Chapter V

The Unappeasable Host

As W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) and Edasseri Govindan Nair (1906-1974) lived and wrote during a critical period in the history of their respective nations, the treatment of sacrifice and the delineation of scapegoats in their works bear the imprints of colonialism. Ireland became an independent republic in 1922 and India in 1947. Both the nations had been under the British raj. Their historical agenda of resistance to the imperium and to the imperial discourse is inscribed in the portrayal of the marginalised and the native in the works of these two writers. Edward Said, for instance, speaks of Yeats as the indisputably great national poet who articulates the experiences, the aspirations and the vision of a people suffering under the dominion of an off-shore power. From this perspective, Yeats is a poet who belongs to a tradition not usually considered his, that of the colonial world ruled by European imperialism now—that is, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—bringing to a climactic insurrectionary stage of massive upheaval of anti-imperialist resistance in the colonies. ("Yeats and Decolonization" 34)

Yeats’s allusions to the dethroned pagan and pre-Christian deities of pre-colonial Ireland such as Tuatha De Daanan and Sidhe and his adaptation of folk legends for his poetic plays like Cathleen ni Houlihan and The Countess Cathleen reveal his
politico-cultural stance. He has identified the wounds, mutilations and humiliations suffered by the dispossessed and liminal deities as those inflicted on the motherland during foreign domination. The imprints of successive colonisations can be deduced from the plight of the deities.

There are various references to native deities who had occupied central positions and who have been relegated to liminal positions. Sidhe is one of them (CP 61). C.M. Bowra describes Sidhe as "the fairy people who travel in the wind and seduce men from habitual lives" (188). Stan Smith observes that Sidhe [pronounced Shee], the faery folk in the Irish legends, combines an idea of the souls of the dead with vague memories of the ancient inhabitants of the island, the Tuatha de Danaan, who left behind them long barrows and cromlechs. (32)

"Tuatha de Danaan," meaning Dana’s children or Dana’s people, is used to denote a group of deities also. Their plight is the same as that of the ancient or native people of Ireland who have been forced to live on the peripheries and the margins. They were defeated by the sons of Miles or Milesians from Spain:

Eventhough defeated and dispossessed, the Tuatha De Danaan held sway in men’s minds for centuries--who is to say that they do not do so still? The invaders spread throughout the length and breadth of the land; the old race went underground. The archeologists list between 30,000 and 40,000 earthen and stone forts. The plain country people maintain that these forts or raths are
the dwelling place of the fairies. The subdued Tuatha De Danaan survive as wee-folk doing mischief or occasionally doing good offices... Those deities, it is believed, often haunt those who vanquished them to destroy peace of mind. (Curtayne 4)

The deities of the folk and native traditions of Ireland have withdrawn into liminal regions. A.G. Stock remarks:

The tradition in Ireland is that the gods were there before the Gaels came, that they fought for their possession of the country and at last came to terms and withdrew into hills, leaving the surface of the land to the invaders ... There are faery hills, green terraced mounds into which no farmer will drive a ploughshare ... the people remember what they are--the dispossessed lords who ruled before Christ came. (6)

The phenomenon of the natives' withdrawal into marginal regions with the coming of territorial colonisers had been a feature of Irish history. Speaking about the submission of Ireland to Anglo-Normans in 1171 and their gradual implementation of feudalistic set up, Jackson notes:

The Anglo-Norman lords, with their private armies, advanced across the great cultural plain, and up the river valleys. The Irish retreated with their cattle to the hills, the woods and hiding places in the bog country. (20)

The retreat of the natives in all the periods and stages of Irish history implies corresponding marginalisation and contraction of
the styles and values of life of the natives. Their deities have become discarded and shrunk. Yeats has observed that "Fairies are the gods of pagan Ireland who, when no longer worshipped and fed with offerings, dwindled away in the popular imagination" (PI 10). Their protest can be heard from the lines like "Taken away wheaten food/Taken away our altar-stone" (Mythologies 166). Prafulla C. Kar, analysing the image of the vanishing African in Chinu Achebe's novels, observes that Achebe seems to believe that the African in his primitive, agrarian and blissful state taking pride in his religion, numerous gods, folklore, magic and rituals no longer exists now; it is transformed into a myth and an archetype which are slowly passing into the ancestral memory of the race. (151)

In the same way, in Ireland, most of the deities of the abandoned cults have vanished into the dark realms of myth and archetype. But compared to other European nations, Ireland is still a poor, undeveloped and less-industrialised nation. The people in the countryside, and even in towns, retain faith in ghosts, fairies and primitive deities. Many woods and places are considered to be sacred. The postulations of Christianity, the dominant religion, against primitive superstitions and beliefs have relatively less effect in Ireland. Norman Vance observes: "The warlike paganism of the heroic cycles of pre-Christian Ireland was not colonized or suppressed by Rome or the Roman Church, but accommodated alongside the pieties of Christianity" (3). And Vinod Sena has this to say:
Unlike the materially progressive nations of the West, the Irish still retain a widespread belief in the supernatural, and many of them still cling to the ancient lore which Christianity had undermined elsewhere. (24)

Yeats himself has noted this aspect: "The ghosts and goblins do still live and rule in the imagination of innumerable Irish men and women and not merely in remote places, but close even to big cities" (UP 175). And Philip Edwards attributes "the great subliminal strength of Irish intractability" to what he calls "the stubbornness of an outlawed religion which refused to be quenched and which took on more and more the features not of belief but of tribalism" (3). This "outlawed religion" has been formed by the amalgamation and syncopation of all the marginalised cults and beliefs. It has been the creation of the native Irish ethos. To Yeats, it supplies an alternative discourse against the dominant Christian discourse of the imperium. Stan Smith comments that for Maud Conne and Yeats the idea of a spiritual other world is represented by a strange amalgam of Irish myth, astrology, Judaeo-Christian heresies, and neo-Platonism, in which druid, priest and seer merged (36). It places a reborn Ireland as the antithesis to everything English. Vinod Sena observes that Yeats had the habit of viewing every conceivable subject in terms of Irish versus British (23). Yeats wanted to establish a nation-wide network of literary societies committed to the cultivation of Irish myth, folklore, history and literature to build up and train a larger, more representative
and critically more responsive reading public (8). In Yeats's view, Ireland's opportunity lay in its access to the primitive and folk mind (24). Yeats believed that Ireland could produce a vital people's literature as it has national traditions living in the minds of the populace (25). Yeats's attempts at reviving and revitalising folklore tradition have a direct bearing upon the colonial status of Ireland. Commenting upon the poems of the reputed Irish poet Samuel Ferguson (1810-1886), Yeats writes:

In these poems and the legends they contain lies the refutation of the calumnies of England and those among the Irish who are false to Ireland. We are often told that we are men of infirm will and lavish lips, planning one thing and doing another, seeking this today and that tomorrow. But, a widely different story do these legends tell. (UP 104)

Yeats has also indicated that the attitudes of the British and the Irish towards the native legends and beliefs are different:

The world is, I believe, more full of significance to the Irish peasant than to the English. The fairy populace of hill and lake and woodland have helped to keep it so. It gives a fanciful life to the dead hillsides, and surrounds the peasant, as he ploughs and digs with tender shadows of poetry. No wonder that he is gay, and can take man and his destiny without gloom and make proverbs like this from the Old Gaelic: "The lake is not burdened by its swan, the steed by its bridle, or a man by the soul that is in him." (182)
The legends and memories associated with the hills, valleys and woods might seem to be a burden to the settlers and their followers. The "presence" of ancient deities and queens like Dana, Meava and Scotia might appear to be a superstitious nuisance. The colonial discourse wanted to efface them. In its school texts they are absent: "The children did not know much of them in those days of British rule, certainly nothing good of them. At school nothing at all was taught about prehistoric Irish figures" (Curtayne 2). Yeats has raised the complaint that when he was a child, nobody, not even "the merchant captains who knew everything," told him about the enchanting personages "hovering" around Irish valleys and hills (PI 123-24). As Edward Said puts it, "one of the purposes of colonial education was to promote the history of France or Britain" and that education "also demoted the native history" ("Yeats and Decolonization" 35). Yeats's concern for Ireland is projected in his works. Richard Ellmann observes that Yeats "did not forget to connect the myth with his nation: the chained lady whom Oisin has to liberate in the second island bears a strong resemblance to Ireland in English chains, and Oisin's 'battles never done' suggest the never-ending Irish struggle for independence" (Identity 18-19).

