CHAPTER 5

THE CLOSURE OF REPRESENTATION IN THE DEATH OF SARDAR GOPALAKRISHNAN

We shall now recapitulate the way we have proceeded with the thesis so far. We began with the analysis of a political death, read as a mythological motif. In our introduction to the thesis, we saw the political and legal importance or aspects of the social fact of martyrdom, vis-à-vis, the Constitution of India. In the first chapter, we discussed the historic aspects of this relationship between death and its symbolism, in relation to the Indian State and its Constitution. In the second, we discussed its morphology, reflecting on the various kinds of social groups and associations and their respective role allocations in the area of our study-Nattika firka- vis-à-vis the dynamics of the fact. In the third chapter we demarcated the realm of imagination that creates the space for the ritualistic staging of martyrdom on every anniversary of Sardar’s death. In the process, we also located the ritual in the general economy of the region of our study; before and after the Land Reforms in the state of Kerala, before and after the formation of the State of Kerala, and how the ritual is associated in the various forms of its narrative with the formation of a local, mythical sense of identity. In the fourth chapter we explored the aesthetic dimensions of the fact; and the four distinctive genres in which the fact allows for its representation, namely, magic, myth, theater and the novel. In this chapter, we shall elaborate the aspects of ritual and popular consciousness- and try to answer the contradictions that underlie the martyrdom rites. Why does it challenge and at the same time accept the Indian Republic, why is it a locally enacted form of theater when its signification is patently national, why is it at the same instance a ritual, yet holds space for the individual and his/ her articulations, and last but not the least, why does it seek to represent a life in dramatic form when it simultaneously seeks its closure? There is the question also, of
what is the politics of this martyrdom, whether it goes beyond what the Communist movement has espoused for it?

The Shaman as an Amnesic

In answering these questions, our basis, will be the responses of Sankaran and Narayani, husband and wife, from the village of Kaipamangalom, in the firka, understood in the light of the critique of colonial psyche, espoused in the work of Michael Taussig on Colombian Shamanism (1987). Michael Taussig’s work on the Putumayo shamans of Columbia, harbingers the concept of dialectical imagery from Walter Benjamin in understanding the ritual processes associated with shamanism. Taussig says, “The connection between history and memory here (in shamanic flights or trances) invoked would seem to have little in common with the historicist view of events unfolding progressively over time. On the contrary, we are startled by an image from the past, a magically empowered image flashing forth in a moment of danger—bringing to mind those lines of Walter Benjamin written in his moment of danger facing the conflation of Fascism and Stalin: “The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and never seen again........Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger”. In which event, then, historical materialism bears an unexpected kinship not only with shamanism, in its colonized form, but with history as sorcery”(ibid:367). Taussig tries to show the power of the shamanic repertorie of images pertaining to the events in the conquest and colonizan of the Putumayo river basin by the Spanish and Portuguese invaders during the time known as ‘the Putumayo rubber boom’. The colonization had led to enormous loss of lives and even extinction of many Indian tribes. In his study Taussig shows, how, the Putumayo shamans in the practice of sorcery, still retain the history of this conquest “objectified.................as magically empowered imagery capable of causing as well as relieving misfortune” (ibid: 367).
Sankaran is known to be amnesic and demented to his neighbours. In the process of field-work, this was how he was often described. Narayani, his wife, repeatedly lamented this fact, in her discourse on their past (both as a family affected by police brutality, and as lower castes; untouchables). Sardar's loss of life is a specific instance, but as a community, the Harijans, bore the brunt of police brutality and violence, that emerged out of the political situation from the decision of the CPI to engineer the final revolution in India on the lines of the October Revolution in Russia, 1917. Sankaran, reportedly, is a living martyr, who sustained severe injuries from torture in the police lock-up, that rendered him invalid, and the state of mind that he is right now in. The reported stories aside, our dialogues with Sankaran revealed a unique facet of the village psyche, that immortalizes itself or at least seeks to do so, by making use of characters like Sankaran as repositories of chaotic and anarchic stages of its past. This studied seclusion, and its legitimization in the name of psychological illness, allows for its refinement of the present, and its representation, as an entity detached from its past. Sankaran is not kept under confinement, because he does not bring harm to anyone, and is allowed to mix freely in the public, often winning perks from patrons of the Left, for tea, snacks and beedi. The good-will or the charity, that it represents, is limited in that it is non-reciprocative, and because nobody wants to talk to him. Moving around the village precincts, with a smiling face, Sankaran has the cogency of a shamanic character, that in fact wins for him this respect, in the village, even though, his family and his friends, would rather label him as amnesic than shamanic. In order to invoke the latter traits, one has to induce him to speak. In a characteristic fusion of events and facts, out-stepping a chronological sequencing of time, he unraveled the social history of the place, in all severity of its contradictions, its ebbs and flows, its highs and lows, its crests and troughs, deploying such imageries, and powerful metaphors, that it transcends the linguistic ordering of space and time, and becomes a shamanic flight transporting the listener to a time, to see for oneself, with his/her historic imagination, the truth that lay hidden amidst the anarchy of facts and events. The world that exists before Sankaran is a world of cruel necessity. It has no referential points in historic time. It has its symbols, with which Sankaran scripts the
theater of every day life. Being removed from engaging in any income-generating activity, he is also outside, the ‘restricted economy’ of accumulation. The police beatings had ensured that he would not return to the only profitable trade he knew, coconut climbing. He exists as *le parte maudite* or ‘the accursed share’ (Bataille, 1991) within the general economy of the place. The accursed share, is that share of a community’s produce, that has to be profitlessly consumed. All archaic societies offered them to the gods. This offering according to Bataille (1991), formed the sacrifice in these societies, even though the accumulative ethos of Capitalist societies seek recourse to war to consume their surplus (ibid:23-26).

