.43

¹⁵ *Utchal* could mean any major ceremony to be taken place at the stipulated time

¹⁶ Ibid. p.44

in mobility to the *pei* enabling it to step in to the *Keeyuloka*. On the other hand, the ritual closes all the steps it has opened; all the layers between ‘this world’ and the *Keeyuloka*:

The wrong deeds on earth (of the *pei*)
Are redeemed (by the power of the ritual trio)
The first door is open
Beyond which another waits,
The second is open,
The third and the fourth...
The seventh is open at last.¹⁷

An ascending chant follows this song. Thereupon the *pei* is sent to the *Keeyuloka* and the doors are being shut permanently. Once it is done the *pei* could never, unless ritually invoked, visit its earthly kinsmen. The closing song begins with chant ‘closing the seventh door’ and ends with ‘closing the first’. The *penepattu*, which is concluded invoking the gods for blessings they have showered on the tribe, marks the last rite.

2

A song for the shopper

Fuck me master, fuck me.
Let the child cry,
Let the hovel crumble,
But let only the debt of salt,
The debt of chilli and
The debt of betel leaves
That I owe to thee be settled.¹⁸

In this section, we shall take up the idea of subjectivity as it is (un)folded in the folk narratives. The song with which we began this section appears to have been sung some time in the late sixties and early seventies. This period, is marked, politically, as ‘post-slavery’ period. The political turmoil, about which I will speak in the next

¹⁷ Ibid.p.46.

¹⁸ P. Somasekharan Nair, *Paniyar*, NBT, Kottayam, 1976, p.125. Translation mine.

section, synthesized the tribal communities, in Wayanad, once smashed into smithereens. It is not to say that they unitedly stood against it but to prove that the undulating, politically apportioned, social geography has had a role in the tribal transition of subjectivity.

The song I quoted leads to trace some of such elements. This section will deal mainly with two interconnected topics among these elements, namely, hunger and desire. These two appear not only to have chiselled the modern day idea of the Paniya subjectivity but to have narrated the universes of political economy of which Paniyas were a part. The song, which is sung by a Paniya mother, epitomizes the modern day space of a Paniya prostitute.¹⁹ Selling of one's body is a contemporaneous analogue of Paniya myths that speak of hunger. For a detailed study of such myths, it is vital to cite them to see how they recount, in varied hues; to the community its subjectivity formation. Descrying such myths as the very nub of the idea of subjectivity formation throws potential light not only on the way they influence living but also on the capabilities to remind the community of its *esprit de corps* by invoking feelings of community and its common origins. The three Paniya myths that form the base for our discussion in this section are collected from the post-slavery Wayanad.²⁰

(A) The (hi)story of the red bird

“We all are familiar with red birds. Our grandparents had a wonderful story about them. Once upon a time, a Paniyan worked for the masters who sent him to bring them rice. He went out at the behest of them with a sack to fill the rice in. on his way back, with his backbone stooping, his stomach burning with hunger, his eyes cast downwards, he met a snail on the road. No sooner, had he cast his hungry look at the snail and said ‘I am hungry’ than he became a red bird and flew to the forest.”

(B) The (hi)story of the woodpecker

¹⁹ See the documentary film on the issue titled as *Silent Screams* directed by O K Johny. The film addresses the life of the unmarried Paniya mothers who are compelled to have recourse to prostitution. Myths related to Paniya prostitutes are in currency and most of them speak of ‘capabilities’ such as ‘stamina’, ‘non-hesitancy’, ‘economy’, ‘free of risk’ (it might mean two things; firstly, the insular places of the Paniya are out of the visibility of the wider public and media, secondly, the women in question are physically safe) and obviously, the ubiquity.

²⁰ P. Somasekharan Nair, *Paniyar*, pp.120-122. Translations mine. These myths are collected in the late sixties and early seventies.

“Our ancestors had a story about the woodpecker. Long ago but not far away a panichi²¹ had gone to the well to draw water. It was the season of red berries²². The purlieus of the well were full of the freshly fallen berries. Seeing such berries, ripen and fragrant, her hunger grew and she thought: ‘if I were a woodpecker, I could eat these fruits’. In less than no time, she became a woodpecker and started eating them greedily. That’s how woodpeckers were born.”

(C) Story of the *Alans*²³

“Some Paniya men carried out, long back, a journey in search of a bride. On the way, luckily, they met a beautiful woman. Following her, they reached at the fort of the *Alans*. Only then did they know that the fort belonged to *Alans* and the woman *Alathi*²⁴. When they noticed her long fingernails and tail, they started to shiver in horror. Each of them made an excuse to go out of the place like: ‘I wanna have a chew and be back’, ‘I wanna have a tea and be back’, ‘I’ll have a piss and be back’. But none did come back. The bridegroom and his in-law were trapped in the fort. Watching the pain of the two, a white rat saved them from there by making a secret tunnel for them. Both of them ran out through the tunnel at the speed of light. It is believed that they could do it only because of the sway of the Paniya theyyam.²⁵”²⁵

These three stories are, to take a term from Jean Luc Nancy, ‘primal scenes’. Not only the myth but the activity of narrating it becomes a primal scene. The ancient picture of telling the myth and its nature plays part in forming the identity of the gathered; the group. Such stories directly address the togetherness; the collectivity. The song as well as stories (A and B) point out the experience of hunger. Myths and folktales are seen as unconnected aesthetic forms. The indeterminacy involved in myths does not appear in folktales which Vladimir Propp calls as *wondertales*. Myths are identified to have possessed the quality to reflect such deep-rooted oppositions that they can be studied independently of their “original language and natural environment.”²⁶ In this

²¹ Paniya woman.

²² This fruit is known as *chullikkaya* which an inedible fruit from a wild variety of the fig tree.

²³ *Alans* are an imagined community of fairies in the Paniya myths. It is important to note that in the Paniya myths even these superhumans lead a community life. Somewhere else, the margin between ‘the master’s clan’ and the clan of the *Alans* blurs and both become one situated in a place barred to the Paniya.

²⁴ An *Alan* woman

²⁵ *Theyyam* literally means god.

²⁶ Vladimir Propp, *Theory and History of Folklore*, Manchester University Press, 1984. pp.16-38.

method, the content of myths becomes nothing more than a vehicle for conveying its structure. This structure is inherent and is in the safekeeping of its story; the narrative. This argument goes on, in Propp, presupposing 'everything in myth is mythic', 'everything allows the deep-rooted mythic structure to assert itself in the chaos of manifestations' and 'everything is relevant as part of the myth'. This chaos was later to be named by Levi Strauss as 'bricolage'. These identifications lead us to the peroration of what is conveyed as its inherent mythic structure and the manifestational chaos only as its outward schemata. Such a mythic story is enabled to represent the pre-historic realities in Propp. These realities include medieval customs, morals and the social relations of feudalism and capitalism.

In order to speak exactly about the folk narratives we are dealing with, Propp's contention of reality and empirical space are strategic. Reality is perceived, as a reciprocal attribute of the folk narratives. Folklore, hence, becomes an 'art form' derived from reality: "even the most fantastic images are based on reality."²⁷ The next step suggested is to divulge the reality in the lore. The reality, as mentioned, is an 'inherent structure'. The division between the former and the later, at least, blurs suggesting an analysis of such a structure a workable possibility: "Materialistic scholarship must find the historical basis of folklore."²⁸

Any scholarly enquiry aiming at the figuration of the inherent structure, the reality, is suggested to take into account: 1) empirical quality of the lore 2) the purpose of representation.

The empirical space as it is the only special marking one could figure out in the folk narratives. The 'empericality' is harmonized well with the reality such narratives delineate. These elements are highly fugitive as the forms, as well as the content, of such 'reflections' (the 'reflection of real life' as Propp would have it) differ according to the period and the genre. They are also changeable depending upon 'the politics of folklore'.

Coming back to the folk narratives that act as myths, cited at the outset, it is important to take note of the space. In all the four narratives, the protagonists have been

²⁷ Ibid. p.38

²⁸ Ibid.

foregrounded by the space; in other words, there is no space outside the protagonist.²⁹ This heuristic space of the dominant character does have a reduced scope, a delimited one, within the mobility of the hero. *A Song for the Shopper* addresses a shopper who becomes a representation of a systemic element by which the poem's inherent structure (poverty) is shown. The reality of poverty is expatiated by way of mythical agents among whom figure the shopper (he represents the other, on whom one ineluctably depends.) and the edibles he sells (chilli, salt, betel leaves). The idea of 'debt' is a comparatively newer version of 'slavery'. In the story (A) the Paniyan is enslaved and is hungry. He carries a sack full of rice - a juxtaposition of contrasting realities. He is enslaved to the extent that he is not allowed to satisfy his hunger; a temptation to that effect leads him to look at the snail hungrily and brings him the inescapable punishment for doing so. The conspicuously portrayed slavery disappears and becomes reciprocity; a commitment (to pay back the debt) as seen in the poem as the historical period changes. The story (B) belongs to the same period of the other two. The presence of hunger, slavery and the motif of punishment stand to be an obvious marker towards their temporal unity apart from the collector's validation.³⁰

The 'crimes' committed by the protagonists (longing to eat the snail or wild berries, desiring to marry a white woman) as well as the punishments imparted upon them for involving in some are more psychological and spiritual than physical in the stories. In the poem, on the other hand, it is more physical (bodily surrender of the protagonist). The shift from the spiritual to the physical declares the change in the political geography. Propp visualizes historical songs as the products of social development – an observation remarkable here.³¹

In the background of these narratives, set the emerging social mobilization and its lineage. The changing dialectics from/of a hungry person carrying a sack filled with rice and desiring to eat a snail and to/of a hungry woman submitting herself to repay her debts are marked off by the intervention of a monetary system which is the most

²⁹ Ibid. pp.16-38.

³⁰ See. Somasekharan Nair. 1976. These myths, the actual time of the first recording of which is unavailable, are collected in the late sixties and early seventies.

³¹ See Propp, 1984. These songs, Propp believed, not only represent the social development but respond to them.

crucial of social changes that affected Paniyas.³² It also evinces the erstwhile feudality's new form in a debilitating market economy.

Levi Strauss' notion of the recurrent mythical patterns in different special and temporal spaces gains momentum especially when they are repeated replicating the theme which becomes a motif.³³

The story (C) depicts a related theme, namely, desire. The white clan of *Alans* is desired by the black clan of Paniyas. The story which belongs to the post slavery period (the very face of the presence of the super human figures, enchanting and terrorizing, is an indirect reference to the masterdom) narrates the vanquished hope of a fusion ; a desire to become the part of the masterdom not as a slave but as a kin, the fairy and her beauty and the horror she discharges(long finger nails ,tail) are once again an oblique reference to the master's goddess *Valliyuramma*³⁴ (the goddess of Valliyoor) who is beautiful and terrorizing; white and malicious, loving and punishing and after all impartial for she takes sides with the masters.

The repeatedness of myths in different stories of various times brings out the role such myths played in the formation of the Paniya subjectivity. All the four narratives are concluded in the submissions/failures of the protagonists. The basic structure of hunger motivates the protagonists to take up such endeavours (to desire to borrow in the poem, to desire to eat, to desire to marry a white woman in the stories).

Neither the shopper, nor the external forces (in the stories) are accused of the punishment (because the coloniality defined crime as an 'exclusive property' of the slaves).

In the poem the reciprocal deed more a law-abiding predisposition than coercion brings in the failure through a physical submission. On the other hand, the desire(s) of the protagonist(s) is/are considered as sinful act(s) by the narrator. Subjectivity as

³² The abolition of the *Balli* system marked not just as a change to Paniyas but an opportunity to enter into a totally novel dialectics of work.

³³ See Propp, 1984, Levi Strauss, 1978, pp. 21-37. Recurrent themes are motifs. A study of motifs, folklorists in general and Levi Strauss and Propp in particular, is considered as a study of the characteristic traits particular to the communities that produce them.

³⁴ See chapter 1.

influenced by the external forces seems to have been what the narratives attempted at depicting.

3

This section would take up the political side of the subjectivity formation. The ‘Tamburan’³⁵, in the traditional concept, in the Paniya psyche, took sides with those in power shifting loyalties. K. J. Baby addresses this problem by portraying a master who supports the Britishers vehemently at the outset and wearing different social masks. The master’s unwavering support to the British Empire seems to have been shifted to the side of the nationalist movement.

All through the process, the Paniyas - the slaves - are also made to act according to the changes that do not affect them. The master metamorphosed to a new entity every now and then, locates his slaves within the discourse of his newly found wisdom. The past of the community is entangled in the master-slave dichotomy despite the master’s politics. The master is the (only) palpable system and outside him stands a meaningless world. The society beyond the master is something he recounted to them. The quotations that follow present a parade of the (early two) shifted positions of the master in the first of which he, the then supporter of the Empire discounts Gandhi.

“Who is Gandhi?

Gandhi! Gandhi!

Hey, can that upstart come anywhere near the British or even the Kottayam king! And he is going to fight against the British! Now what’s wrong with the British?”³⁶

The dawn of freedom made the master to jettison his allegiance to the Empire and to worship the icon of Gandhi:

“Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!

Bharath matha ki jai! Didn’t I tell you the Britishers are to be got rid off? They were our affliction and had to be got rid off!”³⁷

³⁵ Lord.

³⁶ K J Baby, *Nadugadhika*, P.58.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 59.

Baby depicting this major shifting of the feudal master's positions from the colonialist to nationalist, goes on tracking the post-independent transpositions of the master's locales from the Gandhian to Nehruvian, freedom fighter to anti-migration activist, congressman to the revolutionary naxal. The master manages to remind identically fraudulent with each of these ideologies he claims he is a propagator of at a given point of time.