The marks of colonial resistance in the works of Edasseri Govindan Nair also manifest in the presentation of marginalised deities and human beings. Instead of Raman and Krishnan, Edasseri portrays their servants like Hanuman and Darukan. More
often than not, Edasseri looks at the drama of life from the point of view of the marginalised fool (Narayana Kurup 116). The goatherd appears in "Bimbisarente Edayan." Hanuman in "Lavanusuravadhathile Hanuman" (EK 110-122), and "Hanumalseva Tunchanparampil" (554-556) and Darukan in "Ampadiyilekku Veendum" (549-553). Two of his prominent narrative poems, "Kavile Pattu" and "Poota Pattu" have made use of folk legends. Kali in "Kavile Pattu" is a marginalised mother goddess. Durga and Chandi are her synonyms. David Kinsley observes that Kali is associated with the periphery of Hindu society as she is worshipped by tribal or low-caste people in uncivilized or wild places and that Kali’s temples should be built far from villages and towns, near the cremation grounds and the dwellings of the low-caste people, chandalas (117-118). The goddess Char‘i, an epithet used for both Durga and Kali, is worshipped by the Sabaras, a tribe of primitive hunters and her worship takes place deep in the forest (117). Durga of the South Indian legends is also a liminal goddess (Kinsley 100, 115). Pootam in "Poota Pattu" is another discarded goddess presented by Edasseri. Pootam belongs to the group of primitive deities who have been humbled, shamed and betrayed by those of the dominant Hindu discourse. In a legend prevalent among the villagers of Ponnani, North Kerala, also, Pootam is portrayed as an ever-wandering, restless supernatural creature. She is the assistant of an auspicious goddess. The goddess sends her to a goldsmith for bringing a gold ornament. The goldsmith betrays the Pootam by handing over a false one. Discarded by her matron, the Pootam
is constrained to go from house to house in the village to find out the goldsmith (Ramesh 31). Making use of the folk tradition and sources and foregrounding hitherto neglected characters, like Kali and Pootam, Edasseri Govindan Nair has carved out the possibility of an alternative discourse in relation to the dominant upper caste Hindu discourse where such characters occupy subaltern positions. In the Kerala context, M. Govindan finds some of the marginalised goddesses as "proletarian goddesses" (Upanyasangal 667-73) who have to reside in remote woods and small unattended forests. The "never rusting" native deities who had taken birth before the Iron Age, have been fed and maintained by peasants. They have no private property nor any assistance from the aristocrats. They are unprepared to live as the consorts or courtesans of feudal lords or their gods. Those who were willing to play such roles were snatched away from the community of primitive deities. They were appropriated and accommodated among the male-dominant central hierarchy of deities. The Pootam in "Poota Pattu" is described to be a witch, goblin or inauspicious supernatural creature because of her independent existence in a remote corner attended only by the lowest strata of the society. Thayattu Sankaran has remarked that the Pootam is the deity of the lower class people ("Edasseri Kanda Jivitam" 90). As the marginalisation of the primitive Irish deities and tribes took place because of the settler-conquests and advances made by Milesians, Gaels and Anglo-Normans (Curtayne 4, Stock 6, Jackson 20), in India it could be
attributed to the relentless advances of Dravidians, Aryans and other settlers. Arthur Basham observes:

At all times the wild tribesmen were a danger to the settled villagers in the outlying parts of the country. In medieval literature, both in Sanskrit and the Dravidian vernaculars, there are references to these wild raiders pillaging crops, herds and houses, and capturing victims for human sacrifice. The area of their operations was slowly pushed back, and more and more primitive tribes were assimilated into the Hindu order, they became gradually less dangerous... Many of the characteristics of the demons and malevolent spirits of Hindu mythology...were acquired from the wild tribes.(200)

As the fairies in Ireland steal away children, cause diseases and destroy the peace of mind of the settlers (Yeats, PI 12), the malevolent and inauspicious deities like Pootam and matrikas [little mothers] in India do all the mischiefs (Kinsley 151-155). In Ireland and India the discarded deities represent the discarded native tribes. As Prafulla Kar observes, they exist in the realm of myth and archetype contributing to the folklore traditions. Edasseri is aware of this process. In the poem "Malayali" (EK 526) the native Keralite says that even if the goddess with feeding breasts and a sharp sword in hand does not exist in the sacred wood, she resides in the mind of a Keralite. The temples and the groves of most of the primitive deities might have vanished but they exist as archetypes. The outcast Red
Hanrahan's words: "We have hidden in our hearts the flame out of the eyes/Of Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan" (CP 90) can be taken as representing the ethos of the native Irish. It reads like the description of the Keralite's mind where the flames of an affectionate and fierce goddess are hidden.

The folk deities and fairies in Yeats's works give room for an alternative reading in relation to the dominant Christian discourse. Such a possibility is opened up by lines such as "the unappeasable host/Is comelier than candles at Mother Mary's feet" (CP 65), and "purer than a tall candle before the Holy Rood/Is Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan" (CP 90). In the case of Edasseri, the poems like "Bimbisarente Edayan" (EK 240-249) contain ideas of "heresy" in relation to the dominant Brahminical discourse which upholds Vedic sacrificial rituals. In a tone of irony the Kerala dramatist C.J. Thomas gives the epithet "traitor" to Edasseri for publishing "Panimutakkam" (EK 865). "The poem does not suit the heritage of Hindustan. Edasseri is a negro. He is an atheist" (866). The agitators' sufferings and their children's starvation are the theme of "Panimutakkam." The poem refers to a time of epidemic. Such a time is selected to project the exploitation of the poor by the rich. A similar theme--the Irish famine--forms the background of Yeats's The Countess Cathleen. Yeats uses the material for foregrounding the helplessness of Ireland under the British rule. The whole thing is complicated by presenting the charity woman, the Countess and many supernatural touches. Edasseri's approach is realistic.
Though like Yeats, Edasseri was invigorated by nationalistic sentiments, he was equally influenced by the strikes and struggles of labourers of all fields, industrial and agricultural. A poor farmer family’s sufferings are presented in "Puthenkalavum Arivalum" ["The Cooking Pot and the Sickle"]. Talking about the poem, Edasseri has observed that the confiscation of the crop by the landlord, when the peasant has not remitted his dues, is like the cruel ritual of animal sacrifice (EK 250). Koman, the protagonist, is marginalised by the landed aristocracy and the court of law. He strikes the keynote in the concluding lines of the poem: "First we must reap power; / And after that the Aryan Crop" ("The Cooking Pot and the Sickle" 123). If Yeats can be called the national poet of Ireland, Edasseri Govindan Nair, in his early poems like "Palippin Matavineu" and "Bharata Puzha" (EK 21-23, 123-25) can be seen as a follower of Vallathol Narayana Menon (1878-1958), the foremost national poet of Kerala. The situation faced by Edasseri in Kerala craved for the liberation of farmers and peasants from the outdated and worn system of land-distribution. P. Narayana Kurup observes that the Kerala of the post-1930 period was activated by a new social consciousness as a result of the influence of the national freedom struggle, the Russian Revolution and the slogans of liberty and equality (98). Thayattu Sankaran, also, indicates that to understand Edasseri's works and his period the nationalist movement and the leftist movement and the awareness that was created among the oppressed should be studied ("Edasseri Kanda Jivitam" 85). Both forces of
influence work simultaneously in Edasseri. The presentation of farmers' struggles can be seen as a part of colonial resistance in the sense that the then prevalent system of landed aristocracy was also a part of the British colonial project. Errol Lawrence has identified this when he writes that during the colonial period the legal and institutional changes in land and revenue systems that were introduced by the British had the effect of transferring land from rural magnates and small land holders to urban money-lending castes and the changes introduced in land use made the peasantry "dispossessed" (113).

