Chapter Four

"RE-PRE-SENTING ISLAM": MALABAR IN THE PROCESSES OF NATION-TRANSLATION

"They describe us... That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct."

—Salman Rushdie.¹

The partition of the Indian subcontinent leading to the formation of two nation-states is even now essentially remembered and recounted in India as betrayal and loss, as a violent sundering of the motherland by communalities within it. To cite a relatively mild example, "our Independence too was peculiar: it came together with the Partition of our country, the biggest and possibly the most miserable migration in human history, the worst bloodbath in the memory of the subcontinent: the gigantic fratricide conducted by Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communalists" (118).² Shifting the focus from such narratives, I have rather tried to trace the history of such a memory and the memory of such a history through an examination of the colonial period and the contradictions that structure the logic which counterposes the Hindu and Muslim communal with secular-modern frames within the nationalist discourse. In the preceding chapters, I have pointed out that the 1921 Malabar rebellion against both the British overlords and the Hindu landlords was a watershed in the history of the subcontinent. I have argued that this rebellion, being an immediate effect of the Congress mass mobilization campaign and the Khilafat movement, forever determined the future form of freedoms in the Indian subcontinent by ricocheting a by-now-redoubled image of the communality of the Muslim peoples. The negotiations between nationalist leaders and Muslim leaders were at a crucial stage in the wake of the mass

¹ Salman Rushdie, The Satanic Verses (London: Viking, 1988) 168. All emphases in this chapter, unless mentioned otherwise, are as in the original.
² Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory,’” Social Text 17 (Fall 1987), reprinted as the third chapter in In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992) 95-122; all citations are from the latter.
mobilization and Khilafat movements. The representations of the Malabar rebellion in popular press that cued with nationalist discourse seem to have given a fillip to ideas and images already in circulation. The establishment of a “Moplastan,” as many newspapers dubbed it, in Malabar, which went against the policy of surrender urged by the Congress, underlined the possibility of Islam being a constant threat to the notion of a unified nation. The spate of shuddhi and sangathan undertaken in Malabar in 1922, and thereafter, in order to purify the converts points to the possibility that Malabar figured as a region that had to be “sanitized,” cleansed as well as brought back to sanity.

In this chapter I try to trace the phrase “Malabar,” the earlier denomination for a region and a time, in literary narratives. “Malabar,” as re(li)gion, metaphorically, denotes regional and the religious aspirations of a community prone to irrational and separatist demands. “Malabar” also works metonymically in that other Islamic communities in other regions can replace the Mappila community of Malabar. Thus, in more ways than one, Malabar continues to embody the dangers threatening our nation from inside as well as outside. In this chapter, I have chosen to read dominant texts because other “Muslim” texts, with the exception of Vaikom Mohamad Basheer, hardly figure in the configurations of mainstream literary taste. Almost all texts by Muslims from Malabar (Basheer, though he settled in Malabar, hails from the south of Kerala) are bracketed off under the category of Mappila Sahityam. Most of the texts I engage with have already been translated into English and are also prescribed in various literature courses. Apart from that, there is also an urgent need for the discipline of English Studies to engage with literary texts in the regional languages of India since they are probably richer (narrative) instances for a reading of the cultural politics of our contemporary existence. My attempt is to look at some of the literary representations of the proper noun “Malabar,” as a shorthand notation for Muslim
In the first section of this chapter, I examine a contemporary literary representation of Malabar in a much-acclaimed Malayalam short story, NS Madhavan's "Higuita" (1990). In the second section I analyze the definitive novel, O Chandumenon's Indulekha (1889) as a significant instance of representing the Muslim in Malayalam literature. I read them in reverse order so as to trace the roots of a national aesthetic which narrativizes what is often dubbed as the Muslim question confronting nation-state. In both the texts "Malabar," with its association with the Mappila revolts/rebellion, is emblematic of "Muslimness." Thereafter, in the third section, I examine a popular novel, which has the 1921 Malabar rebellion as its background, as a study in contrast. Unlike the two "high" literary texts, this novel also brings out other possibilities of reading the 1921 rebellion. I focus on Donald Sinderby's The Jewel of Malabar (1921) in a contrapuntal reading that brings out the differences between representations governed by the imperatives of nation-translation—by which I mean the whole complex of imagining and imaging into a nation that has to be repeatedly re-affirmed—and a popular novel.

My reading of these texts are structured via the question of representation. "Representation" is a crucial concept in literature since the latter may be said to involve a narrative ordering of the real and I will draw on Jacques Derrida's discussion of its role in the European modern to show the complexity of this seemingly simple concept. In "Sending: On Representation," Derrida examines the imminent closure of representation, in order to open the fields or folds of the theory of representation as translation in its textual (literary as well as cultural) form. Formulating what the word "representation" means, Derrida comments that this word appears already inscribed in an idiom. The word has connotations of "the delegation of presence, of reiteration rendering..."}

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1 Particularly, Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land* (New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1992, 1996) and Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995) which are two other works evocative of Malabar. However, since their themes are not specifically limited to India, they remain outside the purview of my thesis.
present once again, in substituting a presentation for another *in absentia* and so on" (303). Language is seen as a system of representation that would re-present a content “(a meaning, a thing, and so on)” anterior and exterior to it. This reign/regime of representation “programs and precedes us” and our concepts of language, translation and history are “essentially marked by structure and the closure of representation” (304). The mark of modernity is, in Heidegger’s words, “[t]hat what-is should become what-is in representation” (cited, 307). What-is exists only in “being-represented,” and the bringing-to-being of representation coincides with the bringing-to-being of the subject. In the (post-)Cartesian period “representation” was determined not as a “bringing-to-presence” before a subject (bringing in front of a subject what already exists anterior to it), a re-constitution, but as an originary constitution in the mental space of the subject. The human subject, thus, became the determining field, “the domain and the measure of objects as representations, its own representations” (307). Heidegger places the Latin words *praesentatio* and *repraesentatio* alongside the German *Darstellung* and *Vorstellung*.

*Praesentatio* signifies the fact of presenting and *re-praesentatio* that of rendering present, of a summoning as a power-of-bringing-back-to-presence. And this power-of-bringing-back, in a repetitive way, is marked simultaneously by the re-of representation and in this positionally, this power-of-placing, disposing, putting, that is to be read in *Stellen* and which at the same time refers back to the self, that is to the power of a subject who can bring back to presence and make present, make something present to itself, indeed just make itself present. (307-308)

The Cartesian-Hegelian notion of “representation,” Heidegger reads, as being contemporary with the epoch of the “subject,” and Derrida adds:

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The value "pre-," "being-before," was certainly already present in "present": it is only the rendering available of the human subject that makes representation happen, and this rendering available is exactly that which constitutes the subject as subject. The subject is what can or believes it can offer itself representations, disposing them and disposing of them. (309)

But "representation" is not a recent phenomenon characteristic of the modern period. What is characteristic of this epoch of "subjectness" is rather the authority of representation, "the interpretation of the essence of what is as an object of representation" (310). For, though "[s]tructured by representation, the represented subject is also a representing subject" (315).

Derrida notes that there was no equivalent word in Greek for "representation," and, according to Heidegger, the Greeks before Plato did not inhabit a world inhibited/dominated by representation. Nonetheless, the Platonic determination of the being of what is as eidos (form, aspect, look, visible figure) would be "the distant condition, the presupposition, the secret mediation which would one day permit the world to become representation" (312). And the "world of Platonism would thus have given the send-off for the reign of representation" (313; emphasis added). So, the human subject, represented and representing, becomes the stage, the scene, "on which what-is must from now on re-present itself, present itself" (317). The human subject, thus, is pre-sent to itself, and to others: sends itself objects, sends itself to itself, sends objects and itself to others, is sent by and is before something; reveals, exhibits, itself as subject/object. This implies a unity, a security, of some semantic centre, which would stop the flow of signifiers, "which would give order to a whole multiplicity of modifications and derivations" (320).
Re-presentations are authorized and also authorize subjects as subjects. Turning to literary representations, we find that it was not that far back that the "literary" was valourized as an object existing in an ethereal realm, moulded by and moulding the cultural, with an umbilical connection to the social, but somehow untainted by it. The "literary" is authorized by an empiricist epistemology which draws on the notion of representation as self-evident and true for, so goes the argument, it is, after all, an imitation of the real. But the "literary" is an object made visible and viable by a discursive formation, and it depends on a particular notion of the "real" to legitimize it. If the Kantian notion of Vorstellung, representation as a universal faculty, naturalized a particular historical category of "individual," likewise, the "literary" normalizes a particular "real." Moreover, the pre-constituted, given reality, as the essential, original source of mimesis, determines the mode of representation. "Literature" is thus viewed as a form of reflection, of revelation and re-cognition. This was the result of collusion between historicism, imputing a linear and temporal progression, teleology, and "specular" realism, with its conventions of character and narration. The "conscious separation of the literary from other discourses, this act of exclusion is in itself ideological in its claims to neutrality and innocence," notes Homi Bhabha. If the literary text is a cultural artifact underwritten by ideology, we have to examine the notion of ideology itself in order to understand the socio-political effects of the "literary."

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5 "The mere temporality of the aesthetic judgement becomes prescriptive for the narrative of representation through which this actualization of common sense in the modern public sphere is to be realized," notes David Lloyd in his article "Race Under Representation," Oxford Literary Review 13 (1991) 65-66. And as Terry Eagleton has remarked, "there is a sense in which . . . the aesthetic might more accurately be described as an anaesthetic," in The Ideology of the Aesthetic (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) 196.

In Stuart Hall's paraphrase of Althusser, ideologies are systems of representations in which men and women live their imaginary relations to the real conditions of existence. In this model the function of ideology is to reproduce, through ideological state apparatuses such as school and church, the social relations of production, thereby assuring the system of a labour force competent as well as compliant. However, this formulation of an absolute domination rules out the possibility of the social as the site of struggle. As Antonio Gramsci has crucially argued, "Culture" is not a closed structure of stasis, nor is "hegemony" unchallenged. The cultural is the site of interventions and interruptions by conflicting ideologies, and it is in this scheme that the "literary" plays an important role. A "proper" literary-critical approach, which valourizes the aesthetic, "invisibilizes" the ideological undercurrents and ruses in/of a text as much as it erases its own ideological function. What is far more productive is a thematization of the critical activity itself in order to engage with the ideology that is endorsed, if not set up, by/through the text, to understand the politics of the textual representation.

I

I begin my reading of NS Madhavan's "Higuita" with three citations, the first written about 70 years before the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the second roughly 36 years and the third about 2 years prior to the demolition. The first, which sets the scene for my reading of "Higuita," is from Kumaran Asan, a major modern revolutionary poet of Kerala.

The [Mappila] Rebellion, which started in South Malabar [in August 1921] has added a bloody chapter to the history of Kerala. Fortunately, that blizzard, which, with horrible and blood-curdling incidents that defeat even the wildest imagination, had rocked not only Kerala, but the whole of India in one way or

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8 Antonio Gramsci. "Notes on Italian History," Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, ed. and
other. has almost subsided now. It is a great truth, approved alike by religion and
history, that there is no greater teacher than calamity. It is also a great truth that
the Hindu society, which has just come out mutilated after fully tasting the
roughness of the Rebellion’s tongue and the harshness of its canines, is one that
represents a very ancient civilization. It is at this juncture of outliving a “calamity” that he exhorts “Hindu society” to revamp its
existing structure. The preface to Duravastha (1922), his only major work that has Kerala as background, is in fact a warning against the evils of caste-system. The Mappila insurgents are
categorized in Duravastha by Asan as “cruel Mohamedans” who had spilled Hindu blood and
crimsoned the Kerala soil (1). This “riotous mob / Of wicked, cruel and monstrous Moplahs” are
described as having “Terrible forms with monstrous faces” (12) who kick dead bodies, “shout
obscene words / In unrefined barbaric Malayalam” and who dash “with ravishing strides / Into
the inner apartments of the women” and “Molest the innocent, noble ladies” (13). They are
“possessed” like “rogue elephants” (13) and brutal like “wild cats . . . mauling / Sweet doves in a
cage” (14).

