CONCLUSION

Nationalist historiography, taking off from colonial Indologists, who valourized Aryan "migration" and found Hinduism at the heart of India, continues to "reaffirm" India as Hindu. This has led to representations of Muslims as "foreigners," where "invaders" and Mughals continue to determine the parameters for the Muslim, even in contemporary India. The residual memories of a history, and the history of such memories, have created a national amnesia regarding other resources of history. Consequently, a monolithic construction of Islam is circulated across the national imaginary. Lack of an adequate theoretical framework and historical resources with which to address the questions raised by Islam in India adds to the feeling of being pushed into a corner.

While ardent secularists insist on, and nationalist Muslims plead for, toleration, Islam continues to be represented as inimical to the nation. Muslims in India, hence, are emblems of a lack within our secular nationalism as well as embodiments of an excess in lieu of their perceived extra-territorial affiliation to the community of Islam. In sharp contrast, I re-conceptualize the Muslim as a critical-subject that provides us with an interactive window on secular-modern nation-formation. The problematic of Islam in India is that it is fabricated as the other of western modernity and the other of nationalist thought in postcolonial India. Being the other's other, in the sense that nationalist itself is the other of European modernity, Islam yields a centrifugal and centripetal critique that can critically engage with neo-colonial as well as postcolonial predicaments. A central theme around which I organize my discussion of Islam is the identity-community axes, thereby postulating Islam as imparting a critical charge to engagement with contemporary concerns.
If the project of theory in our time is to actualize this potential, an enabling trajectory of Islam’s engagement with Indian modernity must be set up historically. Drawing an archive is an important task if one is to productively engage with the issue of Islam in India. The archive I constructed enabled me to contrast Mohamed Ali’s autobiographical fragment with better-known full-length autobiographies by Gandhi and Nehru. Mohamed Ali, I argued, should be placed in the context of the establishment of the Darul Ulum of Deoband (in 1867), the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU; of which Mohamed Ali was a product, in 1877), the Darul Ulum Nadwatul (in 1898) and Jamia Millia Islamia (of which Mohamed Ali was one of the founding members, in 1920). Working against the assumption that the nationalist leaders were the sole representatives of modernity, I drew on Dalit critiques, to suggest that an awakened modern consciousness existed among various peoples of the subcontinent. Focusing mainly on Deoband and AMU, I argued that these educational ventures were motivated by the urgent socio-political imperative of addressing the aftereffects of the replacement of Persian with Urdu in 1835 and the post-1857 repression of Muslims. Both these events had led to a political vacuum within the community. Various colonial policies had rendered a whole community illiterate in that their learning and resources were no longer of any value. The communitarian move to revamp its socius and institutionalize a contemporary subjectivity also required a favourable political climate.

Mohamed Ali was a national leader, who comes in the wake of other prominent figures like Syed Ahmad Khan. In striking contrast to Gandhi’s seamless narrative of self, region and nation, and Nehru’s taken-for-granted-ness of his addressee (including foreigners), Mohamed Ali’s autobiographical fragment is confronted with the task of addressing people who are “unlike” him. Any attempt to become one with the national-self-image in order to be heard and heeded by other Indians and those other than Indians would have demanded that he ignore important aspects of his identity. In order to make himself “legible” to others, he realized, he had to
thematize his difference and this required that he begin his autobiography (a project he completed) with an exposition of Islam (a project he never completed). The task he set himself in attempting to write an autobiography was to scrutinize received notions of secular-modern self- and nation -hood by articulating a critique of the western Christianity. These transformations of his project, the fragmentary nature of the “final” text, the long delay in its first publication, the significant change of title, from “Islam: Kingdom of God” to “My Life: A Fragment,” and its relatively obscure status thereafter, underlines the dissonances looming before the Muslim-self as well as the unfinished nature of Islam in India. On the one hand, Islam belonged to the nation and was then “partitioned” off. On the other, it still remains as part of the nation. Islam continues to be framed as a piece that has fallen off the amphora but still does not belong to or complete the nation.

In order to examine the nuances of the question of Islam in a local setting, I then turned to the Malabar revolts/rebellions from 1836 to 1921. I analyzed colonial historiography and administrative documents to show that “fanaticism” is a construct that tries to rationalize uprisings by peasant Mappilas. From 1836 to 1919 there were 29 (or 31, according to some historians) “uprisings” and at least 12 putative “uprisings” in which a few Mappilas (only three uprisings had more than 20 participants) would say their prayers and bid farewell to family and friends and often with priestly sanction (try to) murder their upper caste oppressors or their collaborators. Of the 352 peasant insurgents only 24 were captured alive.

