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Editorial

In keeping with the policy of Samyukta to bring to the fore the protracted culture of Kerala over the last 1000 years, may be too ambitious a project, we have included in this number two papers spanning the period from the 14th to the 20th century. Pyari Suradh discusses the Kerala School of Astronomy and Mathematics, an important intellectual circle which disintegrated and died out after the European invasion of India. She hints at the extent to which colonial control of knowledge creation and distribution robbed the original Indian thought in the field of mathematics for centuries till the contribution of Madhava of Sangamagrama was brought to the fore by mathematicians in the 20th century.

Taking a lead to the 20th century, we have also included the paper by N Sasidharan, *Build up of Class Consciousness: Agitational Politics in Malabar*, which is based on the idea that the ‘social and political radicalism’ in Kerala had its origins in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He goes on to posit that the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has its roots in the early radicalism that covered the length and breadth of Kerala in the first half of the last century. Sasidharan contends that “This was due to the impact of modernisation and became what could be termed as Kerala sub- nationalism”. The paper goes on to examine its intersections with caste system , land relations and 19th century religious revival in this interesting study of the spread and reach of radicalism in Kerala.

G. S. Jayasree

Chief Editor

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At home as an ‘outsider’: *Subarnalata* and *Othappu*: *The Scent of the Other Side*

Koshy Tharakan & Dr. Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee

ABSTRACT: The phrase ‘at home’ connotes familiarity, happiness and safety, while the image of an ‘outsider’ evokes the opposite sentiments. It is ironical and a seeming contradiction to feel as an ‘outsider’ in one’s own home. Though many literary texts have portrayed the poignant stories of characters who feel alienated within the precincts of their home, it is with the advent of feminist writings that ‘home’ as a site of alterity has been fully explored. The paper, by focusing on two novels, *Subarnalata*, a Bengali novel published in 1966 (English translation published in 1997), and *Othappu*, a Malayalam novel published in 2005 (English translation published in 2009), attempts to project the uncritical binaries such as home-outside world, secular-religious, and reason-emotion, and thereby problematises the concept of ‘alterity’ itself. We have tried to look at ‘alterity’ from a psychological perspective and explain it using the construal-level theory of psychological distance.

Keywords: Self and alterity, Home and world, Psychological distance, Construal-level theory, Patriarchal society.

Introduction

‘Home’ looms large occupying the entire world of a woman throughout her life, particularly if she is a homemaker and spends most of her time in running the home. Till a past few decades, the myth was that Home and Woman were complementary to each other. It was almost a universally believed fact that a woman was a happy ‘angel’ of her home, that she was

most secure—both physically and emotionally—within the boundaries of domesticity. The make-belief construction of such a myth by the patriarchal society was a narrative that set out to trap the woman in home and limit her imagination to such an extent that to think or act otherwise became a taboo, especially in the traditional communities of South East Asia. Feminist writings from this region have brought out the ambiguities, dichotomies and incongruities associated with lives of women. Thus, home as a site of emotional security, fulfilment and happiness is just one side of the coin—the other is home as a space for alterity.

In simple terms, alterity means otherness. It is something contrary to identity, the point where we deviate from ‘self’. We shall use the term with an inclination to the concept of alienation keeping our discussion focussed on ‘home’ as a space of alterity. Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) in *The Second Sex* (1949) talks of marriage as a means of keeping a woman tied to the household where she is bound to perform tasks rendered hierarchically inferior to man and that makes her a victim of sexual inequality. Beauvoir writes: “Factories, offices, and universities are open to women, but marriage is still considered a more honorable career, exempting her from any other participation in collective life” (Beauvoir 188). Why is it that a woman cannot identify with her own home as something intrinsic to her sense of identity? Why is a space that is supposed to be her own just another place dominated by patriarchal norms? As Susan Bordo (1947–) in *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1995) points out, “Men are not the enemy, but they often may have a higher stake in maintaining institutions within which they have historically occupied positions of dominance over women. That is why they have often *felt* like ‘the enemy’ to women struggling to change those institutions” (Bordo 29).

In this paper, we have taken up Ashapura Debi’s (1909–1995) *Subarnalata* (1997) and Sarah Joseph’s (1946–) *Othappu* (2009) as our unit of analysis to explore the concept of ‘home’ as a space of alterity in the life of a woman. We suggest that the ‘otherness’ or alterity is largely a product of mismatched construal of common actions resulting in deeply engrained psychological distances between the woman and the man. These psychological distances between the two formulate into an epistemic problem of understanding the other and many a time results in the victimisation of the woman.

***Subarnalata*—Alienation within the home**

Subarnalata is the second work of Ashapura Debi's trilogy on life of women. As Nabaneeta Dev Sen (1938–2019) notes in her introduction to the English translation, “*Subarnalata* deals quite extensively with feminist questions in the Indian context” (*Subarnalata* viii). Set in the backdrop of the independence struggle, it is a narration of Subarnalata's unceasing and lonely struggle for self-identity in an orthodox household whose members do not believe in respecting the women of the house. As a child, Subarnalata wished to attend school and complete her education; however, her father, yielding to the prevailing customs, married her off, shattering her mother's dream of giving her a proper education. Satyavati, Subarnalata's mother, even walked out of their home in protest against her husband's unfair act. Years later, Satyavati makes a startling confession to Subarnalata in a letter that reaches the daughter only after the mother's death as was originally intended. Satyavati had written: “If a woman can stay on in her home, and yet attain fulfilment, that is what counts. There is no need to leave the confines of home to achieve one's goal” (*Subarnalata* 160).

Yet, it was Subarnalata's staying on with her family and in her home that prevented her from attaining fulfilment. Lying on her deathbed in the veranda, where she spends her last days, “turning her face to the wall, away from her family and friends, away from life” (*Subarnalata* 3), she construes her life as nothing but a tormenting failure.

Why does Subarnalata feel so? After all, she had stayed in her home attending to her family's needs and often fighting for what she believed to be right; even during those times when the rest of the family was not in agreement with her and prevailed over her, she had never felt helpless. Ashapura writes: “Subarnalata crashed through every barrier, and [almost] always got what she wanted” (*Subarnalata* 38). Though not formally educated, she had acquired a vast array of knowledge and wisdom by reading and observing life in general. Of course she never had it easy. Unnecessary obstacles were often created by an insensitive family and she had to pay dearly whenever she asserted herself. Recall how she intervened to save Dulo, the boy who used to bring her books and magazines from Mallik Babu. When Dulo was caught by her brother-in-law Prabhas, she had to promise her husband that she would not read any books henceforth—that was her way of buying peace with him (*Subarnalata* 65–72). Then, for defying her mother-in-law, Muktokeshi, in attending the “puja” arranged by Muktokeshi's sister-in-law, Subarnalata

had to spend a night out in the cold—a punishment for leaving home without permission (*Subarnalata* 81–83). Here, it could be mentioned that being forced to stay outdoors in the cold by an irritated husband is not just the fate of an ordinary woman like Subarnalata but—as Velcheru Narayana Rao (1932–) observes—even of a princess like Sita (Rao 26–30). When she was later allowed in, she speaks firmly: “Who on earth asked you to bring me in? It wasn’t necessary to have me revived, was it? Were you afraid of the neighbours? God, was there anything left to be afraid of after last night?” (*Subarnalata* 83).

Herein she realises the extent to which patriarchal society can stretch itself. Against this awareness, it was heart-breaking for her to witness her own sons practising everything that she had protested against in the unjust social system. Indeed, what ultimately broke her emotionally and physically was the sons’ antagonistic response to her wish to publish her autobiographical writing, a wish that was clearly a final attempt to seek fulfilment. She painfully realises that, even in her own home—with its large veranda and an open terrace, a luxury that was not available to her during the earlier days of her marital life in a joint family—she could never make herself understood to the family, notwithstanding all her efforts and sacrifices. How true were her mother’s words: “. . . do you know what matters most to people? It is the desire to be understood. The biggest regret in life anyone can have is that no one understood him [or her], no one cared” (*Subarnalata* 160). These lines from Satyavati’s letter to Subarnalata succinctly capture the origins of one’s ‘otherness’ even in one’s own home.

Alterity—Why does one have to live in this otherness?

Our failure to understand the ‘other self’ or the incapacity to make our own self understood by others breed spaces of alterity. As J.N. Mohanty (1928–) says in *The Self and its Other* (2000), “I have found no way of expelling the other from within my own world. The ‘foreign’, then, is that which I do not understand. But understanding and failure to understand, the familiar and the strange have their place within every world” (Mohanty 113).

Thus, the ‘other’ is an ‘other’ in so far as he or she is not understood. In other words, the act of ‘understanding’ bridges the self and the other. The commonest understanding that all of us accomplish in our daily lives is empathy, that is putting oneself in somebody else’s place. This points to our essential community life, as it is the community that enables the individual to

put herself or himself in the place of another self. According to Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), there are higher forms of understanding, like ‘re-creation’ (*nachbilden*) and ‘re-living’ (*nacherleben*). The totality of life is grasped in these activities of understanding. The transference of the subject’s own self into a given complex of expressions, the projection of one’s self into another person or a work, which is understood as empathy, is the basis of these higher forms of understanding (Dilthey 12).

While community life engenders empathy which is the basis of all forms of understanding, it is ironic that family, the smallest and commonest unit of community, often becomes the primordial site of alterity due to the systemic failures of ‘empathy’ and ‘understanding.’ In spite of having the potential to initiate changes in her own family life as well as in those surrounding her, Subarnalata fails to bring about any significant changes to their attitude. Though she had emphatically demonstrated the need to boycott foreign clothes and promote *swadeshi* in her family in support of the Gandhian struggle for freedom, others in the family were not sympathetic to her ideals. Rather, they ensured that she was defeated in this move (*Subarnalata* 73–76). On many other crucial issues, including providing proper schooling to her daughters, Subarna could not succeed. The point is that these failures seem endemic to any family structured in a patriarchal fashion. Ashapurna reminds us:

. . . women who were capable of crossing all barriers to get out in the open, to stand by the side of men . . . did not come from dark, narrow, dirty lanes where dustbins lay overturned; where dogs fought over morsels . . . They came from a different world, from families that were willing to give them the support they needed. Their people were not bothered by what others said (*Subarnalata* 76–77).

Here, Ashapurna seems to echo the widely prevalent belief in India that wealth affords prestige and power. Though Ashapurna is undoubtedly aware of the relevance of ‘class’ along with ‘gender,’ her novel *Subarnalata* does not advance along that way.

The noted American academic bell hooks (1952–) seems to suggest that even in the case of her country—the land of opportunity as it is often described—the realisation that “class matters” is a recent one; hook writes:

For so long everyone has wanted to hold on to the belief that the United States is a class-free society—that anyone who works hard enough can make it to the top. Few people stop to think that in a class-free society there would be no top. While it has always been obvious that some folks have more money than other folks, class difference and classism are rarely overtly apparent, or they are not acknowledged when present. The evils of racism and, much later, sexism, were easier to identify and challenge than the evils of classism. We live in a society where the poor have no public voice. No wonder it has taken so long for many citizens to recognize class—to become class conscious (hooks 5).

bell hooks notes that much before men started clubbing categories like class, gender and race together, feminist theorists had recognised the significance of ‘intersectionality’ of these categories. Sarah Joseph’s novel *Othappu* succeeds to a great extent in problematising ‘class’ along with ‘gender’ and ‘caste.’

Margalitha—A search for the true self

Othappu is about a woman’s yearning for a true understanding of her own self; in this quest, she begins to realise that she could be spiritual even while affirming her own sexuality (*Othappu* 103–106). As the translator of the novel, Valson Thampu, rightly notes, though the English equivalent of the Malayalam word ‘othappu’ is ‘scandal’, it “approximates to ‘othappu’ only in a limited, lexical sense” (*Othappu* xiii). Sarah Joseph in *Othappu* attempts to address gender, class and caste together, and in the process exposes the vacuum created by the uncritical binaries such as ‘spirituality-sexuality,’ ‘dignity-poverty,’ ‘reason-emotion’ and ‘self-other.’

Margalitha, the protagonist, is the daughter of Varkey-Master, from a wealthy ‘upper-caste’ Kerala Syrian Christian family. When she wishes to join the Convent as a nun to serve God, her loving father tries to dissuade her, knowing pretty well the hardships that lie ahead in a convent life. His words remind us of Satyavati’s letter to Subarnalata. Margalitha’s father asks her: “Who said you have to join the Convent to serve God? Serve the family, Margalitha. Serve your mother

who struggles day and night. Concentrate and commit yourself to it. That will make you happy. God is joy, bliss. Joy comes only through work and service” (*Othappu* 54).

However, Margalitha is determined to join the Convent as she feels that family is an obstacle in the service to God. She feels that the concept of family is centred on the notion of ‘mineness’—*my mother, my father, my husband, my children*. And so she wants to escape this “wretched selfishness.” Moreover, while she seeks to serve the Lord, it is not as if she is merely thinking of serving the poor. She rejects her father’s sarcastic comment that she could help the family of “Junction Ayappan,” a ‘low caste,’ by saying that what they needed more than financial help was the “comfort of human help” and that such a service could be carried out by “anyone willing to take some trouble” (*Othappu* 55). She says her primary motive behind the decision to join the Convent is to lead a life of “renunciation,” which is far more than a life dedicated to serve the poor and needy. Here, Margalitha is well aware of the difference between serving the needy while leading a life of affluence and comfort for oneself, and doing the same as one who has renounced worldly comforts.

Joining a convent aspiring to be a nun is an existential choice that one makes after many—often painful—deliberations. However, once the nun’s habit is worn, more painful is the decision to remove it so as to lead a secular life outside the conventional religious life of the convent. Even though both are acts of personal choices, the decision to lead the life of a nun is usually applauded while the decision to renounce that life is often looked down upon by the society. Margalitha experiences the wrath of the family and society once she removes her nun’s habit to return to secular life.

Having abandoned her chosen home, the Convent, Margalitha returns to the home where she was born and brought up along with her two brothers. Now her father is no more, and it is her loving mother who lives there, along with Margalitha’s two brothers and their family. Margalitha surely had anticipated that she would earn the displeasure of her family for leaving the Convent. In terms of a traditional Catholic family, a nun on her own deserting the Convent after taking the oath of “Obedience, Celibacy, and Poverty” is a scandal—an *othappu*, if you may—that tarnishes its honour and prestige. Indeed, Sister Aabelamma, her spiritual mentor, had warned her: “Once

you are caught in a system, it is best to cooperate with its dictates. If you walk out, your rebellion will exact a crushing physical and spiritual cost” (*Othappu* 5).

Thus, her brothers’ act of cruelty, in throwing her into the cellar—a dark room “where raw fruits were stored to ripen”—leaving her to die in hunger and suffocation, was not totally unexpected. Her only hope in returning to her first home was her mother. It was out of love and concern that her mother had defended Margalitha’s decision against her father’s wishes. Margalitha remembered her mother’s words:

My child, family life—delivering children, raising them, and all the rest of it—is not as easy or enjoyable as it is made out to be. Those who see it from a distance may think it is. But those who have suffered the grind know the truth (*Othappu* 55).

She had deep sympathies for her daughter. Now returning to her home abandoning the nun’s habit, Margalitha could see in the dim light her mother standing at the door trying hard to figure out the approaching person amidst the torrential rain. “To Margalitha, the distance between her mother and herself seemed like a blind alley that bred pain and fear. She had to walk that stretch; she had no other way” (*Othappu* 2). What Margalitha feared was not the physical distance between them; it was the “psychological distance,” the distance that stood as a formidable barrier against “understanding.” Margalitha had failed to realise her mother’s helplessness. Unlike Subarnalata’s mother-in-law Muktokeshi, who took charge of the household after the death of her husband, Margalitha’s mother was not the matriarch who ran her home. Sarah deftly conveys the position of an old widowed mother in a typical Syrian Christian home by never ever mentioning her name in the narrative. All through the novel, she is referred to as “Margalitha’s mother,” “Varkey-Master’s wife,” or as “Rebekka’s *ammai*” (aunt).

Now the question to ask is: knowing well the repercussions of deserting the Convent, an act that would be deemed “scandalous,” what might have pushed Margalitha to do so? Sarah does not narrate the travails and tribulations of the life inside the convent. We are told that Margalitha is unable to find the spiritual satisfaction that she had sought on joining the Convent. Sharing her anxieties and dissatisfaction about her Convent life with Sister Aabel, her spiritual mentor, Margalitha complains that she does not get sleep. Sister Aabel tells Margalitha: “Those who do

right, sleep well. You must do what you believe to be right. It has been years since I slept. Many others with us here are sleepless too . . . Some, to be sure, sleep well; they are truly blessed” (*Othappu* 6).

Margalitha, however, does not want to lead such a tormenting life that chokes her soul and one that deprives her of proper sleep. *Othappu* is about Margalitha’s search for her true self that yearns to break the barriers of class, gender, caste and religion.

When home engenders psychological distance

A convent, the home of a catholic nun, is a different kind of ‘family.’ Paul Zacharia (1945–), the noted Malayalam writer, remarks:

Convents are feminist communities which were formed without feminist intent . . . The nuns decide the structure and goals of their Order. There is no external pressure from the Church or the priests . . . The stance—we can live without men; we can look after our affairs; we make our decisions, we create our economic base—is quite revolutionary (*Othappu* 252).

However, despite such a revolutionary potential, the Convent as an institution, much like ‘conventional family,’ degenerates into an oppressive structure for some of the inmates. Jesme (1956–), a former catholic nun, has written in Malayalam, her personal account of the life within a convent: *Amen—Oru Kanyasthreeyude Atmakadha* (2009). Jesme describes the life within a convent as infused with intense “spiritual competition” towards pleasing the God and the clergy superiors—a competition that often borders on jealousy (Jesme 52–53). The hierarchical structure within the convent makes the inhabitants seek advancements within the hierarchy by availing of administrative positions for themselves. Sister Jesme narrates her ordeal in fighting against the hierarchy while attempting to assert herself. Her superiors even conspired to confine her to a mental asylum as she stood firmly by her beliefs (Jesme 155–162). However, unlike Sarah’s Margalitha, Sister Jesme had the support of her mother all through the travails of her convent life; the mother even chose to take the daughter home when the latter expressed her desire to leave the convent.

It is possible to explain the concept of ‘home’ as a space of alterity in the lives of both Subarnalata and Margalitha through construal levels and psychological distance. Experiences remote from us and the present seem to be ‘psychologically distant.’ According to the construal-level theory of psychological distance, people use a more abstract, high construal level when judging, perceiving and predicting more psychologically distal targets, thus judging more abstract targets as being more psychologically distant. Construal-level theory suggests that one of the factors that affect the construal level is the psychological distance between the perceiver and her goal. The higher the psychological distance, the more likely are perceivers to form high-level rather than low-level construals of objects and events (Trope and Liberman 441). Psychological distance is an experiential understanding of the self as close to or away from an object perceived. It is thus egocentric: its reference point is the self, here and now. The ways in which an object of one’s perception might be removed from that point—in time, space and social and hypothetical distance—constitute different distance dimensions. As psychological distance increases, construal would become more abstract, and as the level of abstraction increases, so too would the psychological distances people envisage. Construal levels thus expand and contract one’s mental horizon. Subarnalata’s idealistic view of a life where equality and education are also the priorities for a woman is a matter of constant turmoil in her family. Subarnalata’s actions are construed at a more abstract, higher level whereas the interpretations by her husband and relatives are based on lower, concrete levels.

Reading a book on events of the Indian Independence movement is a way of expressing patriotism for Subarnalata (abstract higher level) whereas for her husband it is reading a book (discrete lower level) during the hours when she should be devoting herself to household chores. Subarnalata’s burning of the sarees that her husband brought her from the British mills is seen as an expression of her adamant lunacy by her mother-in-law and the rest of her family members, while she herself construes the act as her way of serving the nation. When most of the nation is answering the call to shun foreign goods, she contributes in her own way to the cause. But this act of destroying the sarees meant to be draped for the Durga puja is construed (at a lower level of the construal) by her husband and others as sacrilegious. This is also true in a similar way in the case of Margalitha’s act of leaving the Convent. Her decision to live with Karikkan, a priest who abandoned the vocation to be with Margalitha, meets with strong opposition from their

families, society and the Church. The news of the “scandalous act” spreads so fast that they soon become outcasts in the very society that had once accorded respect to them. The societal members do not understand her urge for a spiritual liberation even as she is being truthful to her sexuality and sentiments (construed at a higher abstract level); instead, they look down upon her act as something immoral (construed at a lower concrete level). This might explain the dispassionate attitude of Subarnalata’s husband or the indifference displayed by Margalitha’s brothers to a woman’s needs and desires. Not understanding the other creates psychological distances, thereby reducing propensities for empathy.

Could psychological distances be erased, so as to form more co-operative, empathetic relationships between the woman and the household? We believe fostering a culture of ‘dialogue’ would help us to obliterate the psychological distances. Dialogue is essentially ‘openness’ to the other. It could transform people, if carried out genuinely. As Martin Buber (1878–1965) points out, in genuine dialogue, a “living mutual relation” gets established between the parties in dialogue and they mutually engage with each other (Buber 22). Thus, dialogue has the potential to build bridges between oneself and the other.

Conclusion

A woman’s relationship with her ‘home’ ideally is that of comfort, fulfilment and satiation. ‘Home’ as a metaphor for ‘alterity,’ though not new, was often construed as a paradox, given the binary of ‘home and the outside world.’ The characters of Subarnalata and Margalitha represent a few among millions of women who strive for a space of their own, where the sense of alienation does not render them to become ‘others’ even within the home. When the other is not understood, alterity emanates from the gulf. We have tried to show perhaps why there is such a gap at all. Women are bound to question the age-old norms of patriarchy that mute their voices. Both Subarnalata and Margalitha, each in their own way, react to such oppressive attitudes of a patriarchal society.

Our focus here is on the psychology of ‘othering.’ The problem at hand is of a difference—a breach among perceptions of a single act at different levels. Our submission is that the alterity

stems from a ‘non-understanding’ of the other’s actions, thoughts and desires. The relationship between men and women in patriarchal societies seems more like that of “master-slave” in Hegelian dialectics. In such a situation, ‘otherness’ or ‘alterity’ shall always reside in the home unless an initiative towards gender equality through ‘dialogue’ is imbibed and the hierarchical dichotomies are ruled out.

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My Bombay vs Your Bombay: An Exploration of Metropolitan Attitude Portrayed in Altaf Tyrewala's No God in Sight

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Abstract: The city is a heterogeneous space. It is home to large numbers of people belonging to diverse classes, religions, gender, and ethnicity. This paper is an exploration of the questions, what makes it possible for all the diverse groups to be able to call the same city their city? How does the city accommodate such a divergent population? Such questions will be explored through an interdisciplinary study of a particular metropolitan character, Rahul Adhikari, a Mumbaiite from Altaf Tyrewala's work *No God in Sight*. The character Rahul Adhikari is peculiar, as he differentiates the city of Bombay as he calls it, 'My Bombay' and 'Your Bombay'. Tyrewala addresses Rahul Adhikari as 'Siddhartha in denial', giving his character a religious colour. Hence the first part of the study is an analysis of the religious significance of his story. The second part will inspect how far the attitude of Rahul Adhikari can be equated to the 'blasé attitude' of metropolitan citizens which George Simmel claims is characteristic of city life. This will be done by inquiring how the diverse population of the city experiences the city and how they react to the multiplicity of sensory experiences the city exposes them to. Also, since the character under study traverses the city in his car, the effect of mobility on the social relations of the urban citizens will be investigated.

Keywords: city, blasé attitude, heterotopia, mobility, portable territory.

Introduction

Cities are densely populated areas rich with diverse cultures and daily happenings. The city keeps attracting multitudes towards its belly and there is space for all. What makes it possible

for all these diverse groups to be able to call the same city their city? How does the city accommodate such a divergent population? This paper is an exploration of such questions through an interdisciplinary study of a particular metropolitan character, Rahul Adhikari, a Mumbaiite from Altaf Tyrewala's work *No God in Sight*.

Altaf Tyrewala in *No God in Sight* presents a bunch of random people and their life in contemporary Mumbai. Among the variety of characters, Rahul Adhikari is one distinct character, an upper-class hedonist who lives in and traverses the city in his carefully customized private space. Rahul keeps himself away from the unpleasantness of the city and mediates in a "differential space" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 52) which he calls "my Bombay"¹. (Tyrewala, 2005, p. 160) The space outside 'my Bombay', that is, the city outside his curated space is "your Bombay". (Tyrewala, 2005, p. 160) 'Your Bombay' is chaotic and in direct contrast to his Bombay where everything happens on time and people, sights, and even temperature is optimized according to his preference. He prefers not to look into the newspaper or out through the car window where the clamouring, 'steaming, shitting, spitting city' (Tyrewala, 2005, p. 161) presents itself. While he travels from his home to the office, Rahul consciously avoids the risk of looking at the "suffering" outside which could tan the "incalculable bliss" (Tyrewala, 2005, p. 161) of his Bombay. His car windows are deliberately blackened to mar the heat and sight of the outside world. On reaching his office in the glass-enclosed building, which is chilled and muted, he forsakes the existence of the alternate, the other² city.

Rahul Adhikari vs Siddhartha

The first part of this paper attempts a religious interpretation of the story. Rahul Adhikari's story is titled *Rahul Adhikari: Siddhartha in Denial*. Siddhartha was the previous name of Gautama Buddha³, the enlightened one. Siddhartha lived in a palace shielded from all the agonies of the world. When Siddhartha set out of the palace to see the outside world for the first time, he was shocked by his encounter with human suffering. He was taken on the horse Kanthaka by his charioteer Chandraka. During his journey, he encountered four sights (of which one was the sight of a decaying corpse) which urged him to renounce all worldly comforts. Siddhartha left his palace, his son Rahula and his wife Yashodhara and travelled

to the river Anomiya. From there he left his servant and horse behind, journeyed into the woods, and became a monk.

Here Tyrewala names his character Rahul Adhikari seemingly analogous with Siddhartha's son's name Rahula and the driver Chinu analogous with Chandaka, Siddhartha's charioteer. Tyrewala's character Rahul Adhikari is in sharp contrast with Siddhartha. Rahul too meditates, as demonstrated at an executive conference but not on the questions of suffering or birth and rebirth. He religiously sticks on to luxury and all worldly comforts and lives the life of a libertine.

Rahul excludes himself from his immediate surroundings and is indifferent to the hardships of the world. He chooses not to look at the chaotic city while he travels through the city in his Lancer car charioteered by Chinu. Rahul does not even look up when a beggar(suffering) knocks at his car window. It is Chinu who gives some change to the beggar who looked like a corpse and shudders whereas it was Siddhartha who shuddered at the sight of a corpse long ago. "Your Bombay wants a spare piece of mine" (Tyrewala, 2005, p. 161) is how Rahul responds to the incident. When Siddhartha had renounced the comforts of his palace to experience the world outside, Rahul Adhikari the narcissist, in contrast, reserves himself in his glass palace. He excludes himself from the outside world of suffering that is, 'Your Bombay'. He traverses the city in his car peering into his laptop screen. The chilling cold inside his car matches his coldness towards the outside world.