In Yeats's Cathleen ni Houlihan, an old woman, who has been dispossessed of all her lands, is presented. "My land was taken from me" (CPI 81). All the "four beautiful green fields" that she had was taken from her. One day she visits the house of Gillane. The members of the Gillane family lead a peaceful and settled life. Peter's elder son, Michael, is going to be married. When the play opens, Peter, Bridget, his wife and Patrick, their younger son, are discussing a sound heard from the outside. It is like a crowd cheering a person. Patrick says that there is an old woman coming down the road. The Old Woman comes. She is welcomed. She finds that the members of the Gillane family have a good shelter, which implies that she has no good shelter. The Old Woman appears to be very tired and restless. To their questions, she answers:

I have travelled far, very far; there are few have travelled so far as myself... it is long I am on the
road since I first went wandering .... Sometimes my feet are tired and my hands are quiet, but there is no quiet in my heart. (CP1 80-81)

She is the representative of the Irish natives who have been discarded from their land following the advent and advance of settlers from foreign countries. She is an ever-restless wandering woman. She has been always on the road and in the streets having no haven of her own. Peter pities her: "It is a pity, indeed, for any person to have no place of their own" (81). The Old Woman is like the Pootam in Edasseri's "Poota Pattu" who goes from house to house during the season of harvest to collect alms and donations. The Pootam's status as a discarded and ever-restless deity needs detailed analysis. M.P. Sankunni Nair has indicated the association of the discarded goddess Pootam and the dispossessed untouchable natives and their practice of demanding toll from the upper-caste people (78). The ghosts and goblins and similar little goddesses are said to form the retinue of Devi, the presiding deity of Keralites. The necromancers among the low-caste communities like Vannan, Parayan and Panan make various strange and multicoloured pootams and these pootams visit houses to collect the toll (78). The pootams are identified as belonging to the group of the ghosts and goblins. The Pootam belongs to the family of mother goddess who had enjoyed central status and received sacrifices at crossways. Denied of such positions, for a time, the Pootam manages to fetch sacrifices in clandestine ways.
During the day she lingers
Behind that pariah's hilllock
Casting her stern eyes through the slit
Under the rocks on the sides,
The shepherd-boys, when they are weary,
Seek at noon the balmy shades of trees;
It's then that she drinks
The milk of solitary cows.
And, when, at fragrant even-tide
Men hasten to join their [consorts]
She would lure them away from their path
And get from them the betel-leaves.

("The Ballad of the Pootham" 55-56)
The Malayalam word thambulam is translated as "betel-leaves."
Thambulam is a mixture of betel-leaves, arecanut and lime. When
it is chewed, the mouth is reddened. The red coloured saliva
reminds one of the sacrificial blood drunk by mother goddesses in
their prime days. In C.P. Sivadasan's translation the phrase is
"kith and kin" instead of "consorts." The translation is
insufficient and misleading because the Malayalam word "bandhu"
is not used in the ordinary sense, "relative." As per the
convention of Malayalam folk songs "bandhu" signifies "mistress,"
"concubine," or "consort." The Pootam also plays the role of a
seductress, witch, vampire or female-dracula.

In the profound vacuity of the vault of midnight,
When the magic lamps are lit in bright array,
She waits on the sides of lonely paths.
Combing her locks and smiling sweet
She lures the straying young men coming that way

While youngsters sleep in her embrace
She tastes their warm saltish blood with glee. (56)

But, after her complete defeat at the hands of Nangeli, the Pootam is degraded into the position of a beggarly deity. At first, as a central mother-goddess she could receive bloodful offerings at city centres. Then, though a discarded goddess, she could manage to get sacrifices by functioning as a corrective, secret force in society. But, finally, the Pootam is denigrated so much that she does not have the opportunity of showering her affection on a small child. The pathetic plight or pit into which the Pootam is thrown can be seen in the following lines:

The boy was about to go
When lo, the Pootham lifted him up
And kissed him many a time.
She shed copious tears
And sent up many a sigh. (61)

The Pootam has to play the role of a buffoon to quench or evoke the curiosity of male children in aristocratic families.

Then, year after year, when the winter harvest is over,
The Pootham visits the houses
And so the Pootham would go
To every house and seek her baby there
And wake fun and frolic...
She would run from house to house. (61)
Asking questions like "Do you want the child?" people make fun of the helpless creature, and she has to dance like a doll, the strings of which are pulled by the people:

And many a man would mock:

"Do you need the boy? Do you need the boy?"

Listening to these mocking words

She would run off, here and there when within her heart

A rhythmic drum beat was heard,

With the echoes of a wailing pipe! (62)

Unable to disturb or love anybody, the Poctam betrays masochism in the form of deep sorrow.

The deep sorrow of the Poctam is comparable to the restlessness ["no quiet"] of the Old Woman in Cathleen ni Houlihan. She always sings songs praising the martyrs who died for the sake of their motherland. Cathleen tells the members of the Gillane family that there have been many men who died for love of her:

He died for love of me; many a man has died for love of me... there were others that died for love of me a long time...there are some that died hundreds of years ago, and there are some that will die tomorrow. (CPI 82-83)

Peter thinks that she is insane: "Her trouble has put her wits astray" (82). Being rooted in time, money-minded and leading a prosperous, peaceful and settled family life, it is natural that Peter describes her so. That is why he compels his son to fetch the bride's money before she is brought to the house. Cathleen
is connected with the timeless enthusiasm and thirst of dispossessed natives to attain liberation from the colonisers. Cathleen's description of the "matriotic" heroes who died and who will die for her sake is beyond the comprehension of Peter and Bridget. Peter accommodates the Old Woman as a stranger. When she comes to the house, he has warned Michael not to show money to strangers. Fairies in Irish legends and the malevolent deities like Pootam in the Indian are considered to be strangers who come from the other world to unsettle the settlers. The arrival of the Old Woman on the eve of the wedding is considered inauspicious. Peter is very anxious to get rid of the old witch by giving her something to eat--"a drink of milk, and a bit of the oaten cake" (83). Bridget suggests:

May be we should give her something along with that to bring her on the way; a few pence, or a shilling itself, and we with so much money in the house. (83)

Peter is at first unwilling to part with money. Then Bridget explains why they should make the donation: "Shame on you, Peter. Give her the shilling and your blessings with it, or our luck will go from us" (83). The terms "shame," "blessing" and "luck" are that of ideological mystification. These have been coined to hide the fear of the settlers, who encroached upon the possessions of the primitive natives. Those who lead a peaceful and prosperous life are always anxious about the prospective retaliation from the native tribes whom they had dethroned. The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of
lust, a look of envy; it expresses the native's dreams of possession. This the settler knows very well; when their glances meet the settler ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, that the native wants to take the settler's place (Fanon 30).

The so-called "auspicious" conventions, customs and special terms have been used to vindicate and substantiate offerings and donations and such piacular sacrifices. Speaking about dana (donation) and dakshina (donation to priests), Romila Thapar argues that they are methods of appropriation used to create obligation in those who receive the donations and thus to control them (107). Peter wants to tame the wild witch while Bridget seeks to propitiate the female deity. In legends, women are described as more kind to dispossessed native deities. In the Indian context, there is such a story: Abandoned by her husband, the inauspicious Jyesta deity approaches Lord Vishnu. Vishnu dictates that she will be sustained by offerings from women (Kinsley 155). Women seem to be more kind and considerate. In fact, Bridget is more practical and she smells danger. She is very anxious to remove hurdles so that her son's marriage will take place smoothly. Bridget's use of special terms is identical with that of the Elder Sister who narrates the story of the Pootam in Edasseri's "Poota Pattu." The listener is a small boy. He asks her why clothes and money and such donations are given to the Pootam, which is a malevolent deity or witch ("The Ballad of the Pootham" 56). The Elder Sister cannot give a satisfactory reply. She merely says: "It's sin to deprive her of her due" (56). Here, the exclamation in the original poem (EK 372)
denotes the difficulty felt by the sister in answering the "awkward" question of the boy. The term "sin" is a term of ideology like those used by Bridget who forces Peter to donate money to the Old Woman. In "Poota Pattu," the mother invites the Pootam to visit her house every year, to quench the curiosity of her child and offer luck to the home: "Your presence will bring luck to our home/ And happiness to us all ("The Ballad of the Pootham" 61). Here also, the term "luck" is a special one. The mother succeeds in taming and appropriating the Pootam. The Pootam is bereft of all power. It has been permanently degraded and assigned a lower status while the mother keeps her high status. Like Bridget, the mother in "Poota Pattu" also belongs to a prosperous family, leading a well-settled life. Coming to Yeats's play, Cathleen, the discarded deity, is not tamed by the offerings of food and money. She has not come to receive such donations. She says: "If anyone would give me help he must give me himself, he must give me all" (84). Michael thinks that she wants a male-consort. She admits that she has no man of her own and that "With all the lovers that brought me their love, I never set out the bed for any" (84). By lovers, she means not lovers but heroes who are ready to sacrifice everything for their love of the motherland. The Old Woman, or Cathleen ni Houlihan, is the personification of Ireland. The motherland is conceived as a mother goddess or discarded goddess. Analysing the cult of Bharat Mata (Mother India) and its anti-colonial origin, David Kinsley writes that all Indians are considered to be the children
of the goddess (181). They are expected to protect their mother without regard for personal hardship and sacrifice.