In the restricted economy of the village, that is involved with the process of production for accumulation, Sankaran does not have any role. The fact that Sankaran was a politically conscious citizen who participated in one of the intense political struggles of the region is taken for granted by the people. His amnesia coupled with the occasional states of dementia is constructed for the needs of a temporality that is very specific to the region and its imagined past. The latter is an ideology that is perpetrated in the form of truth, order their day-to-day lives and sustains the sphere of accumulation. The present according to their imagination comprehends truth and history in such a way that Sankaran, the amnesic cannot. Even though he can dispense with the routine of his life without the help of another person and participate in the social life like a normal person; his inner turmoil is taken for granted and is considered as dementia or/and amnesia (to put it short, he is not of sound mind). This allows their conception of time to shut down its openings to the past while maintaining a soft oblivion that necessarily hangs a ritualistic veneer of truth in the form of the martyrdom of Sardar and the sufferings of Sankaran.

But, being a witness to the sacrifice of Gopalakrishnan, and having participated in the rally that took Sardar’s life, he represents the archetype of the sorcerer or the shaman, who has clues to the riddles of a community’s past, locked away in oblivion, but resurfaces with the potentials or possibility of bringing psychic illnesses to the fore. The shamanic effect is subdued because of the community’s picturization of Sankaran as an amnesic. But, he enjoys an inviolable space of wisdom and sovereignty, within
his family as well as community, that is characteristic of a sorcerer, because of his experiences gained from participating in the most intensive periods of change known to them, in their recent past.

During certain flights of his dementia, Sankaran reportedly was found missing from his village premises, yet spending his time alone at the place where Sardar was buried. Such an occurrence has given reason for his family members to assume that he gets possessed, by the memories of his own past along with the memories of Sardar.

Paul Radin has made the observation that the class of sorcerers and priests have a psychopathological origin (Eliade, 1964:26). If Sankaran was merely any amnesic he would not get the kind of respect that he gets in the village and his family. It is his association with the village's past, as observed earlier, that makes him special. Therefore, his dementia also is observed in a divine light. It is not possession of anything, but of the revolting memories of a past, that in itself is held to be special. Sankaran therefore enjoys a shamanic presence in the village. Besides, the terms dementia or amnesia themselves are hardly used in the village discourse, and the illness, is spoken of as merely loss of memory. People never felt the need for any treatment, instead regarded it with a certain kind of awe. That is why effectively, even though not in the least nominally, Sankaran enjoys the role of a shaman.