Rather than a master declaring allegiance to the movements in vogue, it is the current of such fleeting movement, instead, that is portrayed here. Each movement, self-defeating and indifferent, is traced as a replica of its precursor. Hence, colonialism, nationalist secularism, democratic egalitarianism and the revolutionary communism seemed to have appeared in the same apron for the Paniya. Tamburan's, the lord's, shameless claims of bringing up the system in practice are staggeringly mocking when he refuses to admit his allegiance to the now redundant one and goes for another the next moment.

The naxalite uprising of the nineteen seventies was not without immediate political effects. The wider spectrum of social revolution, when concentrated in Wayanad, took the form of an anti-slavery agitation that questioned the notion of *Balli*³⁸ system validated by the erstwhile vallyoorkavu (see chapter 1). O.K. Johny³⁹ observes the core agenda of the naxalite involvement in wayanad, among Paniyas, is to carve out a safe hideout for their revolutionaries from cities in the forests of Wayanad; which could be done through a social as well as political agitation. The first ever armed rebellion against the oppressive feudality and the state machinery was carried out, for the tribals; by the naxal leadership⁴⁰. These moves demanded wages instead of *Balli*, and daily contracts instead of *Janmam* (bond labour). This first attempt itself invited wrath from the police and the lords. The long standing agitation, observes O.K. Johny , against the *Balli* system met with a sudden death as the state and feudality categorized such moves, in the light of the uprising , as 'terrorism' and was fraught with disheartening consequences.

³⁸ *Balli* is a measurement of rice given to the slaves as wages in lieu of cash.

³⁹ O K Johny, *Wayanad Rekhakal, (Notes on Wayanad: Regional History)*, Pappiyon Books, Calicut, 2001. pp.147-158.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

The armed revolution of the tribals led by the naxalites could not comprehensively include them and the revolution faded away when the police murdered the naxalite activist Varghese in the forest and jailed the rest. The state sponsored police violence directed at the behest of the then existed aristocracy prevailed in the years that followed disregarding the genuine causes that gave birth to the uprising. On the other hand, the official left led by the undivided Communist Party of India(CPI), that demanded an abolition of the *Balli* system and argued for a daily wages system as early as in 1953 led by A K Gopalan and K A Keraleeyan⁴¹ seemed to have made impacts though the process was at snail's pace. Taken together, the naxalite and the official leftisms played unavoidably crucial role in breaking the insular domains of the masterdom. These social commitments notwithstanding the questions of tribalities, time, community, land and the tribal on it seemed to have escaped its oppositional *class*-ifications. When the left sought an answer within its limited scope, the other political institutions, apparently, does not even figure in the picture.

⁴¹ Ibid. pp.155-156. Under the leadership of the two leaders an organization came into being in Wayanad in the year 1953 (*Kkarshaka Thozhilal Union* – Union of Agricultural Labourers.) It demanded, apart from the traditional measurement of paddy given to the agricultural labourers, wages in cash as well.

CHAPTER 3

AT THE KAKAPOLAY:

THE LIVING, THE DEAD AND THE RITUAL

This chapter is set in such a way that the analyses of time, subjectivity and community elements in the Paniya performative narratives are focused on a particular ritual, namely *Kakapolay*¹. The ritual, the second among the ritual trio observed after a person's death, opens up a space for a conscious interaction between the dead (*pei*) and the living and gods. An attempt to mark out the jurisdiction within which the ritual could be performed is made as well. A factual description of the ritual could well begin the discussion.²

In the beginning, the stage for the ritual is erected which forms the first of a two- days long ritual performances. The makeshift stage, made of bamboo poles, immediately after its erection, bears witness to a ritualistic mourning by women. The mourners' wailing is not a prolonged one as a prompt observance of time by the host - a male-who acts as a 'controlling agent' - decrees the cessation. The chemmi, the priest, begins the rites by evoking the *Pei* on to the stage. The priest brings a measurement of holy rice with a candle lit above it on two winnowing sieves, to invigorate the performing place with the presence of the *Pei*; a living interactable omnipotence. Thereupon, a procession (resembling the funeral procession) holding a pole (that which represents the dead person) with red and white cloths tied on it arrives on to the performing place. The pole is placed in the pulpit. This action representing the placing of the dead body before the eyes of the gathered at the burial, invites mourning of the assembled (The mourners are dominantly women). This follows a dance around the pole with the accompaniment of the musical instruments *thudi* (drum) and *cheeni* (pipe). On the one hand, women, unlike in the other Paniya performances, do not take part in the dance; on the other, they participate in the procession that brings the pole to

¹ *Kakapolay*, as mentioned earlier, is one among the three major death rituals of Paniyas (they are called here as 'ritual trio'). It is observed in the second year of a person's death. Usually, during the performance the performer (who is supposedly inhabited by the *Pei* - the spirit of the dead) narrates in a frenzied state, the mythical history as well as the dead person's 'reflections and tender and nostalgic feelings towards his earthly kinsmen and so on. He (the performer) acts as a 'middle man' between the *Pei* and the living. *Kakapolay*, though not as ceremonious as the final ritual - *Matham polay* - is seen as the most important one.

² See the *Kakapolay* ritual recorded for this purpose.

the centre stage. The pole remains till the next day attracting ritualistic dance with the music of *cheeni* and *thudi* around it.

The major ritual practices start only on the second day. The feast arranged on the day not only brings a practical break for the dance performance around the pole but declares the commencement of the most religious performances. The chemmi repeats the earlier mentioned performances with the winnowing sieves. These rituals make the upright pole acquiring, now, a divine status. Hence the pole is propitiated, as it is assumed to have carried not only the *pei* of a particular individual but those of the unknown ancestors with it.³ At the end of the ritual appear the mourners⁴. The chemmi gives them a ritual validation for their final performance to be held as the last of the rituals at the end of the day. This part of the ritual is marked off as a performer⁵ appears to the *Pandal*, the performing place. He takes out the red bands from the pole and wears it along with a black strip. When he wears girdles, a dancing fit attacks him. Praying before the pole, now bare, he visits the house of the dead person a couple of times and resumes the dance. Notably, the performer goes through a white cloth held over his head by others which symbolizes his becoming the 'agent' between the dead and the alive. The performer, in this performance, fails to become 'sufficiently possessed' despite his attempts to act the ritual out as though he has become (sufficiently possessed).

When this elongated ritual ends, drum beatings which have been performed all through the ritual comes to an end. The sanctum, now silent, waits for the closing ritual of the mourners. The mourners, three of them, approach with their bodies decorated; (their faces are coloured in stark white and they appear in dashing red, black and white cloths).The mourners, a man and two women, are allowed to break

³ The ancestors are positioned in the Paniya pantheon and are worshipped.

⁴ Different kinds of mourners appear in the *Kakapolay* ritual. The very performance begins with a ritualistic mourning. However the mourners who appear at the end are treated as the 'ceremonious mourners'. Their mourning along with their observance of fasting form the most important of the customs meticulously observed in the ritual.

⁵ The performer has to be differentiated from the Chemmi (the headman).The performer could be anyone who 'knows' the 'art' of getting possessed by the *Pei* when it is invoked by him in the performance. He, in his frenzied state, narrates the history of the community and speaks, for the *Pei*, to the 'earthly kinsmen' sharing the *Pei*'s tender and nostalgic feelings, pleasures and pains. The performer becomes the god incarnate and is supposed to be erudite enough to re-tell the community its past as well as its future. To cite an interesting episode, the performer in the particular ritual recorded for the purpose of this discussion acknowledged gleefully, before the performance of his 'possession dance' that he was a renowned football player at one point of time in his youth.

their long maintained fasting and the chemmi religiously ends their observances. The disappearance of the mourners, after they are blessed by the folk assembled in the place, closes the Kakapolay ritual. The Chemmi, as well as the people, disperse in good hope.

Body and the Ritual

It is not a question of the Black being black anymore, but rather, of his being black opposite the white

Frantz Fanon, *The Lived Experience of the Black*, 2001.

In the correct use of the body, which makes possible a correct use of time, nothing must remain idle or useless: everything must be called upon to form the support the act required.

Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 1977

This section will deal with the different aspects that enable us to posit the formation of subjectivity and community identifying *Kakapolay* as a symbol of Paniya cultural life. This discussion will deal also with the involvement of the body focusing not only on what the body does in the performance but how does it do so and why. The other two major aspects we discuss here are 1) body as a tactic for resistance 2) body as a space where the colonial residua are active.

Fanon writes consciousness of the body as 'solely a negative activity'. Lowering one's body to take out cigarettes from a drawer, say, are according to him not habitual activities but activities out of ones implicit knowledge; knowledge of space and of the bodily movements (like knowing the position of the drawer in which the cigarettes are kept, leaning back slightly to reach out the drawer.). He sees this communication as a schema: "A slow composition of my *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world – such seems to be the schema."⁶ But as Jim Perkinson argues, this corporeal schema crumbles in the very moment of the 'encounter' on the street. By 'encounter' Perkinson meant what Fanon's intensely subjective narration poignantly scripted as the 'Lived Experience of the Black', with moments of utter pain, humiliation and recognition of the discourse of the incontrovertible blackness of the

⁶ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Quoted in Jim Perkinson,, "The Gift /Curse of second sight": is "Blackness" A Shamanic Category in the Myth of America?", *History of Religions*, University of Chicago Press, Nov.2002, vol.42, no.2. p.41.

self.⁷ The corporeal schema becomes immediately after the moment, an epidermal one⁸ and this moment is at the top of the pain, “an amputation, an excision a hemorrhage that spatter[s his] whole body with black blood”⁹ This makes him aware, as argued by Fanon, of his body not in “the third person” but “in a triple person”¹⁰ This tripleness is in his body, in his race and in his ancestors. Fanon’s narrator, in replay to the humiliation suffered on the street, polemically responds to the mother of the child “telling her to kiss his rear end”¹¹. This replay, intended to ‘shock’ the offenders - the white woman and her child - differentially validates, in Perkinson, their envisagement of a rude blackness as the ‘monstrosity’ attributed to the Black is ‘evidenced’ through these wrathful words.

The first ritual performed on the stage immediately after the erection of the stage itself, is the ritualistic mourning by a few women who are asked to do so. It is also mentioned in the description above that the women are obliged to cease it when they are asked to. It seems to be noteworthy that a Foucauldian narration of an individual body becoming ‘an element that may be placed, moved, articulated on others’ is applicable here. The above mentioned ‘mourning women’ are brought on to the stage at an appropriate time (before the chemmi’s religious ceremonies begin). This schematization for a ‘time-table’ fits in what Foucault theorized as ‘functional reduction of the body’. To quote him:

Its (the body’s) bravery or its strength are no longer the principle variables that define it; but the places it occupies the interval it covers the regularity, the good order according to which it operates its movements¹².

⁷ See, Frantz Fanon, “The Lived Experience of the Black” (from *Black Skin White Masks*), *Race*, Robert Bernasconi (ed.), Blackwell publishers, 2001, pp.184-201. Here Fanon narrates the bodily encounter of the Black on the street with Whites (here a white child and its mother) as:

“‘Look, a Negro!’ it was an external stimulus that flickered over me fleetingly. I gave the ghost of a smile.

‘Look a Negro!’ It was true. I was amused.

‘Look a Negro!’ The circle was drawing tighter. I was openly amused.

‘Mommy, look at the Negro, I am afraid!’ Afraid! Afraid! Here they were starting to fear me. I wanted to laugh until I choked, but I had become unable to.”

⁸ See, Perkinson, op.cit, p 41.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See Robert Bernasconi, op.cit. Pp.184 -201, and, Perkinson, ibid, p 41.

¹² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, Alan Sheridan (trans.) Penguin Books, 1991, (first publication-1977) p.164

It associates some of such aspects of the ritual in question with what has been quoted just now. One needs to take up, first, the element of motherly sorrow. The mourners who wail aloud are seen barely as performing a 'mourning ritual' but as releasing their genuine anguish for the loss they suffered, a feeling which the ritualistic recreation of death (the stage is set in such a way that it reminds the way it was hastily set the day the person was dead. It sensually reminds the mourners of the way they mourned then and the pain is exacerbated) manages to renew in them.

On the other hand, such feelings ('bravery' or 'strength') are not the causes that bring the mourners on to the stage or such capabilities exhibited once are de-sentimentalized to form a ritualistic drama in which the performed particles pave way for another to be performed as a continuation of the former to give shape to the 'wholeness' of the ceremony.

To speak of another instance to this effect, the training the body obtains should be traced. The mourners are kept in fasting and on special diet. (They are not allowed to have food other than vegetarian and only of rice and in minimal quantities. The time when it should be taken are also decided.) They are not allowed to shave, to attend any function other than the *Kakapolay* and are also asked to remain in religious gloom. They are freed of all these constraints when each of them appears with his or her body decorated and clad in starkly coloured dress. Apart from the bodily decorations made on them, the strict maintenance of the body is worth noting¹³

The performer on the other hand, maintains his body fit for the dance it is to execute. He takes a fast too, but above a mere observance of fasting (though not as tedious as that of the mourners) keeps himself in hunger while performing the ritual (the '*Pei* dance').

Poverty as a precondition for subjectivity is reiterated here (see chapter two). In K. J. Baby's *Nadagadhika* a character, Velli, during a Nadagadhika performance, off and on yell out in pain, the word *payikkinto* (I am hungry). Similar to this, the performer's

¹³ The mourners' body is directly controlled, appropriated and posed as the space for the ritual. The ritual ends when some strands of hair are cut from them as a symbol of the end of their fasting as well as that of the ritual. Physical interventions of the ritual in the performers' body, in divergent ways, are noticeable.

having a hungry body through a meticulous observation of fasting at the time of the performance enables him to become pure and occupy the colonial stature of a 'hungry Paniya'. Baby's portrayal of Velli declaring hunger intermittently, nevertheless, seems to have narrated the identity of a hungry slave and undermined any ontological categorization on the basis of a 'slave perennially hungry'. The performer's self-imposed hunger denies, as it is evasive, a generic statement as to whether it follows the colonial myth of a 'hungry slave' or whether it a pure religious practice seen in the wider Hindu traditions in a different way¹⁴.