William Logan, the District Collector who was appointed as Special Commissioner in 1881, was the first to perceive that the land reforms—based on principles applicable to the landlord-tenant relationship in England—initiated by the colonial government (as well as the Moplah Outrages Acts of 1854 following the recommendations by TL Strange, who headed the Special
Commission of 1852) had resulted in increasing the hardship, especially of the small and middling, as well as unjust evictions of Mappila peasants. Measures initiated by Logan to correct this mistake did not bring about any significant change, because of the colonial policy of "righting" Tippu's wrongs tilted judgments in favour of the landlords (most of whom had returned after the British victory over Tippu in 1792. Representations from Mappilas (as many as 2734 to Logan alone) were not usually acted upon.

My analysis of dispatches from local British authorities in the wake of many of these uprisings shows bewilderment, shared also by Logan, on the part of the colonial authorities. Faced with the necessity of reporting these uprisings alongside accounts of the success of their administrative measures, the colonial administrative machinery slowly swings into action and "fanaticism" is evolved as a rationale to explain these uprisings. The fanatical causation theory, however, was not just a raison d'être created by circumstances. Its roots lay within the origins of history itself. We can trace its beginnings in Logan's project of writing the history of Malabar. While Logan "understands" and respects the Arabs in Malabar as well as the upper caste Hindus of Malabar, the Mappilas, described as a race and at times as a caste in that they are purported to have mixed Arab-Indian blood, defy him. As Logan notes in 1856, over a period of 25 years the Cherumar caste in Malabar has decreased by 65 percent, and the disturbing cause is conversion to Islam. Mappilas' mixed ancestry of Arab and the increasing influx of "lower" caste Hindus results in a breakdown of neat colonial formulations of race, religion and caste. Thereafter, in the overall colonial perspective, Mappilas became the embodiments of the worst of Islam and India. Fanaticism, accentuated by real economic hardships, is the most sympathetic understanding of their proneness to rebel. The confusion that underlies this rationale of fanaticism is evident in the conflicting explanations for the uprising on 5 November 1841. Immediately after the uprising, the Magistrate had recorded that two Brahmins acted with "great
duplicity” towards a Mappila who was helped by eight others to help redress the “great injustice” done to him. However, eight days after the 14 November 1841 uprising, the same Magistrate writes that the new event is “another fanatical outrage” like the one on 5 November 1841.

In order to show the afterlife of the “fanatic” causation in nationalist/Marxist perception, I read three memoirs of the 1921 Malabar rebellion (during which the insurgents had virtual control of, in fact “governed” for six months, an area now distributed among at least four districts) by local Congress leaders against their grain as well as against each other and, ironically, in juxtaposition with a report by RH Hitchcock, the District Superintendent of Police. I showed that in all these diverse texts, Islam figured as a common denominator that for them symbolized an irreducible difference. This difference and the Mappila community that embodied it are then narrativized as belonging outside the destiny of our nation. Islam, and the fanaticism it incites, remains as an indivisible remainder of a community beleaguered by the nation.

Drawing on Derrida’s critique of representation, I then examined in detail mainly three literary representations of the proper noun “Malabar,” as a shorthand notation for the Muslim communality and criminality in literature. I analyze NS Madhavan’s short story “Higuita” (1991) to demonstrate how “literary” representations of Islam draw on other prior representations which, in turn, determine the “literary,” or what constitutes the structure and effect of what is celebrated as the “literary.” My reading stressed a significant reference to the hero’s past in Malabar, reading it as a figural in the text that disrupts the narrative resolution of a national belonging. Madhavan’s aesthetic valourization of such longing in turn points to the predicaments undermining the desire for narrative and national resolutions; the very force and ferocity of the desire is a lacuna, as if the chink in our armour can be covered up by more fervent deeds. The narrative ends up by demonizing the Muslim and advocates a sending off of those
who do not seemingly belong. Read in conjunction with other texts, by Kumaran Asan and Uroob, that configure the 1921 Malabar rebellion, I argue that in “Higuita” the Muslim is projected as a villain despite internal evidence that suggests that Jabbar may have a life and logic of his own within the narrative, and the nation.