One of the earliest and probably still the most popular literary expressions of this theme is Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel *Anandmath*, written in the late nineteenth century when the Indian independence movement was beginning to become powerful. (181)

Like Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*, a great famine forms the background of *Anandmath*. The mother goddess Kali is under the domination of foreigners. She has become naked, poor and dishevelled. Cathleen's song in which her pathetic plight is portrayed—"I am come to cry with you, woman,/My hair is unwound and unbound" (CPl 82)—can be taken as the plight of Ireland under the foreign yoke. In Kunhiraman Nair’s (1905-1978) poem "Narabali" [Human Sacrifice] (*Malayalam Poetry Today* 39-48), the India of the time is presented as a dilapidated temple of the goddess Durga:

In this temple stands an idol of Devi
That deigns to offer boons, refuge;
Though weakened in power
From dearth of rites and offerings. (42)

The poet tells the mother goddess:
If you demand flesh and blood
Offer it I shall; making
A sacrifice for this cosmos! (45)

He listens to the mother's call:
My mother calls today,
"My son!"-- I've heard the cry;
Here I come, to make
A human sacrifice, pay a debt! (48)

The Indian national song "Vande Mataram" [Hail thee, Mother],
taken from Anandmath contains the concept of motherland as a
mother goddess. "Red Hanrahan’s Song about Ireland" declares
that the Irish have kept the flames of Cathleen, the daughter of
Houlihan, in their minds. In The Countess Cathleen, the Countess
personifies the motherland, who appears as an affectionate mother
giving food to her hungry children. But, in Cathleen ni Houlihan
the mother goddess is like Durga of "Narabali" or Kali of
Anandmath where she demands sacrifice from her children. In
Yeats’s play, Michael develops sympathy towards Cathleen. He
says: "Are you lonely going the roads, ma’am?" (84) Cathleen
replies that she has her thoughts and hopes: "The hope of getting
my beautiful fields back again: the hope of putting the strangers
out of my house" (84). She is optimistic that her friends will
assist her in the task of freeing Ireland and forcing the retreat
of foreigners. Michael decides to go with Cathleen. Bridget
reminds him of his marriage and the money he took from the
bride’s father as a promise to welcome her. Cathleen sings a
song in which there are references to graves and keening. The
song alludes to the death of the heroes who dedicate themselves
for the nation’s liberation struggle. Michael has not so far
understood completely the implications of her words and songs.
He becomes curious and asks her about them. Cathleen, in her
reply, reveals the dangers involved in her service. Those who are ready to offer her service and assistance shall get immortal fame:

It is hard service they take that help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. (86)

Cathleen goes out. Her voice is heard outside singing:

They shall be remembered for ever;
They shall be alive for ever;
They shall be speaking for ever;
The people shall hear them for ever. (86)

Bridget tells Peter that Michael seems to be magically touched by Cathleen’s request and songs. Bridget once again tries to turn her son’s attention to the wedding clothes and reminds him of his marriage with Delia the very next day. Delia comes there. Michael’s attention has been on the cheering heard from outside. He looks at Delia, as if she is a stranger to him. Cathleen’s song about immortal fame is heard. Michael breaks away from the arms of Delia and goes. He gathers the neighbours and follows Cathleen. Peter asks his younger son whether he has seen any old woman going down the path. Patrick replies that he has seen only a queen-like young girl. Cathleen is not an ordinary woman.
She can assume different forms. Her common form is that of an old woman who is very poor. She appears so in order to win the sympathy of the members of the Gillane family. But in the end she becomes a young woman, almost a queen, to lead the people cheering towards her goal. The power to assume different shapes is a magical one, usually possessed by a deity, auspicious or inauspicious. Those who lead a settled and secure life may picture Cathleen as a malevolent deity who wants to raise an insurrection and who forces even young bridegrooms to embrace the "baptism of the gutter" (Auto 410). The Pootam in "Poota Pattu" can also assume different shapes. Before the boy who goes to the nursery, the Pootam appears as a beautiful young girl. "She took the guise of a young woman/And waited for the boy under a flowering tree" ("The Ballad of the Pootham" 58). Like the fairies of Irish legends, the Pootam can reduce the size of her physical body and enter the smallest temple mandakam given to her by the low-caste worshippers. The Pootam can become a beauty-queen to enchant and bewitch those who cross her path: "She waits on the sides of lonely paths/Combing her locks and smiling sweet" (56). Like the Pootam, the abduction of human beings is also done by the Irish fairies. The abduction effected—Michael’s farewell to normal settled life—by Cathleen has undergone "matriotic" transformation. Cathleen ni Houlihan can be read as a play written to inspire the Irish freedom fighters. Such a subtext is absent in "Poota Pattu." But the mother, Nangeli, is a stronger character compared to Bridget. Bridget fails to dissuade her son; Nangeli triumphs in her attempt to win back
her lost child. The fight in "Poota Pattu" is between a discarded goddess and a human mother. The human mother who belongs to the upper class wins; the goddess, representing the untouchables, fails. In Edasseri's works liberation does not always mean liberation from the British, but liberation from landed aristocracy, from the caste system among the Hindus and from male chauvinism. Foregrounding the proletarian and low caste goddess, "Poota Pattu" invites the attention of the readers to certain issues such as the caste system, the threat from the outcastes and wild tribes and the degradation of mother goddesses.

Another work of Yeats which invites comparison with his Cathleen ni Houlihan and Edasseri's "Poota Pattu" is the verse play The Land of Heart's Desire (CPI 51-72). In the play, there are six characters: Maurteen, the head of the family, Bridget his wife, Shawn, their son, Mary, his newly married wife, Father Hart and a faery child. The father has come to the house as there is frequent quarrel between the old mother and the daughter-in-law. Bridget raises her complaints to the father. Mary has no inclination to discharge the household duties like washing plates and milking cows. She is always either reading an old "devilish" book or lying in bed dreaming. Maurteen reveals that his father told him once that Maurteen's grandfather, who wrote that old book, was very fond of it. Maurteen advises Mary not to study the book as it would bring no money to the house. Moreover, his grandfather got only trouble with it. "It was
little good he got out of the book,/Because it filled his house
with rambling fiddlers,/And rambling ballad-makers and the like" (55). As in the case of the Gillane family in Cathleen ni Houlihan, the Bruins in this play lead a well-settled life. Like Peter Gillane, Maureen is also money-minded. By his worldly wisdom, Maureen understands that studying a wild old book may bring restlessness to the family. Unlike his wife Bridget, Maureen does not scold his daughter-in-law. All his pieces of advice are based on the factors that contribute to the happiness of a safe and secure family life. Maureen tells Mary:

Come, sit beside me, colleen,
And put away your dreams of discontent,
For I would have you light up my last days,
Like the good glow of turf; and when I die
You'll be the wealthiest hereabout, for, colleen,
I have a stocking full of yellow guineas
Hidden away where nobody can find it. (CP1 59)

Maureen instructs his wife Bridget not to precipitate the quarrel by using harsh words:

Do not be cross; she is a right good girl!

We have a hundred acres of good land,
And sit beside each other at the fire.

Stir up the fire,
And put new turf upon it till it blaze;
To watch the turf-smoke coiling from the fire,
And feel content and wisdom in your heart,
This is the best of life. (59-60)

To father Hart's question, Mary replies that she is reading the story of Princess Edain, the daughter of a king of Ireland, who was led away into the Land of Fairy during a May Eve. Hart tells her that it is dangerous and harmful to fill one's fancy with such stories and dreams. Fairies are wrecked and wretched angels who flatter human beings to lead them astray. He says:

......it was some wrecked angel, blind with tears,
Who flattered Edain's heart with merry words.
My colleen, I have seen some other girls
Restless and ill at ease, but years went by
And they grew like their neighbours and were glad
In minding children, working at the churn,
And gossiping of weddings and of wakes. (56)

Maurteen comforts Mary by saying that she is too young to know the crux of life. Bridget intrudes and reminds everyone that Mary is old enough to understand that "it is wrong to mop and idle" (56). Maurteen says that boredom, loneliness or unfriendly surrounding may be disturbing Mary. Bridget interferes again to remind her that if she remains silent, Mary would do nothing.