Rahul is Siddhartha in denial. Rahul is in denial of 'your Bombay' ie he is in denial of the sufferings and thereby in denial of enlightenment. He is in denial that there is pain along with pleasure in the world. He is denying the wholeness of experiences. Even his attempt at meditation is only a hollow exercise. He looks away from pain and ugliness. Rahul's car journey from home to the office through the city can be a metaphor for the rite of passage. In the rite of passage, one leaves the familiar, crosses a liminal, in-between stage, and reenters the community renewed. The liminal stage is a time of testing, learning, and growth. Here Rahul refuses to sympathize with the world outside or learn from this stage but clings to his comfort zone and is delivered at the other end unchanged. According to Buddhist legend, prince Siddhartha crossed the river Anomiya and renounced the world becoming Buddha.

Rahul Adhikari crosses the city, reaches his office which smells of ammonia, and shuts himself inside his room determined to deny the existence of 'your Bombay'(suffering).

Multiple Spaces of the City

This second part of the paper attempts an exploration of the character from an urban point of view. Rahul Adhikari's claim of 'My Bombay' can be seen as his affirmation of personal space within the city. The city is a heterogeneous space. It is home to large numbers of people belonging to diverse classes, religions, gender, and ethnicity. Won't these people all be having their own 'Bombays' or 'Mumbais' as it can be differently called? What makes it possible for all the diverse groups to be able to call the same city their city? How does the city accommodate such a divergent population?

This question can be explored by studying and understanding 'city'. In their edited work *Key Concepts in Urban Studies*, Gottdiener and Budd (2005) defined a city "as a bounded space that is densely settled and has a relatively large, culturally heterogeneous population" (p. 4) Here it is the city of Mumbai being scrutinized. The city of Mumbai is a place, which can be geographically located wherein contains a multiplicity of subjective spaces. The participants of the city experience the city space differently. City space can be absolute, abstract, differential, residual, personal, or private. Absolute space is the natural space whereas abstract space is laid on by the planners' schemes. When different groups of people use a particular space differently, it becomes 'differential space'. For example, the footpath used by pedestrians to walk will also be used by hawkers differently, to conduct business. Certain other spaces in the city like some shops or gated communities are 'exclusive' spaces that can be accessed only by a few. In the city, one can move around in a car which is a "portable private space". (Madanipour, 2003, pp. 201-202) In this present era of telecommunication, one can also be in a virtual space while being anywhere in the city. It is this multiplicity of spaces the city offers in its geographical area, which makes it possible to be used by such large varieties of crowds and make them able to call the city their city too.

At the same time, "the coming together of differences spatially can generate new mixtures or new divisive hostilities". (Massey, 1999, p. 161) How do these people cope with such

differences in the city? In the city, there is no dearth of happenings. What survival tactics do the city dwellers apply when the stimuli the city exerts on them are multifold?

Blasé Attitude: Survival Tactic

George Simmel (2017) argued that the indifference or the blasé attitude of the citizens is one of the characteristics of city life. He continues that, a metropolitan person in his everyday life will be exposed to a multiplicity of external and internal stimuli of economic, occupational, and social life which creates the sensory foundation of his mental life. To adjust to the shifts and contradictions of the events and to protect one's inner life from the domination of the metropolis, the metropolitan take on a rational attitude or rather a blasé attitude which makes him insensitive to the numerous stimulations of the outside world. For Simmel (2017):

The mental attitude of the people of the metropolis to one another may be designated formally as one of reserve. If the unceasing external contact of numbers of persons in the city be met by the same number of inner reactions as in the same town, in which one knows almost every person he meets and to each of whom he has a positive relationship, one would be completely atomized internally and would fall into an unthinkable mental condition. (...) immersion into a chaos of unwished- for- suggestions would be unbearable. (p. 15)

According to Simmel, from this danger of metropolitan life, one is saved by 'antipathy' and 'distantiation'. The sociologist Louis Wirth (1938) asserts that the larger the population, the more anonymous would the crowds be, the more formal and secondary the social relations would there be replacing the primary relations of a rural community where everybody knows everyone. In the city, 'acquaintances' tend to be made only for the sake of 'utility'. For Wirth (1938), "the reserve, the indifference, and the blasé attitude which urbanites manifest in their relationships may thus be regarded as devices for immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others". (p. 12) Doreen Massey in *City Worlds* discusses Sennet and Jane Jacobs and points out that diversity in the city 'does not prompt people to interact', nor does proximity produce an ideal meeting place as

envisioned by Jane Jacobs but rather a setting of indifference. “‘Strangeness’ to one another may simply be a condition of city life”. (1998, p. 86)

Personal Space and Distancing: My Bombay vs Your Bombay

In the case of the character Rahul Adhikari, he is consciously exercising his personal space and distancing. Ali Madanipour (2003) wrote:

Personal space is a subjective space around individuals... It is a piece of private space that individuals carry with them around wherever they go. That is why it is called ‘portable territory’ (Sommer, 1969:27) (...) An extension of personal space that can take a physical shape is the motor car, which in a sense is the ultimate portable territory. As we sit inside a box moving across the urban space, we carry around with us a personal space. (p. 20)

Rahul passes through the city from his home to his office in his Lancer car. For Rahul, the car is an extension of his private space. Rahul is in control of his experience of the city. According to John Urry, “the car’s significance is that it reconfigures civil society involving distinct ways of dwelling, traveling and socializing in and through an automobilised time-space”. (as cited in Thrift, 2004, p. 46) The car offers to penetrate the city space and at the same time allows Rahul to avoid participation in ordinary city life. “The communication from across the car while moving is mainly visual (...) Car allows its passengers a safe distance from others while going through a cinematic experience: a visual contact with passing scenes, where the viewer can remain detached from the unfolding story”. (Madanipour, 2003, p. 29) But for Rahul, the world outside the glass barriers is the other. He blocks out the unappealing visuals of the city by blackening his car glasses. He has the choice of whether or not to interact with the inhabitants of the city as he has assigned his chauffeur to deal with it while on travel. His life is an illustration of how the elites of the city remain aloof and out of view in the public. The car serves as a “protective bubble, a portable private space”. (Madanipour, 2003, pp. 201-202) “The barrier between individuals in the public space of the city is (...) both the speed with which they pass through the city and the physical container which they inhabit in their passage”. (Madanipour, 2003, p. 29) Rahul creates an exclusive space for himself aided by wealth and mobility.

Heterotopia of Compensation

In his essay *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, Michael Foucault (1986) call the ship a heterotopia. “Think of the ship: it is a floating part of space, a placeless place, that lives by itself, closed in on itself and at the same time poised in the infinite ocean, and yet from port to port, tack by tack, from brothel to brothel (...) The ship is the heterotopia par excellence” (p. 27). Like the ship in the ocean, the car in the city space is a heterotopia. It is an alternate space, within the city space. By entering this heterotopia, Rahul excludes himself from the city space, while being in it. He navigates in a different space and time against the city scene. The car serves as a “heterotopia of compensation”. (Foucault, 1986, p. 27) It compensates for the heat, pollution, suffering, and chaos of the city with air conditioning, blackened glass, and speed. Speed allows him to flow in a different space-time.

Strategic Indifference of Metropolitan Citizen

Frederic Engels in *Condition of the Working Class in England* responds to the indifference of the crowd in the streets of London where people pass each other without honouring the others with “so much as a glance”. (1993, p. 37) His observation of the urban crowd is significant in the present context too. Engels (1993) observed that:

The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest, becomes the more repellent and offensive... “this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking...is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just here in the crowding of the great city. The dissolution of mankind into monads, of which each one has a separate principle, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme (p. 37).

Louis Wirth (1938) too had an ambivalent position regarding the superficiality and anonymity of the city. He remarked that in the urban:

the individual gains, on the one hand, a certain degree of emancipation or freedom from the personal and emotional controls of intimate groups, he loses, on the other hand, the spontaneous self-expression, the morale and the sense of participation that comes with living

in an integrated society. This constitutes essentially the state of *anomie*⁵ or the social void to which Durkheim alludes. (pp. 12-13).

Mobility and Social Relations

John Urry and Mimi Sheller (2000) argue that “mobility is the enemy of civility”. (p. 741) According to them, even though mobility is constitutive of democracy, “that freedom of movement enabled partly by motor cars has led to the collapse of the very distinction between what is private and what is public through transforming the flow of people in time-space scapes”. (p. 741) It has led to the “extension of human habitats” and “the opportunities to escape certain locales and to form new socialities”. (p. 742) “Automobility has reshaped citizenship and the public sphere” (p. 739). The car could provide its occupant “spatial and temporal dominance over surrounding environments, transforming what can be seen, heard, smelt (...) Such car-environment is a non-place” (p. 746) that floats freely in the cityscape. Amidst the public space of the city, the character owns his mobile private space where the outer world pours in only through his laptop as he is “insulated” and ““dwell-within-the-car”” (p. 746). Dwelling in his car, he fails to perceive the local details, talk to strangers, get in touch with local cultures, understand the local ways of life, or stop and experience each different place. Hence it can be rightly argued that automobility can result in isolation and exclusion.

In terms of his existence in the city, while traveling, Rahul Adhikari is present as well as absent. He is absent to the other participants of the city. For Hannah Arendt (2013):

To live an entirely private life means above all to be deprived of things essential to a truly human life: to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others, to be deprived of an “objective” relationship with them that comes from related to and separated from them through the intermediary of a common world of things, to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself. (p. 58)

Conclusion

Rahul Adhikari's indifference to the co-inhabitants of the city can be explained as the characteristic blasé attitude of the city dweller, but consciously articulated with pride and malice. His relationship with the woman he sleeps with and the people whom he works with are secondary relations only. To conclude, the blasé attitude of the city dwellers is a necessary evil, a survival tactic. Altaf Tyrewala's character Rahul Adhikari's indifference to his fellow citizens is a hyperbolic expression of this attitude.

The religious and moral significance of the story is explicit and the naming of the story as *Rahul Adhikari: Siddhartha in Denial* is not accidental. Rahul's life when read in comparison to the life of the real Siddhartha, justify the title of his story. His indifference to and denial of suffering around him makes him Siddhartha in denial. The car, serves Rahul as his personal portable private space, his heterotopia of compensation, and enables him to keep himself aloof and exclusive. Thereby mobility too has a part in controlling his social relations in the city.

¹Notes

²Gautama Buddha is regarded as the founder of the world religion Buddhism. Born Siddhartha Gautama in ancient India, he received the name Buddha on attaining enlightenment.

³In general terms, the 'other' is anyone separate from one's self. "The existence of the other is crucial in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's place in the world" (Ashcroft et al, P. 154). The other city here is 'your Bombay'.

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¹ Bombay is the old name of the city Mumbai. Even after the name change in 1995, the city is called by its old name by many. In a way denying to use the new name is a way of asserting one's right over the city.

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Afghanistan, War Crisis, and Gender Apartheid: A Comment on Afghan Women as War Victims and Nullified 'Objects' of Human Rights.

Suparna Roy

Abstract: Gender has always remained an alarming concern for patriarchal power discourse and thereby has been omitted from securing an important place of discussion in parity to the world's economic, political, social, and cultural crisis. Recent control of the Taliban's rule on Afghanistan has reflected and repeated the historical totalitarian sense of dictatorship and gender apartheid; so that, the rule of 'phallus' in controlling, representing, and depicting the lives of all women is started. Alarms of 'girls at risk', 'women being abolished from professional spaces' soon emerged with the Taliban's rule. The news and report portrayed how the Taliban treated women as 'objects' and machines of 'reproduction', where the vaginal authority is smashed with 'legitimate' phallus, and thus the vaginal bodies turn into the 'sex-slaves' and servants to serve the Taliban rulers. Power has a crucial role in ordering the central tendency of 'bodies'; the Taliban target is to have the power; a power that is allowing countries like China, the U.S.A to dominate. It is important to note more than Pakistan, it is China's support (secretly) that is permitting the Taliban to accelerate. Gender and Power dynamics always altered domains of inheritance and are associated and inclined more deeply towards the white-cis-heterosexual-phallus (gender) in comparison to any other. Women as subjects have always lacked power because restrictions and marking on the accessibility to 'gain power' were blurred. *Politics and phallus* are complementary power dynamics in operation that uses Gender as an operative tool to create 'crises' for one and support for the other. Where the power-play within the phallogocentric symbolic order creates the suffering veiled. Hence, my paper aims to present the deplorable condition of women under the Taliban's rule and make a comparison of their position before 1996 and after that till the present.

Keywords: Women, Taliban, Gender, Power, Afghanistan

Introduction

Power-play of nations and global politics has veiled sufferings with a note of *foreword* that essentializes the dominating structure of human beings. Before moving into a specific regional political power-frame, it is important to discuss the understanding of

culture from an intersectional perspective as a whole, and then the concepts of Gender, Power and Women separately. Ethnographical studies have enriched anthropological branch of speculation and presentation of any individual culture, which further brings forth the multiple operative power regimes functioning. Cultural complexities and discourses are accompanied by 'silences' to modulate the 'moral code of conduct' that apprehends bodies under specific framework of acceptance. Spaces, created for the existence of any being results in the formation of cluster of ethical-epistemology, which can be very much centered and specific to that particular organization of bodies/beings. Observing the marginalized status of numerous identities, what the mainstream generally overlooks is how one identity is multiply oppressed. Intersectionality is therefore to understand, that marginalization does not follow one single mode or pipe to control an anatomy. Intersectionality has provided us with lens to observe how bodies are subjected to subjugation in multifarious ways, and discarding the other oppressions to validate and fight for only one is to omit the intersectional lens of combating with patriarchy. Therefore, to break down to the very source, and to consider that a vagina is oppressed just on the basis of Gender and Sexuality, so let's protest against this and keep a blind eye on caste, class, race, education, language, identity, religion, geo-location, etceteras, then eventually within the process of protesting the accessibility to the medium of protest will make one realize, one is just not marginalized under one shelter and rather plethora of categories. Drawing here can be the way how Crenshaw beautifully defined the term intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989; in an interview with TIMES quite recently, she said- "...It's not identity politics on steroids... It's basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other." Applying this view on the distressing condition of Afghan Women, hardly critics used the power of their pen; mostly the works generalize the critical condition and work clearly on the apparently larger issues.

This set of ideas churned from the popular practice of few celebrated norms and suppression of the rest, where binarized ontological (existence of a being) representations functions vibrantly, over years of un-interrogated praxis leads to the understanding to "natural/naturality", which is very similar to what Nivedita Menon wrote in her book

Seeing Like A Feminist (2012) was- “The whole point of nude make-up, clearly, is to spend hours painting your face to make it look like you had not touched it at all. The maintaining of ‘social order’ is rather like that... Complex network of cultural reproduction are dedicated to this purpose solely” (Menon, vii). This small community or space or spot eventually grows and spread its branches to become the ‘global ethico-onto-epistemological space’, which perhaps omits and restricts the layers, experiences, intersectional occurrences, individuality, isolation, personal spaces, etcetera, to ambitiously get recognized as the authentic authority of a specific anatomical power- a phallogocentric society; hence, from epistemology to ontology, everything becomes phallus-oriented. Therefore, culture and its creation is simply practice over years, that finally results in some formats and structural set-ups that ethico-onto-epistemological space both globally and in planetary. Working on the global as opposite to planetary, it is crucial to understand the dealings, interrelations and functioning of gender (also sexuality), power and women distinctively and in association with each other to frame why Talibans (operating phallus) in Afghanistan typically modifies the Quran to teach women that Male are representatives of God and Women are to serve them within the Madrasas.

Theoretical Interpretations

Gender then, is that complex operative device which is fixed within a binarized pattern omitting its spectrum. Gender Intersectionalities therefore, becomes that lens which assist the minds to comprehend how ‘a body’ is doubly and multifariously oppressed, so a *dalit-Muslim-bisexual-trans-woman experiencing subjugation*, presents the layered oppression. Gender and Sexuality are two complex terms ambiguously and socially constructed within the spectrum of Feminism(s) that uses “sex” as an operative term to theorize the deconstructive perspective on the cultural set-up of India. Helene Cixous noted in *Laugh of Medusa* that the entrance for men and women is different in the ‘symbolic social order’, and the ‘subject position’ open for either of the sex is different; therefore, ‘crisis’ churns from this clear source of ‘difference’! Crisis simply means the ‘lack’ of required amenities in parity with the amount of requirement. The crisis in this

premise of Gender and Sexuality is because of paranoia; the fear that inclusion and acceptance may break the “nude make-up” like social arrangements, which is so intricately designed to provide a preview of a “natural” outlook that inclusive structure, may unveil the loopholes. From this separate and different position open to women and men within the patriarchal and phallogocentric symbolic order, churns the rhythm of ‘power’. Power is thus created from a sheer difference of subject positions; wherein, one form of ‘re-presentation’ takes control and builds up the ‘norm’ of identity and body politics. Eventual practice and acceptance of this differential presentation of identities for the convenience of power to operate gives birth to numerous branches of ‘regulating and ordering’ bodies in patterns ‘acceptably suitable’. Power always exists in relation to what it is not, as Gayatri C Spivak in introducing the *Breast Stories* wrote, “Power is nothing if not opposed to what it is not...make the latter’s form of expression concretely possible” (Spivak, x). Until the phallus decided ‘what is woman should be’ there was no ‘space what a woman should not be’! The ‘power regime’ operates only within a tensional dimension where one is created and maintained while the ‘others’ are substantially trying to redefine the ‘one’.

The concept and definition of women has been a crucial area of focus since times immemorial in numerous regions and in their own way, and that also includes and must address the global-political scenario. The definition(s) of ‘what a woman is’ is created culturally and regionally in association with the geo-political social structure. The concept of “women” as Butler defines- “Women are the sex which is not “one”. Within...a phallogocentric language, women constitute the *unrepresentable*...women represent the sex that cannot be thought, a linguistic absence and opacity” (Butler, 13). This linguistic absence has created the marked and unmarked distinctions yielding ‘women’ as comparative figures of subservience and reproduction. “Women”, as patriarchy defines them are only those with “vaginas” and the ‘intersectionality’ is completely essentialized, as identity and its construction has only been analogous to the tangible pleasures of ‘body’ and ‘sex’. This system has further been epitomized as the ‘accepted’ form of representing and defining woman; thereby, omitting intersectional and overlapping experiences. The identity of what a “woman” is suffocates being trapped within the culturally bound and

inherently constructed links between sex/gender/sexuality. This teleology has projected the plight of “women” and restrictions imposed upon them, because they are ‘marked’. The marking of women as objects of reproducing the norms imposed on them is because they are severely all body, which is visibly noticeable in opposition to men who are considered universal and representative of lives because they are ‘unmarked’ and absent to be regulated through norms; an omnipotent sense of “purity” is associated with men; thus omitting the sufferings of these bodies.

Theorizing Afghan’s Women Present Deplorable Condition- under Taliban

During the struggle to capture and occupy the position of the ‘controller’ the Soviet was up on their occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, the United States, through a Pakistan-based covert CIA operation, contingent billions of dollars to fulcrum insurgent militias known as *mujahedin*. Eventually, after the Soviet’s withdrawal in 1989, the *Mujahedin* factions were entrapped into a civil war and in 1994 the Taliban usurped as the dominating power. Raised and skilled inside the ultraconservative spiritual regimes and frames of Madrassas, those Talibans (organization of younger guys and boys) rarely lived or experienced the Afghan social subculture and status. The Taliban regime of Afghanistan was granted official recognition only by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Pakistan.

Taliban, an extremist hunger of Power has eventually commenced their totalitarian rule and system of gender apartheid since 1994 (heart), and 1996 (Kabul), wherein women were stripped from their basic human rights to work, enjoy, socialize, being visible, opportunity to education, health, and mobility. Here, most importantly, the curbs on visibility and opportunity to education are highly crucial concepts of discussion. Before moving on to discuss these two areas broadly, let’s drop our focus generally on the distressed positions and oppressive conditions of women-

- Women are banned from working or being professionally involved
- Women doctors and nurses are prohibited from working; females are restricted from visiting male physicians or getting checked by the same.

- Women are prohibited from getting out of their houses until accompanied by a relatable male person or male kin.
- Bifocal presentation of Taliban; peace talks in Doha and Qatar, while tremendous oppression and draconian rule on the youth and women of Afghanistan.
- The freedoms and rights relished by the lives were suddenly shattered and upturned into a web of subjugation under phallus-control.



Education, Afghan Women and Taliban

Education has always opened spheres of perception and visualization in the field of self-understanding and reliance. We cannot omit this very fact that Education is a political and a highly motivated political zone; Education is not 'apolitical', rather the only source of communicating commutes in a viable system. Networking this politically influenced educative thread, critical analysis can draw us closer to the understanding that Education teaches how 'not to accept' what 'an identity should be'! Within this contextual comprehension banning of Education (general ones) and limiting the same to Religious Madrassas results in the birth of numerous patriarchal heads, which are subjected to the difference in the representative power of body-politics. So, if one form of modified education is provided to create products that will control the phallus-oriented social structure, then another form of regulated education (Madrassas for Girls) has to be given to sustain the controller's control and not object or protest against them. Thus, Education as such is banned for Women, and they are open to sexual and reproductive slavery. Stripping women from their basic human rights,

- Schools for girls are closed and women from Universities are expelled.
- Running home schooling for girls could lead to death in front of family members and friends.
- A subversive system has been framed where the patriarchal regime of control and dominance stays but in a benevolent form, where Taliban clearly claimed to have universal policy for women's rights and allow to work in public but under ad with Taliban's rule.
- For the patriarchy virus to continue and sustain it is important to mutate and become drug resistant; hence, Taliban being one of such viruses mutates itself so that, it can control and rule women under the veil of liberty.
- Prioritization of religious education over any other subjects within the schools based on Taliban's control of curriculum.
- Percentage of girls passing puberty to attain and receive education in schools is remarkably few; while girls from few areas are not even allowed to get minimum education.
- University of Kabul uses a 'curtain' to divide male and female students within a class; while the number of female students pursuing higher studies is highly restricted by Taliban threats to 'stop education for females'.
- Female educators have move to hiding, and hardly few female teenagers have 'encroached' Herat University.

Why is Religious Education a priority for Talibans?

A sense of 'caveat' always accompanies the value, rules, and laws, passed by the Talibans for women, where the deployment of such a framework hardly and truly guarantees any legal and real rights to women in terms of Education and Social Visibility. The religious ideology and view-point of Taliban's hardly has any parity with real Islamic or Muslim ideology; it is rather an obscure amalgamation of the same, as according to Angelo Rasanayagam in his work *Afghanistan: A Modern History* (2003), he said, that the Taliban's rule is similar to or based on the Deobandi School; it is also opposed to reformation and innovation including injunction of women within the home territory and

is also characterized by fundamentalist interpretations. Thus we can perceive how religious is re-created and re-presented in accordance to the convenience of phallus-power to rule. Now, if such molded religious education is not imparted among the females, then how will the Taliban be able to create reproductive products that align with their concepts and values? Therefore, this regime of oppressive and politicized education only veils the reality of women's forceful curbs from receiving their basic human rights, because of their gender, which has been created as an 'absently marked' form of identity.

Social Visibility, Gender-Construction, Afghan Women

Visibility and Women are dices of patriarchal presentation of how "respectful" a culture can be. In this form of regressively progressive culture, what gets a strong statement is the control this very "respected" form of body-woman. 'Burqa' is an explicit form of such visible invisibility in comparison to the other form of invisible engagements. Let's consider some archaic forms of Brahminical cultures, where higher caste Brahmin women could not step-out of their house or come or relish anything in the presence of outer society without their husbands (appropriately male bodies not a part of family); few women were second or third in number, as 'polygamy' for the satisfaction and pride of phallus' was and is still acceptable. Often when objects are old, we tend to buy new; thus, invisibilizing the objectified bodies too. Society as a broader spectrum comprises of real information, which somehow the phallus never wants a woman to come in touch with; society is also that gaze from which the phalluses 'desires' to 'protect' heir bought objects, so that, they can only be the owner of the same. Getting back to Afghan, it is important to look at UAE also, where the famous sheiks are having numerous children and huge number of wives; where despite money ruling their lives women 'runs' for safety and escapement from these terrorized cultural authority that prevails. Now, what is this issue with woman identity and the term that its constructed gender always has to go through invisibilization? It turned into determined at the start of the feminist motion that women wanted a language in their personal to mark out an area far from patriarchal discourse. Although their thinking of the language as patriarchal turned into all very well, however they took it as a right that the term 'woman' turned into unproblematic and that it can live because it turned into the

unquestionable perfect presentation of bodies with 'vagina'. But what's a 'woman'? Legal and juridical manufacturing constitutes and produces women as 'subjects' of patriarchal discourse, which encompasses the accepted mode of definition within patriarchal framework. Power produces and represents the subjects, wherein political analysis considers juridical basis for their discourse; however, not presenting what actually lies under this basis. So, defining 'what a woman is' is juridical and productive, as Men creates women and then regulates them through rules, and values, where they decide whom to make visible and whom to invisibilize. 'Nature and Natural' only defines the foundationalist fable that creates and re-creates what a 'woman' is based on the patriarchal needs. Thus, visibility is regulating the invisibilized domain of Afghan women, as their gender construction has been 'invisible under the veil' which has been accepted; what a woman is never defined by a woman but a phallus! The elimination of the marked absent bodies takes place when-

- Women are not allowed to leave home without their male partners (close) accompanying them.
- Women have to cover up with 'burqa or chadari' that shrouds the entire body, and can only see through small mesh-covered opening.
- Regulation is majorly done to control the sexual discourse under patriarchally stated norms, that's why women with adultery were beaten to death by Talibans but not men.
- Accusation is another form of domination and oppression; hence, women 'accused' of prostitution were beaten to death or hanged; where verification was not even done.
- It is crucial to note that sexual freedom shows freedom of a body to choose; hence, curbing this presents the major control of a body on another.
- Women whose ankles, and or any body parts were visible through 'burqa' were horribly hurt; recent report said that a woman's ankle was broken as it was visible.
- Visibility and Sexuality could be the most dynamic tools for the Talibans to control as that demonstrates control to its extremity.



Comparative Study of Afghan Women ‘before’ and ‘after’ the USA-Taliban Snapshots!

The comparative study is crucial to understand as to why and how this present situation of “modernization” suddenly back lashed the status of Afghan women; why the global demand of ‘radical change’ and support for women is still getting downwardly escalated and elevation of subversive *Sharia* webs are constructing and designing the patterns and stimuli of women identities with social, economical and political framework. Not in depth but an overview of the background till present situation gives us a glimpse to this dominance and hunger of power!

Mapping the Historical and Progressive Efforts

The reason of drawing the historical background in comparison to the present condition of women in Afghanistan is to depict that the real culture and socio-political position for women were not the same as it is of now under Mujahideen and Taliban. The present political disassociation and dislocation, along with social and economical marginalization is a result of two prominently impacting epoch that changed the socio-economic and political ethnography for women of Afghanistan. The first era of reformation was brought by Amanullah in 1923, where he focused on bringing about enhancement in the position of women within the patrilineal and patriarchal family structures; however, these reforms were met with huge protests as was against their traditional customs and finally resulted

in the demise of Amanullah. The second period was when the communist-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) focused on bringing social change to uplift the status and position of women; to empower them, and elevate their identities. But, this leadership led to a ten-year long war between Soviet Union and Afghanistan giving births to militant parties like Mujahideen and Taliban; thereby, resulting in declination of women. The condition of women more appropriately declined for a lack of centralized state and dissenting tribal forces that clings to the ethnic demands of traditional forces. Despite the fact that these reforms were suppressed and could not possibly last long under the patriarchal power regimes, but significant historical flexibilities were framed, like- Schools were opened for women under the rule of Habibullah and his wife Asma Tarzi, and also implemented English curriculum, but the mullahs and tribal leaders visualize it as going against their tradition and shifting the paradigm of their patrilineal and patrilocal kinship ties and dominance. Furthermore, huge reforms were introduced (1950s-1960s) by the state presenting the freedom of women and equal participation in social structure and was appearing towards a more prosperous and peaceful society, where-

1. Kabul became the cosmopolitan centre
2. Afghan government established new schools, funded universities
3. Women in urban areas took jobs outside their homes, ran business of their own
4. Women also started participating in politics
5. Modern infrastructures were eventually built and
6. Burqa were becoming optional for a time being.