The ritual demands certain feelings to be evoked. It decides the tunes of the *cheeni* and the drumming of the *thudi* accordingly. It sends forth a confused message as contradicting motives are at work simultaneously. In the first place it is a death related ritual with its moods kept somber, women kept out from dancing. Interestingly, contradictory to this, the whole ritual becomes ceremonious and a field of bodily gesticulations dramatizing death in its pre, during, post operational phases. This schematization of the ritual follows, to take a term from Foucault, 'a time-table'. It also obeys a patriarchal custom that foregrounds the 'wailing women' practically existing outside the tribal culture as well

Implications and Permutations

Their (the Blacks') metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, their customs and the instances to which they referred were suppressed because they were found to be in contradiction with a civilization that they did not know anything about and that was impressive to them.

Fanon.

This section is meant to initiate an intercultural discourse on the life modelled in the ritual to root the formations of such practices, the imbued idea of subjectivity which could have effectively influenced by these permutations. But this time, the subjectivity is watched only in the realm of a ritual; a performance.

¹⁴ This chapter approaches the question by applying two divergent methodologies. The first one traces the imposed colonial mores in the Paniya narratives. The second method, on the other hand, identifies them as counter narratives to efficiently enfeeble and to make fun of the supposedly cogent supremacist traditions. The 'mocking' appears, more than a strategy of resistance, one to undermine the 'mocked'.

The Ritual and its Other: Structural Permutations

Dilip Menon's figuration of a Paniya resisting to act when he was asked to in a *teyyattam* performance (see chapter 2, footnote 1.) is within the performing place of a non-Paniya ritual. *Kakapolay* re-narrates the instructed methodology of *teyyattam*. *Kakapolay* performer's simplistic dress as opposed to a *teyyattam* performer's highly decorated one stands as one of the obvious signs that demarcates the latter from the former. At a deeper level, the idea of *Daivam Kanal* (a meeting with the god) resembles what Wayne Ashley¹⁵ translates *teyyamkettu*- 'to prepare the god'. Similarities to, or at least influences of, the *teyyattam* could be traced at many a performed moment in *Kakapolay*. Wayne Ashley's observation of the beginning of a *teyyattam* performance reads:

In the beginning, the *kolakkaran* approaches the shrine in his everyday dress to receive from the officiating priest a large banana leaf called *kotiyila*. This leaf contains five wicks, arecanut, five betel leaves, turmeric powder and a small amount of uncooked rice. Inside the shrine the priest passes the lighted wicks of the *kotiyila* over the idol of *teyyattam* to obtain its *sakti* (power).¹⁶

This ceremony of initiation of ritual is virtually repeated in the *kakapolay* as the basic concept of, obtaining *sakti* 'is maintained intact here as well'¹⁷. The *kolakkaan* the *teyyattam* performer becomes the *chemmi* in the *kakapolay*. The sacred place of the temple god is that of the *pei* and other ancestors in the Paniya ritual we speak about. The way the *sakti* is obtained in the *teyyattam* is more or less the method applied in the *Kakapolay*. The *kotiyila* gives way to a more indigenous winnowing sieve (an implement for work) betel leaves, aracanut, uncooked rice and the lighted wicks arranged on the sieve along with the aforesaid paraphernalia accompany a *teyyattam* custom where all these *dravyas* (sacred offerings) are systematically set to, in a more or less similar manner, invoke the temple deity .

¹⁵ Ashley Wayne, "The Teyyam Kettu of Northern Kerala", *The Drama Review*, T82, pp. 99-112.

¹⁶ Ibid.p.104.

¹⁷ To speak of a tradition of the possession dances it is important to note the element of 'obtaining *sakti*'. Wayne Ashley argues that the *sakti* (force, power) bestows the performer not only with a physical caliber to endure the challenges of an elongated performance but with knowledge (regarding the history of the deity and of the community). In the *Kakapolay* too the performer obtains *sakti* from the ritualistic invocation of the *Pei* and other ancestral spirits.

Wayne Ashley records a reciting of history by the *teyyattam* performer; his recital takes place immediately after propitiating the god in the temple. The oral life history of the deity from his birth to his godhead is to be narrated by the *teyyattam* performer. This knowledge too is an intuition for the propitiation of the god determines the quality of the knowledge the performer acquires.¹⁸ To introduce another feature commonly shared between the performed narratives, the deity's fleeting existence has to be underlined. In *teyyattam* the deities are highly anthropomorphic whose localized heroic histories make them associated to those who worship them. The *teyyattam* pantheon could, thus, connect the locale and the populace with a(ny) particular deity whose socio-political and cultural interests have been widely shared among them. Existence of dominant deities, overridingly present among others, is not always visible. The presence of such figures as *Kativannur Veeran* or *Vishnu Murthy*¹⁹, nevertheless are local *teyyams* of certain performed spheres that gained popularity. The point which does remind us of the 'difference' between a subaltern pantheon of worshipped deities/objects and the Hindu ones (the *Teyyattam* pantheon too belongs to the former for it hardly represents the mythic structuring of the Hindu pantheon. Absence of major gods, barring a few exceptions, provides clues to this effect. *Kakapalay* remains within the scope of its own pantheon and does not offer a presence of any major deity. The Paniya pantheon, however, tends to merge with the larger Hindu one as it is being re-moulded massively).

Kakapalay being a ritual performed only within the closed spaces of a family, it is less performative than *teyyattam*. However its apparent connections with the *teyyattam* could be cited when it is seen as one among many such Paniya rituals -the most prominent among them being *Daivam Kanal*²⁰. The earlier mentioned recital of the *teyyattam* deity's personal history, in *kakapoly*, becomes the recital of a community's ancestry. The place of the performance is the forefront of the stage whereas in the *teyyattam* it is that of the *kavu*, the temple. It is only after evoking the *Pei* who

¹⁸ See Wayne Ashley, *ibid*, p.104.

¹⁹ *Kativannur Veeran* and *Vishnu Murthy* are *Teyyams* (deities worshipped in the *Teyyattam*). They managed to become the cult deities whose stories are narrated and whose roles are taken up popularly by *Teyyattam* performers of every place.

²⁰ *Teyyattam* is known as the 'dance of the god' whereas *Daivam Kanal* is known as a 'meeting with the god', there are many references to prove the links between the two ritual forms. See, for example E.T Raju cited in the second chapter.

bestows the performer (*chemmi*) with the power to sing, the performer is allowed to narrate the *penapattu*. The *Pei* is as personal as a *teyyattam* deity whose personal and communal histories are known to the singer and to those for whom they are sung.

In both cases the person (the hero of the *teyyattam*, the living of the *Kakapolay*) becomes a superhuman (the deity, the *pei*). Similarly the performers of both these rituals assume the capability of being inhabited with the *sakti*/ or the *Pei*:

During the sporadic intervals, I am inhabited with the *sakti* of the *teyyam* which causes me to quiver and emit sudden outbursts of sound. It compels me to leave my room and journey to the nearby shrine where I display the anger and power of the *teyyam* by stamping and shouting. After a short time I return to my room. The quivering resides and I resume reciting the *mantras*.²¹

The *velicappadu tullal*²², a common temple ritual, among the Hindu sects is what the *Kakapolay* performer appeared to have performed. Tracing its origin in the *velicappadu tullal* cult brings in, a seemingly unviable but structurally corresponding traditions shared by the two.

These similarities are pointed out not to argue that one is an emulation of the other but to pinpoint certain thoughts about performance in general where we locate a sub-cult in the context of a popular and a cult creating one. *Kakapolay*, as it is believed, cannot be posed as a ritual belonging to a deviant podium of performance.

Ideology and the Performance: Thematic Permutations

In this section what appeals us is the presence of the most dearly kept (aesthetic and other) values of the dominant culture in the *Paniya* ritual as they are seen specifically in *Kakapolay*. It is to differentially delve into those connecting links that the politics of actual practices is being meditated upon. Beginning with the importance of the spoken word and concluding with that of the activity at the ritual (colonially outlined?) the focus is on the gender specific discourse that gives rise to certain

²¹ Wayne Ashley, op.cit., p.102. Here a *Teyyattam* performer is quoted as saying his experience once under the sway of the *sakti*.

²² *velicappadu tullal* is the possession dance of a performer in a Hindu temple. The *Kakapolay* performer's *Pei* dance is akin to the former.

queries about the commonalities not only of ideology but of its implantations both share.

The mourning ritual performed at the outset in which only women mourn is a result of such an interaction. The folk performances including those at temples outside the Paniya cultures (in *teyyattam* and *thira* performances as well) men take up roles of the performers and women, of the devotees. In kakapalay the *pei* dancer and the chemmi and the controlling agent are men whereas the mourners (those who appear at the beginning and the ceremonious mourners appearing at the end) are predominantly women. Paniya culture, contradictory to this does not observe such a demarcation. Paniya pantheon does contain for instance female deities, such as *Kadu Bhagavati* and *Kuli* and the society is variably matrilineal. *Uthappan* and *Uttamma* are supposed to be the ancestors and are believed to have initiated the *mantam*. The *Amma Muthacci* of the Paniya myths is another goddess who consoles the clan from the hellish punishments in the *Keeyuloka*. Such myths notwithstanding, the practice, an enactment of those very myths, can be cited as patriarchal in tradition alienating the matrilineal system of family organization overridingly present. The first spoken word uttered after the mourning is an order from the host to 'terminate' the wailing. Nowhere in ceremonies did women act as a controlling agents nor did they enact chemmis or performers. The spoken word of the *chemmi*, in his frenzy, is considered as the same of the spirits that inhabit him, hence a male 'fit to absorb them' is allowed to the carrier of the holy, fortissimo deeds and words.

Even when women in this ritual take part in bringing the pole to the central stage (representing the funeral procession), ultimate care is taken by the *chemmi*²³ not to allow them to partake in the rest of the solemnity. The chemmi is known by the same name and holds the same powers though the political ones are removed from him in the absence of a tangible master. Edgar Thurston writes about the contradiction (between a matrilineal living and a patriarchal regulation):

²³ *Chemmi* is an echo of *Jenmi* (Lord). This post is a colonial construct. He used to be the 'master's man' among the slaves and was accountable for their deeds. He controlled and accelerated Paniya labour, made sure that their commitments are to the master's cause and (their) energy is fully utilized. The suicidal role of the *Chemmi* was attractive as well for it made available to the individual more freedom and power constructing him a 'Gestapo of the Paniyas'. These 'powers' included the religious ones too for he remained as the 'chief' of the clan.

The mourning ceremonies of the Paniyas include a dance, at which one of the dancers (a man act the part of a goddess while two others represent her attendants)²⁴

This runs parallel to the commonly practised temple traditions in Kerala²⁵. The colonial stereotypes of the black - the tribal drummer, flute player, dancer, shaman, and sorcerer are seen here, however, in a less exotic manner. The wider culture it is opposed to is termed as 'accomodative' and 'secular'. Thurston's identification of Paniyas as a clan of conjurers (see chapter one) and shamanistic dancers are evidences apropos of what the coloniality inculcated as a general norm. To elucidate the point, let us take *panitheerthupani*²⁶. During such ceremonies under the leadership of *chemmi* the drummers and the *cheeni* players (all men) use it to the tune aloud. The community (here the workers who reap the paddy- mostly women) dance to the tunes (the pace of reaping is being accelerated for the music inspired the workers catered rhythm and bodily movements hastening the work). The music is considered as divine (in *panitheerthupani* the workers were served with food only when they finish their work; until then they were served with music. The music is 'divine' because even with the supply of material energy a Paniya could go on working). To take another instance K. J. Baby in his *Maveli Mantam*²⁷ speaks of the lord's order to the Paniya to copulate as the lord is in need of slaves in large numbers for the Britisher's tea estates. The primordial music of *thudi* and *cheeni* is played on, usually, on such occasions for the purpose of quickening procreation as both these case are for the Lord 'work'. Either way, the performance has been appropriated by the master's strategy. The very presence of the Chemmi as a priest shall be a reason to think about the presence of coloniality in the ritual; it is not because the Chemmi is a colonial creation but the idea of 'chemmi' has been. The observation of the redundant feudal customs leading to their presence in the 'singular' culture of the Paniya tribe shall be through:

²⁴ Edgar Thurston quoted in James George Frazer, *The Native Races in Asia and Europe: An anthropological Study*, R .A.Downie (ed.), 1986, Manas Publications, Delhi, p.231. Also see *Anthropology Bulletin*, Madras Government Museum, vol. ii, no: 1, Madras 1987, pp.18-30.

²⁵ In many a art form, the most celebrated among them being *Kathakali*, roles of women are taken up by male actors who assume the female characteristics in the traditional performing place in Kerala. Exceptions in both classical and folk narratives notwithstanding, this performing cult's influences are remarkable.

²⁶ *Panitheerthupani* literally means 'work without break'. During the colonial era in order to reap paddy on time this method was deployed. During these hasty work to accelerate its speed, *cheeni* and *thudi* were played on the Paniyas by their own chieftain, the Chemmi. The master's overseeing presence and the primordial music were the two factors that kept them working despite the resistance of the hungry body.

²⁷ K.J Baby, *Maveli Mantam*, *op.cit*, p.38.

1. A direct appropriation of the ritual by the coloniality (positions like *chemmi* the moulding of ritual for purposes other than rituals etc...)
2. An Internalization of the masters' system (internalizing *tayyattam* from *Malayas* aping the performative dialectics of the other non-Paniya temple rituals like *thira*, cultural practices common to the people outside the community, *velichappadu dance* etc...)

Burial and Slavery

To the Africans death and burial were perhaps the most important phases in a man's life cycle. On the funeral depended not only the prestige of those kin of the deceased surviving him but the safe journey and status of the deceased of his new abode of the spirit world. It is not surprising then, that the funerary rites of the West African slaves in Jamaica survived more than most other cultural elements.