Finding that his speculations upon the mystery regarding Mary's indisposition do not impress others much, Maurteen anchors on traditional Irish belief in faeries, especially their association with May Eve: "may be it is natural upon May Eve/To dream of the Good People" (57). To eradicate this obsession, Maurteen directs Mary to hang "the blessed quicken wood" (56) upon the post of the
door. The faeries or the Good People of Ireland would not enter such houses. Maurnteen does not forget to warn her that on May Eve faeries steal newly married brides: "Remember they may steal new-married brides/After the fall of twilight on May Eve" (57). The Good People or the faeries in Ireland are like Pootam and Yakshi and such evil spirits or deities in Kerala. They would not touch those who carry an iron nail or a knife. In Edasseri's "Poota Pattu," the Pootam kidnaps Nangeli's seven-year-old son only after the child has thrown away the writing nail. M. Govindan's interpretation is that the so-called evil spirits or the wretched deities or the proletarian goddesses are primitive deities who had originated before the Iron Age (667-73). The settler colonisers, generally Indo-Europeans all over the world with their sophisticated and powerful iron weapons, sent away the aborigines or natives from city centres and crossways to the outskirts and margins. The native deities became the dispossessed ones. Here, Mary, as per the advice of the head of the settler-family, hangs the "blessed wood" upon an iron nail. Father Hart, who represents the settler-colonisers' institutionalised religion, that is Christianity, ratifies Maurnteen's advice:

We do not know the limit of those powers
God has permitted to the evil spirits
For some mysterious end. You have done right;
It's well to keep old innocent customs up. (CP1 57)
The words like "mysterious" and "innocent" show the lack of knowledge of social facts. The colonisers' Christian gods have
tried their best to root out the pagan deities, in which they have succeeded only partially, as in the case of Ireland and elsewhere. Hence, the natives' pagan deities are described derogatively as "fallen angels" or evil spirits. Milton's *Paradise Lost* provides an excellent example of how "fallen angels" are usually interpreted in dominant discourse.

By falsities and lies the greatest part
Of Mankind they corrupted to forsake
God their Creator, and th' invisible
Glory of him, that made them, to transform
Oft to the Image of Brute, adorned
With gay Religions of Pomp and Gold,
And Devils to adore for Deities:
Then were they known to men by various Names,
And various Idols through the Heathen World.

(BK.I. Lines 367-75)

The lines that follow describe individually many such fallen angels (Ll. 392-520). On analysing their features, in the context of this study, they resemble the non-Christian dispossessed deities in general. They are thrown away from the central positions by the God of the dominant. They can assume different forms and shapes. They always seek revenge and blasphemy against God. They receive bloodful immolations. Their festivals and modes of worship are orgies of lust, violence and drinking. They are worshipped by savages or the people who reside in the margins of the world. Of the fallen angels, Moloch, the first
whom Milton describes, has the characteristic aspects of Kali and Chamundi in Kerala (India):

First Moloch, horrid King besmear'd with blood
Of human sacrifice, and parents tears,
Though for the noise of Drums and Timbrels loud
Their children's cries unheard, that pass'd through fire
To his grim Idol. (392-96)

The worship of the Goddess Kali included human, and later animal sacrifice amidst the beating of wild drums and drinking. Jeffares notes that Herodias, a witch queen, sacrificed babes to ghoules and ghosts (NC 234). There is no denying the historical fact that in every part of the world, when the people of the respective regions were "uncivilized," human sacrifices prevailed. But the assumption that all the deities of the marginalised are the incarnations of the Devil seems to be a colonial construct, which has been a part of the discourse of the dominant and their religion. In other words, the marginality of the worshippers is seen reflected in the degradation and degeneration of the deities they worship.

In the case of Kerala (India), even before the advent of Europeans, the Indo-European or the Aryan Brahminical settlers with their Vedic religion and pantheon of gods and goddesses had displaced the native deities. Like the sophisticated and refined
Christianity as against the pagan in Ireland, the sophisticated and refined Brahminical deities, rituals and forms of worship became central here. Also, as in the case of Ireland, society in general internalised the dominant Brahminical assumption that the native deities are "black" or evil spirits. Speaking about the reforms of the religious centres of the backward classes in Kerala undertaken by the reputed social reformer and the chief protagonist of the renaissance in Kerala, Sri Narayana Guru (1856-1928), P.K. Gopalakrishnan remarks that he redirected the backward communities from the worship of evil deities like Chathan, Chamundi, Matan, Pootathan and Chutalamatan to the worship of auspicious deities. The evil deities, who used to receive offerings like arrack and alcohol, were removed from temples and wools.

The deities thus removed are none other than the traditional ones of the natives. C.J. Fuller has distinguished them from the deities of the Brahmins. The "Upper" gods preferred vegetarian worship to animal sacrifice (Camphor Flame 257).

Deities particularly favoured by Brahmins, who are offered only vegetarian food and are worshipped in Sanskrit by Brahman priests, are disparaged by some low-caste Hindus, who see them weaker than other deities, such as village goddesses, who are offered animal sacrifice and praised in the vernacular by non-Brahmans.
From the above social analysis of Ireland and Kerala, it is clear that the existence of the evil spirits or the savage ones is not an innocent phenomenon. They have their origins in the social history of the respective nations. Though the "official" religion describes faeries as evil spirits, common people call them "Good People." Edward Hirsch observes that "the explanation of the fairies as fallen angels, shared by most of the European peasantry in the nineteenth century, dates back to and beyond medieval Christianity" (39).

Yeats's play The Land of Heart's Desire also bears the imprints of the native/dominant polarity. Here, "the Good People" or the faeries represent the native and the Christian gods the dominant. Mary hovers between paying homage to the native deity and observing the regulations of Christianity. In the play, Mary hangs a talisman on the door to ward off faeries. But, immediately a small child comes from nowhere, and takes away the talisman. In spite of the warnings given by Maurteen and father Hart, Mary has half a mind to welcome the "Good People." Announcing the loss of the talisman, she raises a doubt:

They have taken away the blessed quicken wood,
They will not bring good luck into the house;
Yet I am glad that I was courteous to them,
For are not they, likewise, children of God?

(CPI 57)

Father has clarified that they are the children of the Devil. But, doubt still lingers in the heart of Mary. She hopes that
when the world ends, God may open the door for the Good People. The hope is vehemently contradicted by Hart. Mary finds that a strange old woman, who is thirsty, has come to the door. Mary gives milk to her, Bridget and Shawn become frightened. Bridget makes use of this opportunity to scold Mary, as if Mary had invited faeries to hover over the house. Mary retorts that since she is fed up with the bitter tongue of her mother-in-law, she has determined to welcome the faeries. In fact she does it: "Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!/ Let me have all the freedom I have lost "(61). In the context of this study, "the freedom" can be interpreted in two ways. One way is to place it beside the poem "The Heart of the Woman" (CP 67-58), especially the lines: "O what to me my mother's care,/ The house where I was safe and warm" (67). The loss of the sense of security and the warmth of affection she enjoyed when she was in her own house and also the freedom she had there are projected in Mary's words. Since there is only one person, that is the mother-in-law Bridget, who is cold and rough towards Mary, such an explanation cannot go very far. Maureen, the father-in-law, is very protective and comforting to Mary and Shawn is very loving and affectionate. The other way of interpreting Mary's sense of the loss of freedom is related to her identification with the dispossessed natives and their constriction because of the centrality and officiality of the settlers or the coloniser's Christian religion. Mary finds a lack of space to move freely in. She is not even permitted to read an old book, which has been in her husband's home for a very long time. It has remained
there since it was written and bound by her husband's great
great-grandfather. Since she feels congested and hemmed in, she
welcomes the faeries to take her to a wide and spacious field
where she can ride "upon the wind," "run on the top of the
dishabille tide" and "dance upon the mountains like a flame" (61). Even the little space she can move and the little air she
can breathe in the four walls of the house are contaminated by
the foul and foreign tongue of her mother-in-law. The walls of
the house and the fences of the courtyard are not seen by her as
the signs of protection and safety. Instead, to her, they are
the walls and fences of a prison. This is in a spatial sense.
Symbolically it means that the religion of Christianity cannot
contain her. She wants to pay homage and extend hospitality to
the native religions and their deities like the Good People. She
gives milk to the strangely dressed old woman and fire to the old
man, who are faeries. Though she formally announces the
disappearance of the talisman, she finds satisfaction in the fact
that she was courteous to them: "Yet I am glad that I was
courteous to them" (57). Father Hart reminds her or warns her
that she does not know the meaning of her words. If somebody
calls the Good People during May Eve, they will come and carry
them off to the faery land. They can return no more to the house
and hearth. Mary replies that she is fed up with all the four
people in the house.

A tongue that is too crafty and wise,
A tongue that is too godly and grave,
A tongue that is more bitter than the tide,
And a kind tongue too full of drowsy love. (61)
Mary is dissatisfied with the system represented by Maurteen, the wealthy, wise and well-settled, Hart, the official Christianity’s spokesman, and Bridget and Shawn, and she longs for an alter/native system. A voice utters: "The lonely heart is withered away" (63). It portends evil to the house. It is Mary’s heart which is lonely. She feels a little alienated. It is easy for faeries to carry off her soul and the physical body will wither away. She clings closer to Shawn as she has said "wicked things" that night (63). The voice is heard once again, which sings a song the refrain of which is "The lonely heart is withered away" (63). The voice has been that of a child. Maurteen brings in the Faery Child. The extent to which the Irish folk believe in the faeries and their power is shown by the attitude of Maurteen, Shawn, Bridget and Mary. When the Child has entered the house all are eager to propitiate the Child. But the Child shrieks and covers her eyes when the crucifix on the wall is seen. She is very particular and firm in persuading others to remove the cross. To the native, dispossessed deity, that is the Child, the cross is "the tortured thing" (66). It is the symbol of Irish defeats at the hands of the colonisers.