Mapping the advent of Soviet's Power and Afghans Suffering

It was gradually during 1970s when liberation for western women took ground, progress for afghan women came to an abrupt halt. Henceforth, with the accession of Talibans restrictive regime of subjugation commenced where women were exempted from all forms of basic human rights. Later in 1996, when Talibans were supported by U.S.A, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia to control the mismanaged state under Mujahideen, that swift laws to control and regulate women were introduced. Radios were the medium of order, T.Vs were banned, the Islamic fundamentalist regime brought new rules for women, where no fancy shoes or make-up will be used, and women cannot go social except for a 'maharam' (male relative). The same history got repeated with Talibans re-capturing of Afghanistan, but this time the discourse follows a subversive policy. Whatever maybe the efforts or challenges, changes or wars, Women has always been used as raw materials for the productive purpose of the 'phallus and country'. The patterns that clearly depicted 'resistance to change' also informed that to really bring forth a future that is freer for women one must recognize the numerous fissures, conflicts, hunger, and resistances.



Conclusion

The crossroads of Islamic Fundamentalism and economic reconstruction has somewhere followed a blind eye and deaf ear to the policy of 'gender apartheid' that is followed; how the treatment of women and gay communities are nullified with objective dynamics. Gender Studies has unlocked interpretations from interdisciplinary sources, and applying this point of view is immensely crucial to understand an ongoing sense of 'absence'. It

matters how we think and how we see others are and how we sources and evaluate others with our concepts and matters. Therefore, applying the lens of Gender theory, an interpretation of the inferior situation of women can be presented to mark the molded 're-presentation'. There is a continuous flow of crises that requires paramount attention for having freer future. Within this scenario of global political ramification, Gender and Sexuality are few of the most crucial and edged tools of oppression, where the social organizations are determined to create and sustain the thread of 'self' and the 'other', which further obliterates the demands, requirements and spaces of the *othered identities*, resulting in an immense 'crisis' of 'safe space'. Moreover, the autonomy of a particular anatomy over the 'othered' anatomies needs to diminished, so that, the regressive terrorism of subjugation can be altered with a sense of 'equality in equity'. Thus, a careful conversation and not silence, inclusion and not exclusion, intersectionality and not singleness, visibility and not absence can bring about changes that can free bodies getting submerged with the pressure of patriarchal definitions.



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Revisiting Cancer: The Politics of Discrimination and Disguise in Audre Lordes' works.

Deepti Parangot

Abstract: Breast cancer is the disease which conquers the diseased body without warning, savagely eating into the system silently, spreading across vital organs and rupturing the body's progress and functions. If the diseased is prudent enough or rather fortunate to detect the growth which is slowly and silently seeping into the body early intervention might help. Detection is 'fortunately' just the beginning of this battle followed by mastectomy, the agony of chemotherapy and radiation and the perpetual fear of recurrence and death. This paper attempts to look into Audre Lorde's works as she part of her other 'selves' detects the disease, understands the diseased, the treatment creates questions on histories, identities and concept of the secular, unity and peace are correlative to erotic and sisterhood. The battles are on-going and the cancers are spreading. The only way to understand this disease in perspective is to think deep, speak loud and keep questioning.

Keywords: Breast cancer, survivor, cancer and its metaphors, silence and phobias, erotic and sisterhood.

The language of rage, pain, anger, isolation, fear, disease, body, body politics ... and endless are the list of discrimination, dehumanisation and commodification repeatedly and loudly echoed in the works of African American writing since decades. These repeated histories have not been crying for some space for survival and existence alone but they are impregnating

the secular political state with harsh questions on differences and demanding answers from the world and their nation which promises a secular humane potential of democracy, with an attitude. For Audre Lorde it is a choice she chooses to pronounce her erotic within the democratic and historical narrative space her ancestors, grandmothers and the Dahomey women warriors have already paved for her, her sisters and her women lovers. Lorde's essays, poems, biomythography, and cancer journals affirm the dark isolations she experiences as she confirms herself as: a woman, a black woman, a black lesbian and mother of two and a black lesbian cancer survivor. This paper focuses on the metaphorical as well as the pathological isolation created by the disease cancer upon the diseased.

African-American, lesbian, cancer and post mastectomy survivor Audre Lorde portrays Cancer as a metaphor for the disease in society that differentiates citizens of the world based on the colour of their skin, their gender, their sexuality and, the greatest disease of all, on the issues of the 'normal'. Lorde has been surviving the battle against differences long before she was diagnosed with breast cancer in late 1978, followed by a modified radical mastectomy of her right breast. Her experiences and knowledge about difference from the perspective of a cancer survivor are as intense, vigorous and passionate as that of a black lesbian feminist survivor. The differences within and outside the black community are asserted by Lorde using the erotic and sisterhood as sources of power and growth. The erotic and sisterhood are terms which represent the trilogy of the body, mind and soul; the core of black women's personal yet collective experience of pain, memory and survival. The body is the coloured canvas where language, song and dance are woven together while memory and sharing have always been the conjuring tools for survival leading to unity and peace. The cancer in Lorde's body helped her to reread and consider differences from the light of how a 'disease' which is silently alive, spreading and multiplying beyond control and killing the life-sustaining cells in the patient's body; it is dormant and invisible until it is too late to be conquered. Cancer is read metaphorically to represent the degree of racism, sexism, homophobia and capitalism which work silently, conspiring and creating the 'other'. Lorde in her journal entry dated on "10/3/79" which was selected and edited by Lorde for the "Introduction" to *The Cancer Journals* says, "I am defined as the other in every group I'm part

of. The outsider both strength and weakness. Yet without community there is certainly no liberation, no future only the temporary armistice between me and my oppression” (12).

Alice Walker in her essay “In the Closet of the Soul” examines the underlined fear and isolation which are related to the disease and the diseased. A disease as dreadful as cancer is painful and oppressive upon the body. Similarly the oppressions caused by the uncontrollable and silent spread of cancers in society kill the growth and well-being of a nation.

“Cancer” focuses on breast cancer, the disease that strikes Lorde and the tumor in her right breast which was diagnosed as malignant in 1978. It is her testimony of survival through mastectomy and chemotherapy, against prosthesis, about pain, anger, fear of survival, and her constant confrontation with death and the recurrence of the disease in 1984 which presented itself as liver cancer. Lorde dedicates two of her works *The Cancer Journals* and *A Burst of Light* both of which are collections of her selected journal entries and essays written with the responsibility of being a Black Lesbian Feminist battling with the issues of ‘cancer’ and on survival.

Lorde’s work “Apartheid U.S.A” reads racism as an internal affair within the black community and thus is taken advantage of by the white colonial tool now called with refinement as capitalism. In the essay, Lorde emphasizes the need for people of colour to recognize “institutionalized racism grown more and more aggressive in the shrinking of the profit-oriented economies” (*Sister Outsider* 65). Her essay, “Sexism: An American Disease” which was first published as “The Great American Disease” in response to Robert Staples “The Myth of Black Macho: A Response to Angry Black Feminists” looks at how internal racist prejudice leads towards gender domination and separatism within the community. Staple argues that capitalism has left the Black man with physical and psychological dominance over his ‘black’ woman and a ‘curious rage’. Is this rage any more legitimate asks Lorde than the rage of the coloured woman battling with the degrees of differences, where the ‘master’ is proud to cloak the principles of justice and liberty (be it the natural liberty as in the state of nature, civil and political liberty and liberty of thought) the pillars of his nation. “No reasonable Black man can possibly condone the rape and slaughter of Black women by Black men as a fitting response to capitalist oppression and destruction of Black women by Black men clearly

cuts across all class lines” (Lorde, *SO* 64) and is a great American disease says Lorde. Ignorance is used safely as a ploy for profit and it serves as nourishment for racial, sexual and gender prejudice.

Anger is a grief of distortions between peers, and its object is change” (Lorde, *SO* 129) says Lorde. She elaborates upon this argument thus: “But anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification” (Lorde, *SO* 127). An introspective, historical and collective and journey to identify, “our allies with whom we have grave differences, and who are our genuine enemies” (Lorde, *SO* 127). Anger serves as an emotional response for the understanding and sharing of differences and of connection which Lorde defines as “the essence of a truly global feminism” (Lorde, *SO* 175) in the essay “Forward to the English Edition of *Farbe Bekennen*.”

Cancer is also metaphor for the differences drawn against the choice of one’s sexuality, against the homosexuals and bisexuals in the heterosexual world. Lorde calls it “sodomasochism” and by the capitalist industry it has been marketed as the obscene and pornographic. Within the feminist circles blackness is treated with hatred and within the women community lesbianism is treated with fear, contempt and ignorance.

Lorde in her speech addressed at the Third World Gay and Lesbian Conference (later published as an essay), “When Will the Ignorance End: Keynote Speech at the National Third World Gay and Lesbian Conference, October 13, 1979” says, “ ... AND we have survived. That survival is a testament to our strength. We have survived, and we have come together now to use that strength to implement a future, hopefully, a future that shall be free from the mistakes of our oppressors, as well as our own” (Lorde, *SO*, 211). But how do these interpretations of cancer perform themselves in society? The cancer testimony of Lorde serves to overcome and share the silences of women with women who have been attacked by cancer, by breast cancer—the pain and fury of the diagnosis, of the disease, of its treatment, challenges and the decision of mastectomy and its side effects, the acceptance and need for reconstructive procedures, living with the make-believe prosthesis and confronting this constant reminder, death. Walker in “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens” says: “[M]y history starts not with the taking of lands, battles, and deaths of Great men, but with one woman asking another for her

underwear” (356). This leads us back to Walker’s definition of womanist in the same essay where “the talk is called ‘How to Speak about Practically Everything, Briefly, from the Heart’” (334). In 1978 the first biopsy for malignancy was negative. “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action” reproduces Lorde’s feelings and shares her pain and anxiety of having to confront the killer disease cancer: “Between the telling and the actual surgery, there was a three week period of the agony of an involuntary reorganization of my entire life. The surgery was completed and the growth was benign” (Lorde, *Cancer* 20). Lorde’s “involuntary reorganization of her entire life” (Lorde, *Cancer* 20) helped her to deal with the power of “self-revelation” (21), “selfhealing” (22), “self-determination” (22) and her responsibility to speak, share and love women. In “Breast Cancer: A Black Lesbian Feminist Experience, “Lorde expresses her courage to face cancer in all its myriad differences and . . . Trying to even set this all down step by step is a process of focusing in from the periphery towards the center” (*Cancer* 26). In late 1978 Lorde went in for a second biopsy and this time the result showed that the tumor that had invaded her right breast was malignant. She records the moment in the recovery room as she slowly wakes up from the effect of the anesthesia in the following words: “Being ‘out’ really means only that you can’t answer back or protect yourself from what you are absorbing through your ears and other senses” (*Cancer* 26). This reflection echoes the various Western readings that Lorde’s work reflects upon silently but conscious enough to not utter the terms of Foucault’s “Repressive Hypothesis” from his work, *The History of Sexuality* published in 1978 and later on his and Owen’s discussions on the archaeological and genealogical methods of criticism based upon the values of truth, knowledge, meaning and power (“Bio-power”). For Lorde it was this Bio-power which detected and dictated the operations that organised, regulated and controlled the body in terms of beauty, healthy and normalcy.

The cancers that are conquering society are being allowed to invade, multiply and spread with silence and invisibility. Susan Sontag in her work *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors* says, “Metaphorically cancer is not so much as a disease of time as a disease or pathology of space. Its principal metaphors refer to topography (cancer ‘spreads’ or ‘proliferates’ or is ‘diffused’; tumors are surgically ‘excised’), and its most dreaded consequence, short of death, is the mutilation or amputation of part of the body” (15). With

Lorde's biopsy reports being confirmed as positive she had to decide on the method of treatment. If surgery, it would mean modified radical mastectomy followed by chemotherapy or alternative treatment. The chaos involved in the decision was not merely about the disease and treatment methods but about "fragile mortality" (Lorde, *Cancer* 31), the physical and psychological pain and loss of "such a cherished part of me as my breast" (Lorde, *Cancer* 31) and the sense of isolation, dread and anger attached to the disease. Sontag adds to our understanding of cancer in *Illness as Metaphor* about the "conventions of treating cancer as no mere disease but a demonic enemy makes cancer not just a lethal disease but a shameful one" (59). Through the emotional and intellectual journey that Lorde undertakes in the process of having to decide upon the mode of treatment she realizes the power of sisterhood, of shared experiences and the concern and care of her women 'lovers' who were "prepared to go along with whatever I would decide" (Lorde, *Cancer* 32). Lorde's decision to proceed with the modified radical mastectomy meant the removal of her malignant breast. The next stage was for her to come to terms with the physical and psychological sense of loss of the organ and the disfiguration of the body and the social and cultural hi(s)stories and politics attached to breasts as an organ symbolising femininity, beauty and lust.

Mary Deshazer in her article, "Fractured Borders: Women's Cancer and Feminist Theatre" quotes Nancy Datan, a feminist psychologist who succumbed to breast cancer: "It is a central tenet of feminism that women's invisible and private wounds often reflect social and political injustices. It is a commitment central to feminism to share burdens and it is an axiom of feminism that the personal is political" (3). Lorde's "waking up out of the anaesthetic" (Lorde, *Cancer* 28) sensation forces her to confront the physical realities of pain that she explains as the forceful nature of cultural and societal numbness which negotiates with her space to understand and experience the sense of loss. The treatment protocol for cancer is blunt and it features the qualities of being detached, harmful and impersonal to the psychological understanding of the patient and her body. Stella Bolaki in her article, "Recovering the Scarred Body: Textual and Photographic Narratives of Breast Cancer" dwells on the heterogeneous socio-cultural norms and practices which are associated with the politics of cancer, its diagnosis and treatment through the work of Maren Klawiter's, *The Biopolitics of Breast Cancer*:

. . . the regime of medicalization ‘isolated women with breast cancer from each other, ‘protected’ them from knowledge of their diagnosis, prevented them from participating in decision making about their treatment, treated them with a one-step, one-size-fits-all radical surgery, encouraged them to hide the evidence of their treatment and maintain a normal, heterofeminine appearance. [. . .] it reinforced the architecture of the closet [. . .] and inhibited the formation of disease- 116 based identities, social networks and solidarities among women with breast cancer.’ (Bolaki 6)

After the mastectomy and the sense of her lost breast being fully absorbed and accepted physically, all that Lorde desired was to speak to women who had mastectomies and could understand her language of pain, suffering, fear and loss. The nurse who attended Lorde when she was screaming with pain after the mastectomy ignored her as being over-reactive and the reaction seemed as if it was a day to day affair. A white post mastectomy patient tried to convince and reassure Lorde of her loss; her words were: “don’t feel bad . . . they weren’t that much good anyway” (Lorde, *Cancer* 41), and all that the woman from the Reach for Recovery could offer Lorde was lambswool prosthesis with the advice or rather an advertisement, “nobody’ll ever know the difference” (Lorde, *Cancer* 42). When Lorde returned to her surgeon ten days after the mastectomy to remove her stitches the nurse found her without prosthesis. She was advised to wear one, and the look good, feel good principles were taught to her before she left the hospital with the explanation that her arrival to the hospital without one “was bad for the morale of the office” (Lorde, *Cancer* 58). Lorde realized that her new lambswool make-believe breasts were of the wrong shape, wrong fit, wrong colour, and there was nothing sensual about it: “I looked away, thinking, ‘I wonder if there are any lesbian feminists in Reach for Recovery?’” (Lorde, *Cancer* 42).

Lorde shared her gratefulness to Little sister (Lorde’s sister-in-law) who had gone through mastectomy ten years ago. She came down to speak and share the “common language no matter how diverse” (Lorde, *Cancer* 42) for little sister was not a lesbian but she was a black woman, a post mastectomy survivor and was against prosthesis. The difference of being diseased and with a scarred body is tolerated with contempt, often with invisibility and shame, and is followed by a sympathetic gesture towards the patient. The patient under normal

circumstances is led to the unconscious pretense of being and looking normal under a pad with a little silicone gel and puffed up lambswool shaped to perfection and gaze. The pretence in the form of prosthesis engages her into a journey of self-denial, helplessness and conformity to the norms of appearance to which her body is being designed. Disguise happens through make-up, wigs and prosthesis as the visual culture of illness is being pronounced publicly says Lochlann Jain in her article “Cancer Butch”. Jain refers to the Look Good Feel Better classes conducted for women who have undergone mastectomy as they “teach women how to use cosmetics to make themselves look good throughout treatment” (504). The culture becomes a cult which is funded by the billion dollar industrial kings of global capitalism under the pink ribbon campaigns. Jain refers to the campaigns held by BMW, Ford, and the gas industries who claim to organize social campaigns to raise money for breast cancer and cure for the disease. BMW organizes the social, cultural and corporate meet under the slogan, “Show your care with style”. Jain refers to Adrienne Rich’s views on breast cancer which juxtapose the BMW’s all is well slogan as “‘unfair’, unfashionable, unforgiveable woman’s death, pink has made breast cancer practically into a stereotype, a parody of itself” (Jain 505-506).

The pamphlets distributed at the social and charity gatherings for the cure of cancer focus upon the survivor’s comfort which is associated with the colour pink, and the ways to look cheerful and normal during the course of the disease rather than dealing with the reality of the disease which is gloomy, unpredictable and painful. Jain notices that the organization’s focus tends to kill the truth and ignore the darker and natural identity of the disease and its performance upon the victim; the brutal silence of death is kept off the scenes. The aim of the organizers and their charity meets tend to float upon the imaginary and not so sure results of the cure of cancer, but the disease which lives, occupies and extends its growth at an alarming fast pace is kept away and left undiscussed. Above all the victims’ voice is never heard for she has been well disguised and shielded behind pink, cosmetics and prosthesis. Jain’s “Cancer Butch” looks at the politicization of gender and the “relentless hyper- and heterosexualization of the disease results in something of a recursive process through which gender is produced and policed” (506). This policy also helps the straight and heterosexual world to silence, isolate and discriminate the homosexual cancer patient. Jain in her article states that the isolation and contempt attached to lesbians is one of the causes of increased breast cancer mortalities among

them. The discussion is substantiated with reference to Adrienne Rich's poem "A Woman Dead in Her Forties". The poem refers to the intimate touch as the experience of pleasure shared in a lesbian sexual act and transcends to the feel and sharing of pain and sorrow of a diseased breast with a sincere need to be caressed with intimacy and without difference. The disgust and social stigma attached to lesbianism keeps several medical professionals from examining the breasts of lesbians fearing the touch of their breasts leading to misdiagnosis and complications. . The 'touch' of the erotic that speaks of pleasure, understanding and sharing between women and lovers is often restricted, closeted and pronounced as taboo in public. But the touch and feel on the breasts become mandatory for an oncologist to detect, isolate and excise the malignant tumor in breast cancer. Lorde in the "Introduction" of *Cancer Journals* explains the fear associated with touch on a diseased body. Even the touch on a normal site says Lorde is filled with pain and fear of the spread of the disease. "...Oh Seboulisa ma, help me remember what I have paid so much to learn. I could die of difference, or live—myriad selves" (*Cancer* 11). The realities of the disease which disrupts life and growth, cancer and in most cases breast cancer is treated with hazardous and lethal chemical combinations that are injected into her body and her breasts are excised and re-constructed to look normal. The breast as part of the female anatomy is discussed by the doctors as diseased and treated, while in this process the chaos of the patient, her confrontation with death, the pain involved in the process of modifying the geography of her body, her fear, agony and distress are forced to be associated with loneliness, silence, prosthesis and disguise. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in her article, "The Story of 'I': Illness and Narrative Identity" says: "[I]n Western society, the first commandment of illness seems to be 'get well' . . . and if this fails—atleast conceal disruption under a semblance of continuity and /or victory" (14). Lorde's first encounter with the two white breast cancer survivors who were straight and who had experienced mastectomy tried to console the loss of her breast. One was the white lady called by the head nurse at the hospital and the other, the woman from the Reach for Recovery. Both seemed well convinced that there really wasn't a great loss. The white post mastectomy patients felt that "they weren't that much good anyway" (Lorde, *Cancer* 41) and the woman from the Reach for Recovery truly believed that nobody would know the difference with her prosthesis on. The irony is whether she would ever know if the difference was a question she was never allowed to ask nor think. Robert Murphy

in his work *The Body Silent* looks at the society that kills the diseased or the disabled by channeling or rather tailoring her emotions for her caretakers who wish to see her normal or disease free. Murphy says, “they must confront others about their own condition. They cannot show fear, sorrow, depression, sexuality or anger, for this disturbs the able bodied . . . as for the rest of the world, I must sustain their faith in their own immunity by looking resolutely cheery. Have a nice day!” (92). The breast cancer patient is expected to be silent and projected as composed, brave and controlled like the soldier who carries his valour and dignity at the face of death. Lorde opposes the obscene language where the woman’s emotions are expected to be hidden, to be shed only within the walls of her private space, and in public she is to maintain her composure so that her constructors are not disturbed.

Lorde on the other hand appreciates the valour and bravery of the Amazon girls of Dahomey who willingly cut off their right breasts to become able and effective archers (Lorde, *Cancer* 35). They were brave, black, women, warriors who fulfilled their responsibility of guarding and protecting their community. Lorde’s constant reference of the Amazon girls of Dahomey helps her to reflect upon the strength and responsibility that she carries and owes to the world as a poet, lesbian and feminist. The cancer within her metamorphosises into fury and the urgent need to question the politics of the body, the construction of femininity, the role of the American Cancer Society, the commercialization of the ‘disease’ and treatment, chemical warfare which emits toxic carcinogens into the atmosphere way above its legal thresholds and the role of women with breast cancer in a cancerous world of hegemonies, dominant power politics and capitalism. Lorde’s fight is still going on, and we, the community are still a part of it constantly battling against a womanphobic world to make the Man more comfortable. Mary Deshazer in her article, “Fractured Borders” looks into the theory that Zillah Eisenstein, a feminist and breast cancer survivor believes and lives with. Zillah puts forth the argument of the autonomy of her body where she is the sole owner and architect that pronounces and design of her beauty. Beauty in terms of its construction has always been problematic when it has been defined and designed for her by her male counterparts who claim to be her protector. As the shape of his art of feminizing his muse and the object of his gaze is graphically drawn he marks the politics of femininity, form and behaviour. Mary Deshazer in her article, “Fractured Bodies” re-presents, performs and displays the voices of women with cancer and of her

“medicalized body” (6). The aim of these feminist illness testimonials are to increase the awareness of women’s cancers (breast, ovarian and uterine cancers), ovarian being the most silent and brutal killer of all. A play, *The Waiting Room* by Lisa Loomer is a breast cancer testimonial. Loomer’s protagonist, Wanda has opted for reconstructive surgery and “she flaunts her prosthetic body, especially her enormous breasts, the products of cosmetic surgery, until she learns that a faulty implant may have caused or hidden an incipient cancer” (Deshazer 10). Wanda’s diagnostic report shows cancerous seeding in several lymph nodes and she grapples between the choice of conservative and alternate treatments. The play raises two crucial concerns that are constantly in war with the American Cancer Society. The first concern follows just after mastectomy of the decision to wear a prosthetic breast. *The Waiting Room* reflects the cancer motifs that are loomed into the discourse of sexuality dominated by heterosexual male desire and its profit gained by the billion dollar corporate and cosmetic industries while the underlying question of woman’s autonomy over her body remains dormant. The play opens with three ‘disabled’ women confronting pain to the doctor over their ‘diseased’ body parts. An eighteenth century Chinese woman has got her bound feet infected. She comes to her doctor to relieve herself of the pain and the stink caused by the oozing feet, “but my husband is crazy of the smell” (Loomer 14). The irony is that she is called Forgiveness from heaven. The scene advances with a nineteenth century English woman called Victoria who is under treatment for shrunken ovaries while her husband restricts her from reading romantic novels fearing an ovarian atrophy. Wanda, the third patient, is the protagonist in Loomer’s play. She is bountiful, full of energy, flamboyant, unmarried and independent. She is characterized as an embodiment of heterosexual and cultural beauty. Wanda confides to her nurse Brenda as she waits for nervously for her breast biopsy results, that her father had presented her a pair of silicone breast implants for her thirtieth birthday. She followed his instructions over the years to reconstruct her nose, chin, cheekbones, stomach, thighs and everything. Brenda reads the fear and apprehension on Wanda’s face as she waits for the reports. Brenda flashes the ironic truth upon her saying, “We don’t even know you got cancer. Where are you goin’ get cancer? You don’t have a single body part that’s real” (Loomer 40). The concepts of beauty have been drawn to satisfy the male gaze and for breast cancer victims, she is forced to confront the importance of her breast, if not native, then re-produced. Her

breasts are associated either as a reproductive organ or as the breasts for gaze which either way they do not belong to her. Prosthesis serves merely as a cosmetic tool where the norms of beauty are documented. Lorde in her essay, “Breast Cancer: Power vs. Prosthesis” says: “Any woman who has had a breast removed because of cancer knows she does not feel the same. . . . With quick cosmetic reassurance, we are told that our feelings are not important, our appearance is all, the sum total of self (*Cancer* 57). She continues her argument on beauty vs. self saying:

“When I mourn my right breast, it is not the appearance of it I mourn, but the feeling and the fact. But where the superficial is supreme, the idea that a woman can be beautiful and one-breasted is considered depraved, or at best, bizarre, a threat to ‘morale’. . . . Pretense has never brought about lasting change or progress” (Lorde, *Cancer* 65).

The political discourse of ‘beauty’ forces women to adorn themselves with prosthetic breasts or to consider reconstructive surgeries because of social insecurities. While economic insecurities force women to adorn themselves with cheap and faulty implants that serve as carcinogens and the adverse effects being life-threatening in most cases. Lorde in “Power vs. Prosthesis” says:

Where a woman’s job is at risk because of her health history, employment discrimination cannot be fought with a sack of silicone gel, nor with the constant fear and anxiety to which subterfuge gives rise. Suggesting prosthesis as a solution to employment discrimination is like saying the way to fight race prejudice is for Black people to pretend to be white. Employment discrimination against post-mastectomy women can only be fought in the open, with head-on attacks by strong and self accepting women who refuse to be relegated to an inferior position, or to corner because they have one breast. (*Cancer* 66)

Wanda in *The Waiting Room* realizes that her faulty silicone implants was the cause for cancer and the malignancy had spread to a stage where lumpectomy was not an option. The only way says her doctor is to have a radical mastectomy with aggressive doses of chemotherapy post mastectomy as the cancer had spread into several of her lymph nodes. After the mastectomy Wanda decides upon an alternate treatment for cancer available in Mexico.