For example, Sankaran’s wife, spoke of the rally led by Sardar, with graphic details given to her by her husband. In reporting thus, Narayani, Sankaran’s wife, was also attaining a specialty, of being a part of a larger sense of community, than she would otherwise belong to. It is this sense of collectivity, underlying Sankaran’s memory, which memory is often represented as loss of memory, that brings Sankaran’s persona closest to that of a shaman.

Michael Taussig’s treatise on shamanism, analyses the incompatibility of the colonizing -missionizing Christianity, with the belief of the Indians, and the resistance of the Shamans, in getting absorbed into the colonizing mould. He cites many a missionary’s report or journal to show how they recognized in the shamans the primary threat to the colonizing Spaniards.
Evans-Pritchard notes how the British-Egyptian administrators of Sudan, chose the priests or the the 'leopard-skin sorcerers' of the Nuer as their representatives and chiefs in the Nuer villages of interior Sudan, in the process of integrating them into the colonial fold of administration (Evans-Pritchard, 1956). The collective leadership as a role assigned to the shamans adds significant changes to the perception of Sankaran's role in his village. Sankaran retains the influences of his past in every day life, in a shamanic way, it will have to be said. He reflects, the past of the village, in a mythical fashion, in a way that only, he can. It is in this that Sankaran is situated outside the routine language of quotidian life, and that he has the power of visualizing truth outside language. What appears quotidian for others, is a theater of living, for Sankaran, that is necessarily and rigorously scripted every day. The language of Sankaran's representation is the language of Artaud's theater of cruelty. A language that breaks open the conventions of language and the signifying function of signs through its chaotic mingling of danger and humour, liberating signs that brings us ever closer to chaos. It was to what he called "an infinite perspective of conflicts" that this theater of cruelty was directed. Taussig (1987) gives anthropology a new perspective in applying the central/cardinal concepts of theater of cruelty for the study of the Putumayo shamanism and their Yage nights or exorcism rituals of shamanic flights and trances. For the villagers of Kaipamangalom and neighbourhood, where he (Sankaran) is known, he represents Artaud's notions of the dramatist of a theater of cruelty (ibid:442); that prophesies to the people the immediacy of an anarchic past, that lacked all the order and certainty that rule their lives today, but, from which they gratifyingly derive the current order of their lives. In bringing back the picture of necessity and rigour that life fundamentally demands, it is that he (Sankaran) succeeds as a shaman; which picture of reality alone is capable of taking the audience back to the heart of nature, ever closer to chaos, and open up an infinite conflict of perspectives according to Artaud (ibid: 442).

As mentioned earlier, it is a certain historicity; a certain periodicity relating to Sankran's amnesia that makes him different from any other amnesic or mentally unsound person in the village. Let us see some of Sankaran's observations on the
martyrdom of Gopalakrishnan and the politics of this period (1948-52) in which he took active part.