Orlando Paterson, *the Sociology of Slavery*, 1967

Slone wrote during the seventeenth century of the slaves' belief in a return to Africa after death, 'imagining they shall change their condition by that means to servile to free(sic) and so for this reason often cut their own throat'

Paterson, 1967

In K.J Baby's *Maveli Mantom* the overseer of the lord asks Kaippadan, a slave, to bury, secretly, the dead body of another slave without any 'rites' performed for him. He orders so as he is afraid that the Paniyas might 'waste' time 'drumming and dancing around the dead and won't work.' The ritual is exoticized and shown as a superstitious custom the Paniyas cannot help but perform. The colonial narration of the Paniya death ritual in general and *Kakapolay* in particular describes them as the most characteristic of the activities of the Paniyas. These narrations are internally incoherent.²⁸ While Thurston observes the performer's frenzied state of being possessed as 'acting', some others have observed it as hysteric. Though the element of 'acting' in the *pei* dance is conspicuous, defining it as 'acting' presupposing the

²⁸ Thurston, 1901, op.cit, pp.57- 71

existence of a 'natural' state of being possessed - something 'unattainable' for a Paniya - does have a political rationale behind.

As we have seen in the second chapter, what makes the burial ritual essential is the hope of a traversal. As Paterson observes the importance attributed to death rituals could well reflect a desire to free oneself from the slavery which might have promoted this ritual. But contradictory to this Paniya do not aspire for a free world even after death as seen earlier. The very idea of a perennial slavery generates the ritual. Hence Paterson's observation of the slave's will to freedom appears to be illogical as far as the ritual trio is concerned (among which the *Kakapolay* is one). Paterson's observation of the of the American Black slave longing to return to Africa - where he was culled out from - after his death, tallies with, however, the Paniya idea of the *mantam* (see chapter 2). The core Paniya myth of *Keeyuloka* does not allow freedom for the *Pei* in the 'other worldly' life as it will have to be a '*pei* slave' there. The importance of a death ritual especially in its having effect on the performing community could emanate from two major sources:

1) Self-effacement to the extent of self-denial: to elucidate this point, the Hegelian notion of master - slave dichotomy seems helpful. It is an aftermath of internalizing what one has been told by the 'other'. The original being as Hegel calls it, is defined on the basis of external factors which have nothing original to do with the spirit; the actual existence of consciousness.²⁹ Hegel argues if an individual is confronted with the defining vocabulary such as 'you' (inner being), it is out of the thought that 'you are this kind of person because your skull-bone is constituted in such and such a way' this means, according to Hegel, nothing else than 'I regard a bone as your reality'.³⁰

The 'skull- bone' symbolizing any external factor that could demarcate the 'other' does have the 'capability' to stand for the truth (to the defining entity). Colour, curly hair and physical size form such physical markings. Hegel uses the 'skull- bone', as just a physical symbol which is a metaphor for many a demarcation, most of them being non-physical, to proffer a thought that frees itself from the constraints of these defining categories. In Hegel any such identification is 'nothing in itself, much less its

²⁹ See, G W F Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, AV Miller (trans.), Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, New Delhi, 1998, p.205.

³⁰ Ibid.

true reality'. To speak about the self-effacement from the side of the defined one must speak of the other self which is brought in the place of the effaced one; or for which the self is effaced to trace similarities with such 'skull-bones' in the sphere of Paniya culture. It is interesting to note how reasons for being a pathetic, depraved Paniya self is identified. K Panoor, the first ever historian to write about the tribals in Wayanad, writes about his conversation with an old Paniya which according to him, led him to an insight into some of the reasons that keep them in misery. When asked why the old Paniya does not 'apply' for a new house to be built by the government in the place of his leaking shed, the Paniya seemed to have answered pointing at some pebbles³¹ kept in a corner: 'see our gods are exposed to the clouds, to the sun. They would not like us to have a tiled home. I reject the opulence denied to them'³². The point being made clear here is that of a communitarian 'skull-bone' in the form of the association between the gods and men; between the pebbles and the Paniya community. The failure of the latter is an 'after-effect' of the relationship between the two at the realm of ritual. This relationship, which is 'absurd' to the defining agent, is 'true' to the defined. As this kind of a relationship does not enjoy any universal validity, it is 'much less his true reality' as Hegel would have it. Self-effacement comes only after the establishment of such markings. The burial ritual, in which the *pei* is 'impelled to go to the *Keeyuloka* for its second phase of slavery, now in the other world, an imminent transformation would provide clues for an internal schematization to an outward discourse. Hegel defines the dialectics between the master and the slave in stoicism and skepticism. The discovery of the self is, hence, within the sphere of master-slave relationship. Hegel, essentially refutes the idea of 'the stoic' (in the sense of an ontological stoic, slave) 'the skeptic' (as a born master) as both elements could be found within the same individual though the assertions of these elements might vary leading to the dominance of one or the other in different individuals. Here, the preponderance given to the submissive consciousness, as evidenced in the practised myth (the ritual) makes the community stoical. It (the stoical consciousness) enables the *Pei* to endure pain on earth and on *Keeyuloka*, readies the *Pei* for the sufferings that await it as well. Simultaneously the community is aware of the other side of an individual's consciousness, the side of the skeptic. Hence even the slightest attempt to resist pain from the side the *Pei* through its baulking at the peregrination to the

³¹ Pebbles represent Paniya gods and ancestors.

³² *Keralathile Africa*, op.cit. P. 130. Translation is mine.

Keeyuloka by itself is thwarted and the *Pei* is dragooned into executing the metamorphosis.

2) Subjectivity and community in the realm of consciousness: Hegel proposes the development of human spirit through ‘a process of opposition to the external object. This object of ‘consciousnesses’ or ‘desire’ according to him is intrinsically intentional or even teleological.³³ The act of position, indistinguishable from the act of negation, leads towards an assimilation (of the object desired). This assimilated consciousness in Hegel is ‘unhappy consciousnesses’. It seems, then, that the negation of self is to rediscover the self in the matrix of a newly evolved dialectics. Hegel seems to have argued that the will to freedom of the slave led him to possess nothing out of his absolute fear and this freedom could be located only within the jurisdiction of the master.

To locate the Paniya ‘subject’, the idea of a communitarian togetherness the ritual bids to embody, however, cannot be discounted. But this togetherness if contemplated as envisaged by the erstwhile colonial conception of the tribe on earth and in the *Keeyuloka* (togetherness of the *Peis*) who form a *Mantam*, dismisses any pure claim (of a natural community). The lived experience of ‘the community’, nevertheless, remains as the only possibility to reinforce the tribality. The community, as one could see, being a collectivity of the individuals sharing a common (here unhappy) consciousness, tends towards the external stimuli. For example, the external factors like influences of other art forms, dress, ideological positions taken during the *Kakapalay* performance ect. are the protuberant ones among them.

Shamanism

This portion of the chapter will explore the apparent possibilities to look into the existential life taking Shamanism as a cultural text. Shamanism is read as an ability to see beyond the ordinary

...to tame ideology by taking possession of its own possessing force, remarking oneself in the image, is patently Shamanistic. It also quintessentially a black tactic for dealing with the ideology of racism and the demon of white supremacy.³⁴

³³ See, Hegel, op.cit., especially portions titled ‘Self-consciousness’, ‘Culture’, Lordship and Bondage’.

³⁴ See, Perkinson, op.cit., p.43.

In the portion where we dealt with body, we spoke of Fanon whose description of a humiliated Black man on the street. The Shaman's state of being possessed (in the *Kakapalay* the performer who invites the *Pei* to himself) can be looked at as a preparation of his self for the 'multiple combat' (he being in a 'triple person') the socio-political, cultural environment outside him demands. Fanon introduces Shamanism as a weapon for the combat and the spirit in him (that is, inviting the *Pei* into him, to take a phrase from Fanon, inviting 'into his own body' the spirit). Immediately after the state of elation the body of the Shaman becomes a 'field of combat for multiple forces'.

The response of Fanon's narrator aforementioned is a 'less happy version' of what the Shaman has been attempting to respond. In the response the outward evil (the polemic involved in the words 'look a Negro!') is thrown at the abusers with the same force which is a 'co-habitation of the evil'. The Shaman's frenzied state is ritually opposite to what the black man did on the street. The white\outside culture's supremacy, dominance, and colonial force dismembering the body and reconfiguring it as a generic Black, evokes the Shamanic performances to acquire what such categorizations demanded from the Black but simultaneously are scared of the life worlds of the Black (the response's force, ugliness were otherwise expected from the Black man. It could not shock the white mother in question as an 'unexpected response from a gentleman'). Shaman, like the Black man on the street, imitates and carries the 'evil' in him. His response is not to 'shock' the master but to act as he was expected to in his tripartite individuality. For Fanon the death of the individual body leading to the formation of a collective body in a single individual ('ecstatic body') 'constructed by a spirit or in flesh' is an activity the Shaman has to, ineluctably, perform. The Shaman does not have a choice for the only option for him is to 'resist by submission'; which, Fanon reads, is done, by 'becoming the very terror projected' ('Bare the teeth and snarl!' See Perkinson p.43)

Perkinson, describes, as quoted above, Shamanism as a Black 'tactic for dealing with the ideology of racism'. It is to show that the Shaman appropriates the tradition of 'shamanic healing'. This is not just a way of living for him but a method of resisting. His impulse to overcome the constraints imposed at all levels of his existence validates his performances of imitation. As argued earlier, this activity, more than

taking into the body the spirit of the dead leads him to have recourse to the same places that expose him before the eyes of the white/outsider. Fanon's description of an African-American Shaman could be an oblique reference to the Paniya shamanistic traditions that avail themselves of the oral retelling of the mythical history as well. The 'incantatory' creativity, as Perkinson argues, of the African-American Black folk is similar to that of the Paniyas. Theophus Smith³⁵ identifies the outburst of verbal histories, traditions of the community from the lips of a possessed Shaman is to perform a 'psychological' transformation. In this way, in Smith, the performance of the Black is fashioned out of the experiments of various kinds to tactically deal with the everyday trauma of being Black. This Blackness in the performance is a 'public costume' with which he (the shaman) projects himself to the (white) world around. The religious ritualization, in Perkinson and Smith, or the musical syncopation (the Paniya music of *thudi* and *cheeni* played on when the Shamanistic dances are on) announcing the 'blackness' are 'regularly plumbed and innovated into fresh dramatization of 'human being'.³⁶ The black skin now acquires a spiritual meaning. The *chemmi* as well as the performer send forth a spiritual message out of their very body with its epidermal blackness acting out the fiery, 'barbaric' consciousness. The 'double sight' is a term which characterizes the 'insight' of these 'powers', self recognition of the performer as well as corporeal physicality. It means, apart from the three individualities cluttering in him, (gods, ancestors and the self) his person and his spiritual psyche (an abode of the three) are to be marked out as another spheres of performance. This reading would figure out the madness of the Shaman as a response to the illogical classification of his self by the white\ other.

These 'performances of lunacy' had in them a motive to cure and correct the diseases of the individual, family and community. He is (the Shaman is, traditionally, known as a 'healer'³⁷) but a(ny) post-colonial reading as initiated by Fanon regards it an attempt at healing the wounds and at exorcising the 'ghosts', of the outside cultures.³⁸

³⁵ Theophus Smith, *The spirituality of African American Traditions*, in *Christian Spirituality: Post-reformation and Modern*. Louis Dupre E Saliers (ed.), New York: Crossroad, 1989pp.372-414.

³⁶ Ibid. To Smith, black skin translates spiritual signs and meanings working at a deeper level of the recognition of the physical as well as spiritual self.

³⁷ See, Sudhir Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiry into India and Its Healing Traditions*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1982.

³⁸ The very idea of the Adiya performance of Nadugadhika (from which K J Baby's play of the same name finds inspiration) is of exorcising the evils. Kakar too discerns the shamanistic scope of 'driving the evil out'.

Sudhir Kakar locates a Shamanistic ritual within the Indian cosmos of Shamanic cultures:

Correcting disturbances in the individual's social order, than we must remember that for many Indians the polis consists not only of living members of the family and the community but also of ancestral spirits- the *pitris*- and other spirit beings who populate the Indian cosmos³⁹

In Paniya/Black rituals the prophesying method of curing is the effort of the ones forced to live 'under the duress of a category of a Black which is forged into a 'Shamanic costume of almost numinous force'⁴⁰

Quite opposite to the dancing to the tune of the colonial master, these narratives according to Smith are appropriations by the Black Shamanistic performer. The Biblical symbol pre-eminent in the black performances, are being spotted as part of the sign system of narrative language enactable in the form of bodily renderings. 'The potency of such science' is through reiterating the thrust upon 'meanness' of colour (an emphasis to the colour element singled out by the coloniality as an inferior quality, is otherwise done reckoned without the forceful resilience of the 'colour'; a weapon the Black has in his/her armoury) cultures are revitalized by incorporating such signs (the canonical ones) which have wider acceptability outside the black space of communal existence.

The Shamanic performance can also be seen as a result of the supremacist, overbearing hegemony and a capitulation to white, reigning ideology. The Black man's 'soul loss' (because he is Black) within the parameters of Christian theology and the recovery of it (through the same Christian moral codes) seemed to have influenced the Shamanic performances in the West. The Shamanic rituals, well set against the modern performances, the market economy finds it more lucrative for its very marketability. The Eastern, oriental perspectives in vogue in the West identified such traditions just less than a fantasy. Paniya rituals became a political and social tool for self-expression as seen in plays like *Nadugadhika*, *Uratti* and novels like

³⁹ Sudhir Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors...* op.cit, p.4.

⁴⁰ See Smith, op.cit, p.385-386.