Regarding the crucifix in the play, father Hart is at first hesitant to remove it from the drawing room. He explains that it is the image of the Son of God (66). But the Child is very adamant and vehemently cries to hide the crucifix away (66). Hart yields to the Child’s wish. He hopes that he can convert her into the Christian faith. His explanation concerning why he
has yielded to the plea, or rather to the demand of the Child, needs detailed analysis in the context of the present study:

We must be tender to all budding things

Our Maker let no thought of Calvary

Trouble the morning stars in their first song. (66)

The tide has already turned in favour of the Faery Child. If it is taken as a fight between a dispossessed deity and the representative of the dominant religion, the fight has been won by the former. Father Hart very well knows that the Child is not an ordinary human child. To quote the father’s own words a bit earlier in the play, it is the child of the Fiend. He had said so in reply to Mary’s doubt whether the faery children are also the children of God. Now, father Hart contradicts his own assertion. He is actually trying to mystify the others and save his face by not admitting defeat. The flowery or decorative epithet "budding" and the metaphor "morning stars" reveal his delicacy or a sense of sin or shame in acting against the dictates of his religion, of which he is an official representative. Hart is not completely free from the feeling of obligation to pay homage or worship to the native deities or the Good People. He vainly tries to hide it. His present state is comparable to that of the Elder Sister in "Poota Pattu" and Bridget in Cathleen in Houlihan who consider it a sin or shame not to offer or give anything to the native deity. The pattern of this play is almost identical to that of Cathleen ni Houlihan. In The Land of the Heart’s Desire, the native deity, that is, the
Faery Child, carries off the soul of Mary; in Cathleen ni Houlihan, Michael goes away with the dispossessed deity, Cathleen. Mary, the newly married wife, has abandoned her loving husband and the well-settled family; Michael, who is about to marry, has given up his affectionate bride and the well-settled family.

Mary and Michael give up the facilities offered by the well-settled dominant system. Seanchan in The King's Threshold resembles them. Pressing his demand for preserving a native custom, Seanchan discards the king's various offers. The sacrifices of Michael, Mary and Seanchan are for the nation, the native religion and a native convention respectively. The play The King's Threshold (CP 103-143) presents the sacrifice of Seanchan, an Irish native bard and musician, the chief poet of his time, at the altar of his demand that King Guaire should take back his decision to oust the poet from the advisory council to the King. Seanchan has decided to immolate his life by starving at the threshold of the royal palace so that the people will turn against the King. He hopes that the King will have to pay a very dear price for the poet's death. It will be a severe curse upon the power wielded by the King. The Oldest Pupil of Seanchan thinks that the master suffers from a fever. Then the King explains:

...there is a custom,
An old and foolish custom, that if a man
Be wronged, or think that he is wronged, and starve
Upon another’s threshold till he die,
The common people, for all time to come,
Will raise a heavy cry against the threshold,
Even though it be the King’s. (CPI 108)

These lines reveal a clear divide between the King and the native people or the common people. The custom honoured by the people is described to be "old" and "foolish" by the King. A king is expected to save the interests and protect the faith of the people. Here, the King denigrates their beliefs. Seanchan has the sympathy of the natives. In other words, he represents the ethos of the natives and the native land. Seanchan sends away those who come to stop his fasting and says that a person who opts for the vocation of an artist should be ready to sacrifice all the comforts of life:

In ruin, poetry calls out in joy,
Being the scattering hand, the bursting pod,
The victim’s joy among the holy flame,
God’s laughter at the shattering of the world. (114)

From Brian, an old servant, Seanchan understands that his mother has sent no message: "She sent no message. Our mothers know us, they knew us before birth" (118). In the context of Seanchan’s martyrdom for safeguarding and maintaining the native poet’s right as against the King’s assertion of royal power, the mother sending no message is significant. Seanchan’s fight is for retaining the customs of the motherland. Brian the old servant and the two cripples rhythmically chant curses upon the
King. All of them beat the Mayor, who wishes the King long life. The Chamberlain, the Soldier and the Monk come. They also fail to tempt Seanchan. The Chamberlain raises the calumny against Seanchan that he has stolen the authority of the King by rousing the common people against the central majestic power. The First Cripple has earlier alluded to the power struggle involved in the problem: "Those that make rhymes have a power from beyond the world" (115). Sending Seanchan away from the council, the King has questioned the poet's supernatural power. The old servant, Brian, another representative of the natives, has also referred to this: "What do the great and powerful care for rights/That have no armies?" (122) The King has been asserting his authority by rooting "up old customs, old habits, old rights" (119). The Chamberlain, the Mayor, the Soldier and the Monk represent the new authority wielded by the King. They do not "care for the rights" of the natives "that have no armies" (122). The King sends the priest, the military leaders, dancer girls and others to dissuade Seanchan from his resolve. But he does not relent, and soon he dies. The King treats Seanchan as a traitor and he is not given an honourable funeral. With him will be buried for ever the rights of the natives.

It is clear that Seanchan's death is not simply an artist's death. The artist is not a lonely figure, unheard and unsung. He has his disciples and the representatives of the common people like the Old Servant and two cripples to support him. Even the women folk have their representatives. They approach Seanchan
sympathetically. His sacrifice is not at the altar of art. Graver issues are at stake. "The victim's joy among the holy flame" is not just for adding fuel to the flame of art. Seanchan is only one of the fellows who have immolated themselves to save the native ethos. What is holy in the flame of martyrdom is the sacredness of native customs and beliefs. The King, who calls them old and foolish, belongs to those who have been powerful enough to settle and dominate Ireland and trample successively upon the Irish ethos. All the persons who come near the starving martyr request him to yield to the new order and power. But an off-stage mother, whose presence is felt only through the words of the family servant, Brian, sends no message. Of all parents, usually, it is the mother who is eager to save the life of her son. Her absence and silence can be interpreted as a demand for the son's sacrifice at the altar of the motherland's ethos.

The polarity, the native versus the settler colonisers, one finds in Cathleen ni Houlihan and The Land of Heart's Desire, is expressed in At the King's Threshold with a significant transformation. Seanchan sacrifices himself to save the native custom of admitting and respecting the chief of the Irish bards in the King's council. The broadly expanding and augmenting power of the settler colonisers as represented by the King and the assisting aristocrats is resisted by a poet who stands for the native ethos.

The anti-colonial stance of Edasseri's works is revealed in "Puthenkalavum Arivalum" (EK 250-255) ["The Cooking Pot and the
Sickle" and "Panimutakkam" [EK 240-249] ["The Strike"]. It is not the nationalistic spirit for freedom from foreign domination, but the freedom of the subalterns—farmers and labourers from the locally dominating landlords and industrial owners—that is projected in these poems. For the first one, the poet himself has given an introductory note where there is a reference to sacrifice; in the case of the second, there is a piacular sacrificial ritual organised by the textile mill owner. Both these works are long narrative poems. In the introductory note the poet says that he has "often seen crop-confiscation, like animal sacrifice in temples" [EK 250]. Crop-confiscation was one of the legally sanctioned cruelties. As an advocate-clerk by profession and the villagers’ advisor by their faith in him, Edasseri had first-hand knowledge of the three parties—farmer, landlord and legal court—related to crop-confiscation [250]. Of the three parties mentioned here, clearly it is the farmer who is the sacrificial animal. The landlord who reaps the fruits of the subaltern farmer, using the legal machinery, inflicts physical and mental wounds upon the farmer. It is the crop-confiscation which defames, demotes and destroys the farmer. The cruel and tragic event occurs when the farmer is unable to pay back his loans or when he is incapable of remitting rental arrears to the landlord. Koman is the farmer in the poem. In Malayalam, komaram means oracle. An oracle, in North Kerala, is attached to a temple of a cruel goddess, who occasionally requires him to inflict wounds upon his head and spill blood. He is a semi-priest who is a scapegoat before the goddess. The name of the
farmer, Koman, reminds a Malayalam reader of the phonologically similar komaram. The poet’s notes and the phonological association of the character open the possibility of reading the poem with the theme of sacrifice in mind.