Wanda voices her decision saying: “This cancer is . . . mine. For better or worse, till death do us part, it’s about the one thing I got left that’s all— mine” (Loomer 40). In Lorde’s *A Burst of Light*, Lorde pronounces her decision to go for alternate treatment when she is diagnosed with a recurrence, this time as liver cancer. Lorde in her journal entry on “March 18, 1984 En route to St. Croix, Virgin Islands” writes, “this mass in my liver is not primary liver tumor, so if it is malignant, it’s most likely metastasized breast cancer. Not curable, Arrestable, not curable (*B of L* 54). Lorde keeping in mind her very limited available options decides upon homeopathy as an alternative treatment to surgery. She clings on to hope and self-determination saying, “my decision to maintain some control over my life for as long as possible I believe that decision has prolonged my life, together with the loving energies of women who supported me in that decision and in the work which gives that life shape”(Lorde, *B of L* 49). The treatment for cancer which is slowly invading the body is not intended towards the destruction and cure of the disease, rather the chemical toxins precisely loaded into the body serves only to arrest the metabolic rate of the disease. Lorde in her journal entry in “A Burst of Light” writes: “either way I’m a hostage. So what’s new? Coming to terms with the sadness and the fury. And the curiosity” (*B of L* 54). The cosmetic industry has always catered to and pampered the affluent skin and so has prosthesis. Here once again the conscious correlation between class and beauty has been well drawn in relation to cancers, breast prosthesis and cancer charity organizations. Lorde in “Power vs. Prosthesis” says: “. . . the many reputable makes of cosmetic breast forms which, although outrageously overpriced, can still serve a real function for the woman who is free enough to choose when and why she wears one or not” (*Cancer* 67). Sandy Fernandez in her work “Think before You Pink: History of the Pink Ribbon”, looks at the logistic construction of the ribbon and its colour which has served the billion dollar industries to speak for cancer.

While the colour pink has been associated with being girlish, it symbolizes health, youth and happiness and is also playful and life-affirming. Fernandez quotes Margarel Welch, the director of the Colour Associations of the United States who states that: “pink is the quintessential female color. . . . [Pastel pink] is a shade known to be healthgiving; that’s why we have expressions like ‘in the pink’. You can’t say a bad thing about it” (Fernandez N. pag.).

In the discourse of the partnership between capitalism and cancer, Jain in the essay “Cancer Butch” comments on the amount of funds collected for cancer. She gives a statistical report of companies like Ford which has gathered 128 forty million dollars, Avon, two hundred and fifty million dollars, Revlon’s forty million dollars and the essay begins with the BMW’s nine million dollars collected from a single charity meet. Though the amount of money that people keep aside for cancer research is large enough, the war against the disease says Jain is “never launched in an organized way” (Jain 529). It works two ways, the companies that promote their products use carcinogenic chemicals and the fumes that the companies spew out into the atmosphere are also known to cause cancer. But the companies never mention the darker and dangerous realities of production and commercialization of their finished products. Through charity meets these companies gather millions of dollars ostensibly for cancer from their expected clients but in effect are the cause of cancer. Jain mentions the introduction of a feminine car, “La Femme” by Dodge, targeted for the rising upper class women’s market in America. The car was painted pink and was fully loaded with women’s accessories: a pink lipstick, cigarette cases stuffed into a pink purse, a pink umbrella and a matching raincoat. The carcinogenic chemicals used by the lead and plastic industries are the murderers of large sections of the world’s population who are captured by the dreaded disease cancer cutting across age. The chemical vinyl chloride is known to be a common carcinogen used by the industries who manufacture cosmetics and domestic products like hair sprays, deodorants, insecticides and spray paints in five times the legal threshold. The company’s share an illegal conspiracy with the governments of the concerned nations to whom the secret of the carcinogens in their products are revealed, but the governments do not feel obliged to inform their citizens. The carcinogenic materials involved in the manufacture of artificial breast implants are known to cause breast cancers. The breast and prosthetic implant companies do not take up the responsibility of accidental and faulty implants and their after-effects. This is another face of Lorde’s presentation of sadomasochism, the cancer which feeds into the society in the form of capitalism. The commercialization of breast cancer leads to the pornographic use of the diseased body where hospitals and advertisements sponsored by the cancer care organizations provide free demonstration of physical self-examination to detect lumps in breasts. Jain in “Cancer Butch” says:

It can be hard not to conclude that much of breast cancer culture performs a literal pornography of death, with its constant representation of young women in sexualized poses in everything from the medical posters pinned in the doctor's office, to the covers of cancer magazines such as *Mamm* and *Cure*, to the ubiquitous cards about how to do a breast self-exam. A recent ad by the Breast Cancer Fund of Canada featured a young, purposely slim teenager named 'Cam' who offers free service of doing breast exams ('877-Ring-Cam').

Playing on the long standing joke of adolescent boys, the primary violence of the ad is the collaboration—even in its purported goal of early detection—in the same logic that has belittled the disease. Is any other medical procedure sexualized in this way? (Jain 525) Lorde in her work "Power vs. Prosthesis" delves into the corporate world of prosthetic implant companies, their economies and ethical issues in relation to their products and customers. She brings to her readers notice the issue of a Manhattan company, Apers Body Replacement which was charged for cheating on its customers. The company had taken orders from women who had been promised that the prosthesis would be made from cast taken from their own bodies to get the perfectly desired size and shape of the reconstructed breast. But when the product was sent and tried the customers felt that it had no resemblance to what they expected it to be and some of the customers never received their products even after their bill payments were cleared. Breast reconstructive procedures and centres were becoming highly popular in the 1980's as more and more breast cancer patients and others began to opt for reconstructive procedures as mainly a cosmetic issue. Breast cancer patients were immediately consulted after mastectomy to undergo another operation simultaneously which introduces "interesting silicone gel implants under the skin of the chest" (Lorde, *Cancer* 68) to the size and shape customized for each patient. At times the plastic surgeons recommend the removal of the normal breast along with the malignant one so as to get the "desired degree of symmetry under these circumstances with unilateral prosthesis" (Lorde, *Cancer* 68). In effect the cosmetic companies and the dominant male society promise the woman that she is never going to miss her original breasts while the capitalist agendas in collaboration with the American Cancer Society are framed to objectify women and their loss merely to its cosmetic realm, destroying personal feelings, pain and fear that surround cancer. "Breast reconstruction will not recreate a perfect replica of the lost breast, but it will enable many women who have had mastectomies

to wear a normal bra or bikini. (Lorde, *Cancer* 68-69). Cancer and its treatment are often associated with the metaphors of war as it invades, destroys and conquers life. The diagnosis of the silent and invading disease is often treated with chemotherapy and radiation which literally embodies lack; hairless and hormone-less it restricts the growth of nails, mouth cells and the tissues surrounding the stomach lining. Mastectomy associates itself with the loss of breasts but the scar metaphorically questions the disappearing markers of feminine identity. Newman in her article, "Poison: Fallout in the Breast Cancer Veteran's Jungle" looks at the historical reasons which associate cancer with the metaphors of war. Newman says: "The relationship between chemotherapy and war metaphors stems from actual war technology. Ironically, chemotherapy drugs in wide use today were discovered during WWII, a war plagued with history of employing toxic chemicals to poison civilians in Germany and in Japan" (183). Newman uses James Patterson's theory of the chemical warfare in history which helped researchers to suspect that the toxin infused chemicals could be used for treating and restricting the spread of cancer. Though the chemical warfare triggered new and 'effective' treatments in controlling the multiplication of malignant neoplasms, technology and industrialization have become potential producers of carcinogens which trigger cancer. Thus cancer as a disease becomes a metaphorical text which symbolizes society, culture, age and technology. Howard F. Stein in his work, "Disease as Metaphor" says:

Diseases may likewise become powerful social symbols, metaphors of whole cultures and ages. These metaphors, if not their associated diseases, are themselves the outcomes and articulators of whole historical epochs. When diseases become organizing metaphors, their bearers become social cynosures—categories of people who are given considerable social attention and visibility. (85)

The modern nuclear and atomic chemical warfare which emits radioactive elements in disastrous volumes into the atmosphere is learned to be one of the causes for thyroid cancer. Jain quotes an article in the New York Times which tries to find a reason or a cause for the rise of thyroid cancers in the country and the article quotes Dr. Sloan Kettering who feels radiation is one of the causes for thyroid cancer. But the doctor does not mention the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl and the high risk of exposure to cancerous carcinogens for people living in the

radiation detected areas. America has tested several nuclear bombs in its own land and waters hundred times to the power of those exploded at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Jain quotes from the maps provided by the American government which shows that the radiation levels carried by wind in the country is expected to rise the risk of cancer victims to a soaring 70,000 to 80,000 a year, and the documents recording these facts are stamped as confidential government files. Lorde in “A Burst of Light” shares the following in her journal entry dated June 9, 1984 written when she was in Berlin for a poetry reading at Zurich, “At the conference there, women wanted to discuss the rise of breast cancer epidemic caused by the emissions from the chemical plants in Zurich and Basel” (Lorde, *B of L* 60). As Lorde and her partner Gloria shared their experiences of the illness and the dread associated with the disease Lorde says, “For the first time in Europe, I felt I was not alone but answering as one of a group of black women—not just Audre Lorde” (*B of L* 60). Jain’s article discusses the biomedical and consumer-care nexus gets even more complicated by the dismissal of women’s complaints in medical cure, misdiagnosis of the disease and the use of carcinogenic toxins in medicines. Women who find abnormalities in the feel of their breasts consult their doctors who at times take their complaints lightly, later as the cancer spreads and invades her metabolic system she is left with no choice but mastectomy, paranoia of recurrence and the dread of death. The article also throws light upon how medicines with carcinogenic formulae could trigger abnormal growths that can turn malignant several years after the consummation of the product. She cites the example of DES (diethylstilbestrol) a drug considered effective in preventing miscarriage. It was found in the 1930’s that the pill had carcinogenic components which caused rare kinds of cervical and vaginal cancers. The product continued to be marketed and was prescribed till the 50’s when it was discovered that the pill was ineffective in preventing miscarriage. A similar scenario clouds the present day wonder drug, the oral contraceptive pill known to trigger ovarian cancer but continues to be advertised and marketed.

Medical politics is elaborated by Laura Pott in her work, “Publishing the Personal: Autobiographical Narratives of Breast Cancer and the Self”, Pott refers to the “hegemony of the discourse of medical practice” (117) where the patient becomes the still body upon which the medical vocabulary that is complex and closely guarded becomes alien to her understanding. Her body suddenly becomes a text for research, as subjects or case sheets for

medical examination and sites on which the formulated aggressive doses of mixed toxins are flushed into her body killing the disease and restricting or rather temporarily arresting the attack. Deshaizer in "Fractured Borders" says: "In the doctor's office or the hospital room, they often suffer physical, verbal and psychological indignities. Moreover, they face invasive treatments with painful side effects and uncertain outcomes rivaling the malignancy of the cancer itself" (15). Lorde says: "[S]urvival isn't some theory operating in a vacuum. It's a matter of my everyday living and making decisions" (B of L 60). Thus cancer for Lorde is war against disguise and war against the world that produces cancer. And of all, silence forced in the name of domination, gender construction, economic power and shame are to be fought like fighting the dreaded disease cancer. Lorde says in her journal entry written on December 25, 1985 from Arlesheim where she was registered for alternate treatment for liver cancer:

Good morning, Christmas. A Swiss bubble is keeping me from talking to my children and the women I love. The front desk won't put my calls through. Nobody here wants to pierce this fragile, delicate bubble that is the best of all possible worlds, they believe. So frighteningly insular. Don't they know good things get better by opening them up to others, giving and taking and changing? Most people here seem to feel that rigidity is a bona fide pathway to peace, and every fiber of me rebels against that. (B of L 90)

Breaking the silence is to refuse the disguise and wear it plain and native. Silence in breast cancer is the disguise adapted by breast reconstructive procedures, silicone gel implants, wigs and 'pink' cosmetics to look and feel good. This is the personal politics that each woman invaded by cancer has to fight against and the political makers that will invariably promote her gendered identity with capitalism and economics as their main and hidden agenda. Lorde in "A Burst of Light" says:

I am determined to fight it even when I am not sure of the terms of the battle nor the face of victory. I just know I must not surrender my body to others unless I completely understand and agree with what they think should be done to it. I've got to look at all my options carefully, even the ones I find distasteful. I know I can broaden the definition of winning to the point where I can't lose. (B of L 61)

When Lorde says: “I know I can broaden the definition of winning to the point where I can’t lose” (*B of L* 60), she negates the paranoia attached to cancer, Death as the final fate which will cloud her identity. The discourse of cancer is equated with death and silence. Howard Stein in “Disease as Metaphor” says: “[T]he prevailing image of cancer is of a mechanized body that has lost complete control of its own machinery of life and is overtaken by an alien force that consumes the body. Cancer is the most durable metaphorical vessel of our paranoia” (86). In the last lines in “Power vs. Prosthesis” Lorde reflects on life in “a perspective of urgency” (*Cancer* 76) to “speak those things that I really do believe, that power comes from moving into whatever I fear the most that cannot be avoided. But I will be strong enough again to open my mouth and not have a cry of raw pain leap out?” (Lorde, *Cancer* 76). Lorde’s poems especially the poems in *The Marvelous Arithmetics of Distance* which was posthumously published in 1993 looks at the triangular equation of the past, present and future that she bravely accepts as being, death. In her poem “Today is Not the Day”, she refuses to merely stare at death, wasting away in sorrow and being helpless. Rather Lorde writes: “I am dying / but I do not want to do it / looking the other way” (*Collected* 7- 9). The poem continues to build upon the sense of urgency, correlating her timed life with work, love and hope with Seboulisa, the black mother Goddess, Afrekete her daughter, the trickster figure and Gloria: binding our paths . . . exchanging sweet oil along each other’s ashy legs . . . By this rising some piece of our labor is already half-done the taste of loving doing a bit of work having some fun riding my wheels so close to the line my eyelashes blaze (Lorde, *Collected* 24, 29-30,33-40). Lorde’s prose and poetical works are very deeply interwoven with her journal entries; it is the personal space in which she describes the interconnectivity between life, language, love, work and death. Her war was towards the two opposing forces; the ethics of herself and the aesthetics of an already beautified existence, for survival. Her poetic spaces speak of the political cancers that are elaborated from her journal entries as she extends herself as part of a community belonging to the Black race, Afro-American / Grenadian culture, women and lesbian women across colour and cultures. In “Breast Cancer: A Black Lesbian Feminist Experience” she pronounces her role as a cancer patient, “cancer as it affects my life and my consciousness as a woman, a black lesbian feminist mother lover poet all I am” (Lorde *Cancer* 30). Lorde in poems like “Seasoning” and “Never to Dream of Spiders” she confronts cancer,

the diagnosis of the disease, chemotherapy and its pain, and the silence and reality of the disease, death that she faces like “an iron wall” (Lorde, *Collected* 4) and “one word is made” (9). The word links to the intricate bonding between knowledge and wisdom, intellect and the emotional and spiritual that speak of her fear and paranoia associated upon the impending silence and the urgency of the work that is needed to be done. The word is the erotic. Lorde in her journal dated April 20, 1986 written in St. Croix says:

And of course cancer is political—look at how many of our comrades have died of it during the last ten years! As warriors, our job is to actively and consciously survive it for as long as possible, remembering that in order to win, the aggressor must conquer, but the resisters need only survive. Our battle is to define survival in ways that are acceptable and nourishing to us, meaning with substance and style. Substance. Our work. Style. True to our selves. (*B of L* 98-99)

Cancer has constructed a wall between life and hope. The wall is made of diseased hierarchies, domination, sadomasochism, masochism, and other evils and phobias which feed on differences. This cancer needs to be arrested, excised and destroyed with the help of the erotic. This includes a prayer, to conjure with the past and paving a way into the present where time and space constantly shifts between past and present, the personal and the public yet greatly focussed on identities and of an identity. The erotic in the lesbian body is to break the silence and to refuse disguise. The erotic is to wear one’s identity, just plain and native.

As we read Lorde’s works we understand the various isolations she battled with courage, dignity and determination and we are also well aware that this is not the last of the ‘cancer’ journals we will come across. Lorde succumbed to the disease cancer in 1992 ten years later we have June Jordan succumbing to this very disease in 2002. Her journals, essays and poems speak of the same isolations and the same degrees of pain and fear. Even after these many decades or rather centuries of repeated retelling of African American histories these confessions and discriminations are still blocked and buried by the baptised phobias and norms set by the democratic and secular authorities of power.

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BUILD UP OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS: AGITATIONAL POLITICS IN MALABAR

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to explore the origins of radicalism in the politics of Kerala in the first half of the last century as forces that give support to the Communist Party of India (Marxist). This paper is based on the hypothesis that the 'social and political radicalism' in Kerala originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was due to the impact of modernisation and became what could be termed as Kerala sub- nationalism. An examination of the caste system, land relations and even the nineteenth century religious revival is necessary for a proper study of the radicalism.

Keywords: radicalism, politics of Kerala, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Kerala sub-nationalism, nineteenth century religious revival

In Malabar, the Indian National Congress was an organisation of 'ex-Rajas', 'rich landlords' and 'rich kanamdars' till 1930. Though the 'Salt Satyagraha' and 'Civil Disobedience Movement' activated the Congress, the large majority - the non-caste Hindus still believed that the British rule was better than the caste Hindu domination because, the Britishers did not practice casteism and untouchability. The Congress leaders like K. Kelappan and A.K. Gopalan felt the pulse of the people and decided at the Badagara Congress to start the 'Temple Entry Movement' and to organise the workers and peasants to broaden the mass base of the organisation. K. Kelappan, P. Krishna Pillai and A.K. Gopalan were the leading figures of the 'Guruvayur Satyagraha'. A.K. Gopalan was the

‘volunteer captain’. By the time, the second ‘Civil Disobedience Movement’ started in 1932 all the young leaders, P. Krishna Pillai, A.K. Gopalan, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Moyyarath Sankaran etc., were arrested. They were true Gandhian Satyagrahis who conducted ‘Satyagraha’ even in jails. For them, jail was the school wherein revolutionary prisoners like K.N. Tiwari taught the primary lessons of ‘Marxian Socialism’. When Gandhiji withdrew the ‘Civil Disobedience Movement’, the young political prisoners became disappointed and they were craving for a new method of political action, which they found in Socialism. Released from the prison, A.K. Gopalan and P. Krishna Pillai engaged in revitalising the ‘Guruvayur Satyagraha’. The subsequent ‘marches’ made A.K. Gopalan popular throughout Kerala.

In the Cannanore jail, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, P. Krishna Pillai and others were forming a ‘Socialist Group’. Already at the national level, the ‘Congress Socialist Party’ started working in 1934. During the 1934-’40 period, the C.S.P. unit in Kerala captured the K.P.C.C. and broadened its popular base by championing social issues and through organisation of workers and peasants. Slowly, the left controlled K.P.C.C. changed itself into the Kerala unit of the C.P.I. The economic crisis of 1929-’33 period was creating favourable climate for the growth of agitational politics of workers and peasants in Malabar. The Tenancy Act of 1930 was giving benefit only to the non-cultivating tenants.

The large majority cultivating tenants were subjected to exploitation. In 1935 they organised ‘Karshaka Sangham’ for collective bargain. During 1935-’39, the rural peasants of Malabar were organized behind the ‘Sangham’. K.P. Gopalan, P. Krishna Pillai and A.K. Gopalan were mainly behind the organization of trade unions in Malabar. In May 1935 the C.S.P. coordinated the working of the trade unions. Later it was re-organised on industrial basis. The remarkable feature of the trade union movement of the time was, the ‘peasant-worker cooperation’. Like the workers and peasants, the other working people like ‘students’, ‘elementary school teachers’, ‘intellectuals’ etc., were organised on class basis. Even children were organised under ‘Balasanghams’. Thus by 1939, the entire left-minded people were organised by the C.S.P. as the ground work for the formation of the Communist Party of Kerala.

Early Congress Politics: Politics of Landlordism

In Malabar the Indian National Congress were not active till 1915. Even after 1915, it was not a party with mass support. It met only once in a year, passed a few resolutions and prorogued. Ex-Rajas and rich landlords were its patrons. Later educated members of rich tenants called, 'Kanamdars' joined it, resulting in the decline of the landlord interests.¹ Still, the non-caste Hindus, most of whom were sub-tenants, agro-labourers and other workers were not attracted to the Congress activity. A statement of the General Secretary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam, Kumaran Asan makes the point clear:

Since the leadership of the Congress is with the caste-Hindus, the backward classes are reluctant to join it. The people of this land are suffering more from social oppression than from political oppression. If the caste-dominants get political power too, as popular representatives, the plight of other classes would be from 'the frying pan to the fire'. So, the workers of the Congress must make it truly a 'people's Congress'.²

The Sunday Congress of Chalappuram

The Mappila revolt of 1921 did irreparable damage to the Congress activity and to the mutual trust and love that existed between Hindus and Muslims.³ Since there was no full time working of the Party, A.K. Gopalan called it, "Sunday Congress of the lawyers of Chalappuram".⁴ The condition of the Congress was such that it could not function on its own. So it decided to form a 'Malabar United National Party'.⁵ But the boycott of the Simon Commission on its landing on 7 February 1928 gave a new agitational political atmosphere in India. In Kerala too, it gave new dynamism to the Congress. Mean while, the 'Complete Independence Resolution' was passed by the Lahore Congress in December 1929. It resulted in the nation wide observance of the 'Declaration of Independence' on 26 January 1930. Gandhiji started his historic 'Dandi March' on 1 March 1930. It awakened the people of India from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Kerala too woke up to the clarion call.⁶

Salt Satyagraha

On 13 April 1930 the volunteers of 'Salt Satyagraha' under K. Kelappan started from Calicut by walking, reached Payyannur, and broke the Salt law. In December 1930 the Government declared the Kerala State Congress Committee illegal. Since then, the Congress agitators worked under 'Dictators'. There were six such 'Dictators'. At the time of the seventh Dictator, the 'Gandhi- Irwin Pact' was signed on 21 January 1931, one year after the beginning of the Salt-Satyagraha. The Pact gave limited freedom to the people, to 'prepare salt', and to 'picket shops selling foreign goods and liquor'.⁷

Badagara Congress: 'Temple Entry' and 'Trade Unions'

The Britishers could rule India because the Indian people were divided, disunited and the majority looked with suspicion on the minority. Until these factors of disunity were eradicated, India could not enjoy full freedom. The Muslims saw no difference between the British rule and the caste-Hindu domination. The non-caste Hindus considered the British rule better than the caste-Hindu domination because the former did not practice casteism and untouchability; allowed freedom of movement and education for all. During the 'Civil Disobedience Movement' of 1930 poor peasants of Malabar expressed this feeling. The Congress leaders like K. Kelappan realised that the Congress could get full support at the grassroot level only if it identified itself with the people and fought to redress their grievances.⁸

On 3-5 of May 1931 the K.S.C.C. was held at Badagara. It was presided by Sen Gupta. He revealed that 6000 volunteers were in jails throughout India and the 'Gandhi – Irwin' Pact was only a stop-gap arrangement and the Congress had to fight against the British for full freedom. It resolved to congratulate Abdul Rehman Sahib and Moidu Maulavi in making the 'Civil Disobedience' a success. It resolved to direct its committees to organise trade unions. The sixth resolution requested the caste-Hindus and the temple authorities to open temples to all Hindus. K. Kelappan the President of the K.S.C.C. attended the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay on 12 June 1931 and secured permission to start 'Temple Entry Satyagraha' in Kerala. On 3 August 1931 the K.S.C.C. resolved to start satyagrahas for temples to be opened to all Hindus. For that it was resolved to start satyagraha at the entrance of the Guruvayur temple on 1 November 1931.⁹

A.K. Gopalan was elected as the 'Volunteer Captain' of the 'Guruvayur Satyagraha'. He explains the forces inside the Congress who opposed the agitation:

...Some Congress men did not like the idea of 'Temple Entry' agitation. They thought it would side track the Congress from its fight against imperialism. They viewed the 'Harijan Movement' as communal. They wanted to destroy the communal organisations rather than reform it and thereby make it progressive. The 'Temple Entry' movement would make the caste-Hindus enemies of the Congress; this they thought would weaken the party. ...They did not understand that the fight against division and disunity is fight against imperialism, But, I was happy to start an agitation against conservative forces, which are difficult to be destroyed.¹⁰

A.K. Gopalan and Subrahmanian Thirumunbu went for propaganda work to north Malabar. They arranged for a public meeting at Payyannur. At a nearby place named, 'Kondoth', there was a Thiya temple. Through the adjacent road, the Harijans were not allowed to walk. It was decided to conduct a demonstration with Harijans through the road. On the way, the volunteers were cruelly beaten by the entire people of the locality. K. Keraleeyan and A.K. Gopalan fell unconscious. They were hospitalised and the condition of Keraleeyan was critical. It gave wide publicity to the 'Guruvayur Satyagraha'. Authorities reached Kondoth, erected a board declaring everyone's right to use the public road.¹¹ To start the satyagraha, a committee was constituted. A satyagraha camp was made near the temple. From the beginning, there was threat of violence against the volunteers. The so called 'nationalists' in the Congress, tore away their khadar clothes and the photograph of Mahatma Gandhi. They claimed it as their birth right to suppress the Harijans. Still, they were against foreign domination. At the same time, the entire country woke up and the poor came closer to the Satyagraha.¹²

A month before the beginning of the 'Guruvayur Satyagraha', a propaganda march of the volunteers started from Cannanore to Guruvayur. They walked all the way. Its captain was A.K. Gopalan. They belonged to all castes, from Namboodiri to Harijan. They ate and slept together. The long march and propaganda was creating a new political dynamism everywhere. At Guruvayur, the Satyagraha was inaugurated on 1 November 1931. The volunteers like A.K. Gopalan slept only two hours during the days of Satyagraha. They woke up at two a.m. At each temple gate, there were two

volunteers. Every three hours, there was a shift of volunteers. The shift of Satyagrahis continued till midnight. Wearing Holy ashes on the forehead and in the appearance of a true devotee, Vishnu-bharatheeyan was reading the Bhagavat Gita and Bhagavatham and giving spiritual discourses. Volunteers were engaged in spinning. Press started writing editorials and national leaders started visiting Guruvayur. Thus the 'Guruvayur Satyagraha' assumed national importance.¹³

When the 'Guruvayur Satyagraha' was proceeding, the national political developments compelled Gandhiji to announce the second 'Civil Disobedience Movement' on 3 January 1932. In the midnight of 4 January 1932, A.K. Gopalan, N.P. Damodaran and K. Kunjukrishnan were arrested and sent to the Cannanore jail. P. Krishna Pillai was arrested on the first day itself. E.M.S. Namboodiripad was arrested on 17 January at Calicut beach as the 'Congress Dictator'. This time, the prisoners were mostly common people with revolutionary fervour, ready to sacrifice anything for the cause.¹⁴