Maveli Mantam and *Nellu*.⁴¹ Political assertions through aesthetic re-creations of reality and myths fall prey to the racial ‘high’ many a time. The White culture in the West and the settlers’ one in the tribal space in Wayanad not only appropriated these traditions but projected them as ‘mystical phenomena’ making only a cross racial interaction a possible alternative. In his article ‘Second Sight’ Perkinson points out that a visible ambivalence in the Black performance as a gaze cast on them was dominantly alienating one and some of them were designed specially to cater wider white visibility and many by Whites themselves. This confusion is much more manifest in Black theatre traditionally inaugurated a new ‘ambivalence’ and simultaneously ‘marketable good’. The Shaman appears in his theatrical ritual, as a sarcastic aboriginal who overtly denies the ‘really Shamanic’ powers believed to have had boosted his performance. Perkinson writes:

They could play with the ambivalence with their own otherness, and then, often after beating up (sometimes even killing) actual Black people, post- performance climax, reaffirm that they were really “not that” (not black).⁴²

In the kakapalay the performers’ inability to become ‘sufficiently possessed’ can be taken as an ambivalent act especially when his performance was being recorded by those from the community for which it is generated. This response of the performer warns against the wider culture’s notions about the Shamanic ‘behavioural patterns’ as well. The very description of ‘not sufficiently possessed’ is a colonial creation. Thus the resisting of the performer, in a different reading, is done more aggressively through ambivalence than acting out the role of somebody’s imagination. The authentication of the ‘not that’ positions provides the ostensible disinterestedness in the taking up of an occult *Pei* dance with the body inhabited with a supernatural spirit. Bereft of the spirit, the *Pei* dance springs from other non-ritualistic dance forms of the dominant culture; with the differences ironed out. This seems to have disturbed the imaginative spectators from the outward space when attempted to record a ritual the

⁴¹ All these are books and productions on Paniyas by non-Paniya writers. They do sympathize with the Paniyas but within their limitations. In them often the political aspects concerned with the Paniya life are highlighted.

⁴² Perkinson op.cit., p.54. The colonial mimicry and ambivalence are taken as the most powerful of the colonized’s counter strategies in Perkinson, following, probably, the post-colonial debates on the topic especially those initiated by Homi K Bhabha.

way it was talked about (and when failed to do it). These are generalized to be named as 'subaltern survival tactics' of the newly emergent global order.

Michael Taussing⁴³ proposes that the 'historical victors cannot survive their own triumph and will, in the long run, have to succumb to the 'underworld' of subaltern cultural nuances - 'creolized practices', Shamanic aesthetics etc. for they (the colonial and historical victors) themselves have set it in such a way that 'a healing' of the modern day chaos shall emanate only from this practices; thus the dominant will be forced to 'seek healing from these cultures'⁴⁴

'The night long marathons' of shamanic performances, are in Taussing, 'yage drinking, vomiting, defecating, weeping, laughing, singing, swooning, dying, and coming back to life', are 'primary technique(s) as some of the shamanic retaliatory sketches.'⁴⁵ It, in this reading, more than a shaman curing a patient, both of them enter in a realm of 'joint creation'. In *Kakapolay* the death as a 'going back and forth' technique as we have seen in the ascending and descending ways of invoking the *Pei*, is easily identified as a journey between visibility and a sociological trauma of being pressurized to lead a toiling life. Healing is an activity to connect the healer and the healed especially when both share the pain of a historical wound. Healing according to Taussing⁴⁶ is not first a return to homogeneity but a baptism into the 'waters of decomposition'.⁴⁷ The 'jointly fabricated' space of healing ambivalently appropriates and undermines the bipartite categorization of the 'civilized' and 'barbaric' conceptions as the healing traditions are defined by Taussing. He, comparing the whole Western tradition of a 'scientific healing' proves the Western notions of 'social sciences peculiarly mythic'. Taussing's project of bringing to light the modern Western pretensions of being rational (dominantly in the background of its 'rationality' postulations in empirical, aesthetic and cultural theory) argues Perkinson, redefines the very idea of Shamanism itself. Taussing disregards the ideological

⁴³ See Michael Taussing, *Shamanism, colonialism, and the wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987. Also see Perkinson, p.55. Perkinson's reflections on Taussing's thought, however, have a political motive. Taussing, motivated by Fanon, theoretically formulates the idea of 'healing' against the backcloth of 'suffering' and 'ultimate terror'

⁴⁴ Ibid. P.442.

⁴⁵ This argument of Taussing is cited in Perkinson . See Perkinson, op.cit., p.56

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

positions of the west which identified the 'shamanistic cultures'; which means an 'independent', 'pure' Shaman and his healing. This is to reiterate the interactive dimensionalities of these performances and to establish a deconstructionist counter argument: 'Shamanism does not necessarily designate anything attributable to a human subject independent of its others'⁴⁸ what rejects these links are the 'academic mythologies' that operate as propellers of the western academic disciplines particularly such as anthropology and cultural history to keep in vogue a popular culture to carry forward a plausible debate in favour of the intricate design that gave birth to the very culture itself.

Mircea Eliade⁴⁹ considers the idea of second sight, an insight beyond the knowledge of practice; 'a diagnosis, mobility and mastery'. This mastery is directed at the communal healing and survival. It is deployed to forge ahead 'especially toward a radically historical, and not just mythical or spiritual'. Eliade identifies this regimentation of Shamanism which is as strategic as a 'combat' which he calls a 'new form of Shamanistic combat'.⁵⁰ The shifting of space as we have seen in the burial ritual of the Paniyas becomes an important tool not only to 'disseminate' its counter strategy but to accelerate the subversion of notions regarding 'soul loss'. The Christian idea of the 'recuperable soul' of the Black, though the body is eternally damned, is subjected to the mockery of the subaltern retaliatory tactics as a Shaman's insight into and the understanding of the past (history), present (diseases) and the future (solution to the diseases as well as the post-illness phase of the community) are to be recognized by the very Christian (or any supremacist culture) theology itself, though with a tint of derision.

Time

Thoughts on time have always had a preponderant place in the critical engagement with any art form. Time is characterized by a structure, organization of the text, at

⁴⁸ See Taussing, pp.370, 446 and, Perkinson, P56.

⁴⁹ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Willard R.Trask,(trans.), Princeton University Press,1964.

⁵⁰ Ibid. See, the preface to the book. In Eliade shamanism, as a technique of war, 'makes possible the impossibilities.' The shaman conquers the heavenly domains otherwise denied to him, knowledge he was refused to be given. It perfectly suits to what the Paniya performer - a shaman too as he cures diseases - does in his ritual renderings.

least, in its calenderical progression of presentation. In order to measure it, it has to be splintered into many divisions as in seconds, minutes, hours, days, years and so on. This rudimentary notion of time proposes the cardinal question; 'can there be a pure phenomenology of time?' this question seeks answers from different levels questioning, in the first place, the validity of the categorization to grapple with, in the main, the non-fixable phenomenon which time is. It also proves that the fixability is made possible only when it is fragmented and qualifiers are added to it (for example qualifiers like 'before', 'after') secondly it questions the very notion of 'time' itself. Aristotle viewed time in the *muthos* (plot). He, thus, divided literary genres into two 1) diegetic poetry 2) tragic poetry. In diegetic poetry, which means narrative poetry, he thought, the structural demarcations to indicate time were less possible but in the tragic poetry such divisions were highly recommended. Later on Aristotle structured tragedy based on manifold, identifiable segments (for example his celebrated patterning of tragedy as consisting of Beginning, Middle and End).

Coming back to the question raised a few moments back about the phenomenology of time, Paul Ricoeur's denial (of a possibility of a pure one) seems to be pivotal⁵¹. He thought not only would such a figuration be invalid but be impossible: 'perhaps there can never be one'.⁵² What does 'one' mean by the pure phenomenology of time? Ricoeur views it as an 'intuitive apprehension of the structure of time which not only can be isolated from the procedures of argumentation by which phenomenology undertakes to resolve the aporias received from an earlier tradition but which would pay for its discovery with new aporias bearing a higher prize.'⁵³

Procedures of this re-narration, as a lucid narration of Ricoeur reads, expostulates the establishing of the 'existence' of an 'intuitive apprehension of time'. It means only an argumentation that enables the 'time' to resolve aporias, gives shape to it. In the dialectic of theatre a structural organization of the play reflected the time of its actual occurrences. In this formulation 'Beginning' must come at the outset 'to begin' the play 'Middle' in the centre and 'End' at last to end the play; though dramatic developments like climax could emerge from anywhere. If we take Ricoeur's

⁵¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, Catherine McLaughlin and David Pellauer (trans.), University of Chicago Press, 1984, pp. 31-87.

⁵² Ibid, p. 82

⁵³ Ibid, p. 83

proposition that a continuous argumentation for time concocts its very 'existence' as 'time', a solving of the newly emergent aporias, the concept shall be seen as a mechanism which is directed at bringing forth recognition and resolving. Each of such solutions invites a new query that destabilizes its 'truth' and desires another one to be arrived at. It is clear that without the support of these presuppositions, the 'time' will have no 'existence'. Plot is, for Aristotle, an implement for the establishment of time ('the organization of the events' - the imitation of action is the plot').⁵⁴

Our interest in this debate is mainly in a ritual which resists plot; time. It, as a result, resists any aesthetic evaluation of it on the basis of a beginning- middle- ending format. Conventions of maintaining a coherent visibility, tools for the modern adjudication, often contradict rather than cohere. Ritual narratives anticipate a group of performers conditioned to take part in an incoherent performance in lieu of the 'viewer' of modern theatre for whom a non-ritualistic and a cohesive 'play' is drawn up (Death, preceded by the mourning and followed by a parading of the 'official mourners', typifies the incoherence of *Kakapalay*. The consistency of the conveyed meaning, on the other hand, is not lost for only the observance of the ritual is the marker of its interactability that fulfils the performers' desires. Unity 'in the participator is the same of the ritual he/she is a part of) Time is not made, for example, if we speak about it, neither as an amalgamation nor as a separation of moments. It runs from somewhere to somewhere without the boundaries set contrary to how it was systematized elsewhere.

Ricoeur calls mimetic activity a 'creative imagination' and it is performed by means of the 'plot of lived temporal experience'. He challenges the Aristotelian 'poetic relationship' between 'poetic activity' and 'temporal experience' to connect this often abstruse explanation of the relationship between the two. With the ritualistic unfolding of the lived experience, one might tend towards locating the latter within the perimeters of the former (i.e., mapping the 'temporal experience' within the circle of the 'poetic activity') effectively demonstrating the play; to take an Aristotelian term, the tragedy. Both the activity and the temporal experience are inextricably intertwined in the ritual which is a moment of living.

⁵⁴ Ricoeur, 1984, op.cit, p. 34

Ricoeur's negation of the Aristotelian time frames is to assert the 'aporitic character of the pure phenomenology of time'. How would these insights provide to inquire into the time element in a ritual? The lived temporal experience of the performing men refuses to be enacted through the 'creative imagination' of a performance. The lived temporal experience's time is immeasurably deep and distanced from any recreating re-narration in the form of an aesthetic production. As time is alienated from muthos, the meaning the plot is expected to convey has become an awareness already existing. For instance, the knowledge of the community is totally disconnected from the plot. If at all the ritual has a plot, it is a disorganized one disjointedly contemplated from which not only the beginning that escapes the recreation in the ritual (the timeless tradition of being in a community) but also the end. The transformation of the soul (notable here is the myth of the man of Earth becoming the *Pei* somewhere) can be an aesthetic apparatus to undercut the ever fixable time. When the junctures of time are not observed or it is theoretically impossible to enact any given, lived, temporal experience. The only possibility is that of a timeless time in the background of which a communal ritual is enacted. Even in the worship at the ritual's enactment does not envisage a temporal one iconizing a particular deity of a particular past moment but an array of ancestors in whose assemblage the *Pei* is a member of.

The argument raised in this section stems from a failure 'to judge' the ritual the way it exists by a method that suits it, instead of an otherwise acknowledged aesthetic (dramatic) methodology we are provided with. The elusive time in the ritual becomes a necessary precondition. It happens to be so precisely because of the cultures such performative narratives belong to (for example the *Kakapalay* and the *Paniya* life) which non-progressively appropriate it. Ricoeur also speaks of the invisibility of time ('time cannot be directly observed, that it is properly invisible') the aforementioned 'failure' to 'judge' the ritual is in its applying of the rules regarding the temporality of the narrated action, and, thus, it is a failure of inappropriateness. The postulations applicable (only) to certain forms of narratives, which can be metaphorically named as 'tragic poetry', to take an Aristotelian usage, are seemingly invalid in their 'applicability' in the space of a communal ritual and its latent time. The *catch-all* theory of performativity is not only directed at the Aristotelian tragedy but at the modern forms

of representation that fit in, as an accepted precondition, the nicely carved out time recesses.

As the narrative (diegetic poetry) might not well reflect the time figurations, where will we classify history the most narrative of genres? This question simultaneously takes up two major topics for the debate. 1) Is history a temporalization of what might otherwise seem a history? 2) Can history be then a narrative once it is temporalized? The first of these questions directly addresses the notion of community and the idea of time as Aristotle himself had his reservations about the narrative's capabilities 'to become a drama' with the mimesis set within a structured time, the category 'history' must seem alien to what it is a narration of (timeless ahistory). This, seen in the realm of community that goes back to a mythical (a) history with the progenitors of the clan being trapped by the lords (slavery from the beginning of memory) does not prove to be of an adequate method. The second question is partially answered by Ricoeur when he defined contemporary history as 'non-narrative history'. This implies many possibilities and offers any number of justifications. It on the one hand, bifurcates 'history' from 'narrative', keeping them strange to each other; and it also leaves no scope for the two to come together forming an interactive collectivity. Ricoeur then refers to a 'disfigured' non-narrative history, with elements from diegetic and tragic poetry, attempts at the formation of a temporally structurable delineation which might seem absurd to the Aristotelian view. Ricoeur's attempts to question the 'pure phenomenology', but, offers the most crucial philosophical engagement foregrounding and bringing in a 'discordant' experience of time instead of a 'material reality' of the same. The former is based upon the 'lived temporal experience'. The discordance of time works against the plot which is an 'imitation of an action'. "Mimesis", argues Ricoeur "has just a single space wherein it is unfolded - human making [faire], the arts of composition."⁵⁵ When the lived experience is unfolded as an art form, the dialectic of such experience is transmuted into that of aesthetic ones. 'Human making' stands for the lived experience about which Fanon and Ricoeur speak.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.34.