The poem is divided into seven parts or songs. The first song describes the pains taken by Koman for farming the paddy field:

Who in the last season had sown
The Aryan seeds in this field with love?
When the hot sun of March burned
Rain-fire above, red embers below,
With his bullock waving its dewlap
Drawing the plough deep, unwearied;
Not with the sheen of oil glowed
His body, but with sweat;
Until the earth turned into fine dust,
Until Vishu decked the konna with blossoms,
Koman had ploughed the field up and down;
Koman had sown the Aryan seeds.

("The Cooking Pot and the Sickle" 120)

Koman has ploughed the field, sown seeds and kept watching the growth of paddy plants. He has supervised the women labourers who picked the weeds. There is pleasure for Koman in the pains of farming: "On the field where fresh seeds sprouted, / Were there more golden shoots in the field / Or on the breast of Koman in rapture?" (120) The implication of the first part is that Koman
is the real owner of the plants in the field. In the second paragraph, Koman’s sorrows and suffering because of the season’s mischief are presented. The field is infested with weeds. He has fought against the horrible weeds like the famed heroes of legends. Even the weed-picker girls have started crying. But the weeds have not been fully removed. Koman has neither paid his son’s school fees nor remitted instalments due to the money lender nor bought medicine for his illness. In the third part Koman, running over the dike or the narrow muddy bank of the paddy fields excitedly, is compared to a komaram or an oracle, who is dancing and running wildly as inspired by a goddess.

After the burning summer, thunder showers have come. Corps have begun to come out of the wombs of rice plants. The sight of the tender corn everywhere in the level field has excited Koman. In the fourth part, one finds Koman sitting among the members of his family. He promises a new skirt for his younger daughter. A wedding locket will be made for the elder daughter. Koman’s son says that, after the harvesting, he has to pay off the tuition fee arrears. The mother needs a new pot to cook the new rice. Natives and neighbours appreciate Koman as he alone wields the credit for ploughing, sowing and growing the golden crop in the field. All previous parts of the poem have confirmed Koman’s unquestionable authority to reap the harvest. But, in the fifth part, the harvest is reaped by the labourers brought by the court of law. When Koman and his helpers come to the field, they see that harvesting has been started. Since the earlier crop was a dismal failure, Koman has not remitted the rental arrears to his
landlord. The feudal landlord has obtained a decree from the court to confiscate the current crop. In the sixth song, the indignation of Koman and his people is portrayed. Koman, Chathappan and others enter the field and shout against the harvesters. Koman's anger is compared to that of an insane elephant chained to a post: "Koman raged as if possessed, /Like an elephant chained to the post" (123). In the translated version, Koman is seen as possessed. The word "possessed" reminds one of an oracle dedicated to a fierce female deity. Thus the sacrificial association is preserved in translation. But, compared to the original Malayalam lines, another sacrificial implication is lost. In Malayalam Koman is presented as tied to a kutty [post] like a gajam [elephant]. Kutty reminds one of yoopam (post) near a blood-sacrifice-field. Gajam has phonological similarity to ajam (goat). Thus, though not directly stated by the poet, the lines are connected to sacrifice. If the introductory notes and the comparison of Koman to an oracle and these lines are juxtaposed, the sacrificial reading is vindicated.

The people sent by the landlord find it impossible to proceed with harvesting. Then the court officer shows Koman the decree from the court. Koman finds no ground for resistance. It is futile and absurd to fight against those who are the instrument of the power of the landlord. In the final song, the crux of the problem is expressed. It is not the farmer but the landlord who enjoys the fruit:
Let the man who sowed see it:
The feudal order reaped the crop,
Sticking to the shade of the power;
A handful of robbers have kept all for themselves.

(123)

The subaltern farmer has only the rights to work hard; he cannot enjoy the fruits of his work. Koman and all his people line up in a circle and raise the sickles in their hands. They jointly cry: "First we must reap power;/And after that the Aryan crop!" (123) They have to organise an armed rebellion against the ruling landlords and their laws.

The sufferings and sacrifices undergone by a subaltern labourer and his family are contrasted with the retreat and ritual sacrifice organised by a textile mill owner, wife and priests in the narrative poem "Panimutakkam" [The Strike] (EX 240-249). During the strike, abject poverty and cholera swallow the labourer's ten children. The poverty is caused by the textile owner's pride and power in prolonging the strike, cholera is set in by the communal feast in connection with his sacrificial rite which is, ironically, for removing the sterility of his wife. The textile owner is a landlord also. He belongs to the dominant indigenous group. The traditional sacrificial rite favoured by the upper class is ridiculed and censured by the poet by placing it side by side with the painful sacrifice in the form of strike led by a group of labourers. The subaltern labourers demand or compel one's sympathy. From the point of view of the dominant upper class Hindu religion, the poet
presents a "heretic" argument. Like "Bimbisarente Edayan" this poem also discusses the different denotations and definitions of sacrifice. Apart from the ritual yajna by the priests, the "sacrifice" of strike by the labourers and the motherly sacrifice of Raman's wife are also presented here. She is the mother of ten dying children and is a figure of sacrifice and victimisation. By the end of the poem, she expands into a Universal Mother of all agitators.

The poem has seven parts or songs. The first song presents the strike, the labourer's house and the textile owner's rite and retreat. The description is from the perspective of Raman, the labourer.

Strike in the textile mill;
No jobs around, only starvation.
Somehow a month has been pushed through;
Life has come to a dead end.
Hunger and sorrow inside the house,
Kicks and blows on the streets;
To Raman the labourer the world seemed
An ill-omened shadow. (240)

The textile owner is Raman's neighbour. He spends money and crops in plenty as expenses and offering in connection with the ritual and retreat of twenty-one days. The police support the mill owner whose firm resolve is to suppress the agitation. The agitators, however, intensify the strike shouting the slogan: "Buried be the wrenching sorrows;/Leap toward rocky fortitude"
The poor people and children, who come to the bungalow of the mill owner, are fed by his wife on the eleventh day of their sacrificial rite. So anxious to have a child of her own as the prospective boon of the rite, or in other words, to make the rite fruitful, the lady herself attends and supervises the communal feast in the altar-pavillion. Raman’s ten children, who have been without food for more than a month, partake in the feast. They fill their bellies fully, especially with the prestigious dish, the sweet and oily pudding. The next day, when Raman reaches home, he finds his nine children dying of cholera. While Raman is burying his children one by one, his neighbour, the mill owner, makes offerings into the sacred fire-altar. It is ironical that his sacrificial rite and the related feast intended to get the boon of issue have resulted in the death of his neighbour’s nine innocent children. Raman experiences the deepest shock of his dismal life on the twenty-first day of the rite. His remaining son, the eldest, also dies. Raman’s "sacrificial ritual," the agitation for social justice, has given him a permanent curse: the torture he suffered during the agitation has made a limp on his legs. Accompanied by his loyal wife, Raman goes to a corner of his backyard. After burying the last child, Raman utters a curse with fire-flashing eyes: "Bloom not any offspring/In the womb of callous inhumanity!" (248) The curse is directed against the factory owner and his wife who have been performing sacrificial rites to propitiate deities and get their blessings, so that they can have children.
Like Raman, his wife is a subaltern and scapegoat figure. In spite of poverty and torments, Raman does not think in terms of stopping the strike and entering the mill. Raman's wife does not dissuade him from the strike. Raman and his wife are conscious of their class's rights. Even when the children are buried, the wife or the mother of the children does not discourage Raman. The mother in "Panimutakkam" rises above the biological level of playing her role. The lines: "Wife is ghostly, with shrunk and dried breasts;/The youngest child gnaws at her nipples" (EA 240) show that she also plays the mother's part. As a wife she is dedicated to the husband. She follows Raman physically and mentally. When the last child is buried, she accompanies Raman to the backyard. When Raman curses the owner's family, she lies at his feet. As a mother her pain is greater. This mother has sacrificed her ten children for the strike. The mother-figure in Yeats's Cathleen ni Houlihan demands the sacrifice of young men for the cause of the liberation of the motherland. Here, in "Panimutakkam," the sacrifice of children is for the liberation of the labour class. When the last burial is done, from the nearby street, the slogans of the striking labourers are heard. The agitators shout the refrain: "Buried be the wrenching sorrows;/Leap toward rocky fortitude!" (248) Raman's wife puts on a different mothers' robe and role. She has taught her ten children, who are no more, how to walk. Now, she eagerly looks at "ten thousand children" (248) who walk in steps according to the rhythm of the procession. There is neither trembling nor hesitation in her
voice. Raman and his wife join the agitators and shout the "auspicious mantra": "Buried be the wrenching sorrows;/Leap toward rocky fortitude!" (249)