There was bad food, hard labour and severe torture in the jail. By wearing only a loin cloth, the prisoners were made to work under the scorching heat of the sun. Against it, P. Krishna Pillai and A.K. Gopalan organised the prisoners and agitated. On one Sunday, the two prisoners were beaten down by the police without any provocation. They fell unconscious for twelve hours, the police dragged them into a cell and shut them in. The news leaked out into the town and an angry mob rounded the prison. By the time, A.K. Gopalan and P. Krishna Pillai started 'Satyagraha' (hunger strike) in the cell. Though the jail authorities agreed for a compromise, A.K. Gopalan was secretly transferred to the notorious jail at Kadalur near Arcot. There he was shut in a cell together with lunatics.¹⁵

In the jail there were regular discussions on political events, on Gandhism, Marxism, achievements of the Russian revolution etc. Hindi classes were conducted by P. Krishna Pillai and others. There was a general feeling that the second Civil Disobedience would also be a failure. The prisoners used to read some books on socialism, smuggled into the prison. Some prisoners from outside Kerala, K.N. Tiwari, Kiran Das, Mukundlal Sarkar etc., taught the lessons of working class movements to Congressmen like, P. Krishna Pillai, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, K.P. Gopalan, A.K. Gopalan, K. Damodaran and others. On those days, E.M.S. wrote some pamphlets such as: A Brief History of Revolutions from French to the Russian, A Short History of the Egyptian Revolution, The Three Democratic Principles of Sun Yat Sen, Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution etc.¹⁶

The 'MacDonald Award' on 16 August 1932 on communal problem in India made Gandhiji to start his 'fast unto death' on 20 September 1932 in the Yeravada jail. It resulted in the 'Poona Pact' of 26 September 1932. Subsequently, on 14 July 1933 Gandhiji called off the 'mass satyagraha'. It led to the natural death of the second 'Civil Disobedience Movement'. The Congressmen in Kerala too were released from jails. Due to severe torture, A.K. Gopalan came out as a sick man.¹⁷ With the 'Poona Pact', Gandhiji announced that he would set aside the rest of his life for the uplift of the depressed castes. The Pact caused a significant change in the subsequent policy of the Congress. After the Pact, the Government allowed Gandhiji freedom to work for the Harijans. A good number of Congress leaders like Rajaji withdrew from the Civil Disobedience. This gave the first indication of the looming shift in the political approach after the Civil Disobedience. As a result, two very clear and conflicting ideologies took shape within the Congress. The first view was that, the Congress should take only parliamentary means to achieve its objectives. The other view was that of 'leftist democracy and socialism'.¹⁸

The 'Guruvayur Satyagraha' went on at snail's pace. It created no results as far as the 'Temple Entry' was concerned. Around the temple, a fence was made, beyond it the agitators were denied movement. A.K. Gopalan and P. Krishna Pillai decided to vitalise the movement. Even for the Nayers, the 'Srikoil' of temple was unapproachable; they were denied the right to ring the bells and pray. Krishna Pillai entered the temple and started ringing the bell and praying. The temple guards, mostly, Nayers, rushed to Krishna Pillai and began beating him. Pillai said, "the courageous Nayar will ring the bells, the submissive Nayar will beat on his back". For crossing the fence erected round the temple, A.K. Gopalan was also severely beaten. He was beaten down; still the beating was not stopped. But the assault on A.K. Gopalan made the people angry. The temple guards were beaten in return. The violent people wanted to set fire to the temple. The priests and their assistants were afraid to go out. The temple was kept closed. In September K. Kelappan took an oath to fast unto death for the cause of 'Temple Entry'. Kelappan's fast created sensation throughout India. From all parts of Kerala, volunteers marched in procession to Guruvayur. But on the tenth day, Kelappan had to withdraw the fast due to the personal appeal from Gandhiji.¹⁹

A.K. Gopalan decided to make a political gain out of the popular stir created by the 'Guruvayur Satyagraha'. With twenty Satyagraha volunteers he decided to conduct a propaganda march to Cochin and Travancore. All over Cochin and Travancore, hearty welcome was given to the

'satyagrahis' under A.K. Gopalan. The Satyagrahis marched about 1000 miles. For rest, food and sleep stayed with common people, ate their common food 'kanji', liquid food made of rice, established contact with thousands of families and spoke at five hundred meetings.²⁰ At Trivandrum a gathering of youths numbering 4000, led by Bodheswaran welcomed the volunteers. In the public meeting held, about 30,000 people gathered. There Pattom Thanu Pillai tried to speak, but he could not because the audience objected. They said, "You must not speak even a single word. Where were you during the time of picketing? We want only men of action, not speech makers". But when A.K. Gopalan said that 'he was not a good speaker, he and his friends were only forefront fighters of 'people's cause', the audience shouted "We want exactly that, we want speeches of such men". The public meeting at Trivandrum revealed how deeply common people liked A.K. Gopalan, though he was not an orator at that time. With the completion of the 'Guruvayur March', A.K. Gopalan became the loving hero of the people of Kerala.²¹

On way back from the south, A.K. Gopalan was arrested and detained in the Cannanore jail. Then he was shifted to the notorious prison at Bellari, a hell to the C class prisoners. There he was compelled to do hard labour like pulling the oil grinding roller. When he refused, they chained his whole body with 'Kol Chain'. Both legs were chained by iron rings of one inch thickness. From these chains were hung two iron rods of twenty pounds weight. Then he was shut in a solitary cell. A.K. Gopalan started 'nirahara satyagraha', ie., hunger strike, in the cell. On the seventh day Gopalan fell unconscious. He was hospitalised and afterwards shifted to the Vellor jail. This time, inside the prison, Gopalan had a through introspection of Gandhian methods of freedom struggle. He realised fully that the deprived castes were the real 'have nots'. Their interests were entirely different from the interests of the landlords and the wealthy capitalists. Even if temples were opened before the depressed, they could not go to the temples and offer prayers because their material conditions were such. So the real freedom movement appeared before A.K. Gopalan as the 'liberation of the working class'. By the end of 1933, A.K. Gopalan was released from the prison.²²

New Method of Action:

Marxian Socialism

The withdrawal of the 'Civil Disobedience Movement' in 1934 created frustration among the youths who suffered severely for the freedom struggle. They craved for a new method of action, which ultimately led them to the ideology of Marxian Socialism. Soviet Union at that time emerged as the inspiring model in eradicating poverty, unemployment and other social and economic problems. Jawaharlal Nehru, after a visit to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1927, wrote a series of articles entitled, 'Wither India', in appreciation of the Soviet System. There was eagerness to study the Soviet System and to evolve a programme for India, suitable to her conditions. It was under this circumstance that the 'Congress Socialist Party' was formed in May 1934.²³

As in other parts of India, in Kerala too, the main stream of the 'Civil Disobedience Movement' was the youths of lower middle class - elementary school teachers, students, clerks, lawyers, small merchants etc. In Kerala, there was a rush of young men of partitioned Nayar joint families to the freedom struggle. At the same time, poor peasants and people of lower classes were not attracted toward the Congress. The Congress leadership failed to keep up the fighting fervour of the thousands of young men who sacrificed everything and rushed to the forefront of the agitation by the call of the Congress.²⁴

P. Krishna Pillai, K.P. Gopalan, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, K. Damodaran and other left oriented Congressman formed a socialist group when they were in the Cannanore jail. To E.M.S.:

...It was K.N. Tiwari, one of the youngest of the accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, who was convicted for life sentence, responsible for laying the seeds of left-wing Congress in Kerala, while in the Cannanore jail.²⁵

E.M.S. continues' "... Krishna Pillai was the acknowledged leader of the extremist group. I also happened to be in that group." The biographer of P. Krishna Pillai says that Krishna Pillai and K.P. Gopalan became members of the Bengal terrorist movement called, 'Anuseelan Samiti', and when they went out of jail, they started a branch of it in Malabar.²⁶

Formation of the Congress Socialist Party

At the national level, patriots released from jails met at Patna in May 1934, on a call from Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Narendradev. The delegate from Kerala was E.M.S. Namboodiripad. It was followed by the first National Conference of the Congress Socialist Party in Bombay. It lasted from 21-24 October 1934. The two delegates from Kerala were, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and P. Krishna Pillai. But even before the Bombay Conference, a C.S.P. unit was formed in Kerala. It was held in the Calicut town hall. The meeting was presided over by K. Kelappan. C.K. Govindan Nayar was elected as the President and P. Krishna Pillai as the Secretary. Later Kelappan and Govindan Nayar severed relations with the left-wing and formed a right-wing in the K.P.C.C.²⁷

As far as the study of Communism in Kerala is concerned, the politics of Malabar during 1934-40' is very much important. During the period, the C.S.P. unit broadened its popular base, captured the K.P.C.C. and slowly changed itself to the unit of the Communist Party of India. The Congress which had only a membership of 3955 in 1935, rose to 30,674 in 1937, and it was further increased to 55,031 in 1938-'39.²⁸ This broad base of the Congress was built within a short period of five years by the C.S.P. In December 1939 when the Kerala unit of the C.P.I. was formed by P. Krishna Pillai, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, K.P. Gopalan, A.K. Gopalan and other C.S.P. leaders, with no difficulty, the popular base moved with them and became 'Communists'.²⁹

With the withdrawal of the 'Civil Disobedience Movement', the K.P.C.C met in 1934 at Calicut and elected A.K. Gopalan as the adhoc Secretary, for building a popular base for the Congress.³⁰ On 28 May 1935 at Calicut, the seventh State Political Conference was held. The meeting was presided over by a socialist-the editor of the 'Bombay Chronicle' - S.A. Brelvi. The influence of the C.S.P. was evidently clear throughout the conference. But the right-wing in the K.P.C.C. made a stiff resistance against the moves of the C.S.P. Along with the Political Conference, an 'All Kerala Socialist Congress' and a 'Labour Conference' were held. The socialist conference was presided over by Mrs. Maniben Kara.³¹

In all the meetings of the conference, resolutions passed were more or less in line with the programme of the C.S.P. All the resolutions were passed after heated exchange of arguments between the left and the right wing led by C.K. Govindan Nayar.³² The following resolutions were passed: 1. Requested the Government for speedy trial or immediate release of the detenus from Bengal and to

give relief to their families, 2. Requested the Government to release the sick M.N. Roy from prison, 3. Accepted the resolution of the 'National Convention' of the C.S.P. against the rulers of the 'Native States' and the call to work for the improvement of the economic conditions of the workers and peasants and to organise the people of 'Native States' for 'Responsible Government', 4. Wanted the Congress to oppose any war effort of the British Government, 5. Demanded the K.P.C.C. to organise the poor peasants of villages and help them to redress their grievances and to consider it as an integral part of the freedom struggle, 6. Called for starting an intense propaganda to make the poor and ignorant villagers aware of their real liberation, and 7. Directed the Congress to start a 'Study Centre' for political education of its workers.³³

The K.P.C.C. Secretary, A.K. Gopalan and the C.S.P. Secretary, P. Krishnan Pillai together conducted tour to organise the party throughout Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. New members were enlisted, public meetings were held even in southern areas like Neyyattinkara and Trivandrum. But the 'radical group' leaders like N.C. Sekhar were against strengthening the Congress, which to Sekhar was a bourgeois party.³⁴ In the 1935 K.P.C.C. election, the C.S.P. leaders secured majority. E.M.S. was elected as the K.P.C.C. Secretary. During the 1935, 1938, 1939 and 1940 periods, the K.P.C.C. was controlled by the C.S.P. leaders. When the C.S.P. leaders held the K.P.C.C., the functioning of the Congress was totally changed. During that period the Congress in Kerala became a disciplined people's party.³⁵ The C.S.P. could establish network of contacts throughout Kerala within a year. It could do that with the 'Congress activity', 'trade unions', 'peasant movements', party newspaper 'Prabhatham' and distribution of a series of pamphlets. The C.S.P. groups were established in Cannanore, Kanjangad, Tellichery, Badagara, Calicut, Palghat, Trichur, Cochin and Alleppey. Its political strength was evidently shown in the annual conferences held in Cannanore by the end of 1935 and at Tellicherry in June 1936.³⁶

During 1935, 1938, 1939 and 1940 period, when the C.S.P. leaders held the K.P.C.C. office, annual 'Congress Political Conferences' were regularly held. But no such conference was held when the right-wing Congressmen held the office during the 1936-'37 period. The C.S.P. leaders held District and Taluk conventions also. By the end of the Provincial elections in 1937, the K.P.C.C. decided E.M.S. Namboodiripad to be its Organisational Secretary. He reorganised the party from the State level to the village. With the help of Taluk Secretaries mostly C.S.P. men, within a short period of two months, three hundred 'Village Sub-Committees' were organised. In 1938 its number rose to five

hundred.³⁷ The K.P.C.C. made the 'Village Sub-Committees' to work efficiently by including political awareness at the grassroot level. The K.P.C.C. gave them regular directions, received periodic reports, made them to organise libraries, night literacy classes, to erect news boards, to hold regular public meetings etc. For the 'village sub-committees', the party issued special bulletins. To make the party workers active, periodic conferences were held, at the State and at the Taluk level, for Secretaries. At the central office, Taluk Secretaries were regularly called in conference. The Village Secretaries had such conference at the Taluk Office.³⁸

In 1938-'39, the K.P.C.C. organised a 'Congress Volunteer Force'. In the same year, a Summer School was started for the political education of the full time workers of the party. In May-June 1938, Sardar Chandroth Kunhiraman Nayar gave training to thirty State level officers for one and a half months at Theekodi. Those State level officers in turn trained the 'Village Volunteers'. Within one year, the 'Village Volunteer Force' of 3000 and officers of 300 were trained. For the political education of the Partymen, a school was started in May 1939 at Mankada, Pallipuram. The curriculum included, 'World History', 'Indian History', 'Congress History', 'Economics', 'Economic Problems of India' and 'Politics'. Thus five hundred trained workers started fully engaging in the activities of the Indian National Congress. Of them, large majority were factory workers, poor peasants and elementary school teachers. The C.S.P. had full support of National Muslims like, Abdul Rehman Sahib. In 1938, Abdul Rehman Sahib was elected President of the K.P.C.C. and E.M.S. Namboodiripad its Secretary.³⁹

Economic crisis of 1929-1933

The Global economic crisis of 1929-33' badly affected the capitalist countries. But Soviet Union was the only country which was not affected. In the capitalist countries like England, France, Germany, Italy etc., economic production declined to 50% unemployment and starvation spread like an epidemic. Colonial countries like England started to impose the burden on her colonies also. Already the Indian economy was converted into the one supplying raw materials to England. That weak economic system was further ruined by the crisis of 1929-'33. The freedom struggle in India at

that time (Civil Disobedience), was also a natural reaction of the Indian people to project their sufferings as the creation of Britain.⁴⁰

The economy of Kerala too suffered as a result of the 1929-'33 economic crisis. In the tea and rubber estates, of the 150,000 workers, 75,000 were retrenched. In fourteen tea estates, working was completely stopped. About the economic condition of the peasants, the 'Depression Committee' remarked, "...of the total population of fifty lakhs, twenty-five lakhs were affected by the depression. Agrarian debt increased from rupees twenty-five crores to forty crores.⁴¹ The price of copra, coconut oil and rubber decreased by 40% and pepper by 80%. As a result, the cultivation of coconut, rubber and pepper was completely ruined. Over and above the disaster of depression, the taxation policy of the Government doubled the sufferings of the people. In Malabar, the Government doubled the sufferings of the people. There, the Government decided to increase the taxes by 18.75% in 1931. As a result, the crisis of the depression continued even after 1933. The Government gave permission to import Ceylon copra. The tariff on Ceylon copra was reduced. The former tariff was Rs.10. In 1939, it was Rs.7 ½. Compared to 1929, the import of copra increased by 4.5 times; coconut oil and coconut by 2.5 times. It severely affected the life of the peasants. Hundreds of tenants became bankrupt, sold their land to the moneylenders or wealthy landlords and degenerated to landless sub-tenants. The sub-tenants plunged to agro-labourers.⁴²

Table 6 gives a clear picture of the precarious condition of the peasants, though it was about selected villages of Cochin, it could be well applicable to Malabar also. Even 100% of crop production did not yield profit to

TABLE 6

Agricultural Income & Expense in Cochin, 1935

Village	Type of land	Production 100%		Seed cost		Farm Expense		Tax		Income		Lease (Pattom)	
		Rs	- ps	Rs	- ps	Rs	- ps	Rs	- ps	Rs	- ps	Rs	- ps

													- ps
Anthikad	Dry land coconut	55	9			17	12	6	8	31	4	32	37
	2 crop paddy	49	8	5	0	26	10	4	8	13	5	15	0
	1 crop paddy	29	15	5	0	13	12	2	8	8	11	9	0
Choondal	Dryland Aracnut	12 1	8			64	0	6	0	51	8	50	0
	2 Crop Paddy	83	12	10	0	39	2	4	0	30	10	29	0
	Mundaka n paddy	43	2	5	0	20	6	3	2	14	10	14	0
Erutembadi	2 crop paddy	71	10	7	0	31	4	1 2	2	21	4	24	0

	Viruppu paddy	45	3	4	0	18	2	8	1	15	0	18	0
	Mundakayam paddy	38	8	3	0	14	3	8	1	13	4	16	0
Patachery (East)	2 crop paddy	73	15	6	0	28	11	7	0	32	4	28	7
	Poonthal	73	7	4	12	32	3	7	0	29	8	28	7
	Karinkara	50	2	2	8	18	0	5	0	24	10	24	6
Patachery (West)	2 crop paddy	86	4	6	0	21	6	7	0	51	10	44	11
	Karinkara	61	15	3	0	16	3	5	0	37	12	32	8
	Virippu	44	8	3	0	14	4			22	4	20	5

Source: Derived from, 'Survey of the Agricultural Land', Government of Cochin, In. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Keralam the Motherland of Malayalees, Trivandrum: Kerala Grandhasala Sahakarana Sangham, 1948, pp.177-181.

The tenant, the decrease in production and crop failure due to flood or drought made him debtor and finally landless.⁴³

Land Relations: Malabar, 1930s

In Malabar all tenants were not cultivators. Most of the 'Kana Kudiyaans' were non-cultivating tenants. By the 1930 Tendency Act, the non-cultivating tenants got ownership on his land. The cultivating sub-tenants had to give 1/3 of the value of the crop to him also as rent. Thus at the top there was the landlord, just below, his supervisor the non-cultivating tenant and still below, the cultivating tenant and at the bottom the agro-labourer.⁴⁴ The 'Malabar Kudiyaan Sangham' stood only for the interests of the 'Kana Kudiyaans' the majority of whom were non-cultivating tenants. They were against giving ownership of land to the sub-tenants, who were the real cultivating tenants. The 'Kana Kudiyaans' were also against reducing the lease-rent. They were intermediaries who secured land from the 'jenmis' on 'kanam right', by paying only minimum rent. They sublet it to the sub-tenants and lived on the exorbitant rent collected from them. They got this right by the Tenancy Act of 1930. there was a provision in the Act prohibiting the eviction of the sub-tenants also. But

Table 7

Degree of Exploitation Undergone by the Sub-Tenants of Malabar, 1940

I

Classes connected to the Land in Malabar

Landlords (Non-cultivating)	: 23,000
Tenants (" ")	: 19,000
Total no. of non-cultivators	: 62,000

Landlords (Cultivating)	: 40,000
Tenants (" ")	: 1,72,000
Total no. of Cultivators	: 2,12,000
Total no. of agro-labourers	: 4,01,000
Total population working on land	: 6,13,000

II

Agrarian Production and the Lease-rent

Total paddy production (in paras)	: 8,42,32,500
Lease-rent (2/3 of the net production)	
in paras	: 5,61,55,000
Total coconut production	: 52,81,98,000
Lease-rent (1/5 of the net production)	: 10,56,39,000

III

Value of Lease-rent in Rupees

Value of lease-rent of paddy	: Rs. 225 lakhs
" " coconut	: Rs. 20 lakhs
" " other crops	: Rs. 63 lakhs

Total value of lease-rent : Rs. 308 lakhs

Source: Derived from E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "The Objection Report", to, The Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee, 1940; in E.M.S. Namboothiripad, *Keralam the Motherland of the Malayalees*, Trivandrum: Kerala Grandhasala Sahakarana Sangham, 1948, pp. 173-77, 333-334.

that was subject to the condition that he had to remit one year lease-rent in advance, and there should not be any arrear of rent. The conditions were difficult to the sub-tenant because he was in full bankruptcy due to agrarian debt. Thus many of the 'Kanam tenants', by charging exorbitant rent on sub-tenants and squeezing money from them became wealthy. They became new landlords. Slowly, a partnership of the 'jenmis' and the wealthy 'Kudiyans' started developing⁴⁵. E.M.S. Namboodiripad clearly explains with statistical data, how the hard earned money by the sweat and labour of the sub-tenant was usurped by the uncultivating landlord and the 'Kana' Kudiyan.⁴⁶

Formation of the Karshaka Sangham

Every year the cultivating tenants of Malabar had to pay rupees three hundred and eight lakhs to the non-cultivating middlemen i.e., 'Karamdar' and his landlords.⁴⁷ The economic crisis of 1929-'33 and its effect on the economy of Malabar was the last straw to break the peasant's back. In July 1935 the peasants of Malabar, the silent sufferers of several years, subjected to innumerable social and economic exploitation, were brought to awareness of 'collective bargaining' with the formation of an organisation called, 'Karshaka Sangham' (The Peasants' Society), by the leaders of the C.S.P.⁴⁸

The first 'Karshaka Sangham' meeting was held at the residence of Vishnubharatheeyan in Taliparamba taluk, in July 1935. The meeting was presided by a tenant, Pattathil Padmanabhan. Vishnubharatheeyan was elected the President of the Sangham and K. Keraleeyan its Secretary. The Sangham decided to fight against coercive feudal collections, for reduction of lease-rent, for the cancellation of the provision demanding the sub-tenants to remit lease-rent in advance in the Kudiyan

Act of 1930 and against all kinds of evictions.⁴⁹ The tenants of the locality were not bold enough to appear even witness in a case against the landlord, in which their own property was plundered by the rowdies of the landlord. The Sangham took up such a case, went to the court against the landlord and won a verdict against the landlord and made the landlord to return the produce. It created confidence among the peasants to fight against landlordism.⁵⁰

In the eastern parts of Malabar, the village officers were mostly landlords. The village officer was called, 'Amsam Adhikari'. They collected both the revenue tax and the lease-rent without the knowledge of the Government. Majority of the peasants could not differentiate the two. For both the Government receipts were given, which too was illegal. The 'Kalyat Yasman' also called, 'Kottoor Yasman', was notorious for coercive collections and was also an 'Amsam Adhikari'. Whenever tenants cleared forests for cultivation, this landlord used to collect, 'Kathia Panam', a coercive collection, for which Government receipts were given. The Sangham leaders, Bharatheeyan and Keraleeyan decided to fight against it. They collected from the tenants the Government receipts given by the landlord, who legally was only a village officer in the administrative hierarchy. Sangham started agitations throughout north eastern Malabar against coercive collection. The agitation was so intense that the District Collector decided to make enquiry about the illegal collections of the 'Amsam Adhikari'. The Sangham leaders presented the receipts illegally given by the Adhikari. It led to the arrest of 'Kottoor Yasman', who was regarded by the tenants as the one even above God. The news was given propaganda throughout Malabar. Now the peasants were fully convinced that if they stood united, landlords could do nothing against them.⁵¹

In September 1935 the 'Karivalloor Karshaka Sangham' was organised. The tenants of Karivalloor, Vellore, Feralam and Kokad were organised by this Sangham. Its President was A.V. Kunjambu and Secretary was M.P. Appumaster. The Sangham agitated to end the feudal suppressions of the agents of the Chirakkal landlords. Its first agitation was to establish the right of the tenants to collect green leaf manure from the forest of the 'Thazhekad Manakal'. In 1935 itself, the 'Kurumbranad Karshaka Sangham' was organised by M. K. Kelu and M. Gopala Kurup. Its first taluk conference was held at Vattoli.⁵²

The C.S.P in its Meerut conference in 1935 decided to hold an All India Conference. It was followed by the formation of the 'All India Kisan Sabha' in Lucknow, in 1936. For two years as part of the programme of the Sabha, 'Starvation Marches' were organised throughout India.⁵³

In Malabar, under the leadership of A. K. Gopalan, 'Committees of the Unemployed' were organised at Kathiroom and other places, before the organisation of the 'Starvation March'. To start with, it was decided to conduct a 'Starvation March' to the Collector of Tellicherry. The march was to start from Koothuparambu. K.P.R. Gopalan started a march from Kalyasseri and joined the main march. Thousands joined the march. The Sub-Collector at Tellicherry, received the memorandum from the volunteers. A public meeting was held on the beach. It was there, A. K. Gopalan announced the 'Starvation March to Madras' starting the next day.⁵⁴

In July 1936 the 'Starvation March' started from Malabar to Madras. A. K. Gopalan was the volunteer captain. They sung, "Starvation, starvation, total starvation, people in towns and the countryside starve, even when people starve, taxation time is coming".⁵⁵ They walked twenty miles a day. When the march entered Madras, a procession of 3000 received them. A meeting was held in the Congress House. Next day they marched to the Legislature, but they were blocked by the Police. The march covered a distance of Seven hundred and fifty miles, they held five hundred meetings and 25,000 pamphlets were sold.⁵⁶

The leaders of the starvation march decided to convert the popular support they gained into political action. Village sanghams were to organise 'marches' to taluks, for that new cadres were organised. Along with the 'Village Volunteer Force', the 'Peasant Volunteer Force' and 'Labour Volunteer Force' were organised. Taluk peasant conventions were held. The 'Starvation Songs' of the villagers were widely heard in Malabar. After the starvation march to Madras, the Government framed false cases against A. K. Gopalan, Sardar Chandroth, Keralayyan and K. P. Gopalan. A. K. Gopalan and Chandroth were sentenced for one year imprisonment. Against Keralayyan the charge was that he was organising the peasants of north Malabar to make a Mappila revolt. The trade union leader, K. P. Gopalan was arrested on the charge that he was inciting factory workers to revolution. They were also sentenced for one year imprisonment. Through the arrest, the Government was determined to prevent those popular leaders from contesting the ensuing 1937 Provincial elections. In the election the Congress won majority seats. Raman Menon became Minister for jails. So the leaders were released before the completion of full term.⁵⁷

To create awareness among peasants, a drama, 'Patta-bakki', ie. 'Arrear rent' was staged. It was written by K. Damodaran, the one time 'Gandhian Satyagrahi' and one of the founder leaders of the C.P.I. unit in Kerala. He too acted in the drama along with K.P.R. Gopalan, A. K. Gopalan and E. P.