The second quotation offers an oblique entry into my theme. It is from Uroob’s Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum.10 Towards the middle of the novel, in what is one of the most touching scenes in Malayalam literature, Sulaiman confesses to his wife that the new person who has come into
their village is actually his son. Sulaiman had actually been Govindan Nair back in 1921. At the
time of the rebellion he was trapped in a deserted house with Kunjukutti, his kinswoman, for 11
days. On the 11th day he dares to venture out to see whether peace has been restored, and falls

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9 Kumaran Asan’s preface to the first edition (1922), Duravastha (Tragic Plight), trans. PC Gangadharan (Trivandrum: Kumaran Asan Memorial Committee, Thonnakkal, 1978) xxxiii. All further citations are from this translation, and the page numbers are given in parentheses.

10 Uroob (PC Kuttiprishnan), Sundarikalum Sundaranmarum (Malayalam; first published in 1957) (Thrissur:
into the hands of a Mappila band who forcibly proselytize him and make him accompany them on their rampage. Thus he was not able to return to Kunjukutti, who was by then his beloved. He then settles in another region, marries, and lives peacefully and happily enough as Sulaiman, though a strange, tense and, for others, uneasy silence was characteristic of his disposition. Now he informs his wife that this new person is actually his son and is reproached by her: “Weren’t you doing something terrible by abandoning that child?” (213). And Sulaiman, for the only time in the novel, bursts out in anger, frustration and sadness:

I did something terrible, didn’t I? ... I who have not harmed even an ant. I did not become like this because I desired it. I was turned into this. Now I am not sad about it. ... Even when I said I would come back with that woman who had nothing, had nobody, I was not believed. I would become a betrayer, it seemed. I was among barbarians. At that time everybody was mad. Mad! Some were murdered, harmed. I was also harmed. Because I spoke about my pain and anxiety I was made to carry corpses. I was beaten up. Each one turned me into another person. What can you say to the insane? Did it stop with that? I suffered all these. But when the trials began I became the criminal. ... Hundreds of times I was hit with the butt of the rifle. For what? For doing nothing at all! When I became unconscious from the blows, I was given water to make me regain consciousness, so that they could beat me again. Not just on one day. On many days. ... When I came out after everything was over, everybody said that I was no longer I. Had I undergone any change at all? I did not feel so. (213-14)

This outburst of an innocent man caught in the crossfire is a very touching one. But at whose expense is this poignance achieved? Considering the fact that the rebels had virtual control for a period of six months over a region inhabited by over four lakh Hindus, notes KN Panikkar, the...
figures of 600 killed and 2,500 converted seem to be relatively small. The choice of dealing with such a theme, depicting the growth of a child conceived during the rebellion, and labelled by the community as the lahala’s (outbreak) son, cannot have been determined by aesthetic fidelity or chance, but by cultural politics. These are “determined” narratives that sustain, and subsist on, prevailing prejudices against the Muslim body. As Foucault has remarked: “People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what what they do does.” The Mappila community is held responsible for the “outrage” committed by a Nair, since, ironically, it is Govindan Nair, and not Sulaiman, who fathers the illegitimate child. Indeed, the situation presents an uncanny parallel to the manner in which the unjust acts of the “upper” caste communities disappear from “history” and “memory,” only to reappear as the action of the Mappilas of Kerala.

The third citation is from NS Madhavan’s “Higuita”:

Jabbar opened the door at the knock. He stood five and a half feet tall, with curly hair and knit brows. His scanty moustache had not yet darkened, but his hair was already beginning to grey. It was difficult to guess his age. Jabbar asked, “You’ve come?”

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11 KN Panikkar, “Peasant Revolts in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” Peasant Struggles in India, ed. AR Desai (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979) 622.
12 Cited in Hubert L Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Sussex: Harvester, 1982) 187.
13 This story was first published in Mathrubhoomi Weekly (23-29 December, 1990); subsequently it appeared as the title story in Madhavan’s short story collection, Higuita (Kottayam: DC Books, 1993) 9-15. The story takes its name from the Colombian goalkeeper, who used to leave the penalty area and advance with the ball. Once, during the Mexican World Cup, 1986, an opponent seized the ball from him and scored a goal, thus defeating Colombia, hastening the team’s exit from the tournament. It is significant that “Higuita” is one of the first stories written by NS Madhavan after a long self-imposed literary silence (his last work Choolaimedile Savangal (Kottayam: DC Books, 1995) was first published (by Nila Publishers) in 1981 and contained stories mostly written during 1970-1973. NS Madhavan’s comments on my “misreading” and my response to it are incorporated as an appendix to this dissertation. The translations that I have made have the Higuila collection as source and the page numbers are given within square brackets so as to differentiate them from Sujatha Devi’s (see my next footnote).
His soft, low voice surprised Father, especially when he noticed the thick bull
neck, taut with muscles.

"Come in," Jabbar said, his voice becoming softer.

"No," Father Geevarghese answered, but Jabbar was looking only at Lucy. His
eyes refused to acknowledge Father.

"Aren't you coming in?"

"No," repeated Father.

Jabbar still didn't look at him. In an expressionless tone he whispered to
Lucy—"Isn't it better for all of us that he leaves?" 14

This climatic scene, where Father Geevarghese, the protagonist of Madhavan's story,
accompanied by Lucy confronts Jabbar, will be taken up in due course. Suffice it for now to
remark that the third person narrative is not objective, that the description is not sympathetic or
even neutral, and at this moment the points of view of the author and Father Geevarghese are
indistinguishable.

The fact that NS Madhavan's much acclaimed "Higuita" won the Padmarajan award in 1994 and
was named by Malayala Manorama as one of the best ten short stories in Malayalam over the
past 100 years is not only because of its aesthetic merit, but also because of how masterfully
Madhavan captures the mood of the time, impacting on the manner in which certain political
representations are redeployed.15 In what follows, I will attempt to read, or "misread," this very
powerful masterpiece, and will try to address and thematize the question of "re(pre)senting".

Delhi: Katha, 1992) 141-142. All citations from this translation are incorporated in parentheses throughout the
chapter.
15 NS Madhavan's analysis [in Kulavimarsam: Marxist Manadandum, ed. Raveendran (Kottayam: Nila Publishers,
1983) 198] of the economic structure of OV Vijayan's The Legends of Khasak—wherein he examines the reasons
for the novel's ideological embodiment of a colonialist intellectual position and its historical content being far away
from reality—concludes by raising the following questions: even if The Legends of Khasak is only a novel and

228
Islam. It is my hope that this “reading” of Madhavan’s story will resonate with other fields and thus enable us to rethink our habitus, our representations. I try to analyze 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.” A literary work has to be viewed not only as a structure structured by other fields, but also as a text involved in structuring other fields, as involved in reaffirming and refuting certain perspectives, putting in circulation old, modified or new representations.

The protagonist of Madhavan’s story is a parish priest named Geevarghese, an erstwhile forward in the school football team, now in charge of a small congregation of a “few Malayalees and some tribal girls from Bihar” (136), in South Delhi. His Italian friend, Father Capriatti, had talked, the narrator insists, “once, maybe twice” [9] to him about a German novel (by Peter Handke) entitled The Loneliness of a Goalkeeper Waiting for the Penalty Kick. “When he heard the novel’s name, Father Geevarghese felt as if he had read the novel—not once, but many times” [9]. Here we have a character in a short story drawing the impetus for his life from a literary representation. Interestingly, Father Geevarghese does not want to read the novel, because it would put an end to the “lifecycles of the goalie which he had been constructing in his mind” [9] and bring about “a sudden end to the Nativity plays of the goalkeeper” (136). He does not even have to read the representation; the very possibility of representation triggers other representations that need not be “factually” tied to the “fictive,” representations over which his mind can have absolute control. “Betrayed by all. . . . At first . . . the goalkeeper was our Lord. A little later, the goalie became Goliath. Day by day, possibilities of this man of many roles multiplies” (136). In this connection, Father Geevarghese’s interest in Higuita, the Columbian hence not an elaboration of ideology, why is it that certain elements were accepted in the aesthetic process and optimization of effect by Vijayan and how can the sacrifice of other elements be explained?
goalkeeper, who captures his imagination, calls for special attention. Higuita, with his penchant for advancing with the ball, is an exception among the goalkeepers of the world. Higuita is described thus: "His long curly hair spread out like the locks of Siva before his tandava; his face, dark granite; a thin moustache" (140; emphasis added). The representations of the goalkeeper, the impressions "cultured" in Geevarghese's mind are approximated to a real image, or so it seems. But the Higuita thus created is not the real Higuita. It can be elucidated, and here I echo Laclau and Mouffe, thus: an earthquake or a brick falling is an event that certainly exists, but whether we think of them as "natural phenomena" or "expressions of the wrath of God" depends upon the structure of a discursive field.\(^\text{16}\) Higuita, thus, is a real goalkeeper, as well as an object existing, coming to life, in a discourse. The "real" Higuita is knowable only to the extent that he is representable. The parallel to Siva clinches this. When Higuita loses out to an opponent his representation walks back in Geevarghese's mind "smiling quietly to himself, musing on his role even at such a turn of events" perfectly in accordance with the Hindu notion of "profitless action" (141). The attributes of the goalkeeper are transformed: from a person tied to destiny, silently suffering for the faults of others, sacrificing himself, his Goliath stature mocked by a football slung at him, he now becomes a participant. In the "crescent-shaped stadium" (140, emphasis added), the recluse ventures out, playing the part of a forward. Higuita represents, in the Father's mind as well as in the text, the welcome transformation effected in the form and function of a goalkeeper; he is no longer a Christian Lord, no longer a martyr (meaning "witness" in early usage), now he has a different "dharma," he has become Lord Siva. The incident where the Muslim "villain," torturing a tribal girl who had converted to Christianity, is made to mimic the Hindu ritual of marriage by "applying sindoor to the parting of her hair with a burning cigarette" further emphasizes this transition (137), for this act is effective as

desecration only if it is aimed at insulting, not a Christian, but a Hindu God. Higuita, while facing a penalty kick, waves his arm around like a conductor, "[he] creates inaudible beats of an impossible crescendo for the audience" (140). Jabbar, the "villain," is described as standing "five and a half feet tall, with curly hair and knit brows. His scanty moustache had not yet darkened, but his hair was already beginning to grey. It was difficult to guess his age" (141).

The author-protagonist is right, for he is ageless, unreal! Jabbar had a "soft, low voice [which] surprised Father, especially when he noticed the thick bull neck, taut with muscles" (142). Such is the power of description, which purporting to represent the real goes unnoticed, un(re)marked.

The tribal girl is named Lucy Marandi, and she is described as having "thick negroid lips" (137). She stops after the mass to talk to the Father. She talks about Jabbar, a middleman who trafficked in rough cotton, fowls and mahua, buying them from the tribals and selling them to outsiders. In lean months he used to "entice [tribal girls] with promises of jobs in big cities" (137; emphasis added), and that is how Lucy happened to reach Delhi. There is no comment about his immediate gains, noteworthy because of the (unspecified) months that elapsed before he tries to trick Lucy. The next sentence reads thus: "Jabbar kept his word and found Lucy a job with a family" (137). The narrative expects Jabbar to break his promise, toys with such an expectation in the reader, for that is the kind of person he is, since he belongs to a particular class/caste/community. Further, while Lucy was working, Jabbar used to come and meet her every month with a gift. We do not know how many months exactly passed, and when once Jabbar invites her out, "Lucy walked out with him without hesitation" (137), and he buys her a colourful salwar kameez. We also do not know the exact nature of their relationship. When she runs away from him, after the incident at the hotel, she finds herself locked in Jabbar's house. There is a strange amnesia on the part of the protagonist/narrator at this point: "Father couldn't remember how Lucy escaped ..." (137). The narrator does not prompt the protagonist, the
statement suggests that the narrator knows but is powerless/prohibited from revealing it for fear of its effect on the narrative. What kind of a villain is it who could not control/keep in custody a defenseless girl, and what about the girl who managed to escape from the clutches of this "villain"? Then occurs the absurd incident referred to earlier: Jabbar, a Muslim, applying the burning cigarette to the parting of a (Christian-convert) Lucy’s hair, “tickling the soles of her feet with the same glowing butt” and “talking like some sleazy villain in a Hindi movie” (137). The torture is described as if the narrator actually sees it taking place, but when we come to the section about “talking like some sleazy villain in a Hindi movie” the statement is attributed to Lucy (137). In the Malayalam original, this statement is set all by itself as a separate paragraph [11]. Jabbar seemed as unreal as a film villain to Lucy, but for the narrator-protagonist Jabbar is very real; so alarmingly hyper-real that Jabbar comes through to the reader as unreal. There are prior representations that endow him with reality for the author-narrator which are withheld from us, and which Lucy may not share. The narrator-protagonist does not give us any inkling of the representations that for him make Jabbar “real” for he expects, rightly, that a “normal” reader would already be party to them by the simple virtue of living in our times, if not through familiarity with and participation in literary and other representations. Moreover, like the German novel that Geevarghese did not want to read, for he feared it might rein in his imagination, the representations which commission and authorize this representation have to be shielded from the reader. Rendering them will render the representation opaque. Representation, or the possibility of representation, is enough, for it functions in a particular way, skillfully safeguarding its machinations. The logic of representation demands that that which will rupture the representation be elided over. The effect of this is to make the character unreal, he is unreal to the reader, for how can one believe in a villain so vividly described as being beaten to pulp by a priest whose only physical activity seems to have been playing football, and that too in his schooldays!
I detailed all this in order to come to Father Geevarghese’s past. His father was the physical training (PT) teacher in the school where he also was educated. Geevarghese was selected, and proved worthy of his position in the football team. When his renown spread, people from Malabar came in search of him, they wanted him to play “sevens”: a version of football, played by teams of seven members each on a smaller ground, usually empty paddy fields. He is lured by the idea of playing “sevens” because of it is also more lucrative. However, his father is dead against the idea of playing “sevens” and remarks, “Son, football is my faith, but sevens is [its] antichrist” [12] (139). “But Geevarghese just couldn’t stop himself from playing sevens” (139). The father and the son soon stop discussing football and the intimate bond that existed between them is broken. Then, the narrative, all in a rush now, points out:

The year Geevarghese failed his B.A. was the year Appan [father] passed away.