As mentioned earlier, like "Bimbisarente Edayan," "Panimutakkam" too discusses at length the implications of real and ritual sacrifices. The poem written in the rhythm of marching songs suits the revolutionary tone. The slogans of the agitators are interwoven with the pictures of ordeals suffered by the labourers. The motif of sacrifice undergoes the required transformation. The rhythm of chanting prayer and the tone of adoration can be seen in poems on mother goddesses like "Xavile Pattu." The basic assumption behind the theme of mother goddess/male victim is that the fertility and welfare of the community depend upon the victim's sacrifice and the consequent rejuvenation of the deity. Such an assumption has however been gradually eroded in the wake of colonial domination and other kinds of cultural invasion. And mother goddesses have turned into archetypes giving way, among other things, to the conception of "motherland." Edasseri remarks that the well-being of all the members of the society depends upon the subversion of the wealthy class and landed aristocracy. The ideals of Indian freedom struggle and the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 had succeeded in subverting many of the assumptions of the dominant ideology of the time. The mill-owner in "Panimutakkam" who conducts ritual retreat is unconsciously or indirectly trying to perpetuate the dominant ideology. He does not seem to analyse the medical or material reasons for his or his wife's sterility.
To him, God's curse, because of the sins he and his spouse might have acquired during their previous births, is the root cause of their sterility. From the point of view of such an ideological plane, the labourers should view their poor wages and other grievances as the result of their inherited sin or blight. Instead they question their "god-given" plight and launch an agitation. The iron hand with which the owner handles the issue of the strike and his unrelenting pride in not yielding to the labourers' demands, together with his observation of the yajna, have, thus, the same ideological background. He is also asserting his power. He has the prestigious position and privilege to destroy valuable items like ghana and rice. He can withhold what is due to the starving coolies. In a similar fashion, King Bimbisaren, in "Bimbisarente Edavan," plans to immolate goats and offer them into the fire-altar. The King shows that he has the rights and power over the lives of the people. Quoting Smruti, Balaraman in "Varadanam" asserts the royal power to possess girls and pearls without bothering about the likes and dislikes of others. Conchubar in Deircre also declares his unlimited royal power and privileges. Republican and democratic ideologies put an end to such dispositions and verdicts. At another level, the loss of female centrality and the consequent marginalisation of female deities all over the world have stopped the sacrifice of male victims. The decapitation of male heroes and the blood-bath of goddesses and queens exist only as archetypes. Congal in Herne's Egg and Cuchulain in Hawk's Well encroach upon the remote regions where
female-centred systems exist. As male heroes they question and subvert the assumptions of such systems. The pioneers who question the existing assumptions become martyrs. Koman in "Puthenkalavum Arivalum" and Raman in "Panimutakkam" also battle against the existing assumptions and are, thus, martyrs/scapegoats.

"Puthenkalavum Arivalum" and "Panimutakkam" exhort the peasants and labourers to unite, fight against and capture power from the indigenous dominant class. These poems illustrate how the subaltern farmers and labourers are adversely affected by the cruel and terrible "legal rituals" like crop-confiscation and lock-out. Before the implementation of land reforms in post-independent Kerala, there had been another cruel, legally-approved "ritual," namely, eviction. Edasseri gives the following introductory note to his poem "Kudiyirakal" (EK 287-290). "The memories of eviction, the sad and lonely scenes that passed before me many times like crop-confiscation, urged me to write this poem" (287). Landlords used to give lands on lease to the landless. Sometimes the peasants used to reside in the corners of lands as tenants or residents. If the landlord was displeased with them they were ousted. They had deep attachment to the soil or land in which they were born, played as children and cultivated crops as peasants. The poem "Kudiyirakal" (287-290) presents the heart-rending agonies, grievances and nostalgic recollections of a peasant, who is the head of an evicted family.

So fond of that land
Paradise can be given up in bargain.
Born and brought up on that soil,
I should die lying there.
My forefathers lie there,
Having their eternal sleep.
Fed upon my sighs
The plants grew there.
Orchards offered fruits
Before my labouring spade.
There the busy drama of my young life
Bloomed in various hues.
There I met my partner
A blushing young bride.
There and there I found her a deity,
A mother, who realised my life's continuity.

(287)

The peasant hopes that if he were not evicted he would enjoy
a restful old age there. He has his son who will work hard in
the orchard. Even after death he will feel the beauties of
the cycle of seasons. Such hopes are shattered forever. He is
not permitted to enter that land. He finds that even memory
cannot throw a handful of dust upon the terrible scene of his
eviction to hide it or to obliterate the scene. The cruel event
of eviction has exposed the dearth and penury of the family. So
far, he has been hiding the family's wretchedness from the public
view. When the utensils and other articles from the hut are
thrown out, the neighbours become aware of the family's blight.
The only psychological refuge the members of the family possessed, their pride, has gone.

The peasant and his family—his loyal wife and crying children—leave the land of their heart's desire. They walk and wander with heavy hearts. Like the Old Woman in Cathleen ni Houlihan, their "feet are tired" and their "hands are quiet," but "there is no quiet" in their hearts (CP1 81). The helplessness and alienation of the evicted are comparable to the painful condition of the discarded woman Moll Magee and the dethroned native queen Cathleen ni Houlihan. The husband drove Magee out and "shut the door." "The windows and doors" of the neighbours and other familiar persons "were shut" (CP 26). Cathleen "has travelled far, very far" and "there's many a one that doesn't make" her welcome (CP1 80). The dispossessed Irish native deities like the Sidhe live in mountains. The proletarian and tribal goddesses like the Pootam reside in hilllocks. The dehoused and outcast peasant in "Kudiyirakal" finds it difficult to find a haven even in mountainous regions. Even such outskirts and remote margins are under the ownership of the dominant. Though the world is large and wide, he cannot own a handful of soil. Even the bits of earth's space which support his walking feet come as loan (EK 289). The poet speaks through the mouth of the peasant in the last ten lines of the poem "Kudiyirakal." He asks all the evacuated and evicted whether they belong to any nation or whether they have nations of their own. Though they are born in India, England or Africa, they do not
have lands of their own in such nations. Nowhere in the world are there public places on which the evicted can claim a share of ownership. They cannot build houses in any of them. The evicted do not belong to any continent. But those evacuated from different nations constitute a particular community and together they form a "nation." To use Frantz Fanon's phrase, they are "the wretched of the earth." The laws regarding ownership rights and private property have made the existence of a broad group of people in almost all nations in the world wretched. This is mainly effected as a consequence of European colonisation of the world. The central authority of colonial power executed land surveys in colonies and fixed the ownership and responsibility of different divisions of land. Hitherto uncharted regions were brought under big landlords. Moreover, small landholders were deprived of their rights and they were placed under the control of big landowners. Jackson (248) and Lawrence (113) quoted earlier in this study attest to this fact. European rulers found it convenient to collect tax revenue from landlords who are few in number. The land reforms and agricultural innovations were implemented by the colonial rulers with a view to making centralised taxation more effective and less cumbersome. Edward Said remarks that colonialism is "the practice of changing the uselessly unoccupied territories of the world into useful new versions of the European metropolitan society. Everything in those territories that suggested waste, disorder, unaccounted resources, was to be converted into productivity, order, taxable, potentially developed wealth" (The Question of Palestine 78).
The peasant in Edasseri's "Kudiyirakal" vents his grievances against the colonial powers who reserve the whole land for big land owners. He does not speak as the representative of any nation. His exhortation to all the evicted who belong to different nationalities and continents is directed against the result and consequence of colonial expansion. Such evicted peasants have to fight against "a widely varied group of little Europes scattered throughout Asia, Africa, and the Americas, each reflecting the circumstances, the specific instrumentalities of the parent culture, its pioneers, its vanguard settlers" (Said, The Question 78).

Cathleen ni Houlihan, the Pootam, Koman in "The Cooking Pot and the Sickle," Mary in The Land of Heart's Desire, Seanchan in AT the King's Threshold and Raman in "Panimutakkam" expose various aspects of eviction and dispossession. Cathleen exhorts young men to give up all and fight for the nation. The dwindled and tamed mother goddess, the Pootam, is powerless to do more than collecting the toll once an year. Koman makes the peasants and farm labourers pledge to reap power from the landlords. Mary escapes into the magical world of fairies. Seanchan dies by fasting to revive the native custom of admitting a bard among the King's council. Raman wages war against industrial capitalism. All these characters show that colonisation and its discursive practices have made imprints upon Yeats's and Edasseri's works. The victim position of their nations in
relation to the British imperium can be read from the above-mentioned scapegoat characters. The theme of eviction/dispossession in Yeats has a mythical/legendary mask. Edasseri presents the theme unmasked.