Gopalan. This drama played a great role in increasing the mass support of the Sangham. It awakened the class consciousness of the peasants and workers.⁵⁸ After the starvation march to Madras, Peasant Conventions were organised at taluk level. In November 1936 at Parassinikadavu the first 'Chirakkal Taluk Peasant Convention' was held. It was presided over by A.K.Pillai.⁵⁹

The Fezpur Congress of the A.I.C.C. in December 1936, declared a thirteen point agrarian programme.⁶⁰ The declaration signalled widespread agitations in Malabar. Throughout Malabar, peasant marches were organised to agitate for their demands. In 1937, those marches were given leadership by the 'Malabar Karshaka Sangham', having P. Narayanan Nayar as its President and K. A. Keraleeyan its Secretary (both were founder members of the C.P.I in Kerala). Shouting the slogans, 'end landlordism', 'end imperialism', 'reduce lease-rent' and 'land to the farmer', the entire tenants of north Malabar moved to the residence of their respective landlords. The sound of the slogans reverberated the political atmosphere of Malabar.⁶¹

On 16-09-1938, the march started from Karivalloor of Chirakkal taluk. The destination was the 'Kovilakom' of the 'Raja of Chirakkal', near Cannanore. He was the most powerful landlord of the time. He never talked to tenants in group; only one at a time was allowed to talk. Against the precedence, he welcomed the march and gave audience to the tenants. It added confidence of the peasants in the Sangham. Similarly the tenants of Mathamangalam, Kattoor, Eramom, Parapoi, Thimiri, Kooveri, Perumthatta and Korom started a March on 12-09-'38 and gave representation to the landlord, 'Vengayil Nayanar'. On 21-10-'38, the peasants of Malapattom, Muiyayam, Kurumattoor, Kayaralam, Changalayi, Panniyur, Kodaloor, Kolthuruthi marched to their landlord, 'Karakattidom Nayanar'. They were 7000, walked ten miles to represent their demands.⁶²

The tenants of 'Vellora Devaswom' too conducted 'demand march'. The 'Panur Karshaka Sangham' started its march from Maniyur under the leadership of Kundacherry Kunhiramanmaster to the landlord, 'Koodali Yasman'. In the Kottayam taluk the Sangham march was organised by T. V. Achuthan Nayar. It was led by A. K. Gopalan and Sardar Chandroth. The volunteers from different villages, Dharmadom, Vadakumpad, Eranjoli, Kathiroom, Kodiya etc. concentrated at the reading room of Pinarayi. From there, more than 2000 peasant volunteers marched to the 'Kovilakom' of Kottayam 'Thampuran'. But the 'Thampuran', ie., 'landlord', refused to see the march. At last, he agreed to see leaders. In the Kurumbranad taluk, the march started from Kuttyadi to the 'Poomeri Kovilakom'. The tenants of Mukkom Moideen Sahib too organised a march against him.⁶³

By the time in December 1938, the 'Second Malabar Peasant Conference' was held at Chevayur, in Calicut. The President of its reception committee was the trade union leader, Manjunatha Rao. The conference was presided over by A.K. Gopalan. In connection with the conference, three peasant marches were conducted; the first from the north, led by Chandroth and the second from the south, led by E.P. Gopalan, were directed to Calicut. The march from the north started on 11 December 1938. Each of the march contained 500 volunteers, selected from each village of the area. They wore red uniform. Most of them were seeing the Calicut town for the first time. Both marches were to join at Calicut and to present memorandum to the District Collector. But the Collector, Mr. Wood took a negative stand. He conducted propaganda against the march. When the red-march entered the town, Wood disappeared. The march was received by the workers and peasants of Calicut. Together they marched to the Collectorate. Having failed, to see the Collector, they marched to the beach. There, at the public meeting, their leader, E.P. Gopalan read the memorandum amidst applause, and declared that it was implemented in the absence of the opposite party (Collector) ⁶⁴.

In 1938 the 'Punam tenants' (seasonal cultivators of forestland) of Kurumbranad taluk started agitation, under M.K. Kelu. It lasted for nineteen days and ended in success. The lease-rent was fixed in one to ten ratio. Later the agitation spread to the Karinganad region also. Its leaders were, M.K. Kelu, C.H. Kanaran and M. Gopala Kurup.⁶⁵ The peasant marches changed the very mental attitude of the peasants to the landlords.

Table 8

Till then, they had to bow down in the presence of the lord, and could speak only in an inferior language, violation of which was punishable according to tradition. The marches made the peasants bold enough to talk to the lord on equal terms. The slogan, 'end landlordism' was dear to him. Leaders like C.H. Kanaran taught them lessons of 'rationalism', 'atheism' and 'class-war'. The poor tenants started calling the 'well fed' and the 'well dressed' by the term, 'bourgeois'. On 6 November 1938, throughout Malabar, 'The Kudiyan Act Amendement Day' was observed. By the time, peasants of Chirakkal-Kottayam taluks, the tenants of seven landlords planned to boycott the payment of lease-rent from November 1938 onwards. About seventy three village Sanghams agreed to it. But due to stiff resistance from the Rajaji Ministry and K. Kelappan, the plan was dropped.⁶⁶

The peasant marches which culminated in the combined demonstrations of the workers and peasants in Calicut and Mangalore, made the Government panic. The Government realised the danger in the popular agitations directed against landlords, who were the real basic support of the British rule in India. Collector Vellodi issued a 'red notice' giving caution that the peasant movement was danger to the country, which would finally lead to revolution.⁶⁷ There after the Government officers and the landlords joined together to suppress the growing peasant movement. They knew that the traditional type of feudal oppression was no longer possible before the organised strength. So they resorted to new method of torture and harassment by charging false cases against the activists of the 'Karshaka Sangham'. Thereby they thought the peasants would realise that the membership in the Dangham was an invitation of troubles from the Government and from the landlords. The Government officials started sending false reports and registering false cases against the Sangham workers, with the support of the landlords. Strangely, all those reports were taken at the face value by the Congress Ministry in Madras. In the countryside, new police stations were opened and additional police named, 'Punitive Police' was sent. Thus started the long police suppression of the working class movement, with the support of the landlords.⁶⁸

By the end of 1938 and by the beginning of 1939, Malabar was burning with peasant agitations. It attracted national attention, resulting in the visit of N.G. Renga, the General Secretary of the 'All India Kisan Sabha'. He visited the agrarian regions of Malabar and attended several Sangham meetings. In the Sangham meeting held at Kodakad 15,000 tenants participated, and at Balthoor 10,000. A good number of them were women. In those meetings, A.K. Gopalan asked them, whether they were ready to court arrest for their cause, in one voice, they replied 'Yes, Yes'.⁶⁹ The visit convinced Renga of the grave situation of the tenants of Malabar. The visit of Renga was an eye opener to the Congress Government in Madras. The Revenue Minister, T. Prakasam visited Malabar on 24 December 1938.⁷⁰ He visited Chirakkal taluk, talked to tenants and their leaders and realised the urgent necessity to amend the Malabar Kudiyan Act of 1930 to give relief to the peasants of Malabar. At last, the Madras Ministry led by C. Rajagopalachary decided to appoint an enquiry committee headed by K. Kuttikrishna Menon to submit report on the tenancy problem in Malabar.⁷¹ It was in this background that the C.S.P leaders formed the C.P.I. unit in Kerala by the end of 1939.⁷²

Formation of the Trade Union Movement

India which was an exporting country till 1813, gradually turned into an importing country due to the British rule. The Indian economy was reorganised to assist the British imperial interests. With it, the traditional Indian industries perished, her skilled craftsmen became unemployed and finally turned into waged worker of English factories. Their land policy increased agrarian debt, converted farmers into agro-labourers and agro-labourers to the unemployed. They were forced to leave their native village in search of work, to plantation estates or to industrial centres. They formed the early proletariat.⁷³

In plantations and in factories, the working condition was miserable. In plantation estates, bonded labour existed. A newspaper report in 1938 briefly tells the condition of the estate workers of Waynad:

It seems that the slave trade in all its ferocity precipitates at Waynad, among the estate workers. There, bankrupt peasants are sold like cattle by the brokers for the capitalists. Even after the death of the worker, the bond survives.⁷⁴

The bonded workers were given no cash payment. Only a chit was given to a particular shop to buy things. No outsider was allowed entry and the workers could not go out of the estate. To the estate record, each worker was a debtor from which he could not be free. The owner could even kill a worker. Soon, another person in the name of the dead worker would be posted so that even the police could do nothing.⁷⁵

The working condition of the industrial worker was also miserable. The working time was from 7 o'clock in the morning till 6 o'clock in the evening. 14 to 16 hours work in a day was common. Most of them had to reach the factory from the countryside. They had to start before the day-break and to return after sunset. They were not expected to wear clean clothes. The workers were even beaten. There was no labour law. The factory owner could deny work to anyone. Though they worked hard, only poverty existed.⁷⁶

In 1915 textile mills were established in Calicut and Cannanore by the Basel Mission. The mission founded tile factories at Puthiyara in 1874 and at Kodakal in 1891. Later those factories were renamed as 'Common Wealth Factories' by the English. By the beginning of the twentieth century,

Indian capitalists also started factories. In Malabar the Congress leader Samuel Aron was such a capitalist. Like the landlords, the Indian capitalists too were alienated from the peasants and workers since they too did not recognise the trade union rights, the workers thought, if power was transferred to political leaders like Aron, they would suppress the freedom of the workers with increased power. The absence of identification between the working class and the Congressmen was a big handicap of freedom struggle. It was to correct that defect, the left-wing Congressmen formed the C.S.P.⁷⁷

The first organised workers' strike in Malabar was, the 'South Indian Railway Strike', in July 1928. About the strike the Malayalam daily Mathrubhoomi wrote, "This strike is inevitable result of the awareness and consciousness among the workers."⁷⁸ Between 1931-'33 period K. P. Gopalan and his friends organised several trade unions such as, 'The North Malabar Labour Union', 'The Azhikode Weavers Union', 'Tellicherry Beedi Workers' Union', 'The D.M.R.T' (Devdar Malabar Reconstruction Trust) etc.⁷⁹ But a systematic co-ordination of the unions emerged only with the formation of the C.S.P. It started working among the workers from January 1935 onwards. In May 1935 all trade union workers of Kerala met at Calicut. It was organised by P. Krishna Pillai. The meeting was presided over by Mrs. Maniben Kara.⁸⁰

At that time the creation of the trade union was not so easy. The difficulties were many. Basically the workers had no confidence in the Congressmen, most of whom were caste-Hindus. Workers were afraid of the Government and police. Lastly, they had no courage to work against the factory owner. The problem of the identification of the leadership with the workers was successfully solved by the tactics of P. Krishna Pillai and the sincerity of A. K. Gopalan⁸¹. In 1935 the Government amended the labour law by reducing the 60 hours work to 54 hours. But the cunning factory owners decided to cheat the workers by reducing the total working hours to 54 by reducing the working days to five and a half and by retaining the ten hours work during five days. On the sixth day, the work was for four hours and only half day wage was given.⁸²

The workers of Calicut realised that they were cheated. The workers of the cotton mill struck work, on 19 February 1935. Their demands were, 'No punishment on striking workers'. 'Implement 9 hour work day' and 'Payment for the reduced six hours'.⁸³ The factory management tried to enroll new workers instead of the striking labourers. It failed because of the stiff resistance from the people of the locality. There was an attempt to make the Government interfere and arrest the workers. Since the strike was peaceful, that too did not happen. Still, the leaders of the strike like A.K. Gopalan were

summoned to the police station and they were threatened to withdraw the strike. The strike lasted for fifteen days. During the days of the strike, the leaders like A.K. Gopalan worked on war footing. They rose up at 4 o'clock in the morning. The first thing to do was, informing the volunteers for the day's picketing. Then they talked to the non-striking workers. A special squad was formed to persuade them to strike. Every day a public meeting was held. The speeches of the C.S.P. leaders were meant for the political education of the workers and to mobilize public support. To collect fund, mainly for the relief work of the families of the striking workers, four to five hours time was spent. Till 12 o'clock, house visit was done. The different problems of the workers due to the strike were discussed at that time. At 2 o'clock in the night, the strike committee met and evolved the programme for the next day.⁸⁴

When the management understood that the striking workers were dedicated and had the active public support, they came down and agreed to talk with the labour leaders. All demands of the striking workers were accepted. There was no victimization of the striking workers. The nine hour working day was accepted. A wage rise of one Anna per Rupee was allowed. Thus the strike was a great success. The 'Cotton Mill Workers' Union' was a creation of the strike. Though the factory owner had the support of the Government and had money and power, he could not defeat the striking workers. It taught a rich lesson to the workers. They no longer looked the C.S.P. workers with suspicion. Leaders like A.K. Gopalan were as an 'elder brother' or as a 'loving son'. 75% of the workers of the cotton mill joined the trade union. An office was opened, workers used to visit the office in the morning and in the evening and started reading newspapers regularly.⁸⁵

The tile factory workers of Feroke were actively supporting the cotton mill strike. They formed the 'Tile Factory Workers' Union' and wanted to strike for more or less the same demands of the cotton mill workers. But the tile factory management had resorted to the method of suppression. Workers were dismissed for participating in demonstrations. Their union was denied venue. Pressure was exerted to see that no union office was opened. Rowdies were paid to create confusion in the labour meetings. At the same time, the workers of the tile factory lacked sufficient class awareness and cooperation. So, to make awareness among the workers, and to protest against the suppressive methods of the factory management, K.P. Gopalan (the Madras Government records mention him as the 'professional agitator') started his ten days 'Nirahara Satyagraha' (hunger strike). Huge protest

demonstrations and public meetings were held. Near the Feroke bridge, in such a meeting, after the demonstration of 6000 workers, the decision of the strike was announced.⁸⁶

In February 1935, the strike broke out in the Tile factory of Feroke. The Government decided to suppress the strike with iron hand. Public meetings and gatherings more than four were banned. A.K. Gopalan and P. Krishna Pillai were banned from making speeches. All capitalists of Calicut and Cannanore joined together to suppress the strike. The rowdies were paid handsomely. For the head of A.K. Gopalan, rupees one thousand and expense for protection were assured. The violence that was created at the Cheruvannur junction, when the C.S.P. leader, K. Damodaran was speaking, resulted in the assault of Keraleeyan. In the presence of police, the rowdies specially recruited from Ernad, broke into the trade union office and destroyed everything. Finally, when the police charged the case, it was against A.K.Gopalan. That situation compelled the leadership to call off the strike.⁸⁷

The cotton mill workers were forced to strike again on 11 November 1935. It was the result of a conspiracy between the capitalists and the Government, to weaken the striking power of the 'Cotton Mill Workers' Union' through a prolonged strike. They started provoking the workers by violating the provisions of the agreement at the end of the first, successful strike in February. By the time, the C.S.P. organised a trade union meeting at Kallai. There, the cotton mill worker, Manari Appu spoke of the grave situation in the factory. For that, on the next day, Appu was dismissed from the factory. Immediately, the workers struck work and went out of the factory. It was the beginning of the second strike in the cotton mill.⁸⁸

The strike lasted for forty days. The management recruited new workers. To make them work, police camped inside the factory. The management and the Government adopted all methods to suppress the strike, which they had tested successfully at the time of the tile factory workers' strike. 'Prolong the strike and finally break it', was the method adopted. During the strike, the C.P.I. leaders, S.A. Dange and Sundarayya visited Calicut. Long starvation compelled the workers to end the strike. In spite of increased popular support, the strike failed. On 16 January 1936, the strike was withdrawn. Though the workers secured some financial benefits, about thirty active trade union workers were dismissed. Still, the capitalists did not win in undoing the trade union from the cotton mill. Instead, it got consolidated through the strike. During 1935-'36 period, strike became a regular feature of the trade union activity. Even during the non strike period the C.S.P. leaders lived among the workers. At Calicut, a 'Central Trade Union Office' started working. It was emerging as a meeting place of left-wing

political workers. There a night time literacy class was conducted for the workers. Such classes were conducted by the units also.⁸⁹

The Commonwealth Tile Factory workers also struck work. There, the workers were cruelly beaten by the police. P. Krishna Pillai was arrested and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. To bring about a settlement, even the Labour Minister of Madras and the well known trade union leader of the time, V. V. Giri talked to the factory manager, but it was of no use. The strike was suppressed. It was followed by the strike of the beedi workers of Tellichery and Cannanore. The weaving workers of Kakad, Chovva and Azhikode struck work twice.⁹⁰ By the beginning of 1937, the annual of the 'Cannanore Labour Union' was celebrated at the Aanandamandira hall. On 19 September 1937, the workers of Malabar observed the 'Declaration of Rights Day', by conducting mass rallies, holding red flags, shouting the slogans, 'Inquilab Zindabad', 'End Capitalism', 'End Imperialism', and 'Kisan Mazdoor Raj Zindabad'. Such rallies were conducted in Cannanore and Tellichery. The weavers of Karivalloor and Payyannur, saw mill workers, motor workers, workers of umbrella making, today tappers, Municipal workers, soap workers, fishermen, shop keepers, men employed in collecting forest produce etc., could be seen in the rally. The meeting at the Calicut beach passed the following resolution: 1. Demanded factory owners to recognise the trade unions, 2. Fix minimum wage as Rs.15 per month, 3. Reduction of working hours to 48 in a week. 4. Stop piece works on contract basis, 5. a) 14 days casual leave with salary. b) Start provident fund and Insurance. c) Free education and medical aid and d) Residential facility and 6. Ensure freedom of speech, press and organisation.⁹¹

The agitations of the factory workers during 1935-'40 period were projecting more or less the same demands, such as 'recognition of trade union', 'improved working conditions', and 'rise in wage'. In 1933 there were seventy-nine factories and 11,907 workers in Malabar. They were generally classified into 'Textile workers', 'Tile workers' and 'Beedi workers'⁹². If at all the workers attained anything through strikes, the factory owners deliberately neglected it. They with the help of the Government, tried to suppress the trade union movement. The bitter experience of the period made the C.S.P. leaders to reorganise the trade unions on the basis of new programme, such as: 1. Establishment of a 'Trade Union Central Council' in all industrial centres, 2. Organisation of 'Factory Committee' and 'Ward Committee' with every union, 3. To develop class awareness and general knowledge, organise study classes. It was also decided to give training in speech making and in writing,

4. Management of office work through systematic and disciplined day to day activities and 5. Formation of a 'Red Volunteer Force' in each centre.⁹³

In 1939 there was a new development in trade union movement of Malabar. On 17 January 1939 a beginning was made to organise trade union on industrial basis. On that day the 'All Malabar Motor Workers Meeting' was held at Tellichery. A.K. Gopalan was its reception committee president. The meeting was presided over by N.G. Renga. Soon the beedi workers convened an 'All Malabar Beedi Workers' Conference' on 30 July 1939 at Cannanore. Among the five demands they made, the fifth one was to sanction half hour time for lunch break.⁹⁴ Another feature of the strikes of those days was that there was mutual help of workers of different trades and also of peasants. For example, when the beedi workers were conducting a prolonged strike, there was a call from A.K. Gopalan to the peasants to help the striking workers, the response was immediate.⁹⁵ When the Tajmahal factory workers struck work, the textile workers and the T.S. Brothers union declared support. When the Tellichery textile workers struck work, the beedi workers declared support.⁹⁶

No Faith in the Congress Party

The workers like the peasants, gradually lost faith in the Congress Party. When the Beedi and the Textile workers were in strike in Cannanore and Tellichery, the Congress leader, Samuel Aron took negative stand so that, an early settlement of the strike became impossible.⁹⁷ The right-wing Congressmen used the period of the strike to condemn the C.S.P. leadership. The appointment of the Kuttikrishna Menon Committee was the result of the long struggle of thousands of peasants and workers of Malabar. But the way how C.K. Govindan Nayar and other right-wing Congressmen in the Committee submitted their report even against the spirit of the Fezpore A.I.C.C. resolutions, was an eyeopener to the workers and peasants of Malabar. They hoped for the formation of a political party with their class interest, to establish the 'Kisan Mazdoor Raj' (Peasants' and Workers' rule). The workers were only happy when such a political party with the 'red flag' was formed in December 1939.⁹⁸ The early trade union leaders of Malabar were P. Krishnan Pillai, A.K.Gopalan, K.P. Gopalan, N.C. Sekhar, C.H. Kanaran, K. Damodaran, Manchunatha Rao, P. Narayanan Nayar, P. Balanchandra Menon, P.V. Gopalan, M. Appu, and M. Apputty. But for the last two, all other leaders were also leaders of the Congress Socialist Party. The last two

sprung up from the workers of Malabar.⁹⁹

The Students' Federation

In Malabar the 'Students' Movement' assumed strength during 1936-'37 period. But even in 1931 when the 'Kerala State Congress Political Conference' was held at Badagara, a 'Students' Conference' also was convened. It was presided over by K.F. Narriman. The main activists were Subrahmanian Thirumumpu, P. Balachandra Menon, P.K. Balan etc, who were all students. But the students' organisation assumed political importance only when they were organised under 'Students' Federation', in 1936, by the C.S.P. Then the leaders of the Students' Federation were, Imbichi Bava, Kallat Krishnan etc.¹⁰⁰

The units of the Students' Federation were soon organised in schools and colleges. Their slogans were, 'Freedom', 'Peace' and 'Prosperity'. The students became aware of their share in shaping the new society. During the election to the Madras Provincial Legislature, they showed active interest. It continued after the election by active participation in the political activities. Their main problem was unemployment. Even degree holders, who were a few, could not get any job, and were roaming about. The educational system was meant to produce obedient servants of the British Government. The teaching method and syllabus too were made suitable to the system. The students were not expected to think about the developments outside the campus. They were carefully taught the 'Glorious Stories of Robert Clive'. In the name of discipline, teachers had the right to beat the students and even to keep them out of the class and even out of the institution. The students had no right to organise. But the students who saw the peasants and workers organising and agitating for justice, and the Congress agitating for freedom the British rule, naturally got organised.¹⁰¹

The first 'All Kerala Students' Federation Conference' was held in Calicut, in 1937. It was presided by Saumendra Tagore.¹⁰² The first students' strike in Malabar was held in 1939 in the Brennan College, Tellichery. It was to reinstate a dismissed student. A few Muslim students sought the help of A. K. Gopalan to organise the strike. In the evening, a meeting of the students was convened inside the college campus. It was presided over by A. K. Gopalan against the prohibition of the Principal. On

the next day, the students refused to enter classes. In the conciliation that followed, the problem was solved. With the strike, the federation became strong. An office was opened at Tellichery, and preparations started to hold the second state conference. The venue of the conference was Tellichery. The President of the conference was Batleewala. At the end of the conference dramatically, Batleewala was arrested by a warrant issued by the Government of Madras. The original order was to arrest A.K. Gopala too. Later it was changed by the pressure from the right-wing Congress leaders, Raman Menon and M. P. Damodaran. It created a stir throughout Kerala and further strengthened the students' federation.¹⁰³

In 1938 another 'Students' Conference' was held at Palghat. It was presided by Narriman. Strikes were held at Badagara and Chirakkal. There too A. K. Gopalan was consulted by the students in conducting the strike and also in establishing normal working condition. Against imposing fine, the students of Payyannur struck work. In front of the school a student conducted 'Nirahara Satyagraha' i.e., hunger strike. The tenants of the locality gave active support to the strike. It was settled by the mediation of the Divisional Officer.¹⁰⁴ The students of the District Board agitated for the recognition of the union and to end the detention system. Another strike broke out in protest against the expulsion of fourteen students from the Annamalai University. It spread all over Kerala. Strikes were held against unemployment and against the proposed constitutional reforms of India. In 1938 during the X-mas vacation, the members of the Students' Federation were engaged in organised political propaganda. They were split into batches of fifty volunteers. Three villages were selected for propaganda. They propagated the ideas of 'Socialism' and 'Class war', which received good response from peasants and workers.¹⁰⁵

The organisation of the Students' Federation and its connection with the C.S.P. irritated very much the right-wing Congressmen. The 'Mathrubhoomi' wrote an editorial condemning the students interfering in politics. It accused 'strikes' and 'hartals' as cheap agitational methods of the tenants and the labourers, copying of it by the students, they had degenerated.¹⁰⁶

Balasangham

In 1936, an organisation was started for the children, by the name, 'Balasangham'. It was first organised at Peelikode in Hosdurg. Its motto was, 'Study and Become Active'. It gradually spread to all taluks of Malabar with the spreading of the Karshaka Sangham and the trade unions. It got every

support and encouragement of the C.S.P. It was later becoming the nursery of the Communist leaders in Kerala. The primary lessons of the importance of the 'Organisation' and the necessity of 'propaganda' were taught to Communist leaders at childhood by the Balasangham.¹⁰⁸ It still survives in the same name as the primary tributary organisation of the C.P.I. (Marxist) in Kerala.

The Elementary School Teachers' Organisation

The elementary school teachers had played a decisive role in the development of the agitational politics of Kerala. They organised themselves to fight against injustice and met on collective basis in 1935, at Pinarayi, the birth place of the Communist Party of Kerala. Their first meeting was presided over by A. K. Gopalan. At that time, conducting schools in the private sector was like business to make money. The manager of the school was getting money from the Government by way of grant, for the salary of the teachers and for the maintenance of the school. Often the whole amount of the grant went into the pocket of the manager. That he was doing with the help of corrupt bureaucrats of the Department of Education.¹⁰⁹ During 1938-'39 period, the teachers' organisation took anti-imperialist stand. Then it represented the whole elementary school teachers of Malabar. Apart from organising themselves, they started organising the peasants and students. On 26 September 1939, they struck work and observed 'hartal' (halting of work and business) throughout Malabar.¹¹⁰

The Progressive Writers' Association

In 1936, with the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress, the 'All India Progressive Writers' Association' was formed. It was the Indian response to the call of Maxim Gorkey and Henry Barbusse at the international level, upon every writer to struggle against the threat of Fascism. Its leaders in India were the pro-Communist writers like, Sajjad Zaheer and K. A. Abbas. E. M. S. Namboodiripad, who was closely associated with it at the national level, decided to form its unit in Kerala.¹¹¹ Its purpose was also to integrate creative writings with the revolutionary movement in the

country. The C.S.P. organised its first meeting in Kerala in 1937, at Trichur. The meeting was presided over by A.D. Harisharma. Participants of the meeting were, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, K. Damodaran, Achutha Kurup, P. Kesavadev, A. Madhavan, K. K. Warriar, Subrahmaniam Thirumunpu, K. A. Damodara Menon. C. Narayana Pillai, etc. In Kerala, the movement was called, 'Jeeval Sahithyam' (Literature of the Living). The young writers of the movement contributed greatly to the development of the revolutionary movement. Some of the most revolutionary works were, 'Pattabakki' i.e., 'The Rent Arrear' by K. Damodaran, 'Red Volunteer' by P. Kesavadev, 'Anadha Manidrangal' ie. 'Destitute Homes' by Thakazhi, 'Inquilab Zindabad' by Mohammed Basheer, 'Achane Kandappol' ie., 'When Father was Seen' by S. K. Pottakad etc.¹¹²

NOTES

¹The Malabar District Congress Committee was organised in 1915. In 1916, it met at Palghat. Its patron was, Vasudevaraja of Kollamkode. He requested the Government to recruit more Nayers into the army, congratulated the Government in forming a Nayar Bridge. It is protested against the Government in declaring the rivers and canals as Government property. In 1917, the Congress was presided by Sir. C.P. Ramaswami Iyer. Its patron was the Samrin of Calicut. The meeting resolved not to discuss the tenant problem. The third conference was held in 1918. It was presided by the Valiya Raja. The fourth conference was in 1919. Promoters were Sankara Varma Raja and Rama Varma Raja. The fifth conference was held in 1920. Its patron was Manavetan Thirumulpad of Nilambur. Then, large number of sub-tenants, mostly Mappilas participated. Influenced by the call of Khilafat, they supported the 'Non- Cooperation Movement'. The landlords allied with Mrs. Annie Besant and voted against the Movement. For the first time, the Congress passed a resolution requesting the Government to give legal protection to the holdings of the tenants. It resolved to limit the working hours, abolish child labour and to cancel the 'Planters' labour act. In 1921, the first Kerala State Congress Conference met at Ottapalam. As part of the Conference, 'Tenant Conference', 'Khilafat Conference' and 'Students' conference' were held. But the interests of the landlords prevented to pass a resolution on the tenant problem.