Time could only be imagined when it is supported by action. The earlier mode necessitates (imitation of) an action. And the performance is a re-creation of 'persons engaged in action.'

Actions of the 'imitated' have been the location of, invariably almost all the modern systems, to look at the performative productions. The observer appears as the 'other' who does not share the same works of the performer's experiences and vice versa. The represented time is an 'identifiable possibility'. Traceable and personal actions are to be imitated. To elucidate this point which is rudimentary to this deliberation, the moment imitated is traced 'within' the memory.

Fritz Breithaupt⁵⁶ observes a radical shift from the eighteenth century understanding of memory to a yet to be explored modern psychological estimation. The eighteenth century presupposition of memory as the 'store-house of our ideas'⁵⁷ whose sole task is to recall the past(s) perceptions in the absence of a sensual object, is superseded by the new and mostly continental thought of the time expanding the role of memory dramatically.⁵⁸

This thought of time, yet to be taken up by the modern aesthetic scrutiny retrieves memory well beyond the time frames which becomes 'a sleeping giant that can be awakened and take over a person, trigger thoughts and actions uncontrolled by the conscious mind.'⁵⁹ Breithaupt situates this straggling, rebellious memory in the conjectural ambit of trauma. This interrogation figures out an 'observation of one's past' as 'framing the past within an observatory' from which the past can be monitored, repeated, tested, pointing out the failure of psychology to take trauma into considerations, when it is thought only in terms of a progressional time, the argument is furthered stressing an empirical memory.⁶⁰ The penetrating presence of trauma in a

⁵⁶ Fritz Breithaupt, "The Invention of Trauma in German Romanticism", *Critical Inquiry*, No: 32(Autumn-2005), 77-101

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.82

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid. pp.77-83. To negotiate the 'empirical' memory of the traumatized, Breithaupt demands an 'empirical psychology' instead of the current one that presupposes a rather personal, and 'set in (pieces of) time' modern mind.

community is, despite being unavailable for direct observations, and not being an 'easy condition to detect', imponderably decisive.

In a ritual such as *Kakapalay*, the central narrative that generates the discussion can be situated within the lived experience, which is synonymous to a traumatic non-singular (dis)continuity of Paniya living. Perhaps there is little leeway to carve out a refurbished methodology to set it on the ritual as well as life traumatically emerged. To quote Breithaupt once more, whoever speaks of someone's trauma 'walks a thin line between supporting the weak, giving them a voice and infantilizing the weak, stealing their right to speak and thus disempowering where there is a chance for self-empowerment'.⁶¹

This discussion too is not an exception to this (im)possibility or could be an easy prey for the disempowering/self-empowerment agendas. Schemata of this sort, for the unobtrusive incrustation that modernity might have formed over them, peter out for the very reason of the incongruous trajectories they set along with the alienated narrativity they follow. The impossibility to assume the time of a performed narrative could be made possible, again, for a general identification, through a fabrication of a non-existed event in time. Dipesh Chakrabarty spots a similar instance in 're-created romantic sense'. Though in the field of poetry, he disregards the true existence of 'the time' as a re-narration of which 'the performance' appears. Located within the boundaries of a regional history, the archive, rather than a (ny) moment at a given time, promises to have the capability to become the only influencing constituent:

Bengali poetry thus, I suggest, acts as the place where a collective memory of a non-discredited romantic sense of the political - the sense that once enabled Dinesh Sen to look on his history of Bengali literature as a nationalist, that is, political exercise- is archived.⁶²

This experience is not retrievable for every given individual in Chakrabarty as well. He, too, acknowledges the failure to articulate them:

But in likening this historical process of transmission of sentiments to the process of archiving, I do not mean to say that this archive is simply there in any objective sense for us to make use of it. It is, in that

⁶¹ Ibid. p.101.

⁶² Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Romantic Archives: Literature and politics of Identity in Bengal", *Critical Inquiry*30, (Spring 2004), p.681

sense, not the archive the historian usually draws on in writing exact and accurate narratives of the past. Nor is it an archive in a metaphorical sense. ...otherwise the legacy is simply there as printed words, as aesthetics as historical monuments ...to proclaim an individual sentiment as something political would indeed be sentimentalism.⁶³

Time, as a concept, not only is elusive to an 'expert' hand, to a historian, waiting for the arrival of a performance or a narrative to position it but for the people carrying with them a traumatic lineage. The myths of Paniyas activating their performances also do not accede to such proposals of the norms of a structurable time.

⁶³ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS A POLITICAL LORE

This chapter attempts a reading of the paniya lore between the lines. Collected from different places and times, they provide us with interesting and evocative worlds of experience. Beginning with a lullaby we go on reading stories and songs. (Lullabies are usually sung by mothers. Paniya lullabies, contrary to the general principle, are not. They are sung either by the elder children or aged people. The appearance of mother happens only when the singer refers to her). While singing to lull a child to sleep, the singer takes up two responsibilities:

1. To bring the image of the mother and to justify her.
2. To suppress the child's desire for its mother.

These two points can be addressed only when the answer for the question 'why cannot mothers sing lullabies?' is sought. Understandably, the aged and the kids are predominantly the singers of such songs for the youth are at work at the masters' fields. The child is an eternal orphan desiring for its parents and for food:

(1)

Sleep thee child sleep

Thy Father guards our lord

O! He would bring tender flesh of the black crab for thee.

Thy mother serves the lord

O! She would bring sweet breadcrumbs for thee.

Sleep thee child sleep.

O! Thy father travels to the fair with our lord's cashew

Sleep thee child sleep!

O! On Saturday night he would be back.¹

¹P. Somasekharan Nair, *Paniyar*, National Book Stall, 1976, pp.117-119. Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations in the chapter are mine.

(2)

Ba vom Ba vom child
Ba vom Ba vom...
Let the reaping be over
The mother would fetch more *balli*
Otherwise we will be hungry
Ba vom Ba vom, Ba vom Ba vom.²

The first song reminds us two important existential realms; the one of reality and the other of instinct. Both of these, together, form the narrativity of the poem. The child's cries for its parents are a longing for what it is denied. On the other hand, the child must sleep, for its parents could bring it 'flesh of crabs' and 'breadcrumbs'³ only if they are kept out of it. 'Serving the lord' is no more an activity looked down upon but a credential attributed to the child which is to be proud of what its parents are. The second line in which the mother is pictured as obtaining 'breadcrumbs' from the lord⁴, seems to have given the child enough reason for its sleep.

The lullaby (B) is, in its quoted form, incomplete. The poem doesn't end anywhere as the narrator goes on inventing the song. Interestingly, here, the narrator is simultaneously an actor and the song, a drama. In the first place, it addresses the child in the second, the mother. The quoted song, but, is an interpretation from the narrator as to why the mother is absent. The child does not seem to have a personal voice and its pangs are always interpreted by the singer whereas the mother voices her thoughts through the singer. Later parts of this discussion shall make these arguments clearer. The section of the poem quoted below addresses a mother:

O! Mother come back!
Cries, here, thy child aloud
Back here be soon, O!

²Ibid.p.118.

³ It is, sometimes; in the poem is *Dosa*, a common food item in the region.

⁴ In the poem the word used is 'thiruvola' which means the lord's wife.

Be thy child be fed.⁵

The next section of the lullaby is in the voice of the mother, in which the mother ignores the child and responds to the singer.

Calling for feeding now!
When the seedlings are not picked
When the master stops the *balli*,
When he stops the *coolie*⁶.
Let it cry as it could
Or let us be hungry!

It follows a justification of the mother's act by the singer. Singer is back again to the child and interprets for it its feelings:

Come mother! As fast as you could!
Its mouth is dry,
Eyes wet,
Shivering and screeching
It longs thee!⁷

This song follows the mother's voice as we have seen earlier with slight modulations. The singer consoles the child and tries to fascinate it with the names of eatables.

Come here would she
Bringing thee crabs!
Come here would she
With her hands full of paddy
With its husk, O! Child, I will make thee pastry
As didn't we have money to buy any.⁸

⁵Ibid.p.118.

⁶'Coolie' means 'wages'.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

When the poem goes on, the worlds of a struggle unfold. These songs identify the singer as a convinced narrator whose recognition of trauma opens up possibilities to look into the Paniya routine that depends upon the master. The child's cry for the mother is a cry of instincts suppressed by an interactive routine the Paniya follow. These songs are collected, to differentiate them from the mythical ones dealt with in the second chapter, at the 'slavery period'. The lullaby becomes a contradiction, here, to the very idea of a lullaby. The child when being lulled to sleep listens to the interpretations of its mother's absence as well as to its own reasons for calling her back. Its 'cry' is a voiceless activity that is stopped once the absurdity of producing it is revealed. On the other hand, the mother too resists her instinct to meet the child as material constraints stop her from going to the child. The singer recognizes the ineluctability of the child's cry and the mother's work, and acts as facilitator of reconciliation. Between the child and mother two major systems are suspended – the paniya and the coloniality. This song is sung in the background of an invisible master in the first place, in the second, that of two elements -the child's instinct and the mother's and the singer's recognition of reality. The cry of hunger is a recurring theme in the paniya narratives and so are the songs on edibles collected from the forest.

Eponymous Heroines: Visibility and the Lore

In the slavery period it is the presence of the master in the psyche of the slaves that generated some of the lore. The master was not only a colonizing entity but an enchanting one. (See chapter 2 and the story of the Alans) An early collection of Adiya songs reveals the aforementioned psyche (with a tint of jealousy)⁹:

(A)

People from the neighborhood,
People from afar,
Listened with proper heed paid
To the song of the pearl like maiden

⁹M.R. Pankajshnan (compilation), *Vayanattile Adivasikalude Pattukal*, Kerala Sahitya Akademy Trichur, 1989.

Of the fort.
They heard the music flowed
And heard it without their lips moved
People so far
People so near
Heard her sing and hum
The golden maiden of the fort,
And thought how sweet she would be
If her song was so sweet?
When she pours water in a
Vase so precious,
In to our palms,
Open before her mercy,
With her hands like molten gold,
Even the drops from her elbow
Are drunk.
Watching the fun
Didn't she smile?
O! No. she did burst into laughter.
Look at her face a
Chembarathi flower,
Look at her hair
Palm leaves,
Her nose *kindival*¹⁰,
Her eyes
Small and wet,
O! Her teeth in
The measurement of the
Pavli seed.
Her breasts
Pomegranates,
Her limbs

¹⁰ A carved, long and beautiful portion of the traditional tumbler named *kindi*. Water is poured through it from the tumbler.

Beauty incarnate,
Her waist of a goddess
These words fail to describe.¹¹

This chapter inquires into the visibility aspect in the collected paniya lore. Udaya Kumar¹² speaks about the visibility the early Malayalam fiction carefully maintained at the emergence of a new literary genre namely ‘novel’ in Malayalam. Novel when emerged as a new form had a tendency to emulate its English counterparts as the English ones remained the base of the newly emergent literary form in the Malayalam’s literary space. These novels, arguably, represented not only the thematic re-creations, but the cultural ones of the English tradition. The regional space of Malayalam, however, offered to this project perplexed responses with the sophisticated English culture influencing the folk on the one hand and the equally sophisticated local space appropriating the same folk on the other (in Udaya Kumar, the space of Suri Namboothirippadu in *Indulekha* is sophisticated yet local). Such novels contracted the reading community through catering ‘visibility’ as Udaya Kumar lucidly argues. The title of the section ‘Eponymous Heroines’, is taken from Dilip Menon.¹³ The above mentioned songs do depict no one but an eponymous heroine. Menon finds such figures after whom the early Malayalam novels are named, as decisive in the making of a tradition. To clarify the argument, a figuration of such a heroine in the celebrated Malayalam novel *Indulekha* is taken up here:

“I confess that it is impossible to describe the joy and the happiness and the fervour and the excitement and the intense desire and the grief that arise in the minds of men when they see Indulekha’s complexion which resembles the colour of gold, her teeth which resemble gems, her lips red like coral, her eyes which make dark flowers feel like slaves, her face which has the glow of red lotuses, her dark hair, heavy breasts and her slender waist.”¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid.pp.384–386.

¹² See Udaya kumar, ‘Seeing and Reading: The Early Malayalam Novel and Some Questions of Visibility’, in *Early Novels in India*, Meenakshi Mukherjee (ed.)Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi,2005.

¹³See Dilip Menon, ‘No, Not the Nation:Lower caste Malayalam Novels of the Nineteenth Century’, *Early Novels in India*, Meenakshi Mukherjee (ed.)Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi,2005.

¹⁴ Udaya Kumar, p.170.this is quoted from *Indulekha*.

This description, Udaya Kumar interestingly observes, imitates paraphrases of Sanskrit poems as they stand apart from the rest of the text. This creates an enhanced sense of solemnity and it is employed to indicate a ‘schematic world even in the midst of a world of secular visibility’. Let us now go back to the folk song cited at the outset of this section. A song like this cannot but stand out from the rest of Paniya / Adiya lore not because they follow the ways of describing such heroines existed elsewhere in a sophisticated place, but because a stunning repetition of the latter could be traced in the former.