Geevarghese stopped playing sevens, as a reparation to his father.

Before long he received the Call. (139)

Of course, it is possible to read “its antichrist” (which is there in the Malayalam version) as referring to football, that is, “sevens” is the antichrist of football because it is a distortion of the normal game. However, it must be recalled that “sevens” is a game played predominantly, if not only, in Malabar, hence the significance of the evocation of Malabar with its lure in terms of excitement and remuneration. Malabar also figures powerfully in the Kerala imaginary as the site of Mappila “outrages” against colonial overlords and feudal (Hindu) lords. My analysis stresses this reference to Malabar in the story, reading it as a figural in the text disrupting the rule of representation.17 Within the narrative, this reference figures as an aporetic moment, when the

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17 Figural is a term coined by Jean-Francois Lyotard to denote the other at work within and against discourse itself, tracing an opening in the textual space. Bill Readings notes: “The figural . . . becomes a quasi-symptom of a ‘political unconscious,’ opening onto a space of social desires and possibilities that are as yet unimaginable within political representation. Figure and discourse are necessarily and impossibly co-present, as constitutive and disruptive of representation”; cited from Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London and New
groundedness, the taken-for-grantedness of the narrative is disturbed. Hence, playing in Malabar, in an “infidel” region, in the mind of Geevarghese’s father, possibly resonating with instilled memories of the Crusades, is equated with the negation of Christian values. Islam, and the “distorted” football played in Malabar, is the antichrist of Christian faith, of “normal” football. In fact, the narratival ellipsis implies that it is as a result of this apostasy that Geevarghese loses his father and his degree. Geevarghese, now contrite, stops playing “sevens.” And “[B]efore long he received the Call.” This is a traumatic event in Geevarghese’s memory and the Call could be analyzed as resulting from a neurosis. The past torments him, but the figure of Higuita provides him succour, release from his guilt and hope for potency, action without responsibility for the consequences. Finally, he changes into civilian clothes, reverting back to a forward from being a goalie, or a goalie assuming the role of a forward, and he takes Lucy to Jabbar’s house for a showdown. This is the scene I evoked earlier where Jabbar refuses to acknowledge Geevarghese and expressionlessly asks Lucy whether it would not be better for all if Geevarghese left. When Lucy answers negatively, “in the same instant, Jabbar raised his hand, Lucy took a step back and the people who gathered to watch the “sevens” match in a field near Tellichery bellowed ‘Geevareethe,’ ‘Geevareethe’” [15].18 And Geevarghese, playing the forward now, manhandles Jabbar, who strangely, if we consider the preceding narrative, offers no resistance being as passive as a football. Or rather, not so strangely, for it was only in the mind of Geevarghese that Jabbar had assumed Goliath proportions. Like Milton’s Satan, Jabbar has diminished in stature and St. George, known among Kerala Christians as the Saint Geevarghese, slays a puny and pathetic dragon. However, this refusal of Jabbar to acknowledge Geevarghese is highly revealing. The narrator-protagonist is not a party to the representations that circulate in Jabbar’s world.

18 “Geevareethe” is the Malayali colloquial vocative form of Geevarghese.
It would be of interest to examine the strategy of the short story in the relation between the narrator and the protagonist. At times they are collapsed, at other times they form separate entities. The author-narrator skillfully intervenes in moments of crisis, containing and controlling the story, but again, at times, refuses to help out the protagonist. And also, in the narrative logic, a character can experience the "unreal," but the "unreal" cannot acknowledge the "real." The "unreal" Jabbar functions as a big cut-out which makes Geevarghese's antics meaningful; the moment life is granted to Jabbar, Geevarghese is bound to collapse as a character, his existential predicament losing its mooring and meaning. Like the surrealistic narration, making temporal shifts with ease, Jabbar the "unreal" constantly undermines the realism of the story. Jabbar cannot see Geevarghese, for Jabbar is only a devised object, a football, having life only in the imaginary field of the narrator-protagonist. Jabbar and Geevarghese, in the narrative, inhabit two different worlds, inhibiting each other. They cannot meet, in Madhavan's discursive-real without engendering what is in effect a differend.\footnote{I borrow this term from Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. George Van den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).} Lyotard's coinage denotes a point of incommensurability, of difference, between two parties who use heterogenous languages. To resolve such disputes by taking recourse to a master code will be an unjust act since the representational framework, the criteria of judgement, will necessarily favour the dominant party and repress or reduce the other party's discourse. In the story Jabbar cannot acknowledge Geevarghese, nor can Geevarghese talk to Jabbar and be heard without rupturing the regime of representation. To acknowledge the differend is to dismantle the existing framework, hence it is repressed.
This repression in/of the text returns in other guises within the text itself, endangering the text’s transparency. What I have been trying to bring out are the repercussions, those reverberations that disrupt the narrative unity. Apart from the reference to Malabar and the “sevens,” there are other motifs scattered throughout the text. I will mention some of them. The bewilderment of Lucy, after the repeated biblical allusions, that Jabbar “even knows the time when nobody is at home where she is employed. Otherwise how can he telephone me at exactly that time?” [13] could allude to Satan’s strategy of singling out Eve when Adam was not around. Another is the description of the stadium as “crescent-shaped.” When most stadiums are round or oval in shape, why is Higuita made to battle, like Siva whose long curls are adorned by a crescent moon, a spherical object in a stadium curved like a crescent? How is it that the Higuita’s long curls, the dark granite of his face and his thin moustache add to his beauty, while the short curled hair of Jabbar with his five and a half feet stature and his moustache not yet black but his hair a little bit greyed, his knit brows and his thick bull neck summon a monstrous image?

To return to the story, before Geevarghese tackles Jabbar he catches a glimpse of the physical training teacher, in memory, as yellowed as an old photograph, leaning against an arecanut palm. The shift from father to physical training teacher is significant. Earlier, after another victorious match, the father had coaxed the son: “Don’t be afraid. I’m not your father now, I’m your PT master” (139). Only the PT master, the one dedicated to the game, can see the game Geevarghese is playing. Geevarghese’s father, who could not properly integrate the roles of a father and PT master, now appears as the PT master who should condone, inspire and applaud Geevarghese since he is only going about his father’s business and playing football. But such

20 The words “OKLAHOMA emblazon[ing]” (142) on Jabbar’s T-shirt can also be construed as a veiled reference to the supposedly America-sponsored terrorism of Pakistan. Oklahoma, literally “red man” also denotes a territory of conflict. Another layer evoked for later readers is the April 1995 bombing in Oklahoma, of which vivid pictures were circulated through the media, frenziedly suggesting the handiwork of terrorists. This was later refuted by the arrest of a white American male, leading also to a collective sigh of relief over possible fallouts averted.
neat and clear-cut boundaries, as those between fatherhood and profession, do not exist. Later, Geevarghese seems to have managed it, but his role as a football player, of goalie-as-forward, only exists in the imagination; it is unreal compared to his role as a priest. His appointed role of a Father is made real by his imagined role of a goalie-forward, and if so, similarly Jabbar the "unreal" should have a role, a reality, elsewhere. In not depicting this "reality," in not acknowledging this fact, the author-narrator is assuming the role of an arbiter who is sent to us, who repeats messages for us, who re-pre-sents our resentment for us, who sends us.

To elaborate the above point, I revisit Asan’s Duravastha. After the description of the in-grained violence of Mappilas, the female character addresses with heart-rending agony a caged Mynah: “Is there no sense of justice and morality/In what these beasts profess as religion?” (14). But she is reminded by the poet:

Dear Lady, you have forgotten something;
Most of these men were once Hindus,
Belonging to the communities of Nayars
And still lower; but driven beyond
The normal limits of tolerance
By preclusion, prohibition, excommunication
And other inhumanities of untouchability,
They left the Hindu fold, or Brahmanism,
Which had petrified into a swarm of castes. (15)

The poet goes on: “In Kerala there are but few Muslims/Who had come from western shores” (15). Asan, so very perceptive of the inhumanity of caste, could not perceive the sufferings of Muslims. This is not surprising, given his preoccupations on the one hand and his understanding that real Muslims are those who came from outside on the other. Asan regards Mappilas as his
lower caste brothers who have been degraded by the alien religion they espoused. The year 1922 is crucial, for, as is well known, “the 1920s made for a new conjuncture in the world of Indian politics” because of the entry of the masses into “the organized national movement on an unprecedented scale.”21 The coming together of the crescent and the cow, of Khilafat and the Non-cooperation movements, and the resultant Malabar rebellion, determined the course of the history of the Indian subcontinent.

Occupying a “structurally contradictory position”22 because of his authorial function, Madhavan, too, is called upon and delegated, to present to us messages about ourselves, to present us with solutions to the problems besetting us, to make them present for us, to make ourselves present. Moreover, he also, in re-presenting (for) us, calls upon us, assigns us duties, and “sends” us. “Making-present” has two senses embedded in it: of “bring to presence, into presence, cause or allow to come in presenting,” and of “the possibility of causing or allowing to return,” for “to render present, like all ‘rendering,’ all restitution, would be to repeat, to be able to repeat.” Hence, “the idea of repetition and return which resides in the very meaning of representation.”23

A part of this operation is the petitioning of and sending off of citizens, assigning tasks and duties to each citizen. And the need to send off people who are or who should be, “properly” designated, refugees, refuse in our habitat, is part of the rapturous ascertaining of a national belonging. In fact, we seem to be caught up in a circular logic, whereby our thought of a unified nation rules/represses certain peoples as outsiders in order to hold ourselves together while the same peoples return as figures in our narratives to rupture the imaginary.

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22 Pierre Bourdieu has pointed out that writers/artists “occupy a dominated position in the dominant class, they are owners of a dominated form of power at the interior of the sphere of power. This structurally contradictory position is absolutely crucial for understanding the position taken by writers and artists, notably in struggles in the social world,” in The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature, ed. and intro. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity, 1993) 164.
But where is Madhavan sending us? Jabbar asks Lucy: “Isn’t it better for all of us that [the Father] leaves.” In a tragic, if ironic, reversal, after reading the story, we concur and conclude: yes, definitely it is better for all of us, we can live in harmony and peace as Indians, if people like Jabbar are made to leave. “If the sun rises tomorrow you are not to be seen in Delhi,” is an unequivocal decree and a call for a pogrom. The authority that the narrator presumes and the author subscribes to and prescribes for us, is linked to, if not constituted by, the concept of the nation. After all, it is only by being summoned before and by the nation that a citizen is constituted, and this constitution involves also a co-opting, for our subjectivities have other layers that are often in conflict with this paring. An instance from the story itself is Father Geevarghese’s childhood in Kerala and his incursions into Malabar that has a Mappila majority. Definitely it is a remainder of his past that he carries over to the capital, where it finds correspondences.