In order to trace the sources of a nationalist-aesthetic, I read O Chandumenon’s *Indulekha* (1889), first translated into English by the acting collector, W Dumergue in 1890 with the subtitle: A Novel from Malabar. Here, my argument is that a nation, an imagined community that involves constant assertion of one’s affiliation, most often uses the ruse of the other in the process of nation-translation, by which I mean the whole complex of imagining and imaging into a nation that has to be repeatedly re-affirmed. I read the dream sequence—when the heroine Indulekha dreams that her beloved husband Madhavan had been killed by a Muslim—as an aporetic moment in the text. It is a supplement which has the potential to supplant the text, but it also significantly subverts the narrative resolution of a proto-national belonging. The narrative closes its eye to the possibility that the villain who disguised as “Sheer Alikhan,” a subordinate judge, and cheats Madhavan may not be a Muslim at all. Especially since throughout the novel he is referred to as the “handsome young man” who masqueraded as a subordinate judge in contrast to other Muslims in the novel. Since the encounter happens during Madhavan’s tour of India, I argued that the author and his hero are already on an outward voyage in search of a nation-translation; they are in search of an alliance with other Hindus, and are engaged in writing the rightful heir from Kerala, the Nair, into an emerging bourgeoisie, upper-caste fold. The other side of this nation-translation is to read/reduce Pathans, Turks, Mappilas and the like into a monolithic “other,” read “Muslim.” Even as early as 1889, and even from a place so distant from the center of national life, Chandumenon already envisaged a larger national culture in which the Muslim is the generic term for the structural other.
To the above "high" literary texts I juxtaposed a popular novel written by a colonial subaltern in order to show other possibilities of representing the 1921 rebellion. I evoked an early "autobiography" by a "Muslim" in English—*Confessions of a Thug* (first published in 1839)—to point out the strategic deployment of literary (auto-biographical) narratives of individuals as depositories of dangerous and irrational communalities and subjectivities, the role ready-made and reserved for the Muslim to fit into within colonial representation. In Donald Sinderby's *The Jewel of Malabar: A Story of the Moplah Rebellion in India, 1921* (1927) we find this figure full-bodied as a Mappila Muslim fanatic and functioning in Malabar. Apart from the various stereotypical elements in the novel, which draw on earlier versions in order to re-circulate such redoubled and modified representations, what is most striking about Sinderby's novel, I contended, is that we can perceive the basic difference between the Indian nationalist perception, as in the stories and novels in Malayalam analyzed in the first two sections of this chapter, and the western colonial/capitalist Christian secular modern perception of Islam. Whereas within the nationalist framework the Muslim is figured as a supplement, an excess, that nevertheless helps us constantly redefine the Indian, I argue that within Sinderby's popular novel Islam figures as a double, an other which is at the same time the self-same. I counterpoint the novel's contention that insane fanaticism, fostered by ignorance and blind faith in religious leaders, is the main cause of the 1921 rebellion with internal evidence that puts forth other political reasons, especially the discontent among disbanded Mappila soldiers. I use a contrapuntal outline of the narrative to draw out the awareness within the narrative that goes against its purported claim that this "fanatical" rebellion was spurred on by the Mappilas' false belief that the empire was tottering to its fall.
"Higuita" does not foreground the dissonances of the relationship between a tribal girl converted to Christianity, a villain from Bihar and a priest from Malabar. The narrative enfolds them and presents them as if they all belong to the same place and speaks the same language. In *Indulekha*, the protagonist Madhavan advocates English education as the only route to civilization while the narrative turns a blind eye to "Sheer Alikhan" who converses quite fluently in English while he thieves and commits as many as seventeen murders. In contrast, the English protagonist in *The Jewel of Malabar* when captured by the Mappilas comes out alive (in fact his Nair beloved rescues him) because he decides to die rather than shame his spirit by spurning his religion, very much like the "fanatic" Mappilas. He snubs their offer of life, braves beheading and becomes himself rather than become like them. I read Bennville's euphonic refusal as enabling him to behold the absolute other as a double; only when he becomes like them does he become himself so that he now has the right to live as well as die. If in "Higuita" the Muslim was "turned out" as a villain, if in *Indulekha* the villain, without a nation and a name within the narrative, is transfigured into a Muslim, in *The Jewel of Malabar*, the Muslim figures as an other that structures the self-same.