What makes a high caste mistress appear like an angel with her sweet music enchanting the slaving clan around?¹⁵ In his reading of lower caste Malayalam novels of nineteenth century Kerala, Dilip Menon, quoting Paul Gilroy, observes that one can no longer assume an “innocent modernity where the subordination of the slave doesn’t figure” and attempts to treat the intimate association of modernity and slavery. He goes on to argue that the emergence of novel as a literary form not only brought new ways of writing but new formulations in the ‘colonial modernity’s notions of narrativity. The term, which is argued as more spatial than temporal, carved out a unique place to work in. to speak of the songs we quoted, such formations are to be taken up. Nowhere in the Paniya / Adiya narratives do we see a colonial / elitist description of an upper caste maiden who is (song A) invisible and only her voice is heard. The slave who looks up to the maiden as a goddess listens to her music as though he is listening to the melody of a nymph. The people of the place (slaves who work at the master’s place) imagine the enchanting beauty of the singer who lives in a fort. The stark contrast in the poem makes it a potential narrative to establish differences. The maiden’s sweetness of voice, her invisible place (a fort) has appeared in the early modern Malayalam literature as well. The celebrated work of Changanpuzha Krishnapillai, ‘*Ramanan*’ in which the protagonist, a lower caste subaltern, and the heroine a maiden, of the high caste Brahmins, fall in love which finally leads the protagonist to end his life as impossibilities of a union become clearer to him. In *Ramanan* the many storeyed mansion of the maiden is an existential bar to the lower caste

¹⁵ At times the poem supposes the maiden as an Adiya woman with non-Adiya characteristics. She marries a rich Adiya, and he takes her home on a caparisoned elephant’s back.(such marriages resemble the royal ones of the Nair\Brahmin couples often narrated in the stories of the princely states)

male lover. But here the male lover's music penetrates the walls of the high mansion and makes his lover aware of his presence.

The poem (B) goes further in romanticizing the charm of such a colonial maiden and establishes slavery as the only possibility to have an opportunity to meet her. The contrast will be clearer once the naiveté of the maiden is studied as opposed to the funny/ barbaric slave who performs a(ny) mean trick to appease the lady and even goes to the extent of humiliating oneself by denying individuality ('...Even the drops from her elbow/ Are drunk.') This is to invite a derisive giggle from the lady ('watching the fun / didn't she smile? / O! She burst into laughter'). The poem's narration, with divergent metaphors employed to discuss different body parts of the heroine, tells what the narrator exactly misses in his psyche/body. Beginning with the 'vase so precious' and ending with the 'waist of a goddess', the poem's narration expatiates jealousy as an inherent theme. This poem, which must have appeared in the end of the colonial rule, places the Paniya /Adiya before 'her mercy' with the unfolded hands extended for her to pour water into.

The issue that one has to take up now is of the visible analogy between the paniya narration of a beautiful woman and the description of the same in the mainstream fiction. The roots of such descriptions go deep to the bedrock of the colonial modernity. The space seems to be not always 'spatial' but psychological, physical, cultural, and economic. Birth of an individual is the only merit attributed to him/her and the most important of the differences. The high-born, thus is an opposition to the low-born. The high-born lives a higher life and the low-born, a lesser one. The symbols of many storeyed forts are recurrent in the modern literature in Malayalam. The colonial construct of mansions known as 'manner houses' built after the British fashion, was widely advertised during the modernizing project of the coloniality especially during the 18th century. Indulekha's sophistication in the novel as Udaya Kumar points out is in her language (English educated) and in her furniture and culture. This can be seen especially in the description of the rooms of the educated Nair men in Malabar or in Madras. Round tables, reclining chairs, painted mirrors embroidered covers, glass lamps, carpets and sometimes in the glass cupboards of books in English and

in Sanskrit, beautifully bound and embossed with golden lettering. These objects conjure up a new world of coherence; the universe of a new civility and new values. These new values of extremely aristocratic super elite formed its subjects as a cohort of barbarics¹⁶. The desire to possess the naïveté of the master somehow has become a passion in the psyche of the slave (See the story of the Alans in the second chapter). Space, to speak about it, could only be perceived, in this perspective, on the basis of its nearness and distance. The slaves, during the period of the colonial modernity, are distanced, though caught within the nearness. This juxtaposition is a tool the aristocracy has invented to narrate its coloniality. The newly emergent colonial modernity compromised both with the metropolitan and with the indigenous 'high' traditions¹⁷. In the village the manner houses of the classed declared the aristocratic values they stood for. In many early modern Malayalam works from Changanpuzha's *Ramanan* to kumaran Asan's *Karuna*, it can be generally argued that the colonial modernity's self projection is visibly depicted. The rearrangement of contrasting realities is the most characteristic of the modern forms of colonial self projection. In the colonies sometimes it is called upon as a discursive strategy emanated from discursive interpretive paradigms¹⁸. These paradigms, according to Menon, centered around elemental units and oppositional schematizations (such as- self/other, state/ nation.)

From here we go on to inquire about the upward movement that was shown by the slave communities during the colonial era. Religion especially Christianity was considered to be an interface through which lower castes experienced modernity¹⁹. Conversion as a process to facilitate social mobility attracted many Paniya men. The post conversion period too was not as easy a process for the new convert to tread on. To put it simply, the opposing ideology, a portrayal of which had tremendous impact in the slave life, had generated a deep feeling of jealousy in the minds of the oppressed of the masters' spheres. Conversion as a modern tactic to acquire social mobility was one among the methods the slave societies adopted. Apart from all these, social mobility was attempted to achieve through an imitation of the dominant discourses. Literary ones too figure here. The

¹⁶ Dilip Menon p.44.

¹⁷ Ibid.P. 42.

¹⁸ Ibid.p.43

¹⁹Ibid.p. 44

connections between the two similar narrations mentioned above, will be clearer once the aesthetic dominance is inquired into. The narrative structure and style of such descriptions are incongruous to the rest of the text in the Paniya folklore. Marriage, to speak of one of such incongruities, has always been described as a function the community collectively took part in the Paniya lore. Contrary to this, the married couple goes on an elephant's back wearing luxurious ornaments; they use decorated umbrella to conceal the beautiful bride from the people gathered around to have a look at her, in the poem (B). This 'travel of a lord', a recurrent theme in the mainstream literature, is emulated by the slave to declare the outward world his elegance which he tries to prove to be on a par with that of the masters'. A song collected sometime at the end of the last century, bear evidence for a transformation of a written tradition into an interesting conversational song²⁰. Projecting the opposing forces in its narration, the song is musically titled as Rareeeram rere (name of an imaginary paniya chieftain). The poem describes a war between Rareeeram rere's clan and the Thekkers (southerners). The poem begins when the Rareeeram rere of the Itchat meets the Rareeeram rere of Matchat.²¹ The opposing Southerners' force is mockingly narrated by the Rareeeram rere. The description of the arms and ammunitions that they have with them are counted as:

In each *Kothalam*²²
 There are two guns
 Black powder
 Round cartridges.

This Paniya song along with the singers' names (Rareeeram rere of two places) conveys the most important role they played during the freedom struggle. Though Paniyas were identified as 'thieves' (see Baby 1993), the political loyalties of the clan remained with the Pazhi Raja, the nationalist warrior and king.

²⁰ Kaviyoor Murali, *Dalit Sahityam*, Current Books, Kottayam, 2001p.103.

²¹ They are simply (any) two places.

²² Cellar.

Dilip Menon speaks of the ‘artifice of translation’ that decides and spreads dominant conventions. The early Malayalam writers’ attempts at translating English novels which finally led them to write their own novels in Malayalam provided the early lower-caste fiction with a model to follow suit²³. Attempts to imitate the early ‘high-caste novels’ led the writers generate the ‘lower-caste fiction’ in Malayalam. In many cases the thematic and structural contents remained the same. To connect this argument to what we have been trying to prove, the inter-textual transactional capabilities should be taken into account. As identified, the interactability goes beyond the periphery of the lore and engages with a distant written tradition. The idea of a geographical space seemed to have disappeared as far as literary traditions are concerned. For a slave such loyalties remained within the space allowed by the masters for him to live in. The term ‘southerners’ means actually ‘westerners’ as the colour of the ‘southerners’ being ‘white’ as identified somewhere in the poem (*vellekkaran*- whiteman).

The most recent lore carry with them themes connected to food. In the second chapter, we spoke of the ideas relating to hunger and desire. The recent lore takes a notable turn from there. Hunger, as a basic conception, seems to be no more as forceful a theme as it had been. The song that follows these words seems to have narrated the shift in the core motif of the lore:

How many times I dreamt
How much I enjoy
To husk the *Kanna* rice of the field
Freshly reaped and shining.²⁴

This incomplete song tells the desire to have the *kanna* rice that one has in his/her possession. Though ‘desire’ as another motif, continues to exist, it is for something one can acquire, in the modern lore. The hunger of the singer in the past is a memory of the singer of the day (‘how many times I dreamt’) the experiences of such desires and dreams pave way for a feeling of fulfillment (‘how

²³ Dilip Menon, p. 57

²⁴ An unpublished paniya song collected in February, 2006. Compilation and translation mine.

much I enjoy'). The lore does not depict hunger as a theme but it appears with its dialectics changed. The land question, the most political of the contemporary tribal debates, has been addressed in a different song:

O! Varelamma, Varelamma,
Thy place a better place
Where each vagabond has a burrow,
Where nobody is a thief.
Is there a lack of land?
As vast as the world!
O! Varelamma, Varelamma,
Thy place a better place.
Even in the city Palakkadu,
Justice does prevail.
O! Varelamma, Varelamma,
Thy place a better place
For thy place a better place!²⁵

The song provides with resources for a discursive interpretation. Immediately after the removal of the official and colonial slavery, the Paniya in Wayanad found themselves landless, jobless and in a jumble of frustrating and poverty stricken chaos the post slavery period offered to them. Colonial master's withdrawal from a long existed system left the tribal, the slave, exposed to a completely new world. The erstwhile colonial master re-appeared in new attires in the forms of market economy, social elite, and labour-exploitation. Landlessness alienated them in the very place they were born. It was in the post-slavery era that the word 'Paniya' acquired many meanings. Some of them reiterated the old colonial conceptions of 'Paniya thief', 'Paniya the treacherous', and 'prostitutes'. The song quoted above narrates how a Varelamma's (who can be anybody but a Paniya) land is better because 'nobody is a thief' and every 'vagabond has a burrow' (some Paniyas are landless migrants). The Paniya conception of land is different from that of a non-Paniya modern man. A Paniya's land will not be a 'personal possession'

²⁵ Ibid.

demarcated with barbed wires as they believe in the community life. Thus the conception is of a land 'as vast as the world'. Justice, as it was proclaimed by the newly emergent democratic state, seemed to them as the most absurd of ideas for no justice has never been practised for their sake in the history. The lines 'Even in the city Palakkadu / justice does prevail' might mean that even in a city which is cruel and crowded justice does prevail ;the justice that they are denied of in the place where they were born, in a village where they were brought up. The ideal 'place' of Vareamma is seen to be a reference to the imaginary *mantam* of their myths- The most egalitarian of places headed by Uthappan and Uthamma.(In the mythical *mantam*, everybody is equal; and justice is a norm). These words express the frustration and anger they have in them because the democracy, a system which seemed to have liberated them from slavery, now appears to them, as totally oblivious of their pangs. The place of an ignorant democracy with its political (in)activity is not a 'better place' ('thy place a better place / for thy place a better place!').We conclude this discussion here by citing a song from K.J. Baby's *Nadugadhika* sung by a Gadhika performer:

We have neither fowls nor rise to offer thee beloved ancestors.
 So here we do offer ourselves.
 We bow to thee, ancestors,
 Seeking thy forgiveness.
 We bow to the sky,
 Asking forgiveness.
 We bow to the earth,
 Asking her to bear with us.
 We seek the way,
 Which way are we to go on?
 On this side, it is the Tamburan's wall.
 That side, the migrant's fence.
 On every side,
 Wall or fence, hedge or bands,
 Block our way.
 Which way are we to turn?
 Towards which hill?
 Along which stream?

Show us, show us the way,
Dear ancestors.
Here we are
Entangled in barbed wire fences,
Enveloped in obscure of darkness,
We the offspring of *Maveli*,
Your very children
Languishing in this pit.
What remains, what remains for us?
May be this thundi, this cheeni,
And a few strains left behind by you
Ours ancestors...
Now, guide us ancestors, guide us.
Our brains are muddled
Our limbs are weak.
We are lost.
Which way shall we proceed?
Tell us which way?²⁶

²⁶ Baby KJ. *Nadugadhika*, Visthar, Bangalore, 1993,p.64-65.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The placement of the temple theatre (*kuttampalam*) within the temple walls disallowed even the approach to its domain by a near majority of those we would today call Hindus. Within these walls the social structuring of the upper-caste hierarchy around Nambutiri ritual and material privileges, their dominance in Sanskrit education and scholarship and the consort status of temple-servants (e.g., *cakyar* and *nambyar*) and Nayar women in their service made for a literary, religious and sexual politics of knowledge in the temple arts.

(Rich Freeman, *Literary Cultures in History*, 2004)

The context of this study has been the hierarchical organization of art forms; both ritualistic and non-ritualistic. Rich Freeman traces the emanation of these (classical) art forms from the temple theatre tradition of Kerala. It is important to note that, on the other hand, the same temple theater (*kuttampalam*) tradition unknowingly paved way for a tradition of parallel, yet classical, art forms to thrive. The very story of Kuncan Nambyar, a temple theatre drummer of Sanskrit performances serves us with evidence to support the argument. Nambyar, (he was a lower caste artist and drumming a somewhat polluting profession because of its association with hides- see Rich Freeman p. 490) was made the butt of jokes by the *cakyar* (the *kuttu* performer) when he dozed off during an all night performance of the Sanskrit *Kuttu*. An enraged Nambyar formed his own art form - the most satirical of art forms - *tullal* and made the open space outside the *kuttampalam* his theatre. Nambyar consequently stole the show and the *cakyar*'s audience. That was how *tullal* emerged as an art form as the most representative of the parallel tradition of art forms.

We have been speaking about the classical tradition of performing arts so far in the conclusion. The local/folk tradition of the performative narratives, however, is located within the ambit of the classical/Sanskrit ones. The very schematization of these local traditions as belonging to a common and singular organization caused them their second-rate existence. The classical tradition identified the less-classical and more ritualistic art forms as its outgrowths. We have now two modes of parallel forms of representation for consideration.