Coming after “Higuita,” and the post-Babri Masjid riots, “Mumbai” presents a very different scenario. Here, Madhavan renders the Muslim in a sympathetic light. The protagonist of “Mumbai,” Aziz works as a stockbroker in a firm; the employees are interested in politics only so far as it affects the Sensex, the stock market index. Though a new government is in power, Aziz decides. “after some serious reflection, that nothing was going to change” (19). In fact, the new government has had a beneficial effect on the Sensex: it has revived. What is more, Aziz understands and supports the new government’s statement that all foreigners will be driven out. Meanwhile, his firm is sending Aziz to an industrial exhibition in Frankfurt and he has to procure

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24 NS Madhavan, “Mumbai,” trans. Sharada Nair, in Geeta Dharmarajan and Meenakshi Sharma, eds. Katha: Prize Stories, vol. 6 (New Delhi: Katha, 1997) 17-25; the Malayalam story was first published in the weekly Malayala Manoroma, annual issue (Kottayam, 1995); the story was later published in the short story collection Thiruthu (Kottayam: DC Books, 1997).
a passport. Now, that is no easy job, for he has to have a ration card in order to prove that he exists. Getting a ration card proves to be a more difficult task for Aziz; even a Gandhi, a five hundred rupee note, cannot solve his problem. For verification, the supply officer visits Aziz on a Sunday at his house with one Ramu Dada, a vote hustler for the ruling party, and asks Aziz to meet Pramila Gokhale at the supply office. When Aziz reaches the supply office, Madam Gokhale, as delicate in appearance as a white mouse, is reading the Dynaneshwari, a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. The interrogation starts; the object is to establish whether Aziz is an Indian. Aziz’s angry query: “Suppose you were woken up from sleep one night and asked to prove that you were an Indian, what would you do, sister?” gets a soft-spoken reply from the Madam:

“I will just tell them my name. That’s all. My name is both my history and geography. Pramila Gokhale. Maharashtrian. Hindu. Chitpavan Brahmin. Do you understand?” Even as she said all this, her voice remained like the whisper of a beloved. The softness of her voice filled Aziz with fear. (22)

The interrogation continues through the next few days and pages. Since Paang, the village where Aziz was born, does not have any meaning, since even Aziz cannot locate it on a map of India (he is not sure whether he can do it on a map of Kerala), since there “can’t be a village with a name like that in India” (23), and since Aziz was not in India in 1970 (because he was not born yet) and was in India in 1971 (he was born that year) when the “infiltration” from Bangladesh began, the conclusion is that Aziz is not an Indian. When he reaches home, Aziz sees two policemen standing guard outside the building. He goes into his room and closes the door. As he is about to pull back the curtains and open the window, he feels that the other side will be stacked with innumerable human faces with loveless eyes, as on a peacock’s tail. Gripped by an uncontrollable fear, Aziz creeps under the bed and, with his face pressed to the floor, lies motionless, like a stillborn child.
In “Mumbai,” as in some of his other stories, Madhavan certainly engages with the situation of a minority that slips ever so easily into the label “foreigner.” The secular-modern position upheld by the author clearly puts the blame on Hindu communalism, and if not for the Hindutva obtaining out there, everything would be fine here. It is because of such a perspective that “Mumbai” ends with the final picture of pure victim-hood: a Muslim assuming a foetal position in the face of the Hindutva upsurge. It is clear that an aesthetic such as this is governed by a politics that makes Muslims into either villains or victims. However, within the story itself such pure victim-hood is counterpointed by the total absence of any memory of oppression and fear, though “[m]emories from childhood helped Aziz to understand the world” (18). One needs to ask how could Aziz plausibly not have any memories that mark out his minority position and so enable him to live in and understand the world.

II

A nation is, to use Benedict Anderson’s well-worn phrase, an imagined community that involves constant assertion of one’s affiliation and the other is most often the ruse in this process of nation-translation. The collusion between a nation and narration, their enclosure, so to speak, and “the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of ‘the people’ or ‘the nation’ and make them the immanent subjects and objects of a range of social and literary narratives” has been widely studied. It is within such a frame that I propose to examine Indulekha, although my focus is on the role reserved for the other that stalks narratives of national definition and self-determination. In Indulekha, first published almost a century before “Higuita,” we find a more complicated representation of the Muslim as the other.

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27 Homi K Bhabha, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” Nation and
The narrative of the novel seeks to resolve into a proto-national shared cultural belonging, forcing one to think of “representation” and our social/textual affiliation as involving a cultural translation by which “our” culture evolves as against “an-other” culture.

O Chandumenon’s *Indulekha*, first published in 1889 and translated into English by W Dumergue in 1890, is considered to be the first narrative in Malayalam that can rightfully claim to have most of the characteristics of a novel. The genealogy of the novel itself is interesting. Pestered by his wife and friends to share his solitary/secret pleasure and compelled to recount stories/plots of English novels, Chandumenon started translating *Henrietta Temple* (1837) by Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81), but soon abandoned the project in favour of transplanting the novel form itself by writing a Malayalam novel book, as he called it, with a local Malabar setting. The 300 odd pages of the novel were briskly written over a period of 67 days; it would have been finished within a month but for the delay in getting hold of some English books for reference. In the preface, Chandumenon professes that “whatever be the merits of the book I have written, you will readily recognize that in writing it I was actuated solely by a desire to improve the status and position of my country women generally” (*INM*, xxv). The authorial voice intones on the “advantages which would accrue if the women of India were given the same privileges of education that are enjoyed by the men.” The voice bewails the manner in which “Kalliani Kutty was seized and given to the Nambudiripad by Panchu Menon just as if she had been a kitten about the house.” Thereafter, there is a direct address and appeal:

My fellow country-women, are you not ashamed of this? Some of you have studied Sanskrit, and some music, but these attainments are not enough. If you

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O Chandumenon, *Indulekha: A Novel from Malabar*, trans. W Dumergue (Calicut: Mathrubhumi, 1890); foreword by TC Sankara Menon, i-vi; Dumergue’s preface, vii-ix; Chandumenon’s preface to the first edition, x-xv; Chandmenon’s letter to W Dumergue, xvi-xxv; hereafter cited as *INM*.
wish to really enlighten your minds, you must learn English, whereby alone you can learn many things which you ought to know in these days and by such knowledge alone can you grasp the truth that you are as free agents as men, that women are not the slaves of men. (INM, 368-369)

Apart from advocating social reform for women, he also makes a case for realism and hopes that his readers will take to the new pleasures offered by it. In the preface to the second Malayalam edition of 1890, he states that “if stories composed of incidents true to natural life, and attractively and gracefully written, are once introduced, then by degrees that old order of books, filled with the impossible and the supernatural, will change, yielding place to the new” (INM, xiv). The English translation contains a couple of pages that are absent in the Malayalam edition, where, as part of the novel, the authorial voice assures us that “[a]ll the characters mentioned in this book are still alive” (INM, 368). At the same time, in his letter to Dumergue, he admits that though his object is to write a novel after the English fashion, and it is evident that no ordinary Malayalee lady can fill the role of the heroine of such a story. My Indulekha is not, therefore, an ordinary Malayalee lady. . . . Some of my readers may object that it would be impossible to find a young Nair lady of Indulekha’s intellectual attainments in Malabar. To this objection my answer is that those who make it are not acquainted with the educated women now existing in Malabar. . . . The only thing which my readers might reasonably take exception to is Indulekha’s knowledge of English; but as one of my objects in writing this book is to illustrate how a young Malayalee woman, possessing, in addition to her natural personal charms and intellectual culture, a knowledge of the English language would conduct herself in matters of supreme interest to her, such as the
choosing of a partner in life, I have thought it necessary that my Indulekha should be conversant with the richest language of the world. (INM, xx)

He also declares that he had shown the circumstances under which Indulekha happened to acquire knowledge of the English language and "shall leave it to my readers to decide whether there is any probability suggesting itself in the narrative in connection with her education" (INM, xx-xxi). I have delineated all this in order to underline the fact that Indulekha is a dream of a character, masterfully crafted, and represents, as in a dream, reality as it ought to be, and unwittingly goes against the grain of Chandumenon's professed realism.

What would be the nature and effect of the transactions/translations taking place in and around Indulekha? Chandumenon was a civil servant and subordinate of Dumergue, and Dumergue, the translator, was the Acting Collector of Malabar. On the one hand, Chandumenon construes a "lack" in our literature/pleasure and sets out to supplement it by translating/transplanting a novel form from English to Malayalam.30 His novel pleasure caught on wildly and in turn his novel became the model for the Malayalam novel. At the same time, he was also translating/transforming the Malayali woman, recasting her as she should be. The aim of the author, who has absolute faith in the redeeming qualities of an English education, was also to mould a woman who can become an apt and able helpmeet for the emerging bourgeois Nair male. However, it is in during this transfiguration that we also encounter another translation, that of a villain into a Muslim—underlying the common grounds between its reversal after almost a century when the Muslim becomes a villain in "Higuita."

The hero of *Indulekha*, Madhavan, is an educated, extremely intelligent and handsome young man.

His body had the colour of gold. Due to the daily ritual of physical exercises, in all its youth, his body was most attractive. His hands, chest, and legs were not more heavy or thin than necessary and appeared as if they have been cast in gold. He was sufficiently tall. And, it would have been very easy to measure his body with his beautiful sacred hair (*kuduma*) that reached down to his knees. The sheen and maleness of his face, the individual beauty of each one of his parts as well as their proportionate harmony, and the brightness of his face and figure were amazing. All the Europeans that he was acquainted with were very fascinated by him and became his close friends. (my translation, *Indulekha*, 30)

Such a Madhavan and Indulekha (in a kind of inversion her lover is the only one who addresses her as Madhavi, her “real” name) are in love with each other and are married as per the *gandharva* ritual. However, Madhavan, who has passed the Civil Service examination, opposes the patriarch of the family with the result that the patriarch vows he will never agree to Madhavan marrying Indulekha. Because of a misunderstanding, Madhavan too comes to think that his Madhavi, aka Indulekha, has forsaken him and, grief-stricken, decides to travel through the Indian subcontinent.

In the course of his wanderings, he happens to visit the Calcutta zoo and shoots a tiger that had escaped from a cage, thus rescuing some rich merchants, who gratefully invite him to their house. Yielding to their pressure, he spends many days with them. However, after a while, he decides to continue his travel and takes leave of his friends, who heap valuable gifts on him. On this leg of his journey from Calcutta to Bombay, the train stops at a big station where he takes some refreshments. At the next station, which was a smaller one, a handsome and well-dressed
young man steps into the compartment in which Madhavan is traveling and looking towards him asks in English whether he could share Madhavan's seat. None of the other passengers reply, maybe because they do not follow English. With Madhavan's permission, this handsome young man sits next to Madhavan as the train leaves the platform.

He was exceedingly good-looking and his dress and demeanour were also very attractive. In religion (jati) he appeared to be a Muslim. He had long hair that was cut straight, a little above his shoulders. He had a handsome moustache; he also had what is known as side locks in English, which were neatly trimmed. His colour was that of a rotten [ripe] orange fruit. Viewed altogether, his face was extremely beautiful. He wore a heavily embroidered cap with a gold thread that covered the top of his head. The cap, the black hair around it, the fair face and the moustache together made a very attractive picture. He wore a coat of glittering white velvet, one that reached four or five fingers below his knees. It was held in place by buttons woven in gold that were placed very close to each other from the neck down to the waist. On his feet he wore green silk socks and shining boots; on his breast hung a shining golden watch-chain. Such was his outfit. As he sat next to him, Madhavan felt an intense fragrance. (my translation; Indulekha, 206-207)

This amusing person tells Madhavan that he is a subordinate judge of Allahabad and that his name is Sheer Alikhan. Sheer Alikhan ventures to predict that Madhavan is a graduate as well as a Bachelor of Law. Having lived for the past many days with his very rich friends, Madhavan is easily taken in by the charms of this stranger. Soon the train stops at another big station.