A.K. Pillai, op.cit., pp. 290-300, 304-316, 326-332.

²Kumaran Asan, Prathibha, Mal. Magazine, Vol. Makaram-Kumbham, 1920, Quoted in, N.E. Balaram, The Communist Movement in Kerala, Mal., Trivandrum: Prabhatham Pub. Co. 1990, pp. 51-52.

³The second State Congress was held in 1923 at Palghat. In 1924, about the working of the Congress, its Secretary, P. Ramunni Menon reported, " Though two years have passed, the Malabar Congress has not yet recovered from the shock of 1921 revolt". The meeting of the K.S.C.C. was postponed due to lack of quorum. Soon Ramunni Menon resigned. Mr. Comberbail was nominated as the temporary secretary. He reported, "... Gandhiji has written in Young India that the people of Kerala are in deep sleep so that, they cannot hear the call of the Congress. The General Secretary of the A.I.C.C, J. Nehru complained that he could not get even a list of the Congress Committee in Kerala"

A.K. Pillai, op.cit., pp. 333 & 372.

⁴A.K.Gopalan quoted in, T.V. Krishnan, Sakhav, Biography of P. Krishna Pillai, Trivandrum: Prabhatham Pub. Company, 1975, p. 36.

⁵On 14 August 1925, the Kerala State Congress Committee passed a resolution to form a 'Malabar United National Party'. Based on three point programme (1. Self-Government 2. Hindu-Muslim Unity and 3. Promotion of swadesi and eradication of untouchability), Congress decided to work in coalition with like minded parties.

A.K.Pillai, loc.cit., pp. 373-374.

⁶The fourth Kerala State Congress Committee met in 1928 at Payyannur, presided by Jawaharlal Nehru. In the same venue, the majority of the delegates met under the banner of 'North Kerala Nayar Mahasabha'.

To join the 'Salt Satyagraha', from Travancore, a volunteer team under the leadership of Ponnara Sreedhar, N.P. Kurukkal and N.C. Sekhar reached Malabar, violated law and courted arrest. The first batch of 'Satyagrahis' under Kelappan included P. Krishna Pillai, K.P. Gopalan, Moyyarathu Sankaran, T. Subrahmanyam Thirumunpu, Muhammed Abdul Rehman, K. Keraleeyan and R.V. Sharma.

N.E. Balaram, op.cit., p.52, Also vide

A.K.Pillai, loc.cit., pp. 373, 375, 385-88, 390, 392-395.

⁷Moyyarat Sankaran was the pilot of the volunteers. When volunteers were beaten and sent to prison all over India, in Malabar, Government refused to beat and arrest the volunteers the first week. Only on 30 April Kelappan was arrested. In the Kasargod taluk, the agitation was opened by P. Krishna Pillai (founder of the C.P.I. in Kerala). In June the agitation was shifted to Calicut. There together with Kelappan, Abdul Rehman Sahib and P. Krishna Pillai were arrested. In the 1930 agitation, A. K. Gopalan was also arrested. They were first sent to the Cannanore jail and later to Vellore. There were four hundred freedom fighters in the jail. To break their unity, they were classified into A, B, & C. In the upper class, life was comfortable like that of a hostel. In the C class, life was miserable. Their legs, hands and even body was chained. The special type of chain called, 'Kol changala' was used for it. Without any reason, at any time, they were beaten. They were forced to do works like scavenging. P. Krishna Pillai, K. P. Gopalan, A. K. Gopalan etc. established contact with terrorist leaders like R. Sengupta, T. N. Chakrabarthy, R. C. Acharya, K. N. Tivari, J. Kapoor and Mota Singh. Mota used to ask, "Why should you make salt? Can't you rob the Government Treasury?" Gandhi-Irwin Pact was a subject of talk among prisoners. They feared that the pact would put out the agitating fervour of the people. Released from the jail, Congressman like A. K. Gopalan worked hard to organise the party, to picket foreign cloth shops and liquor shops. It was a difficult task. Common people had no sympathy to the Congress. They mocked at the people wearing khadar. They believed that the Congressmen were responsible for the reduction in the price of coconut. They arranged goondas to beat them. Howling at them was common. Since the Congress volunteers were educated young men from feudal families, no response was invoked from the poor peasants and workers. The difference of casteism existed. When they were picketing a toddy shop, a poor peasant got angry and said. "You say, you work for the poor. Is it not a lie? You have enough to eat. You need not work. We work for you. Due to flood, I got not a single grain. Still I measured the lease yesterday. For that I had to borrow. In debt, I have to leave my hut next year. You do not allow us to draw water from your well. You want our help to drive out the British. We will not. They are better than you. They practice no casteism. Nobody will take you seriously". This was the attitude of the majority of poor peasants. Quoted in,

A.K. Gopalan, The Story of My Life, Mal., (autobiography) Trivandrum: Chintha Publishers, 1985, pp. 25, 27-30. Also vide A.K. Pillai, op.cit., p. 405.

⁸A.K. Gopalan, loc.cit., p. 35. Also vide T.V. Krishnan, op.cit., p. 26.

⁹A.K. Pillai, op.cit., pp. 406 & 409.

¹⁰A.K.Gopala, op.cit., pp. 35-36.

¹¹T.V.Krishnan, op.cit., p. 26, Also vide A.K. Gopalan, op.cit., pp. 36-37.

¹²Ibid., pp.37-38.

¹³Ibid., pp.38-41. Also vide E.M.S.Namboodiripad, How I became A Communist, op.cit., p. 127.

¹⁴A.K.Gopalan, loc.cit., pp. 41-42. Also vide, T. V. Krishnan, loc.cit., p. 26.

¹⁵A.K.Gopalan, loc.cit., pp. 43-46.

¹⁶E.M.S.Namboodiripad, How I became A Communist, op.cit., pp. 127-136, Also vide, T.V. Krishnan, loc.cit., p. 25.

¹⁷E.M.S.Namboodiripad, How I became A Communist, loc.cit., pp. 139-140, Also vide, Agarwal, Constitutional History of India and National Movement, New Delhi: Chand & Co., 1981, p. 218.

¹⁸A.K. Gopalan, loc.cit., pp. 47-51.

¹⁹Ibid, pp. 47-53. Also vide, T.V. Krishnan, loc.cit., pp. 26-27.

²⁰Appendices VI, VIa, VIb, VIc, VIId, VIe & VI f regarding police report about 'Guruvayur March' (Unpublished Document).

²¹A.K. Gopalan, loc.cit., pp. 54-55, Also vide, Infra, p.588.

²²A.K. Gopalan, op.cit., pp. 58-59 & 60.

²³E.M.S. Namboodiripad, How I Became A Communist, op.cit., p. 173.

²⁴T.V. Krishnan, op. cit., pp. 34, 37 & 39.

²⁵E.M.S. Namboodiripad, loc.cit., p. 133.

²⁶N.E. Balaram, op. cit., p. 72. Also vide, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, idem.

²⁷E.M.S. states of another Malayali, A. Madhavan also attending the Patna Conference.

E.M.S. Namboodiripad, How I became A Communist. loc.cit. pp. 164, 172-173.

²⁸A.I.C.C. Files, "G.56" 1935; Mathrubhoomi Weekly, 15 November 1937; Home, Political Department, "4/6, 1941", New Delhi: National Archives. In,

K. Gopalankutty, "Popular Base of National Movement: Congress and the Workers in Malabar 1934-40", in, Indian Independence Struggle and the Communist Movement, Trivandrum: Chintha Publishers for, A.K.G. Study Centre, 1984, p. 142, n. 21.

²⁹To E.M.S. Namboodiripad, even in June-July 1937, a secret fraction of the C.P.I. was formed by P. Krishna Pillai, K. Damodaran, N. C. Sekhar and he himself.

E.M.S. Namboodiripad, The Communist Party of Kerala, Vol. I, Trivandrum: Chintha Publishers, 1984, p.4.

³⁰File No. 1938, Sub: "A.K. Gopalan Enlists Members to the Congress Party", Year 1934: Government of Travancore, C.S. Also vide, Appendix IX (Unpublished Documents).

³¹A.K.Pillai, op. cit., pp. 424-26.

³²E.M.S.Namboodiripad, How I became A Communist, loc.cit., p. 173.

³³A.K. Pillai, op. cit., pp. 434-26.

³⁴A.K. Gopalan, op.cit., pp. 67 & 68. Also vide, T.V. Krishnan, op.cit., p.51.

³⁵E.M.S. Namboodiripad, ... Motherland, op.cit., pp. 319-322.

³⁶N.E.Balaram, op.cit., p.83.

³⁷E.M.S.Namboodiripad, ... Motherland, loc.cit., pp.319-322.

³⁸Idem.

³⁹Ibid., 321.

⁴⁰"The Report of the Economic Depression Committee", quoted, N.E. Balaram, op.cit., p.7.

⁴¹Ibid, pp. 40, 51, 56, 58, 65 & 68. Also vide "The Condition of the Peasants of Cochin". Pamphlet, Part III, quoted, N.E. Balaram, ibid., pp. 6 & 7.

⁴²Idem.

⁴³E.M.S. Namboodiripad, ... Motherland, loc.cit., pp. 181 & 182.

⁴⁴Only the 'jenmi' (landlord) had ownership on land in Malabar. By the beginning of the 20th century, the 'Kana Kudiyan' started agitating for proprietorship on his land. It was granted by the 'Tenancy Act' of 1930.

Ibid., pp. 171 & 333.

⁴⁵E.M.S. Namboodiripad, ... Motherland, loc.cit., pp. 333 & 334.

⁴⁶Idem.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 173-177.

⁴⁸In the Peasants' revolts of the 19th century, the 'toddy-tappers' of north Malabar and the 'Mappilas' of the south Malabar were in the forefront. In 1924, the 'Verum Pattakudiyan' (sub-tenants) of Malabar organised a meeting at Puthupanam in Badagara. Thousands of tenants participated, under the leadership of a peasant headman, 'Moolayil Koramban', about 100 tenants marched to Madras to make the Government include their interests also in the 'Kudiyani Bill'. They gave memorandum to the Government and also to Mannathu Krishnan Nayar (Balaram).

To A.K. Gopalan, in the entire Kasargode taluks, the peasants were organised by the leaders of the 'Abhinaya Bharata Yuvak Sangham'.

N.E. Balaram, op.cit., pp.27 & 115. Also vide, A.K. Gopalan, op. cit., p. 79; and Supra, pp. 66 & 67.

⁴⁹The tenants existed on unbearable tax, lease-rent and debt. Each birth and death in the landlord's family was added burden to the tenant. He had to do free labour on such occasion. He had to rear the lord's cattle for nothing, guard his house and move away with a bending head at the sight of the lord. He was not allowed to wear clean cloths, cloths could not reach the ankles, education was denied, the farming expense, even in the years of flood and drought he had to meet and the law and the Government helped the lord to exact rent from the tenant. In the north Malabar, where cruel feudal suppression existed, the Sangham grew strong. There, the landlords had even the right to kill

the tenant. Such landlords were, the 'Raja of Neeleswaran', 'Nayanar or Karakkattidom', 'Yesman of Kalyat', 'Thampuran or Chirakkal', 'Kandakayil Govindan Nambiar' etc. Coercive collections such as, 'vasi', 'nuri', 'vachukanal', 'mukkal', 'kankani', 'kazhcha', 'poli', 'kallapara', 'polichezhuthu', 'seelakasu' etc., existed. On all special occasions the tenant had to give gift. Thus apart from the lease-rent, whatever left was usurped by the landlord in the name of coercive collections. The early peasant agitations were against the coercive collections.

A.K. Gopalan, loc.cit., p. 63, Also vide, For Soil, Trivandrum: Chintha Publishers, 1986., pp. 16-19.

⁵⁰Thrice the Sangham leaders tried to hold a public meeting against the landlord, Karimarathu Namboodiripad. First two attempts failed because of the stiff resistance from a loyal tenant, Kariyil Ambukutty. At the third time, when his own crop was plundered by the rowdies of the lord, Ambukutty joined the Sangham and helped to organise the meeting against the lord. But no tenant was courageous enough to stand witness to the case. The leaders of the Sangham gave statements against the landlord in the court. The court verdict directed the lord to return the pepper crop to Ambukutty. The victory of the case gave big stir to the peasants to join the Sangham.

A.K. Pothuval, The Peasant Movement in Kerala, Trivandrum: Prabhatham Publishers, 1976, pp. 35 & 36.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 37-38.

⁵²A.K. Gopalan, For Soil, op.cit., 19-20.

⁵³The founder leaders of the Sabha were, Swami Sahajananda, Indulal Yajnik, Musafar Ahmed, Acharya Narendradev, Karyananda Sarma & Rahul Sankeertyanan. The objects were:

1. Total liberation of the peasants from economic exploitation,
2. Organise the peasants to agitate and 3. Attainment of sovereign power to the working people and participation in the freedom struggle.

A.K. Pothuval, The Peasant Movement..., loc.cit., pp. 83-84.

⁵⁴A.K. Gopalan, For Soil, op.cit., p. 20-21.

⁵⁵Quoted in

A.K. Gopalan, My Story of Life, op.cit., pp 82-92.

⁵⁶The volunteers of the 'Starvation March to Madras' included, Sardar Chandroth, K. P. R. Gopalan, M. K. Kelu, C. C. Gopi, Kasim Manuel, P. M. Gopalan, P. Padmanabhan, V. Krishnan, Chauthukutty, P. K. Narayanan Nambiar, Gopalan, Krishnan Nayar, etc. P. Gopalan went in advance to give propaganda.

Ibid. Also vide,

A.K. Pothuval, The Peasant Movement..., loc.cit., pp. 42-43.

⁵⁷A. K. Gopalan, op.cit., p.82.

⁵⁸A.K. Pothuval, op.cit., p.47.

⁵⁹A.K. Gopalan, loc.cit., p. 93.

⁶⁰Most of the twelve points were relevant to the peasants of Kerala. They are: 1. Reduction in the lease-rent and tax. 2. Exempt barren lands from rent and tax..., 3. Abolish all feudal collections, declare all collections outside the lease-rent, illegal. 4. Permanent hereditary ownership of the tenant on land, 5. Introduce cooperative farming. 6. Relief from agrarian debt, appoint special court to enquire on agrarian debt, 7. Public ownership on canals, ponds, wells and forests of public use, 8.Recovery of arrear rent through civil court, not through eviction, 9. Agro- labourers should be given minimum decent wage, 10. Recognise agrarian unions.

A.K. Pothuval, The loc.cit., pp. 47-49.

⁶¹A.K. Pothuval, The Story of Peasant Agitation, Trivandrum: Prabhatham Publishers, 1978, pp. 23-24. Hereafter abbreviated, "A.K. Pothuval,... Peasant Agitation".

⁶²Ibid.p.25.

⁶³loc.cit., p. 25-26.

⁶⁴By this time, from Kodakad, South Kasargode, a march started to Mangalore, with 200 volunteers under T. Subrahmanian Thirumunbu to meet the Collector.

A.K. Pothuval, ... Peasant Agitation, loc.cit., p. 28. Also vide, A.K. Gopalan, The Story of My Life, op.cit., p. 194.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 82 & 87.

⁶⁶N.E. Balaram, op.cit., p. 118.

⁶⁷A.K.Gopalan, For Soil, op. cit., p.25.

⁶⁸Idem, Also vide.

A.K. Pothuval, ... Peasant Struggle, op.cit., pp. 31, 32, 34, 35, 39 & 40.

⁶⁹The tenants quoted in,

A.K. Gopalan, The Story of My Life, op.cit., pp. 105-106.

⁷⁰A.K. Pothuval, The Peasant Movement..., loc.cit., p. 59.

⁷¹K. Kuttikrishna Menon, an advocate in Madras was the Chairman of the Committee. The other members were C.K. Govindan Nayar, P. Raghava Menon, M.P. Damodaran, Mohamed Abdul Rehman Sahib, E.K. Kannan & E.M.S. Namboodiripad. Excepting the last three, the majority members were right-wing Congressmen. They could have given a report to the spirit of the 'Fezpore Resolution'. But, their opposition to the C.S.P. leaders in Kerala made them submit a report against the spirit of the Fezpore and against the interest of the peasants.

The report was against reducing the lease-rent, exempting unproductive land from taxation and cancel all evictions. Only the 'punam land' was exempted from taxation. Eviction for arrear lease-rent was allowed.

Against the majority report, E.M.S. Namboodiripad gave and 'Objection Report', which was taken to be the 'Manifesto on the Land Relations of Malabar'. It disapproved the purpose of the very existence of landlordism, since it was doing no use to society. At the same time, he proved with statistical data, how landlordism was existing as a burden on the producers on land the tenants.

The right-wing in the Congress was always working against the socialists who were organising the workers and peasants for collective bargaining. To counter the left at the party level, they

organised the 'Gandhi Sangham'. They worked indirectly against 'trade unions' and 'Karshaka Saghams'. It gave courage to Capitalist- Congressmen like Samuel Aron to boycott the C.S.P. led K.P.C.C. In the second District Board election, they projected rebels. By the end of 1938, when Malabar was burning with peasant agitations, and when the 'Rajaji Government' sent 'Punitive Police' to suppress the agitations, the right-wing Congressmen supported the Government in its suppressions against the working class. It generated anti-Congress sentiment among the workers and peasants, which was skillfully utilised by the CSP leadership when they formed the C.P.I. unit in Kerala.

E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "The Objection Report", to, The Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee, 1940, Government of Madras: in, ... Motherland, pp. 173-177, 333 & 334. Also vide, Table 7. Supra, p. 135.

⁷²Infra, p. 309.

⁷³Supra, pp. 131-134.

⁷⁴Quoted from, Mathrubhoomi, Calicut: 14 May 1938.

⁷⁵Andalat, The Origin of the Working Class in Kerala, Trivandrum: Chintha Publishers, 1984, pp. 46-47.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 52-55.

⁷⁷A.K. Gopalan, The Story of My Life, op. cit., p. 66.

⁷⁸Their demands were, 'reinstate the dismissed', 'increase low wages', and 'solve difficulties of the running staff'. It was a success in Trivandrum, Palghat, Shornoor, Calicut, Tellichery, Badagara & Cannanore. The Malabar leaders who helped the strike were, K.P. Gopalan, U. Gopala Menon & Kuroor Namboodiripad. Editorial quoted,

Mathrubhoomi, Calicut: 31 July 1928. Also vide, R. Prakasam, History of Trade Union Movement in Kerala, Trivandrum: Prabhatham Publishers, 1979, pp. 42-43. N.E. Balaram, op.cit., pp. 98-99.

⁷⁹In 1931, the workers of Common Wealth factories struck work 19 days against reduction of wages. But the strikes were not well organised. After the strike, the workers used to invite the

Congress leaders for conciliation. V.R. Nayar, U. Gopala Menon, P.V. Chathu Nayar etc., were interested in the Welfare of the workers. Early demands included, stop beating, time to use toilet, stop indiscriminate dismissal, etc. R.Prakasam, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-44.

⁸⁰The leaders participated were, P. Krishna Pillai, K.P. Gopalan, A.K. Gopalan, R. Sugathan, N.C. Sekhar, K.K. Varrier, P.S. Namboodiri, P.K. Balan etc. Balaram, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-101.

⁸¹P. Krishna Pillai and A.K. Gopalan used to wait at the gate of the cotton mill to befriend the workers for making a trade union. They started at their khadar clothes, turned their heads and passed away. They were afraid to go to the leaders. Still Krishna Pillai approached them with a smile. A.K. Gopalan too talked to them. Finally the workers were convinced of the sincerity of the two, they realised that they were a new type of Congressmen, whom were able to understand the sufferings of the workers. After a few days, the workers agreed to hold a meeting. One day after the work they met. Only 15 workers were present. But the number increased due to the work of men like, Maneri Appu, a worker. Regular classes of A.K. Gopalan and Krishna Pillai helped them to understand that the worker was starving because, the factory owner was accumulating profit. Within one month, the trade union was organised in the cotton mill and 75% of the workers joined it.

A.K. Gopalan, *The Story of My Life*, *op.cit.*, pp. 70-71.

⁸²*Mathrubhoomi*, Calicut: 31 March 1935.

⁸³R. Prakasan, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-67.

⁸⁴A.K.Gopalan, *The Story of My Life*, *op.cit.*, pp. 72-73.

⁸⁵*Prabhatham Annual*, Calicut: 1939. Also vide. A.K.Gopalan, *loc.cit.*, *op.cit.*, pp.72-73.

⁸⁶*Public Department (General)*, Fortnightly Reports; Report of the second half of March 1935, Government of Madras: Tamilnadu Archives. *Ibid.*, second half of April 1935.

⁸⁷A.K. Gopalan, *loc.cit.*, *op.cit.*, pp. 76-77.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 78. Vide R. Prakasan, *loc. cit.*, p.70.

⁹⁰A.K.Gopalan, *The Story of My Life*, loc.cit., pp. 100-102.

⁹¹R.Prakasam, op.cit., p. 89. Also vide E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "Looking Back", Desabhimani Weekly, Calicut: 26 June 1977.

⁹²Prakash Karat, "Agrarian Relations in Malabar, 1925-'47", Social Scientist, Trivandrum: October 1973, p. 37.

⁹³K. Gopalankutty, "Congress and the Workers in Malabar", op.cit., p. 138.

⁹⁴R. Prakasam, loc.cit., 91-92.

⁹⁵The peasants from Pinarayi and Erayoli marched to Tellicherry with their produce. An old peasant told A. K. Gopalan, "As long as we are alive, these working boys need not fear, we will feed them".

A. K. Gopalan, op. cit., p. 101.

⁹⁶K. Gopalankutty, loc. cit., p. 139.

⁹⁷A.K.Gopalan, loc cit. pp. 101-103.

⁹⁸Supra., pp. 315-318.

⁹⁹R. Prakasam, loc.cit., p. 91.

¹⁰⁰N.E. Balaram, op. cit., pp. 212-213.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 214. Also vide, A.K. Gopalan, *The Story of My Life*, loc.cit., p.98.

¹⁰²N.E. Balaram, loc cit., p. 214.

¹⁰³A.K. Gopalan, *The Story of My Life*, loc.cit., p. 99.

¹⁰⁴Idem.

¹⁰⁵N.E. Balaram, loc.cit., pp. 214-15.

¹⁰⁶A.K. Gopalan, *The Story of My Life*, loc.cit. p. 270.

¹⁰⁷N.E.Balaram, op.cit., p. 214. Also vide, A.K. Gopalan, op.cit. p.106.

¹⁰⁸A.K.Gopalan, The Story of My Life, loc. cit., p. 106.

¹⁰⁹A.K. Gopalan wrote an article entitled, 'School Business' in the daily newspaper, 'Mathrubhoomi', exposing corruptions in the management of a particular school. Based on it, an enquiry was conducted by the Government and the school was denied grant.

Ibid., p.100.

¹¹⁰Idem.

¹¹¹E.M.S. Namboodiripad, How I Became a Communist, op.cit., pp. 208-209.

¹¹²N.E.Balaram, loc. cit. pp. 181-184.

“Reaching out to Infinity: The Mathematical Imaginary of Medieval Keralam”

Pyari Suradh

Abstract: One important intellectual circle which disintegrated and died out after the European invasion of India was the Kerala school of astronomy and mathematics. The significance of Kerala mathematics lies in its rare continuity. According to available information it stretched from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century C. E. The major proponents of the School hailed from Irinjalakuda, Ponnani, Alathoor, Thrikkandiyoor, Vanniyoor and Sukapuram. The generous patronage of the rulers of these regions who promoted studies of advanced nature not only in Sanskrit and literature but also in astrology, and astronomy led to an explosion of knowledge in mathematics. The invention of Calculus and the Infinite series were important milestones in the journey towards the rise of modern mathematics. The present paper examines the advances in the study of mathematics, from finite concepts and ideas to the infinite in Kerala, now widely known as the Kerala School of Mathematics.

Key words: Matematics, Infinite Series, Medieval Keralam, Astrology, Astronomy

Pyari Suradh Kerala is located in the peninsular region of Indian subcontinent which helps in easy access to the place through land and through ocean. The unique geographical features especially the 44 rivers, some of which are so deep and navigable that, in ancient times, were used for inland navigation similar to present day Suez Canal helped the region to develop a constant relation with many places around the globe for trade, tourism, education etc. The geographical location provides Kerala with a warm and moderate climate throughout

the year which has been very crucial in the development of the place as an agrarian society and also a business centre. The very heavy rainfall received by the region during southwest monsoon and northeast monsoon and the steep terrain helps in constant alluvial deposition, high yield, cultivation in paddy fields and dry land of almost all crops possible, especially high yield of rice. These unique features are at the same time a curse as it causes very drastic and destructive flooding of the region for short periods which loots the land of its wealth. The population in this region always exhibited an interest in all round growth of their society which reflects in the present day also.

As an agrarian society their drive to know about the seasonal and climatic changes accurately can be easily understood. This led to the intense studies in the fields of mathematics and astronomy. There were also a great number of extended and elaborate work especially translations from earlier works from other parts of India. K V Sarma in his work *History of Kerala School of Hindu Astronomy* reveals the fact that nearly 400 palm leaf manuscripts on astronomy and 350 on astrology have been discovered in Kerala. The conservative mindset of the custodians are the reason for the inaccessibility of this by students and scholars interested in this area. A number of them have perished and the extant ones face threats of perishing without being deciphered in the hot humid climate of Kerala. (Sarma, 1972) In Kerala almost all incidents in a person's life were celebrated ceremoniously starting from birth which continues even after death. To list a few auspicious ceremonies in a person's life "vayambu kodukkuka" (feeding the new born a potion made of gold, honey and sweet flag), "cheroonu" or "annaprashanam" (first introduction of solid food and all the tastes to the infant), "irupathettukettu" (the naming ceremony), vidyarambham (initiation to learning), rithukalyanam (celebration of attainment of puberty), "vivaha nishchayam" (engagement), vivaham (marriage), pulikoduppu (celebrating pregnancy), shradham, (the final tribute giving and adieu to soul). Also horoscope of a person was made for foretelling the incidents in their life. This necessitated the advancement in mathematics, astrology and astronomy.

Apart from these bhoomipooja (ritual in honour of land) kallideel (laying the corner stone for any new building), kattilaveypu (placing of the first front door of a building), grihapravesham (house warming), neetilirakkal (the first introduction of a boat or ship to water), annual

festivals in religious centres especially temples. In the field of agriculture starting from the sowing of the seed ,followed by transplanting sapling, harvest ,thrashing, winnowing, niraputhari (collecting harvest in barn), harvest festival were all occasions of celebration. And auspicious time were observed for these rituals. This forced them in advanced study of mathematics and astronomy to invent calendars, exact knowledge of summer and winter solicit and season change, start and end of rainy season, period of high tide and low tide etc. for effective agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing and transportation.