- 1) That which following a common temple tradition.
- 2) That which is practised beyond the 'temple's jurisdiction'.

Both of them responded to the existing tradition by questioning its narratology. During the course of the dissertation only the second of these two aforementioned traits was taken up for elaboration. Kakapolay is situated as belonging to the local\folk performative cultures. The title of the work "Paniya sense of the world" is to implicate the work's attempt to observe the reciprocity between 'the world' and 'the Paniya' forming the self and its dialectical perspectives. The element of resentment involved in the reciprocity is one among the many constituents that work in the performing tradition of the kakapolay. This characteristic could be the less visible and penetratingly inherent; hence its force, significance and capacity to generate the very performance itself are remarkable. Systemic elements are seen not only as objects with certain importance, but as places one is linked to through an unseen umbilical cord. Kakapolay is just another tool to observe them and so are the Paniya myths and narratives. The ritual performances as well as the narratives are thus spaces to interact with these existential nuances. To speak more about the links between the community and the systemic elements, it is crucial to observe how the interaction is maintained. *Valliyuramma*, the goddess of Valliyoor, defined the nature of the relationship between the Paniya and the Hindu temple system in the religious space of Wayanad. The lower periphery of the Valliyoor temple (Paniya were not allowed inside the inner sanctum. The lower periphery of the temple was the place of the former slave auctions) remains a pointer towards a psychological barrier the Paniya wouldn't like to cross. It seems to contribute to what Louis Dumont observed in his study of the Tamil temple system. The visible difference is in the mythical patterning of the custom. These mythical narrations of the community are particular to the Paniya precisely because the element of 'tribality' in the Paniya demands these narratives of a collective and shareable lineage. Tribality can be argued as an entirely different experience from 'dalitness'. Hence, untouchability is the least of the pangs of the Paniya. To collate certain points, the earlier mentioned parallel tradition of art forms does not have a visible influence on the Paniya performances. The Paniya

performances and narratives give symbols of a narrative tradition forced to be acted out within the constraints of a larger tradition.

Throughout our discussion, certain aspects are attempted to be highlighted. They include:

1. The power of the outward culture - aesthetic, political and social with which the smaller cultures are appropriated.
2. The reciprocal interactions between the two tremendously altering the existing patterns of the local \ folk traditions.
3. The characteristic of resisting the massive over-powering of the dominant tradition.

As such responses in the realm of performance are spoken about in the course of this inquiry; the political ones activating the contemporary arguments in the modern day living of Paniya have not been the central theme of the project. Hence the political aspects are inseparable from the aesthetic ones in the performance. Here, it is suggested that the existence of these forms are more 'radical dialogistic' than dialectical. In this perspective, the external factors that determine the performativity of the Paniya narratives promote these narrative structures to open up a world in to nothing. Here, if we see them opening a world into 'something' (aesthetic, cultural and so on) we shall lose track of the absolute singularity of the narrated. To clear away the ambiguity, let us see what happens to a performance once it is seen as connected to a motive.

The necessity out of which each Kakapalay performance is carried out, for example, if seen politically, is a result of the submission to the power of the dominant. The singularity of the performance, if seen independently, will, possibly, appear as a liberating feature of the performance. Its singularity, when stressed, creates an egalitarian space where even the narratives from the dominant traditions belong to without maintaining a hierarchy; rather without having undergone a schematization to that effect.

The independence of the Paniya art form will give to it its dignity back which has been taken away from it when attributed to a larger tradition. It is also criticized that any deviation from asserting its singularity can lead us to form different theoretical affiliations that may or may not be helpful for the performing lives of the people in question. For example, the over emphasis on the post coloniality may, burden, unnecessarily, the communal performances with post colonial theory. Such theories are, because of the greater possibilities of these performances, applicable to divulge certain assertive dimensions of the performative singularity.

The foundation of the arguments in this project is in the assertion of the independence of the performed life, ritual and lore. The multifarious methods applied to inquire into it are merely ways of looking at it. The immediate sphere of the performance may, at times, stand beyond the capacity of the divergent methods. Thus the Black \ White dichotomy seems to be alien to the more or less similar existence of the Paniya \ the Lord equations. A distant similarity may not serve us with equipments for an investigation into an immediate sphere like the one of the Paniya performative world.

The modernist notions that disregard local \ folk narratives can be appropriated, to certain extent, to articulate the performativity of these traditions. Modern notions are, to these singular forms, some among the many ways through which they were looked at. The narrative's independence seems to have catered the conveyed idea of 'humanity' which, potentially, goes beyond the immediate spheres of the ritual's performance leaving it open to any number of theoretical methods to continuously unfold its manifold possibilities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahmad, Aijaz, *In Theory: Classes, Nations and Literatures*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992

Ambedkar, B.R., *Annihilation of Caste*, Blue-Moon Books, New Delhi, 2000

-----, *The Untouchables- Who were they and Why they became Untouchables*, (vol.7), Vasant Moon (ed.), Govt. of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1990

Baby K.J, *Guda*, D.C.Books, Kottayam, 2004

-----, *Maveli Mantam*, Current Books, Thrissur, 1991

-----, *Nadugadhika*, Visthar, Bangalore, 1993

Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994

Breithaupt, Fritz, "The Invention of Trauma in German Romanticism", *Critical Inquiry*, No: 32, Autumn, 2005

Chakrabarty, Dipesh, "Romantic Archives: Literature and politics of Identity in Bengal", *Critical Inquiry*, 30, spring, 2004

Chakravarti, Anand, "Caste and Agrarian Class: A View from Bihar", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 36 (17), 2001

Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993

Chaudhari, Budhadeb, (ed.) *Ethnopolitics and Identity Crisis*, New Delhi: Inter-India, 1990, pp. 43-54

Chentharassery, T.H.P, *Kerala Charitrathinte Gathimattiya Ayyankali*, CICC Book House, Ernakulam, 2000

Clifford, James and George Marcus, (ed.) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986

-----*The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography Literature and Art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1988

Cohen, Bernard, *An Anthropologist among Historians*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987

Dangle, Arjun, (ed.), *Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Literature*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1992

Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, G.C. Spivak (tr.), Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, New Delhi, 1994

Dumont, Louis, *Religion/politics and History in India: Collected Papers in Indian Sociology*, Moulton Publishers, Paris, 1970

Eagleton, Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, 2000

Eliade, Mircea, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Willard R.Trask, (tr.), Princeton University Press, 1964

Elvin, Verrier, *Philanthropologis: Selected Writings*, Nari Rustomji (ed.), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1989

Fanon, Frantz, "The Lived Experience of the Black" (*from Black skin White Masks*), *Race*, Robert Bernasconi (ed.), Blackwell publishers, 2001

-----, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Constance Farrington, (tr.), Penguin, London, 1978

Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, Alan Sheridan (tr.) Penguin Books, London, 1991

Freeman, Rich, "Genre and Society: The Literary Culture in Premodern Kerala", *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, Sheldon Pollock (ed.), OUP, New Delhi, 2004.

Guha, Ramachandra, "Subaltern and Bhadrak Studies", *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, August 19, 1995, pp. 2056-2058

Guha, Ranajit (ed) *The Subaltern Studies Reader: 1986-1995*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997

Guru, Gopal, "Dalits in Pursuit of Modernity", in Romila Thapar (ed) *India: Another Millennium?*, New Delhi, Viking, 2000, pp. 123-136

-----, "Understanding the Category Dalit: Atrophy in Dalit Politics", Gopal Guru (ed.) DIC Book Series, Mumbai, 2005, pp. 66-77

Habermas, Jurgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, Frederick Lawrence, (tr.), MIT press, Cambridge, 1987

Hegel, G W F, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, AV Miller, (tr.), Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, 1998

Illiaiah, Kancha, *God as Political Philosopher: Buddhism's Challenge to Brahmanism*, Calcutta, Samya, 2000

-----, *Why I am Not A Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy*, Calcutta, Samya, 1996

Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol.1, *Indian Empire Today and Tomorrow*, printers?, New Delhi,1907

Iyer, L.A. Krishna, *The Travancore Tribes and Castes*, Government Press, Trivandrum, 1939

Jacob, Lukose, *Thudi Chetham*, Hilda Trust, Sultan Bathery, 1995

Johny, O K, *Wayanad Rekhakal, (Notes on Wayanad: Regional History)*, Pappiyon Books, Calicut, 2001

Kakar, Sudhir, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiry into India and Its Healing Traditions*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1982

Kavira,j Sudipta, *Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997

Khare, R.S., *The Untouchable as Himself: Ideology and Pragmatism Among the Chamars in Luknow*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989

Kumar, Udaya, "Seeing and Reading: The Early Malayalam Novel And Some Questions of Visibility", *Early Novels in India*, Meenakshi Mukherjee (ed.), Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi,2005.

Kunjambu, Pothery, *Saraswathy Vijayam*, D.C.books, Kottatyam, 2004

Kurup, K.K.N., Lukose Jacob, *Wayanattile Adivasikalum Swayambharanavum*, Keraliyan Smaraka Samity, Kozhikode, 2002

Levi Strauss, Claude, *Myth and Meaning*, Routledge, London, 1978

-----, *Structural Anthropology*, Clair Jacobson, (tr.), Basic Books, New York, 1963

Ling, Catherine F., *Sunrise on the Nilgiris: The story of the Todas*, The Zenith Press, London, 1885

Logan, William, *A collection of Treaties Engagements and other papers of importance relating to British Affairs in Malabar*, Madras Civil Service, Calicut, 1879

-----, *Malabar* (Two volumes), Asian Educational service, New Delhi, 1989

Menon, Dilip, "The Moral Community of Teyyattam: Popular Culture in Late Colonial Malabar", *Studies in History*, 1993

-----, "No Not the Nation: Lower Caste Malayalam Novels of the Nineteenth Century", *Early Novels in India*, Meenakshi Mukherjee (ed.), Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2005.

Monoli, Salgado, "Tribal Stories, Scribal Worlds: Mahasweta Devi and the Unreliable Translator", *Journal of Common Wealth Literature*, 2000, pp. 131-145

Mosse, David, Sanjeev Gupta, et al, "On the Margins in the City: Adivasi Seasonal Labour Migration in Western India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 9-5, 2005, Vol. XL, No. 28, pp. 3025-3038

Murali, Kaviyoor, *Dalit Sahityam*, Current Books, Kottayam, 2001

-----, *Dalitharkkoru Suvishesham*, Current Books, Kottayam, 1997

-----, *Purananooru: Oru Padanam*, Current Books, Kottayam, 1999

Nair, M.R. Panjkajakshan, *Wayanattile Adivasikalude Pattukal*, Kerala Sahitya Acadamy, Trichur, 1989

Nair, P. Somasekharan, *Paniyar*, National Book Trust, Kottayam, 1976

Nancy, Jean Luc, *Being Singular Plural*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2000

-----, Peter Connor (ed.), *The Inoperative Community*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London, 1996

Nandy, Ashish, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of self under colonialism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1983

Omvedt, Gail, *Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India*, Penguin, Viking, New Delhi, 2004

-----, *Dalit Visions: The Anti-caste Movement and the Construction of an Indian Identity*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1995

-----, *Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1994

-----, *We Will Smash this Prison: Indian Women in Struggle*, Orient Longman, London, 1980

Panikkar, Gopal T K, *Malabar and Its Folk*, Asian Educational service, New Delhi, 1983 (first publication 1900)

Panikker, K. Ayyappa, "Adivasi Kathakhyanam", *Kalakaumudi*, 1155, November, 1997

Panoor, K, *Keralathile Africa*, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1963

Perkinson, Jim, "The Gift /Curse of second sight" is "Blackness" A Shamanic Category in the Myth of America?", *History of Religions*, University of Chicago Press, vol.42,no.2, November,2002

Pius, T.K., "The technique of Configuring Docile Bodies through a process of appropriation of space: A reading of K.J.Baby's 'Nadugadhika'", *Theatre India*, NSD, No.10, November, 2004

Propp, Vladimir, *Theory and History of Folklore*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984

Raju, E.T, *Penappatile Chettadiyar* (tribal study-Malayalam) Fedina Publications, Sultan Bathery, 1999

-----, *Aive*, Fedina Publications, Sultan Bathery, 1995

Reddy, N.Bhaktavalsala (ed.), *Folklore Padanam, Sindhanta Thalam, FOSSILS*, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004

Ricoeur, Paul, "Narrative Time", *Critical Inquiry*, No. 10, 1980, pp. 169-190

-----, *Time and Narrative*, vol.1, Catherine McLaughlin and David Pellauer, (tr.), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 1984

Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, Parthenon, New York, 1978

Sarkar, Sumit, *Writing Social History*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997

Sarma, KNK, "Communication: Note on the Paniyan of Kerala", *Man in India* 72 (3), 1992

Sharma, Suresh, *Tribal Identity and the Modern World*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1994

Smith, Theophus, "The spirituality of African American Traditions", in *Christian Spirituality: Post-reformation and Modern*, Louis Dupre E Saliers, (ed.), Crossroad, New York, 1989

Spivak, Gayatri Chakrabarti, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1999

-----, *In Other Words*, Routledge, New York, 1987

-----, "Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular", *Postcolonial Studies*, vol.8, no.4, 2005

Sreedharamenon, A, *Kerala charitram: Compilation of Kerala History*, vol.1, Kerala History Association, Cochin, 1973

Taussing, Michael, *Shamanism, colonialism, and the wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987

Thurston, Edgar, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India .vol. vi*, Cosmo publications, New Delhi, 1975, (first published in1901)

-----, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1975, (first published in1907)

Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folk Tale*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1970

Wayne, Ashley, "The Teyyam Kettu of Northern Kerala", *The Drama Review* 82

Williams, Raymond, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1958

Young, Robert, *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 2001

Zelliot, Eleanor, *From Untouchable to Dalit*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1992