Holding on to Madhavan's hands, Sheer Alikhan gets down to the platform and shouts for a peon. To the "huge bearded Pathan wearing a coat, pagadi and sash" (Indulekha, 208) who appears, Sheer Alikhan gives instructions to look after Madhavan's belongings. He pulls
Madhavan with him into a refreshment room and, being informed that Madhavan has no objection in eating meat, orders for sherry, mutton chops and other items. Then he takes leave of Madhavan saying that he will be back in a short while with his young obstinate son, who is sitting in the first class compartment with his “mother” (amma), and disappears from the frame forever. After a long time, an impatient Madhavan runs to his compartment only to realize that the Pathan has taken all his belongings away, presumably to the first class compartment. A frantic Madhavan cannot locate either Sheer Alikhan or the peon anywhere. Left with nothing but small change and the clothes he is wearing, and unable to pay for the ordered food, our straightforward and simple Madhavan runs to the stationmaster, who calls in the police. This incident takes place outside the limits of “our British Raj,” and the head officer of the police is a “terrible looking” Turkish Muslim who tries to solve the theft by beating up the butler who has been after Madhavan for payment of the food “Sheer Alikhan” had ordered.

Towards the end of the novel, and after the lengthy eighteenth chapter, we are informed that, at about the same time and evening, around six-thirty, Madhavi aka Indulekha has a dream in her palatial house. She wakes up suddenly, feverish, and cries out: “Ayyo! Ayyo! Did this Muslim stab my husband to death? Alas! My husband is dead. I don’t want to live/continue any longer” (my translation: Indulekha, 269). The author-narrator immediately states that the readers should not presume that he subscribes to the theory that dreams are an index of the past, present or future. However, he goes on, “I am not very surprised at Indulekha’s dream” since he knows of two white men who had dream-premonitions of a serpent and a friend which turned out to be true. But if we look into the textual truth of Indulekha’s dream, we find that her dream is a series of lies unsubstantiated by the fictive real. For, first of all, Madhavan is not the “real” (legal) husband of Madhavi aka Indulekha since they are not “properly” married. Secondly, “Sheer
Alikhan" does not stab to death her "husband." Thirdly, "Indulekha"'s "husband" does not die. And finally, the handsome man who gave the false name of "Sheer Alikhan" is not a Muslim.

It is easy enough to agree to all the three statements above. However, the last one, that "Sheer Alikhan" is not a Muslim may need further elaboration. A close reading of the text reveals that apart from the instance, when the author-narrator remarks that in religion he appeared to be a Muslim, there is no instance whereby we can construe that "Sheer Alikhan" is a Muslim. A comparison of the descriptions of Madhavan and "Sheer Alikhan" compels us to the conclusion that "Sheer Alikhan" is undeterminable in religion and nationality. As against a golden Madhavan who wears his tuft of long sacred hair, "Sheer Alikhan" wears, apart from green and golden threads, side locks and a cap. Shorn off the assumed name and the appropriate costume for his role, "Sheer Alikhan" cannot "appear" to be a Muslim. My argument is further substantiated by the fact that in what one can conceive of as a translation into Malayalam from English, the language in which the two characters converse, the author-narrator reports "Sheer Alikhan" as using the Hindu term (amma) for mother. Further, taking away from the counter-argument that all I am doing is nit-picking, the author-narrator is very clear about the real/other Muslims in the novel, for the accomplice who came as the peon is a Pathan and the police sub-inspector is Turkish, whereas "Sheer Alikhan" remains "a handsome young man." The Pathan and the Turk are outsiders, their racial, socio-cultural and political—what I would term as the proto-national in this context—moorings are elsewhere. On the contrary, "our handsome young man" (emphasis added), to use one of the expressions in the novel, is neither an outsider nor an insider. Towards the end of the novel, we read that, two or three years after the theft, one of the rich merchant friends writes a letter to Madhavan informing him that two or three of the thieves involved (we know of only two, unless the butler was also implicated) in robbing Madhavan were arrested by the police in connection with another theft which was accompanied by murder
and that among them "a handsome young thief" had confessed to the murder of seventeen people on different occasions. He further confessed that if he had been unable to trick Madhavan that day he would definitely have murdered him. The repeated use of the phrase "handsome young man" for somebody who has murdered seventeen people reveals the almost necrophilic fascination and repulsion the figure is supposed to evoke. Being neither inside nor outside, this character, without a "proper" name or a nation of his own, comes to embody the "other" in the novel. Here, I will loop back to the description of "Sheer Alikhan."

Whereas Madhavan's body is made of gold, only what "Sheer Alikhan" wears is golden and his colour is that of a "rotten orange fruit." Since in Malayalam the words denoting "rotten" and "ripe" are differentiated by something like a diacritical mark, "rotten" could very well be a printer's devil. However, there is something devilish at work when most of the various modern editions re-inscribe and re-circulate "rotten" and, paradoxically, a print edition of 1997 has "ripe" whereas the 1999 reprint of the same edition by the same publisher (Kottayam: DC Books) has "rotten" on the same place on the same page. The transformation of "Sheer Alikhan" into a Muslim in Indulekha's dream opens the possibility to re-read the dream as prophetic: Madhavan will become her husband; if unable to fool Madhavan "Sheer Alikhan" would have killed her husband-to-be; then her "husband" would have died, and finally, the nameless clever and cruel cheat would be always-already the Muslim.

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31 Such fascination and repulsion is a hallmark of most descriptions. The later volumes of The People of India has "portraits of named individuals... Muslims accused of practicing 'Hindoo rites in secret.'" An Aligarh District landholder is described as having "features [that] are peculiarly Mahomedan, of the centralasian [sic] type; and while they vouch for the purity of his descent, exemplify in a strong manner the obstinacy, sensuality, ignorance, and bigotry of his class. It is hardly possible, perhaps, to conceive features more essentially repulsive," cited from Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India, David Lelyveld (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). Meadows Taylor's Confessions of a Thug, first published in 1839 (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1988), also has "a good-looking man of middle age" (3) named Ismail, kind and cruel at heart, leader of a band of Thuggees who after killing Yoosuf Khan, the Pathan (3) and his wife shows filial love towards the boy and takes him into his protection and profession. The boy turns out to become the terrible Ameer Ali, who coldly "confesses" his "seven hundred murders" (178) to the white sahib-narrator, who is amazed at the lack of repentance on the part of the captured thug.
Dumergue, who evades the ripe/rotten terminology altogether, had known this all along and had already resolved this issue for us in an-other way. His translation—subtitled “A Novel from Malabar” came out in 1890, the same year as the second edition of the Malayalam novel—had the author’s sanction, among other things. He remarks that the author had read through, and even helped him with, the translation. But in his translation, Dumergue amends Indulekha’s dream or at least translates her cry as “Oh husband! Has that Pathan stabbed you? Ah, my husband is dead, would I were dead too!” (INM, 357). Burdened with the carryover cultural baggage of a colonial administrator and presuming the sudden intrusion of the Muslim into the narrative/dream to be the author’s oversight, Dumergue takes a capital way out: he corrects the corrupt “original” native-narration. But if it was an oversight by Chandumenon, it is only probable that the author would have been alert to Dumergue’s alteration and followed it in the Malayalam second edition, especially since in its preface he undoubtedly proclaims his happiness and satisfaction in that his novel had the good fortune to find a translator who not only understood the deeper significations of his sentences but also could convey them in easy, enjoyable and simple English. However, as regards Indulekha’s dream, Chandumenon did not follow Dumergue and did not correct himself/his text. Let us then assume that he must have known all along what he was doing, especially since modern translators, caught in the narrative flow of the text and located in our contemporary cultural politics, would not even discern any narrative flaw in the text, much less dare to correct the original. Dumergue, from his colonial/administrative perspective, sees only Pathans, Mappilas, Nairs and the like, whereas Chandumenon, and his hero Madhavan, is already on an outward voyage in search of a nation-translation. They are in search of an alliance, and are engaged in writing the rightful heir from Kerala, the Nair bourgeoisie, into an emerging upper-caste Hindu, read Indian, fold. Let me reel out the names of the rich and true merchant friends of Madhavan: Govind Sen, Chitraprasad Sen, Keshavchandra Sen and Gopinath Banerjee. They are all marked by caste, and what is involved
in Madhavan’s journey is an alignment with other upper-castes and a consolidation of the Nair hegemony. The other side of this nation-translation is to read/reduce Pathans, Turks, Mappilas and the like into a monolithic “other,” read “Muslim.” For Chandumenon, already envisaging a larger national culture, the Muslim is the generic term for the structural other. Defying the narrative logic which demands a Pathan in place, Chandumenon posits a fascinating and repulsive “other” which, culturally, should have been a Mappila from Malabar, since he and Madhavan are located in the cultural geography of a Malabar already marked by a history of Mappila unrest from 1796, as per certain records, and definitely from 1836 onwards to 1922.32

In their discussion of the novel, Devasia and Tharu argue that, as the Nair afterlife of the novel form, Chandumenon’s venture—as against the novel in its European homeland where it “obscures” the process of “massive cultural (re-)organization” by “naturalizing it through claims to transparency and realism”—“acknowledges this initiative quite openly and in fact celebrates it” thereby making “a breach in the very apparatus of European realism” (69). They also argue that in its return journey in Dumergue’s translation, it “encounters few of the grave problems faced by the passage out, indeed no problem that cannot be immediately attended to by good sense and executive efficiency” (73). In their words, Dumergue’s “fluent and eminently readable translation” is

rewrit[ing] its original into the dominant (and therefore also transparent) discourse of the target-language, providing the target-language reader with the pleasure of recognizing his or her own culture in the foreign text and feeling at home in another history and another culture. Such translations obviously domesticate the

foreign text, obscuring differences of history, politics, intertextuality, context, etc.

Not always so evident is the imperial scope of this universalism. (74)

Though I would agree with them about the return journey, as is evident from Dumergue’s easy amendment of Indulekha’s dream, I would think that Chandumenon’s venture is only different in that our experiences of modernity have been different. This comes out clearly if we contrast Chandumenon advocating Englishing ourselves while at the same time he writes a dissent note to protest “against the violence of . . . ethnocentricity” in colonial attempts at reform and “the blindness to cultural difference that marked colonial assessments of Nair women and Nair marriage” that would destroy Nair society (58). As we can read off from the above, the difference between the English and the Malayalam novel/modernity would be that the imperatives are different as much as the heroes are. Likewise, Dumergue’s assumption that his translation would become a “resource for colonial ethnography” (57) and be “‘useful to administrators and historians’ [which] becomes both the basis of his translation practice and of the canonization of the original” (75) only brings out the native/colonial difference. And within these different practices, the Muslim seems to be “working” in not very dissimilar terms.

Devasia and Tharu have not paid attention to the translation of the villain into Muslim within the novel, for they observe that

[for a novel set in Malabar, claiming to depict the real life and the true language of the region, the total absence of the Mappilas and the hazy presence of the “lower” castes is significant. It is interesting that the only Muslim featured in the novel is the well-dressed man from the North of India who befriends Madhavan on the train, only to cheat him. (fn. 12, 77)
However, as I have argued, “Sheer Alikhan” is not a Muslim, but becomes a Muslim. The figure of “Sheer Alikhan” is a marker of the translations taking place within the novel. As against the cultural geography of the character, where a Mappila would have been appropriate, or the narrative logic, where a Pathan would have been appropriate, Indulekha is made to dream up a Muslim in order to set in the process of cultural translation and national belonging. Her dream, however, is also an aporetic moment in the text. It is a supplement which has the potential to supplant the text, but it also significantly subverts the text and its narrative resolution of a proto-national belonging. Let us once again return to Indulekha. Structurally her dream plays a significant part, since it is her fear and fever that helps to change the patriarch’s heart in favour of a Madhavan-Madhavi (re-)marriage. Her dream also leaves an indelible impression that it was a Muslim who cheated Madhavan; her dream works within the text much the same way the text works in our literary/cultural imaginary. She dreams and cries out that a Muslim has murdered her husband. The author-narrator is structurally forbidden from revealing her dream, he does not tell us what her actual dream was, we know/read of it only in a translation/representation in verbal language. He does not tell us what she actually saw; neither does he see what she is telling us, that her dream disrupts the text and its narrative, proto-national, enclosure. We have to be awake to her dream, and suspicious of the authorial translation of her foreboding in order to see the import of the supplement as lack and as excess. Maybe now we can wonder anew why a novel-narrative more concerned about the hero’s intellectual, emotional and proto-national interests is named Indulekha in the first place. Perhaps what we witness in the narrative is the congruence of the emerging bourgeois Indian male, who needs a new normal woman, a novel pleasure and a national past time, not necessarily in that order. This congruence of female-novel-nation is inadvertently brought out when one critic (MK

33 Most of the essays in a recent collection of studies in Malayalam also automatically assume “Sheer Alikhan” to be a Muslim. sec. Indulekha: Vayamayute Disakal, ed. EP Rajagopalan (Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 2001).
Sanu in his *avatharika, Indulekha*, 21-22) reads the description of the heroine in the second chapter of *Indulekha* as a commentary on the requisites of the novel form itself.