Another area is trade, from ancient times Kerala was a well-known port city due to its location, indigenous products including spices, teak and wooden ships known as “uru” which were of great demand. It was accessible to both east, west via sea but the exact time of the winds from land to oceans and oceans to the land now known as westerly or trade winds in the present were crucial in enabling transport of sailing ships via sea .The absence of technologically advanced instruments for tracking sea route and determining directions forced to resort to the knowledge of position of stars which were an indispensable prerequisite in navigation skills. This lead to the advancement in astronomy, mathematics, cartography. Geometry for ship building and also building of houses, religious centres and other great buildings. In order to make accurate predictions a thorough knowledge of the position of stars and planets and seasonal and climatic changes were necessary. And these were the pioneering reason for the birth growth and rapid development of mathematics, astronomy and astrology.

The invention of advanced mathematics in medieval Kerala are a result of the continuity in rich Indian tradition and the relation between advanced civilizations in the past through travel of Indian scholars belonging to all sects including Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, Muslims, Christians to educational centres in Baghdad, Chang’an etc. and the diasporic communities in Kerala which includes Jews, Christians, Arabs, Buddhists, Jains etc. The novel ideas thus obtained were incorporated into literature, religion, arts, medicine, science and technology. Some unique works are Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhitha, Ashtanga Hridayam, Ashtanga Sangraha, Sharngadhara Samhita, Bhava Prakasha on Ayurveda Maathangaleela on elephantology, Manushyalaya Chandrika on construction of houses (extant version of both authored by Thirumangalath Neelan Musath and older with a commentary by Paloli Choi

Vaidyar) etc. All of them give us a knowledge in the traditional mathematics in the form of weights and measures, flawless construction manuals etc. These works were found as written in Sanskrit, Manipravala (combination of Sanskrit and Tamil –believed to be the ancestor language of Malayalam) and in Malayalam.

Though the Sanskritic tradition, that is learning and teaching of Sanskrit were enjoyed only by the Brahmins, the vocational pursuits and scientific and technical knowledge were known and practised by various communities. Astrological predictions and calculation of auspicious time were done by both Brahmin and Ganaka community. Members of Ganaka community also practised medicine. Medical practitioners also belonged to the communities of Brahmin, Ezhava, Vela or Mannan, Nair etc. Hendrik van Rheede expresses his indebtedness, in the preface to *Hortus Malabaricus*, towards Itti Achuden, who was a Thiyya, along with other Brahmin physicians. The master craftsman or master carpenter was an honorific title which refers to a legendary carpenter, Raman, whose parents were Vishwakarma. The famous temple architectures which were believed to be designed and built by Raman Perumthachan were numerous. Some of them are Shiv temple at Uliyanloor, Chengannur Mahadeva temple, Vazhapally Siva temple.

The legendary astronomer, Vararuchi, is believed to be the pioneer of Kerala astronomy and the author of *Chandravakyas* (Moon Sentences – mnemonic words or phrases which is a set of 248 numbers to calculate the longitudes or positions at different intervals of time to help worshippers carry out their daily observances and rituals). *Chandravakyas* were also used in Tamil Nadu to construct almanacs. It is estimated that Vararuchi died during fourth century BC.

The unique systems of numeration Katapayadi and the Parahita system for performing calculations in mathematics and astronomy were a refinement of earlier Aryabhata's system. Bhuta Samkhya is the older system and is of a connotative type. Bhuta the term means element or part or component etc and samkhya is number. Here numbers are indicated by familiar concepts or objects having the same number of parts as the indicated or intended number which is commonly understood in the community in which it is used. Some commonly used denotations were:-

0 denoted by randhra (hole)/ sunya (void)/ purna (whole)/ kha (sky)/ antariksa (atmosphere) etc

1 denoted by bhumi (earth)/ sasi (moon)/ go (cow) etc.

2 is denoted by netra (eyes)/ bahu (hands)/ karna (ears)/ paksha (moon's waning and waxing periods) etc – each being a pair.

3 is denoted by kala (time - past, present and future), loka (heaven, earth, and hell) etc- each of which is a set of three components.

4 is denoted by disa or dik (directions-east, west, north, south), yuga (krta, treata, dvapara, and kali), veda (rig, yajur, sama, atharva) etc- each of which is a group of four.

5 is denoted by pandavas, bhuta (elements) which have five members.

12 is denoted by mas (months), rasi (signs of the zodiac) – groups having 12 constituents

32 denoted by danta (teeth)

Synonyms of these words also represent these numbers. It employed the principle of place value and mode of writing or representation was from left to right .Details regarding the origin, inventors and first practitioners are unavailable.” (Parameswaran, 14) The limitations of this system is that only a person who is familiar with the concepts like pancha pandavas (pandavas who were sons of pandu and 5 in number), saptharishis (the seven holy sages of Hindu mythology) will be able to decode or decipher these numbers .Another challenge was the ambiguities in some of the representative concepts like paksha which is a partition of a month into two and included 15 days so it sometimes stood for both 2 and 15; concepts like loka meant 3 and also 14; dik or disa for 4 and 8 which could have been north, south, east, west or north, north east, north west, south, south east, south west, east and west. It makes the deciphering of Bhuta Sankhya prone to mistakes and affected its prolonged use and survival. Katapayadi system overcomes this defect.

The system was used by astronomers and mathematicians of India because it enabled the construction of rhythmic *shlokas* or poetic or rhythmic passages which could be memorised

easily by them and their posterity and transferred through rote learning and oral method in those periods. The immense number of synonyms to choose among to write the same number in variety of ways was fruitful in providing a poetic language to scientific and mathematical formulae and texts which is a unique feature of Indian system. According to Datta and Singh “a system of expressing numbers by means of words arranged as in the place-value notation was developed and perfected in India in the early centuries of the Christian era.”(Parameswaran, 15) At the beginning Sanskrit alphabets were used to denote this system of numeration but in due course Malayalam language was also used in this system because all sounds are similar in pronunciation in Sanskrit and Malayalam only the script, that is notation is different. The *Katapayadi* system derives its name from k, t, p and y the first letters in the respective groups of consonants. Katapayadi system follows the decimal notation in which the number at unit place is written first, tenth place written next and so on from right to left. The letters (k, t, p, y) represent 1, (kh, th, ph, r) represent 2 , (g, d, b, l) represent 3, (gh, dh, bh, v) represent 4, (ñ, ñ, m, ſ) represent 5, (c, t, ś) represent 6, (ch, th, s) represent 7, (j, d, h) represent 8, (jh, dh, l) represent 9, (ñ, n) represent 0 respectively . Apart from ñ, n, all pure vowels if not preceded by a consonant represents 0. Consonants followed by a vowel represent the same number as the consonant without a vowel so p, pa, pi, pu denotes one only. The popularity and advantage of this representation rests on the fact that numbers having several digits can be put down as meaningful expressions and several different expression for the same number is also possible. The mnemonic of a number is named as its paralperu. A variant of Katapayadi was used by Aryabhatta II. The Kerala model of Katapayadi was believed to have spread to entire south India. (Datta, 69) Kerala had a unique set of symbols to represent the numbers from 1 to 10. These symbols were commonly used in calendars and calculations in native schools.

Kerala also followed traditional indigenous divisions of an year which goes as 1aandu or kollam=2 ayanam=6 rithu=12 masam=24 paksham \approx 52 aazhcha=365 divasam. And division of time as 1day=8 yamam=60 nazhika=3600 vinazhika=21600 asu or pranan=216000 gurvaksharam. Traditional measurement of solids like volume of grains were done by using vessels made out of wood or metal some measurements are, one naazhi =14400 rice grain, 3 naazhi = 1 chanthiram, 1idangazhi=4 naazhi , 1.5 idangahi= 1thooni, 1 para = 12 idangazhi.

Commodities like gold, silver, medicines were measured using kazhanjikol, also kazhanji seed were used to measure small weights 1 kazhanj =20 lucky red seeds, 1 thola equivalent to 11 gm, 2 thola = 1 azhakku, vellikkol were also used. Liquids (oil, milk) were measured using thudam, 4 thudam = 1 nazhi, 1 kutti = 5 nazhi, length measured by wooden scale called muzhakkol, 1 muzhakkol = present day 30 inch. So Kerala had a unique system of measurement which shows a fully independent society Apart from names for numbers from one to nine there are multiples of ten up to ninety and Indians used separate names for the powers of ten up to 1017:-

Eka=1, dvi=2, tri=3, catur=4, pancha=5, sat=6, sapta=7, asta=8, nava=9, dasa=10, vimsati=20, trimsati=30, catvarimsati=40, panchsati=50, sati=60, saptati=70, asiti=80, navati=90, sata=10²=100, sahasra=10³=1000, ayuta=10⁴=10000, niyuta or laksha=10⁵=100000, prayuta=10⁶=1000000, koti=10⁷=10000000, arbuda=10⁸=100000000, abja or vrinda=10⁹=1000000000, kharva=10¹⁰=10000000000, nikharva=10¹¹=100000000000, mahapadma=10¹²=1000000000000, sanku=10¹³=10000000000000, jaladhi=10¹⁴=100000000000000, antya=10¹⁵=1000000000000000, madhya=10¹⁶=10000000000000000, parardha=10¹⁷=100000000000000000. So Indians may have taken 10 as the base. In the forming of words of multiples of ten the presence of multiplicative principles is seen. And for expressing larger numbers the additive method was used. The subtractive principle also was used in some cases.

It was during the reign of Ravi Varma Kulasekharan, the Chera king a new era was launched. It was in middle of August of 825 A.D, the era was named kollavarsham. This is being mentioned to elucidate the fact that mathematical and astrological advancement in Kerala were at an advanced and propitious stage more than seven centuries before Kepler (1571-1630 A. D.) who enunciated laws of planetary motion. "Science does not bloom suddenly in a vacuum, but since knowledge is cumulative, growing bit by bit through generations and centuries, it needs a firm foundation of rationalism, openness of the mind, strict self-discipline, leisure, hardworking habits and continuity of culture for its sustenance. It is quite surprising that it was at a time when originality and creativity has almost dried up in other parts of India, that Kerala produced a number of great works in these fields which placed her

scientists far ahead of scientists everywhere else including Europe.”(Narayanan,11) According to K Kunjunni Raja the presence of a large number of wealthy kingdoms were the reason for rich contributions by scientists, astrologists, astronomers, mathematicians, poets, artists etc. The scholars never felt any political barriers within Kerala they were welcomed everywhere and there was a healthy competition to provide patronage to scholars. Though Kerala was politically divided into small kingdoms they were culturally united and prosperous. This welcoming atmosphere attracted scholars even from Tamilnadu to mingle with scholars of Kerala and spent a considerable part of their life here exchanging ideas and thoughts and translating works, engaging in fruitful debates. The constant income from trade through land and sea, the constant contact with various diasporas provided for the stability in Kerala economy when other parts of India were being attacked by Muslim rulers who even came to Kanyakumari, Kerala was left undisturbed due to the natural shield Western Ghats. Late medieval Kerala scholars attempted to reform calendar using Parahitagaṇita and Drggaṇita theories using information obtained by direct observation and spherical geometry because of the lack of any instruments for advanced sky watching.

The stalwarts in the field of astronomy and mathematics in Kerala start from the pioneer Vararuchi. His only extant work is Vararucivākya (Candravākyaṇi). Haridatta (650-700 A. D) in his work Grahachāranibandhana used Katapayadi system which was known by another name until 9th century. ”He made corrections in Āryabhaṭa system and invented the Parahita system of astronomical computations. It was presented at the Māmāṅkam festival of 683 A.D at Thirunnavaya. He also introduced a smaller Yuga called Dhījagannupura- yuga, of 576 years or 210389 days (which is $1/7500^{\text{th}}$ part of a Mahayuga) and accurately determined the zero corrections for this subyuga for the mean motion of planets. The corrections are used to compute the mean planets for any given date.” (Anil Narayanan, 206). Haridatta referred to his own another work named Mahāmārganibandhana in Grahachāranibandhana which is yet to be discovered.

From the age of the Perumals of Mahodayapuram (9th to 12th centuries) to the period of swarupam organisations (13th to 17th centuries) is generally known as the medieval period in Kerala history. Kerala School of Mathematics and Astronomy flourished during this period.

Govindasvāmin (800- 850 A.D) was the court astronomer of King Sthana Ravi Varma Kerala. He was one of the ablest exponents of Bhaskara I and the Aryabhatan system. His elaborate bhashya or exegesis on Mahabhaskariya namely Mahābhāskariyabhāṣya contains new ideas and mathematical elaborations which are yet to be fully recognised and studied from the point of modern mathematics. An original work Govindakṛiti which has been quoted by later writers like Sankaranarayana, Nilakantha is yet to be recovered. Govindapaddhati a work referred to Govindaswamin by Nilakantha and Sankaranarayana and manuscripts of short commentary called Prakatārtha or Sampradāyapradīpika on Parāsarahora are mentioned by Kunjunni Raja in *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature*.

Sankaranarayana(825-900 A.D) was a native of Kollapuri on the Arabian coast which could be most probably present day Kollam. He was the chief court astronomer of Sthanu Ravi Varman, the 9th century ruler of the Chera Dynasty. He was a disciple of Govindaswamin. “He has given the standard mathematical methods of Āryabhata I such as the solution of the indeterminate equation $by = ax \pm c$ (where a, b, c are integers) in integers .This was known as kuttākara method for the determination of mati, which refers to the optional number in a guessed solution, which is a feature which differs from the original method presented by Bhaskara I.”(Anil Narayanan, 208). His only known work is a commentary on the Lakhubhaskariya named Laghubhaskariyabhāṣya which was written in 869 A.D. It is a highly elucidatory work with regard to the subject discussed. It shows the keen interest of the royalty in promoting the study of astronomy. The Perumals of Mahodayapuram in their capital city of Mahodayapuram built an astronomical observatory which could have been roughly somewhere in modern Kodungalloor near Cochin. Sankaranarayana refers to the observatory and the practice of public announcement of correct time at regular intervals.” The kind of an intellectual atmosphere that prevailed at the time may be gathered from references in the Kokasandesam, a 15th century text written in Manipravalam. Kokasandesam refers to a great teacher (or preceptor) and his students (sisya) at Triprangode.” (Vijalekshmy. M, 61)

Another scholar is Suryadeva Yajvan (1191-1250 A.D) belonged to the Nidhruva gotra and nephew of another Suryadeva. He was a versatile commentator and very much recognised authority in the subject. His extant works include elaborate commentaries on Āryabhatīya and

Laghumanasa. On astrology he has written a commentary on Mahayatra of Varahamihira and Jathakakarmapaddhati, both of which were famous works in the concerned field. He has given his date of birth as visvesa (1113) saka in one of his commentaries.

It is very important to note that Gurukula system of education prevailed during this time .After the initiation ceremony early or primary education is given and after that a student is accepted by a guru as a sishya, then the student becomes a part of guru's family. The instructions of the guru would then be followed and the student is supposed to serve and obey the guru. During the learning process the teacher will orally instruct and make the sishya proficient in the instructed things through rote learning and periodical chanting, the content may be noted down on palm leaves. The student will be taken to participate and listen to various discussion in parishads where great masters discussed and presented their knowledge and findings. There were also exposure to vidvat sadas where scholars took part in debates. The main gurukulas during medieval period in Kerala were Trichur Brahmaswam Matham, Thirunavaya Samuha Matham, Kudallur Mana Gurukulam, Thiruvalla sala, Moozhikulam sala, Kudungalloor and Punnasseri Gurukulam. The intellectual liveliness of the period is also evident from literary competitions like Revathipattathanam at Kozhikkode and Kadavallur Anyonyam at Kadavallur (near Kunnamkulam).

The emergence of major figures of the Kerala School occurred between 14th and 15th centuries. Madhava of Sangamagrama (1340-1445A.D) was referred as Golavid (Master of Spherics) by later astronomers. He was an astute mathematician who came from the medieval Brahmin settlement namely Sangamagrama. Sangamagrama a village with a temple dedicated to a deity of the same name is identified as present day Irinjalakuda near Cochin. He belonged to a priestly class, the Emprantiri, consisting of Brahmins who arrived from coastal Karnataka and later became a sub-caste of Kerala Brahmins. The information regarding the name of his family house and village were obtained from details provided in his own work Venvāroha, in its commentary by Achyuta Pisharati and in the Āryabhatīyabhasya of Nilakantha. It is understood that his house name meant that in the compound stood an Ilanji tree in Malayalam or Bakula tree in Sanskrit that is because the house was called 'Bakuladhistitaviharam' or Ilanjipalli. In present day Irinjalakuda there exists two nambuthiri houses with names similar

to this namely 'Iringarapalli' and 'Iriaravalli located about eight kilometres from exact Irinjalakuda near Kallettumkara railway station. The temple in which Madhava is believed to have spent many hours meditating is now under the management of Iringarapalli Mana.

Madhava in his works *Venvaroha* and *Sphutachandrapati*, revises and refines the Chandra vakya system of Vararuchi. He calculated the exact positions correct to the second, and evolved the procedure to find out exact position of the moon every 36 minutes. Vararuchi gave values correct to the minute. Considering the cyclic nature of lunar vakyas where nine months is equal to 248 days he found the lunar longitude at nine equally distant times in one day. Computation of the longitudes of planets were also discussed. Short commentaries are available on his works *Mahājyānayanaprakāra* and *Mahdhyamānayanaprakāra*. These works contain novel theorems and computational methods found or evolved by him and used later by his successors in the field. Kunjunni Raja gives the name of another important work *Aganita*. *Aganitapancanga* is also attributed to him. An anonymous work *Aganitagrahacara* which is quoted in *Karanapaddhati* is available in manuscript which mentions *sodhyabdas*, *Lagnaprakarana*, *Golavada* are also attributed to him. "In the case of *Aganitagrahacara* in, the *sodhyabdas*, with A. D. 1418 as the latest among them, agrees, surprisingly with the date of Madhava. This goes to confirm that in the present *Aganitagrahacara* we have a hitherto unidentified work of Madhava, viz. his *Aganitapancanga* which is mentioned in the said astronomical document" (Kunjunni Raja 52). Kunjunni Raja also hints the possibility of comprehensive treatise on astronomy by Madhava which is yet to be discovered.

It is possible to be true as M R Raghava Varier as part of an investigative research found that many uncatalogued and catalogued books from India were present in *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana* and *Nazionale Centrale di Roma* in Rome. This may be only the tip of an iceberg, India was a hub of traders, travellers, tourists, colonizers what is yet to be discovered from individual collections, archives, libraries around the world could leave us awe inspired . The interesting fact is that they are mainly manuscripts in languages native to India which includes Sanskrit, Malayalam, Manipravalam, Tamil etc. So it is possible that these were not collected in vain just for sake of collection or as a hobby. Foreigners from many regions who came to India made deliberate attempts to study Indian languages, it was not just out of curiosity.

When they came into contact with a rich culture it was obvious that there were possibilities to acquire higher levels of knowledge which they imbibed and articulated for the modernization of their societies.

Paramesvara of Vatasreni (1360-1455) was Madhavas disciple and another major member of what is now being identified as Kerala School. He revised the Parahita system of computation and introduced Drgganitha in the year 1430. He hailed from the village Ālattur (Asvatthagrama). His house was situated on the banks of Nila(Bharathapuzha) near its confluence with Arabian Sea . He is reputed to have carried out observation of sky, eclipses and investigated for fifty five years and his findings are documented in Siddhantadipika. Paramesvara was a prolific writer who authored about 30 works which include original treatises as well as commentaries. His notable compositions Drgganita(1430), Goladipika I-III(1443), three works on improving computations and explaining the rationale of eclipses namely Grahanastaka, Grahanamandana and Grahananyayadipika. Grahanamandana discusses the method for the construction of the eclipse graph for any desired moment. Grahanastaka deals with the calculation of eclipses since much matter had to be compressed in the eight verses the work is very terse and technical and an apt example of the Indian mode of intellectual patentship and the tradition of representing only the crux of the findings which they were sure their posterities could decipher and which could be sustained through the gurukula system. Candracchayaganita, a text on the computation of moon shadow, Vakyakarana, on the computation of mnemonic tables. He has written commentaries like Āryabhatiya, Karmadipika on Mahabhaskariya, Siddhantadipika Bhasya on Mahabhaskariyabhasya, Paramesvari on Laghubhaskariya and Lilavati, commentary of Laghumanasa of Munjala, commentary on Suryasiddhanta and also wrote a gloss on his own work Goladipika and Vyatipataastaka. Two of his works on astronomy namely Vakyadipika and Bhadipika are yet to be recovered.

Damodara (1410-1510) next in the line was son of Paramesvara of Vatasreni, no fulfilled work of his is known till date. His pupil Nilakantha Somayaji refers to him as an erudite astronomer and scholar and quotes from his writings. Later writers also mention Damodara

and Nilakantha quotes Damodara which suggest that he might have composed certain works which are yet to be discovered.

Nilakantha Somayaji (1444-1545) the centenarian astronomer who hailed from Trikkantiyur (Kundapura), near Tirur in South Malabar. He was the student of both Paramesvara of Vatasreni (received occasional instruction) and his son Damodara of Vatasreni. Nilakantha also had another teacher Ravi who authored Ācaradarsana. During his student days he stayed at their house as part of gurukula system. In his Bhashya on the Āryabhatīya, Ganitapada he gives full details about himself. In his work Siddhantadarpana-vyakhya he gives his date of birth as 'tyajāmyajnatām tarkaiḥ (16, 60, 181) which falls in Dec. 1444. He and his brother Sankara were patronized by the hereditary religious head of Namputhiris, Kausitaki Adhya Netranarayana (Āzhvānceri Tamprākkal). He was a prolific writer and erudite scholar. The mathematical sections in his work Tanthrasangraha (1500 A.D) helps scholars for a better understanding of Madhava's contributions because he was the first person to record and elaborate the findings of Madhava. It also formed the basis of Yuktibhasa. In his work Golasara he discusses spherical geometry and his view on astronomical topics. In Siddhantadarpana he puts forth a set of astronomical constants (32 versus). Āryabhatīyabhasya is considered to be his masterpiece through its extensive commentary valuable quotations. *Jyotirmimamsa* stresses the necessity of revising and correcting data obtained through observation. *Sundararajaprasnottara* are a set of answers for astronomical problems addressing a Tamil scholar who commented on the Vakyakarana of Vararuchi. *Grahananirnaya* and *Candracchayaganita*, also deal with astronomy. He also wrote a malayalam commentary on Candracchayaganita. Grahaparikṣakrama provides the procedures for the observations planets and methods of their computation, it is a set of 200 verses.

Citrabhanu Namputiri (1475-1550) hails from Sivapuram near Trichur. He authored an advanced work in four chapters regarding astronomical computation titled *Karanāmṛta*." Chitrabhanu gave integer solutions to 21 types of systems of two simultaneous Diophantine equations in two unknowns."(Anil Narayanan 221) He was Nilkantha Somayaji's student, whom he addresses as Gargya in his work. The date of composition of *Karanamṛta* given in Kali chronogram is 1530 A.D.

Trkkutaveli Sankara Variyar (1500-1560) lived at Trikkutaveli near modern Ottapalam. He was a disciple of Nilakantha Somayaji. He wrote an elaborate commentary on Tantrasangraha titled Laghuvivrti in 1556 A.D. The name of the author was not mentioned in the commentary, the ‘post-colophonic’ statement by the scribe in Malayalam in some manuscripts:” i vyakhyanam Trkkutaveli-c-Cankaravariyar otukkattu camaccatu / Āzhvancerikku ventittu sukhame siksiccu camacu ennu Parannottu parannu kettu / : ‘This commentary was composed last by Trkkutaveli Sankara Variyar. It is stated to have been said by Parannottu that it was composed with great care for the sake of Āzhvanceri’.”(Kunjunni Raja 58) The person who is referred to as Parannottu is probably Parannottu Jyesthadeva, a young contemporary of the author. Kriyakramakari which is a commentary on Bhaskara II’s Lilavati was begun by him and written upto 199th verse but was completed by Narayana an esteemed associate of Nilakantha. The work Kriyakramakari has a unique and revered place in the history of Kerala mathematics and astronomy because of the detailing on earlier works and authors some of them are extinct and this book stands as an evidence to their existence. Other works attributed to him are Kriyākālāpa, Karanasāra (a work in four chapters) and Karanasārakriyākarma , malayalam commentary on the work Karanasāra.

Jyesthadeva (1500-1610) is the well known author of the popular work Yuktibhasa or Ganitanyayasangraha. He was a student of Damodara of Varasreni. It is believed that Nilakantha was his senior colleague and a respected elder. He lived in Ālattur village and was a member of Parannottu family of South Malabar. The first part of the detailed exegesis is an elaboration of the rationale of mathematics and second part of astronomy. The Sanskrit version is probably his work and is named Ganitayuktibhasa. The authorship of Drkkarana, available in single manuscript, metrical treatise on astronomy written in Malayalam is attributed to him.

Acyuta Pisārati (1550-1621) was a great scholar in astronomy, medicine, grammar, poetics who lived in Trkkantiyur in Tirur (Kundapura in South Malabar). He discovered ‘reduction of the ecliptic’ and stated it in Sphutanirnaya which was elaborated in Rāsigoḷasphutāniti. This correction was introduced in western astronomy also at about the same time by Tycho Brahe. He was the teacher of Melpathur Narayana Bhatta and protege of King Ravi Varma of

Vettathunadu. The date of Achyuta Pissarati's death is given in the 'carama –sloka' composed by Melpathur Narayana Bhatta as 'vidyatama avar asarpat' which falls in 1621 A.D. "Rāsīgolasphutaniti in fifty verses, discusses a very prominent point in celestial measurements, that is whether the longitudes of planets as well as stars are to be measured along with ecliptic or each along its own path- concerned with the reduction of the moon's true longitude in its own orbit to the ecliptic." (Anil Narayanan, 220). He has written a Malayalam commentary Venvarohavyakhya on Venvāroha of Madhava of Sangamagrama and it was written at the request of Netranārāyana. Acyuta has also authored several works including Karanottama on astrological computation of the mean and true longitudes of planets, Uparagakriyakrama, on solar and lunar eclipses, Uparagavimsati and Chayastaka on eclipse and shadow computation respectively.

Some scholars continue with the list of Kerala mathematicians and astronomers with successors of Achyuta Pissarati and their respective students. The chain continues with Trippanikara Potuval, Melpputtur Narayana Bhattatiri, Navayikkulam Azati, Pulimukhattu Potti, Raman Āsān, Krishnan Āsān, Mangalattu Dakshinamurti Musatu, Mannar Nalekkalattil Balarama Pilla, which only comes to a stop with Kilimanur Karindran Tampuran (1812-1846). The continuity of a tradition lies in the dedication of the posterity in sustaining the enthusiasm and empirical attitude and the role of the Kerala mathematician in an age without printing, external thrust is commendable.

As there is no record of any original contribution after Acyuta Pissarati it is better to include the members till him for the convenience of the study. But a fact that requires mentioning is that only a small fraction of these works have been subjected to study because some were not able to withstand the ravages of time. Many manuscripts still are under the tag of artefacts with obscure script of old Malayalam or crude forms of Sanskrit and have not been subjected to rigorous study. The present knowledge available is from only a handful of texts. There are hundreds of texts waiting to be studied in manuscript form. Europe is rectifying its curriculum from school level incorporating Sanskrit and Indian knowledge realizing the abundance of knowledge awaiting in Sanskrit texts, India is abandoning the language and the rich corpus of knowledge awaiting in it labelling it as outdated. The spirit of enquiry exhibited by the

scholars of Kerala school has been lost by their successors and our generation finds it relaxing and authentic just to work on the knowledge that reached India from western mode of education.