*Indulekha* dreams up the Muslim, not a Pathan, as the other threat, to her marital as well as "our" national consummation. With an awareness of the alacrity of this dream-effect, it would be instructive to examine the eighteenth chapter of the novel. Sandwiched between the theft and the dream, running into about 44 pages, this chapter has been criticized as "a stone blocking the unhampered progress of the plot." However, reading the chapter as an integral part of the novel, I argue that this chapter is all about the ushering in of modernity or of our translation into modernity. The eighteenth chapter is basically "A Conversation"—taking place in Babu Keshavachandra Sen's huge moon-washed palatial house in Bombay—between Madhavan's father Govinda Panikkar, Madhavan and his young relative, Govindankutty Menon. These three figures from different generations start by discussing God. As opposed to the atheist and radical Govindankutty Menon and the conservative Govinda Panikkar, Madhavan talks about a God divorced from the temple and the sandalwood paste, thereby freeing God for the emerging class from the Brahminical fold. Whereas Govindankutty Menon insists on the absolute urgency of social reforms before political liberation, Madhavan tries to establish a role for the Congress in the subcontinent. He holds out the hope that India will eventually step into modernity and argues that "[i]n such a large country like ours, unity and discord [has increased] due to the English language" and that "[m]ore wider English spreads, our unity will increase manifold" (255).

According to Madhavan, we will free ourselves from unjust Kings and become more democratic if we follow certain dictates: 1) The Congress controlled by educated and noble Babus should rule India; 2) English education should be available to all, especially women; 3) revolts, like in

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34 All citations, hereafter, are from *Indulekha* (Kottayam: DC Books, 1997).
1857, should not happen; and 4) we have to advocate a policy of patience before we can eradicate the evil of caste.

I concentrate on the last of these dictates. Madhavan’s comments on caste are prefaced by his depressed observation that Englishmen have failed in their attempt to free us from our religions. According to him, in order to free us from our religions, all Hindus and Muslims should be shown another special religion that attracts them away from their different rituals. However, since we are not yet in a position to become modern and live in a mono-religious culture, it would be counterproductive if we insist on engaging with caste. We can only hope that as our “knowledge” increases our caste-doctrines may slacken and eventually disappear (251-252). Till such a time, we are to be ruled by a Congress guided by the learned Babus. Thus, we see that Madhavan is cognizant of which religion and castes are the authors and rightful heirs of our modernity. From this perspective, Madhavan’s journey into modernity, from the local to the national, is the novel version of the King/landlord surveying his kingdom/land and neighbours, thereby cementing relationships with other hegemonic castes in other regions and staking a claim in the future power-sharing. It is significant that during this journey, he is brought face to face with “Sheer Alikhan” only to be duped. Surviving this mishap, he has now returned and enumerates his insights in the eighteenth chapter. He has learned that those people (British as well as upper caste Congressmen) who taunt us for being cowards, who point out that we, the “talkative Babus and Aiyars . . . are not strong enough to oppose a Muslim” (256) do so in order to awaken our valour. Potent and virile, this newly awakened Indian is now ready to marry an Indulekha who has been earmarked for him, saved from the vile desires of the decadent Namboodiris. However, the consummation of this marriage is not without impediments. While the national male has found himself and others like him, the woman has to be aptly reconfigured.

Tulika, 1995) 143.
It has been pointed out by various critics that the challenges faced by India’s move towards modernity were usually mapped onto the woman in order to seek a resolution or sublimation. It has also been pointed out that such classic manoeuvres were often successfully accomplished by deploying the Muslim as a threat to national-modernity.36

The contradictions of the national-modern that Indulekha is made to bear come out clearly in her double naming. Whereas her real name is Madhavi, everyone except Madhavan calls her Indulekha, meaning “crescent.” However, we hear Madhavan calling her Indulekha at very significant moments: “My Indulekha is my wife . . . otherwise there is no point to my existence” (27), he asserts earlier in the narrative. Later, when she tells him that she has already chosen him as her husband (“My husband, my life's Lord. . . . My body and soul are at your command,” 48-49), in his six sentence long response he addresses her twice as Indulekha. A Madhavi, also known as Indulekha, who had spiritedly upheld the equal freedom for women allowed by the Nair system of marriage against Madhavan’s charge that it encouraged immorality and “enabled” women to be licentious by evoking the western customs is deeply hurt when Madhavan so easily believes the rumour that she had consented to marry a wealthy Namboodiripad. It is this enlightened Madhavi who is muted by the dream of a Muslim. A troubled Madhavi, worrying about her husband and angry at the realization that he had not understood the nature of her intelligence (262) goes to sleep. When a frightened Indulekha wakes up from her dream, Madhavi goes to sleep, as if forever, only a crescent marks her disappearance.

36 In another context, Susie Tharu notes: “Women, for instance, are pivotal figures in . . . these texts. Yet as they take on what is proffered as a natural—and obviously also Indian—femininity, the effects of their community, caste and class identities, and the conflicts implicit in these subaltern experiences are neutralized. They are absorbed into the projects of the narrative and become emblematic of national spaces. More central, especially in the context of partition texts, is the question of the recalcitrant Islam that is regarded as having disrupted the enlightened project of Indian nationalism in both its territorial and humanistic dimensions. It is this recalcitrance and this disruption that underwrites and structures what is depicted as irrational violence or outrage against nature. Narrative authorities must therefore carefully constitute, indeed constantly and obsessively re-constitute, themselves to address and contain such threats of disruption for which the Indian Muslim is set up here—and well into the 1990s—as aibi” (79), “Rendering Account of the Nation: Partition Narratives and Other Genres of the Passive Revolution,” Oxford
One of the early characterizations by a Muslim in English is *Confessions of a Thug* (first published in 1839). It, as the opening line indicates, renders an "autobiographical" account of the life of the captive Ameer Ali, a notorious thug, transcribed by the author. Despite the fact that the debate around "thuggee" was woven around "Hindu" Kali worship as a root of criminality, the protagonist is a Muslim. This surely alerts one to a process, which as early as 1839 is consolidating the Muslim body as a depository of dangerous and irrational communalities and subjectivities. It is perhaps in this context that it could be productive to examine the strategic deployment of literary (autobiographical) narratives of individuals and its role in the manner in which colonial representations are produced and circulated.

In Donald Sinderby's *The Jewel of Malabar*, this figure is found full-bodied as a Mappila fanatic, functioning in Malabar. In spite of the 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 is its basic difference from a nationalist perception on the
one hand, as in the stories and novels in Malayalam I analyzed above, and the western colonial/capitalist Christian secular modern perception of Islam on the other. As I have shown in the earlier sections, within the nationalist framework the Muslim is figured as a supplement, an excess, that nevertheless helps us constantly redefine the Indian; it is a pharmakon, poison and cure at the same time, or a ghost that habitually haunts its once familiar belonging. However, in Sinderby's frame, Islam figures as a double, an other which also the same.

An analysis of Sinderby's last novel, *Mother-in-Law India*, first published in 1929, will perhaps amplify the significance attached by Sinderby to the Malabar Mappila uprisings and Islam in general to future (of the) Indian subcontinent. In this novel, in an almost prophetic vein, Sinderby foresees the division of the Indian subcontinent along the South-North axis. As the opening paragraph of the novel put it: "The British Raj in India was cracking up at last. Not so much because of any great effort on the part of Indian politicians as because an extreme Socialist Government in England had got itself into a hole. The Socialist party had promised independence to India and now that they were in power they were obliged to keep their promise" (chapter 1). While the colonial government has been weakened by the gentlemanly obligation of the British politician to keep a promise, the British residents of India plot with various local kings. All the "leading Independence wallahs or Congress-men, as they were also called" (chapter 2) are rounded up, and the coup leads to the formation of the Southern Confederation, advised by resident Britishers, like Sir Charles Grimble, with the Maharajas of Mysore, Travancore and Cochin ruling in tandem under His Supreme Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad. Within a couple of days, the North follows suit and establishes the Northern Confederation.

1929). Other novels of Sinderby, *Mother-in-Law India* (Southport: Small Print, 2001; London: Albert E Marriott, 1929) and *The Jewel of Malabar and The Protagonists*, are on their schedule.

40 Since I worked with a scanned and emailed copy of the text, made for republication, instead of pagination, only details of the chapters are given.
Government. The prime movers behind this idea of a South-North coup are a Muslim, Mohommed Ali Ashram, a retired police officer of Lahore, in the North and a Brahmin, Iyenar Patela, a professor, in the South.

Apart from these, one of the main actors in the South is a Eurasian, George Da Sousa, the head of the secret service and the inventor of a sort of prototype of the atom bomb called the flying bomb. However, the North, preoccupied with the settlement of the North-West frontier, continues to look down on the South. The antagonism between them is intensified by the fact that while South continues to be governed by the sovereign authority of the Nizam, North follows "a certain half-expressed regard for democratic principles" (chapter 3). The difference is further accentuated by the personal rivalry between Mohommed Ali and Da Sousa for Marietta Da Costa, a coquettish and scheming Eurasian woman. The political difference as also the lust of the main players in the North and South lead to showdowns, which, as the foreword has it, "are as bloodthirsty as real scenes which occurred at Partition," because of the deployment of the flying bomb. Despite being governed by the Nizam, or maybe because of it, the Mappilas of Malabar continue to rebel, and the Islamic rebellion spreads all over India under the guidance of the evil Mohommed Ali, till it is completely destroyed by the flying bomb of an even more evil Da Sousa. The end result: the American Marines step in and India is divided among the rival European powers except the British who "had forfeited their claim" (chapter 13). Although interesting and worthy of a serious study by itself, I have outlined the plot of the novel to highlight the part played by Islam. It is against the backdrop of the reconfiguration of Islam in *Mother-in-Law* that I seek to situate my analysis of *The Jewel of Malabar*.

The simple enough plot of *The Jewel of Malabar* is a love-triangle formed by the British subaltern, Sir John Bennville, a rich Baronet in the military service as an officer (Lieutenant) in
the regiment of the Royal Musketeers, a native Nair woman Kamayla and the Mappila rebel leader Abdul Ahmed Hajee. The novel is structured around two “illegal” journeys undertaken by Bennville, the first to ensure Kamayla’s safety in Malabar and the second to escape from his commanding officer with Kamayla to the safety of Madras. Nahran, Kamyala’s betrothed is the policeman who leads Bennville and his men through the jungles of Malabar to the Mappila hideout. Nahran saves Bennville when the Mappilas, who the British have been sent to quell, ambush the platoon. Out of gratitude to Nahran for saving his life, Bennville, against the explicit order of his superiors, sends military and police personnel to go after the Mappilas who have abducted Kamayla. Bennville and Nahran also accompany the troop into the tangled recesses of the wild forest that takes on the aspect of a green wall (50-51). When they reach the Mappila hideout, situated in the Panthalur hill (52)—which comprised the centre of the fanatic zone according to British administrators—the party separates and in another bloody battle, in which Nahran dies, they rescue Kamayla and return. Nahran’s death opens the way for John Bennville, now “the military governor of the district!” (103), to desperately fall in love with Kamayla, who is mourning Nahran. As Bennville tries to move a reluctant Kamayla and her willing mother into the telegraph office near the military outpost, the Mappilas keep after her and abduct her again. Chasing them, Bennville rescues her and in the process is severely wounded. Meanwhile, with the second rescue and the nursing of the feverish subaltern, Kamayla also falls in love with him proclaiming: “thou art the light of my life, my lord and my hero” (127). Caught between the

41 The description of the wild animals: stealthy tiger, majestic elephant, kingly cobra and miming bunder, is counterpointed by the “wild pig—courageous king of fighters—snuffed and grunted and rooted as he led his hairy, black entourage through fastness seldom or never traversed by the foot of man” (51). The latter description points to an unconscious parallel to Abdul Ahmed Hajee and his gorilla warriors. Also, as they catch up with the Mappilas, Nahran starts talking to John Bennville about “our revenge” (52); he also shows his knowledge of Hindustani, thus accentuating the contrast with the alien Mappilas of Malabar.


43 I will not be going into the intricacies of the role of Kamayla, but will only point out that at one point Bennville thinks of her as a second Gunga, the lovely maiden who gave life to things on earth until “she was carried off to
honour of the Royal Musketeer, the ridicule lavished on the officers who fall for native women and his intense love for Kamayla, Bennville decides to resign his commission and live with Kamayla in Malabar, the “emerald gem of sad beauty” (5). When his superiors learn that he is contemplating such a decision, Bennville is posted elsewhere. However, he illegally procures a Harley-Davidson motorbike and drives in a roundabout way to Kamayla’s village and arranges for her and her mother to stay at the telegraph office. When he is returning by a shorter route, he is captured by Mappilas and it is only the quick and decisive action taken by Kamayla that rescues him from the physical and moral danger represented by Abdul Ahmed Hajee. Taken back to the headquarters, Bennville is “under close arrest” for being away without leave. His commanding officer takes an interest in him and advises him to forget the native woman, because “[oil and water won’t mix!” (225). One day their camp is attacked, reportedly, by six thousand Mappilas, “the woods were alive with the fiercest fanatics in India” (228), but the superior British force is able to kill the Mappilas. In a “private battle,” Bennville kills Abdul Ahmed Hajee. Bennville’s heroic act of leading a charge to save firearms as well as his killing of the notorious rebel king earns him a recommendation, but, nonetheless, he is posted to a distant place in the hope that he will free himself of his obsession with the native woman. Despite the atmosphere of dance, dinners, tennis, polo, bridge, theatre and the attractive Alice Catesby-Jones (256-261), Bennville is unable to forget Kamayla. Meanwhile, his commanding officer tries, in vain, to bribe Kamayla to forget Bennville and arranges with the postmaster to intercept their letters. However, hearing the news of Kamayla’s degradation, once again Bennville hires a bike and car illegally and, being on leave, goes to rescue her. The couple, thereafter, is chased by the commanding officer till they reach the safety of Madras. At Madras,
racial and religious doubts surface. Kamayla resolves the situation by converting to Christianity as well as by forsaking marriage with Bennville.45

The novel clearly draws on half-a-century old format of weaving adventure-romances around fictional characters playing a minor role in major historical events of the time. My reading of the novel is focused on the contradictory pulls structuring the representation of the Malabar rebellion. On the one hand, Islam as embodied in the rebelling Mappilas is certainly the repository of fanaticism, religious bigotry and primitive savagery. The way in which the soldiers discuss the Mappilas on their way to deal with the insurgency is illustrative. They recognize that the Mappilas are not all provided with firearms, but are armed with carving-knives, pick-axes, anything; but the point is that they all want to die! Nahran says that they get worked up to a tremendous pitch of fanaticism and go to a mosque and take oath to die for their religion. Then they divorce their wives, pass their swords through the flame, and come out and charge about trying to find some one to kill them . . . [because] they think that if they die fighting the infidel they go straight to Paradise. And for every Englishman they kill they obtain three wives; but I believe the allowance for a Hindu is only one wife. (20)

However, Bennville, who has read about local customs and has a rudimentary knowledge of Malayalam, thinks that it must be because they are ignorant people. Nahran agrees that it must be so because "They don't know what they are doing! They follow their priests blindly!" (21). When their procession was, suddenly, ambushed by some Mappila rebels, "[a] wailing cry, ineffably mournful and weird, swelled up from the jungle. It was the dismal battle hymn of the Moplahs" (26) which is followed by the beating of drums. Using the jungle to their advantage,

45 Charmain Goldwyn attributes Sinderby's reluctance to portray Nahran and Kamayla's marriage to the influence of his mother who was of strong Methodist persuasion.
the Mappilas attack in incessant waves of martyrdom in the face of the superior firepower of the British military. "If any man had felt pity for the way in which the fanatics had been mowed down, that generous emotion died out in that man's heart now" (28). Further, Abdul Ahmed Hajee, the leader of the Mappilas, equally the signifier of Islam, is on various occasions "malicious" (7), "loathsome," "foul" (167) and "the Prince of Evildoers" (188).

Nevertheless, on other occasions Abdul Ahmed Hajee himself is described as "tall and graceful, with the Arab stamp on his aquiline, scornful features" (7) and as speaking perfect English (203) in contrast to the ceremonious English spoken by Hindus, like Nahran (47, 101). Also, at other moments, the Mappilas, in contrast to "their gentle, mild-mannered Hindu neighbours," are shaven-headed men, some with queer shaped light grey caps... Their faces were keen and aquiline; some were richly bearded. A few were of poor physique; these were not true Moplahs, but the descendants of low-caste Hindu converts made by the invading Arab pirates. The majority were of splendid proportions... All had the appearance of men who never appreciated or understood humour or the lighter side of life; but who were wont to brood darkly over their wrongs, the vileness of their unbelieving neighbours and rulers, and the glory of the Paradise which rewards earthly asceticism and devotion. (35)

Their act of rebellion is also understood in political, rather than religious terms: "They were in the rebellion from political motives only. Yet even without fanaticism the Moplah is still a hard, brave man, and these exposed themselves recklessly to the fire of the British" (56).

The local and loyal policeman Nahran's explanation for the rebellion is that most of the Mappilas are poor because their religion enjoins them to divide a dead man's property among his relations and thus they become poorer. Hence, they become discontented, but blame their Hindu
landlords instead of their religious custom by saying that it is because they are charged too much rent. Their hardship is aggravated by their ignorance, their religion is all in Arabic that few of them understand, which makes them fanatical so that they blindly follow their religious leaders. Most of them had probably served in the Indian Army during the War and understood some of the methods of modern warfare. However, "Ghandi's [sic] agents have been down here for many months, preaching rebellion against the Government, and this has really caused the outbreak. Many of these Moplahs think that the British were defeated in the Great War" (42-43).

Although at one level the narrative attributes the rebellion to fanaticism, there are several key moments when its political underpinnings surface. These moments are all the more significant in the context of Sinderby's firsthand experience. He was a subaltern posted in Malabar during the rebellion and had narrowly escaped after "one of the Moplars fired point blank at him, and missed."46 The reasons suggested by the narrative for the Mappila rebellions are: 1) insane fanaticism fostered by ignorance and obedience to religious leaders; 2) political reasons such as those of the disbanded soldiers. However, this opposition between fanaticism and politics collapses in the light of other evidence within the narrative. I will briefly track some of those moments when the political character of the rebellion asserts itself. We are informed that other peaceful Mappilas (147), like traders and priests, wish the rebellion to continue, so that their business may prosper (151-152) and/or spy for the rebels providing them with a network of information-dissemination (155, 174). We are also told that the beginning of the rebellion was marked by an attack on the building which significantly enough housed the local treasury and Government offices and that the "compound in which it stood was still covered with legal documents of a century, scattered and torn by the rebels" (172). The terror caused by the "cruel marauders" (138), not least by "Krembassery Thangal, the Moplah 'king,' an abominable..."
monster, who was in the habit of flaying Hindus alive before killing them” (201), is however belied by the fact that a Hindu, for fifty rupees, agrees to drive the motorbike over quite a distance (167). Again, another Hindu lends Bennville his Ford car as well as his driver (270-271), in spite of the caste rigidity among Hindus. Also we are informed that Bennville “knew of the case of a high-caste who divorced his wife simply because she helped a coolie to put his heavy burden in her house” (84). He also reports of Mappila converts from among Hindus as well as of an elaborate social network over which rumours and news travel “like lightning amongst the rebels” (191). We are also informed of the collusion of the women (62), priests and merchants. Putting all the above observations within the narrative, one is forced to conclude that there is an awareness within the text of the possibility of a political interpretation of the rebellion. In fact, the parallels between the Mappilas and the British, in their political struggle, are brought out more forcefully when Bennville meditates on the honour and pride of his regiment (“Better to die than to hurt the name of the Regiment” [114]). What emerges is a battle between the conquering British and the resisting Mappilas for territorial domination, rather than any fanaticism; the British soldiers “looked more at home in the place than the natives themselves” (152).

The Mappila voice emerges despite narrative exigencies. One of the rare occasions when we hear Mappilas speaking among themselves occurs when Bennville is hiding, in “this impossible district” (182), from a British convoy, scheduled to pass a particular point at a particular time. Two rebels, Ali and Kunhee, reach the same place on stolen police bicycles with firearms tied to their machines and hide very near him. They see the marks of Bennville’s motorbike tyres. One of them exclaims: “Surely, Kunhee, this must be one of those strange bicycles with engines that the velakar [white people] use? W’Allah! But do they go about by themselves on these

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46 Cited from Charmain Goldwyn’s foreword to *Mother-in-Law India*. 265
marvelous things at this time?” (178). His companion asks him to use his “nimble brain” (179) and obey “[t]he Musaliar [who] told us to count how many men were in them” (178). After the convoy passes by, Bennville shoots them dead. “Sorry!” said Bennville to himself with a slight shudder. “[c]an’t help it, though! It was their lives or mine!” (180). The deliberate matter-of-factness, slight shudder notwithstanding, with which Bennville shoots down two men whose guns were tied to their bicycles reveals how the “Pukka Sahib” (250) is after all an arm of the empire.

However, the most illustrative incident through which the rebellion is characterized comes at the point where Bennville is captured by the Mappilas when returning from his first journey. While traveling back in the dusk without headlights, pushing his bike, he hears the sound of someone chopping wood. While crossing a bridge, he hears a tree fall further ahead, and attempts to turn back only to be stopped by a “half-naked figure” (194). Soon he is surrounded and disarmed, “pinioned by many hands hardened with years of toil” (195). The Mappilas “gazed at him as if he were some strange animal” (195) and immediately recognize him as the murderer of Ali and Kunhee and also the rival in love of their great chief. One of the Mappilas wants to kill the “son-of-Hell” but is stopped from attacking him by the voice of their leader, who commands them to take him away to their hideout. Some of the Mappilas unable to push the Harley-Davidson attempt to burn it. Bennville “helps” them by asking them to put the flame into the petrol tank, which they innocently follow. Upon which,

“Oh, you bastard fools of many dogs!” cried the leader wrathfully. “It is ever thus that you allow the white man to deceive you! Do you not know that there will be no peace or justice in the country until you refuse to be duped by the cunning, lying words of the white-devils?” (197)
Even in his perilous condition he could not help but note “the almost boyish activity of the Moplahs who trotted beside him or leapt lightly from boulder to thumlock” (197). Bennville also commends their physical stamina and nimbleness of feet, since even an expert at warfare like himself found it hard to keep up with them. He complains about the way he is being treated. To his remark that the British are more courteous to their “prisoners of war,” the rebel leader bitterly retorts: “And sent off to the Andaman Islands to slave till their hearts are broken” (198).

At the hideout, Bennville notices several men and a few plain-looking women and the “whole atmosphere was heavily charged with the distinctive odour of the inhabitants of Malabar” (199). All present showed signs of the hardship which the present rebellion had imposed upon them. A disinterested and humane observer would have found pity in his heart for these poor ignorant creatures led into death and sorrow in pursuit of the vain ideals of that dreamer Ghandi” [sic] (200). Though resigned to death, Bennville reflects: “the Moplahs, although bloody and ferocious in their waging of warfare, were not studiously cruel” (201). Meanwhile, Abdul Ahmed Hajee, “the Governor of Calipuram” (201), arrives and recognizes Bennville as his worthy adversary on the battlefield as well as in love. Abdul Ahmed Hajee tells him “we are not the savages you think we are. We are just as reasonable and intelligent as you. We are rebelling against your Government because we are tired of the tyranny and oppression of the white man, and wish to rule ourselves” (203). Bennville once again reflects on how the ignorant natives were duped into sacrificing their lives and homes and criticizes the colonial government’s policy of “immunity” to such “demagogues” that has led to “the present state of political unrest” (203-204; emphasis added). Thereafter, in a scene reminiscent of the Armageddon as well as the temptation narratives, Abdul Ahmed Hajee informs Bennville that “[y]ou may purchase your life

47 Earlier, “[t]he air was heavy with that peculiar and distinctive, yet not unpleasant, odour which is always noticed in the presence of the inhabitants of Malabar” (152).
on one condition” (204). A large brass cross is brought and placed in the middle of the semi-circle formed by the crowd, amidst the shadows and fading and flickering light and smoke from dying torches. Abdul Ahmed Hajee then tells Bennville that the cross is the symbol of that religion that “Englishmen disregard nowadays,” and that “I will let you go free back to your friends if you will show the contempt which perhaps you feel for the religion of the unbeliever. Go and stamp and spit on that cross and you shall go from here to-night” (204). Though Bennville did not believe that they would let him go even if he stamped and spat on the cross, he was tempted because “there might be an opportunity to get away!” and “[f]resh hope swept over him like a wave as he realized that there was still a chance for life, sweet, infinitely desirable life!” (205). While musing on love, happiness, sport, travel, home, and all that life meant to him, he sighed with anticipation, for he might “yet purchase his life!” (205).

His eyes fell on the brass cross and the Moplahs staring eagerly. He was not a religious man, and the habit of thoughtful reflection had landed him in a sea of doubt and unbelief with regard to many of the universal questions. In fact, he had an entirely open mind on religion.

Nevertheless, a great tide of some new and strange emotion swelled within him as he saw that simple cross lying there with the Moplahs regarding it.

It seemed to him at that moment the emblem of all that is clean and civilized in the world. Something inside him seemed to say:

“You stand here the ambassador of the British peoples. That cross is their sign as well as the badge of Christianity. Stamp on it and you drag the prestige of the white man in the mud.” (205-206)

He asks Abdul Ahmed Hajee what will happen if he refuses and is informed that he will be beheaded the next morning. Then “[a]n idea occurred to him that a brass cross is a small thing to sacrifice life for. He reflected that a church meant little to him” (206). Nevertheless, he
hesitated, much to the anger of the natives who had heard a lot about the "unprincipled character of the Briton" who would do anything to save his skin (207).

He saw Christ, the Man of unearthly gentleness and unearthly bravery, of sympathy and love, going about relieving suffering and explaining His religion of kindness and unselfishness. It was like a vision, sudden and uplifting. And then he realized that Christianity is the best religion in the world. . . . Reverently he picked [the cross] up, and some instinct prompted him to kiss it. Perhaps the spirit of his Crusader ancestors rose within him as he raised the symbol above his head and cried out clearly in Malayalam [sic]: "Mohammed is dead, but Christ is the Son of the living God!" (207-208)

Amidst "howls of rage and fury," Bennville is condemned to death in the morrow, but Sir John was smiling with a strange happiness. He had been unable to pray before, but now he murmured "Thank God, thank God!" Then glancing at Abdul with exaltation in his eyes, he cried: "If I am to die, kill me now.—I am ready." (208)

What I have tried to draw out by my contrapuntal outline of the narrative is that there is an awareness within the narrative that the rebellion is not the product of Mappilas believing the rumour of the colonial government tottering to its fall. It is also not that they were duped into it ("I fought for freedom, this I know / For those who bade me fight / Have told me so," 155), considering the hardships they undergo in the jungle. This awareness doubles upon the narrative itself and makes Bennville's obsessive love an emblem of resistance to over-arching structures of domination. His love is said to be a "demon in thy veins" (128) only different in that it "respects neither creed nor race nor custom" (130) whereby "he was soon to become an outcast from his people" (138) thereby anything of spirit, like religion, is the other of the European modern. In the pursuit of love, in his first journey as much as in the second, he becomes a rebel, a fact
brought out by the parallel between the Mappilas hiding in the forest and Bennville using the same as a cover against the well-meaning military. Just as the Mappilas always are represented as “a number of slinky animals or stealthy men . . . moving excitedly through the mass of tropical vegetation” (107), so in his pursuit of love does Bennville: when hiding in the forest, he pushes his way through thick undergrowth and people’s gardens (271) in order to reach the house of his beloved. Once he reaches there, he causes “astonishment and fright, as if he were . . . a ghost” (272). This doubling, where Bennville becomes himself through encounter with his double is best thrown in relief by the condition offered to Bennville by Abdul Ahmed Hajee, which I referred to earlier. As one of the officers when he heard the details of Bennville’s “fairy-tale get-away” pointed out: “‘You’ve got no right to be alive’” (217). And he is alive because he braved beheading and beheld the absolute other and became himself. The condition was that he should spurn his spirit, his religion, which has been relegated to the private domain, almost a spectre that is not accorded its rightful place in the modern scheme of life. As we gather from the following scene, beholding his double and becoming himself, Bennville now has the right to live as well as die.

IV

Frederic Jameson, addressing the question of the textual affiliation and affirmation of a national belongingness, had argued that nationalism has become a major concern of Third World intellectuals when it has been “long since liquidated [in the First World] and rightly so” (65). Hence, the Third World novels do “not offer the satisfactions of Proust or Joyce” and may cause First World intellectuals to conclude that the Third World is “still writing novels like Dreiser or Sherwood Anderson” (65). However, he cautions, First World intellectuals’ “reactions to third-world texts are at one and the same time perfectly natural, perfectly comprehensible, and terribly
parochial” (66). Moreover, the “reinvention of cultural studies in the United States” seems to demand the reinvention “of what Goethe long ago theorized as ‘world literature’” keeping in mind our contemporary neocolonial situation whereby “a study of third-world culture necessarily entails a new view of ourselves, from the outside, insofar as we ourselves are (perhaps without fully knowing it) constitutive forces powerfully at work on the remains of older cultures in our general capitalist system” (68). It is the impossible situation of the Third World that makes “the telling of the individual story and the individual experience . . . ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself” (85-86) so that the impossible political situation cries out for narrative resolution. Jameson adds that some similar experience or “allegorical resonance” (71) is required for the First World intellectuals in order to read “libidinal investment . . . in primarily political and social terms” (72). As Aijaz Ahmad has pointed out in his rejoinder, Jameson exhibits a considerable degree of blindness to other First World texts when he theorizes that the ability to present in private psychological terms a critique of public sociological aspects is one of the basic, essential, features of Third World texts alone. One just has to juxtapose, to cite some texts at random, Kafka’s “Metamorphosis,” Camus’ The Plague or Ionesco’s Rhinoceros, in order to perceive what Jameson means by canonical texts. Jameson takes for granted an umbrella of capitalism that sublimes the plurality of First World nations and does not see that the incoherence of the Third World nations would then be concomitant with the imbalance of modernity itself. This makes his argument that “[s]uch

49 Aijaz Ahmad. “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory.’” It is significant that this exchange predates the resurgence of cultural nationalism spearheaded by the Bharatiya Janata Party that also led to the demolition of Babri Masjid on 6 December in 1992.
50 Aijaz Ahmad asks: “what else are, let us say, Pynchon’s Gravity’s Rainbow or Ellison’s The Invisible Man but allegorizations of individual—and not so individual—experience? What else could Richard Wright and Adrienne Rich and Richard Howard mean when they give their books titles like Native Son or Your Native Land, Your Life or Alone With America?” (110).
51 As early as 1986 Partha Chatterjee had argued that “the problem of nationalist thought becomes the particular manifestation of a much more general concern, namely, the problem of the bourgeois-rationalist conception of knowledge, established in the post-Enlightenment period of European intellectual history, as the moral and epistemic foundation for a supposedly universal framework of thought which perpetuates, in a real and merely a
allegorical structures . . . are not so much absent from first-world cultural text as they are unconscious, and therefore they must be deciphered by interpretative mechanism that necessarily entail a whole social and historical critique of our current first-world situation” (79) into a mere rhetorical one. The complacency of the First World intellectual is brought out by Jameson himself when he writes that “in the third-world situation the intellectual is always in one way or another a political intellectual” (74). Maybe we should add that the very apolitical thought of the First World intellectuals is an endorsement of the “cultural imperialism” of the First World.

Aijaz Ahmad, taking himself as an addressee of Jameson, points out, rightly, that the one world where we all live in includes experiences of colonialism and imperialism on both sides of Jameson’s global divide. However, the complacency of the Third World intellectual comes out when his perspective does not allow for caste or religion to be used as tools of analysis. In fact, it is significant that he had to take stock of his own critical position after the demolition of Babri Masjid.52 What is required would be a re-reading of canonical texts by first and Third World intellectuals themselves from the perspectives of colonialism, gender, race and minorities, especially if they are ostensibly absent at the narrative surface. In fact, later work, especially by Edward Said and Toni Morrison,53 has concentrated on such a re-reading.

metaphorical sense, a colonial domination. It is a framework of knowledge which proclaims its own universality; its validity, it pronounces, is independent of cultures. Nationalist thought, in agreeing to become 'modern,' accepts the claim to universality of this ‘modern’ framework of knowledge. Yet it also asserts the autonomous identity of a national culture. It thus simultaneously rejects and accepts the dominance, both epistemic and moral, of an alien culture,” in Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse? (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986, 1996) 11.

52 In later articles—especially, “Fascism and National Culture: Reading Gramsci in the Days of Hindutva,” 221-266 and “On the Ruins of Ayodhya: Communist Offensive and Recovery of the Secular,” 267-319 in Lineages of the Present: Political Essays (New Delhi: Tulika, 1996)—one can perceive certain tremors, though he takes the occasion to attack the work done by the Subaltern Studies collective.

Apart from such works, another source of inspiration for my analyses of literary texts in this chapter was the new mode of writing envisaged by Deleuze and Guattari. Their formulation of a "minor literature" makes it possible for a re-theorization of an aesthetic open to questions of colonialism, gender, race and minority. A minor literature "serves as the focus of an ethnic group's collective life and, without solving social problems, provides a medium in which conflicts may be articulated." In minor literatures "language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari, 16). They have immediate social and political functions.

everything in them is political. In major literatures, in contrast, the individual concern (familial, marital, and so on) joins with other no less individual concerns, the social milieu serving as a mere environment or a background. . . . Minor literature is completely different; its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. (17)

It fosters collective utterances as against individual ones and disrupts the dominant forms of content. It is not required that one belong to a polyglot culture or a social minority so as to practice this mode of writing. It is based on the principle of a minor usage of language, of being a foreigner in one's own tongue. In fact, you do not need to have a minor language to have a minor literature; there can be minor uses of a major language, like Kafka writing in German.

Taking a cue from them, in this chapter I have tried to look at the question of Islam, its constituted otherness, as represented, primarily, in three texts. Whereas the Muslim figures as an other in Madhavan's short story and Chandumenon's novel, both belonging to the "high" literature category, Sinderby's novel portrays the Muslim as more than a stereotype. The other

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as the self-same is a theme seldom encountered in literary narratives from India, whether in English or in regional languages.

"Higuita," a story about a Malayali priest situated in South Delhi and who had at least a "few Malayalees and some tribal girls from Bihar" (136) in his congregation, is written so smoothly as if they all form one single and harmonious community, of course, except for Jabbar. The authorial voice elides over all such questions; Father Geevarghese, Lucy and Jabbar converse with each other without any problems of language and culture. This very elision points to a desire to assert a belongingness and that desire, that longing, points to the predicaments undermining such a vision. Such real problems cannot be resolved by dreaming/demanding more patriotism from everyone. The very force and ferocity of such a desire points to a lacuna, as if the chink in our armour can be hidden by more fervent deeds.

Indulekha's reconfiguration of the European form as well as of the heroes and heroines of the national-modern pivots on the nation-less and nameless figure of "Sheer Alikhan." The ambivalence surrounding this figure in the novel is further augmented if we follow Madhavan's dream of a united India brought through the means of English education. As per Madhavan's logic, by learning English we are to be automatically ushered into the modern. He is also considerate enough to stress that English education should be made available to women, and, maybe, by extension to other sections of society so that they can all be refashioned. However, the problematical idea of English as harbinger of modernity within the narrative runs into a quagmire when examined from "Sheer Alikhan's" perspective. Once divested of his disguise, "Sheer Alikhan" may belong to any region, religion or nation, but he could not have conversed fluently in English, like Abdul Ahmed Haji, unless he had prior access to and had acquired
English; in fact “Sheer Alikhan’s” ease in with English had impressed Madhavan so much that our educated Madhavan actually believed him to be a subordinate judge!

NS Madhavan’s refusal in “Higuita” to take into account the question of language and Chandumenon’s insistence in Indulekha on the otherness of the other, foreclose the possibility of the other pervading the narratives. But in Sinderby’s The Jewel of Malabar, its popular format allows for the other to be glimpsed as the structure of the self-same. Maybe, minor readings of major texts as well as minoritization of the genre of literature itself, whereby the aesthetic is nudged from the security of its self-valourization, might open up the urgent questions of class, caste, gender and community in contemporary India.