In the course of our conversations, he became vocal about his arrest, that came roughly an year after the death of Sardar. The terror unleashed by the police on the villagers was ebbing. Sankaran was in Edamuttom village; hanging around the temple premises participating in the festivities of pooyam for the lord Subramanyan. Suddenly, a group of policemen appeared as if from nowhere, caught him by the neck and forcibly dragged him towards a jeep that was waiting. They flung him inside the jeep headlong after pushing him on the ground and nailed him to the floor of the jeep with their boots. He was kept in the sub-jail at Chavakkadu for almost three months and eventually let free. No proceedings of law followed; no hearings; no judgements, and no punishments. Finally, as Sankaran recalls it today, there was only torture; and of such an order that it rendered him invalid. Sankaran never once said that it was the police beatings that turned him invalid and put him off any profitable occupation. It was Narayani, his wife who reported on the deterioration of his health, that began since his return from the sub-jail in Chavakkadu. Sankaran as such had no sequential ordering of events pertaining to his life, nor to anyone else’s. His speech, though incoherent, still had a smattering of powerful images that comprehended the social history of the place very concisely. Thus in a moment of powerful expression, he mentioned how after his release from the jail, he worked at a local movie hall, punching the tickets. There he met the owner of the hall, who wore khaki shorts and was incontinent. This was in the same breath as he was talking about the struggles of the Communists and highlighted their suffering. By putting in the same breath such diverse imageries as suffering and incontinence, the Communists and khaki shorts (the insignia of the RSS), Sankaran showed us a glimpse of the shamanic repertoire of his imageries, that makes his amnesia venerable, if not; at times, desirable in his locality.
The Shaman and The Theater of Cruelty

Narayani, his wife was mostly in tears, while explaining to me how her husband was rendered invalid, because of the injuries sustained by him after he was taken into the police custody in January, 1951. It must have been a shock to him. A coconut climber by occupation, he could not resume his traditional means of livelihood, ever since. He tried his hand at punching tickets for the movies at a nearby talkies, but did not last long. With the birth of two children - a boy and a girl - life was changed for Sankaran and Narayani. Today, with the children grown to maturity and fending for themselves, the tears of Narayani speak more for joy than agony. As for herself, she (Narayani) still continues with the job of brokering marriage alliances, the remuneration from which is, even though arbitrary and marginal has helped the family see through its critical stages of penury.

Narayani while remembering Sardar, kept repeating how vacant, the idea of Human Rights, those days¹. She recollected comprehensively, the political agenda of the Communists in those days - a three point agenda included, which included, the right to wear a formal dress, irrespective of caste, or wear a piece of white cloth washed with soap, (the Harijan had no Rights to any of these), ten cents of land apiece along with a ‘black’ cow for the land-less, and the right to enter the sanctum sanctorum of the temples. Narayani’s moving description continued, which said, the Harijan were only allowed to stand outside the wall of the temple and call the embranthiri - one of the upper castes of Kerala, a Brahmin priest - and tell him to fetch the box for offerings in the form of coins, so that they could make their offerings to the deity in which they

¹Associations of this kind become important for understanding situations of humanity free from the conventional norms of its definition - as in religion, ideology or science. George Bataille (1993) argues that feelings such as vertigo, experiences of joy through tears, happiness that can bring sudden death, the altered state of perceptions during drunken ecstasy etc., are experiences of transgression of reason (ibid:210-11). The human mind rises above the given rule of prohibitions that govern its thought into the formation of a collectivity and reflects back on itself and the moment it broke away from the collective or as Bataille puts it, it’s moment of ‘rupture’(ibid:203).
believed no less than anyone else, even though they were always kept at a far remove from the deity's premises and were never allowed to go near.

Sankaran continuing in his strain of shamanic wisdom said how Communism ironed out all differences in the society in those days, which made Communists like Sankaran, who were hiding from the police, the most wanted enemies of the police. Sankaran affirmed, there was no personal vendetta involved in the police hunt for the Communists. The mere fact that someone pointed you out to the police as a Communist was enough to turn their stakes on you.

Now, coming back to the question of representation in 'theater of cruelty' and the phenomenon of sacrifice/martyrdom in the light of the 'dementia' afflicting Sankaran. Sankaran represented the end of all information. "You will not get any information out of him. You better not waste your time", was one of the repeated statements that both Narayani and her daughter kept giving me, in the beginning when I went to meet Sankaran at his house. His wife, Narayani was often using the pronoun "it", in most places instead of "him", when it came to occasions like these. In an era of globalization when the world is getting integrated as a village, this blockade of information can virtuoso represent a Fascistic tendency in not just Narayani, but, the village and firka to which she belongs at large. But, in fact it is not so. What Sankaran represents is in fact a phenomenal 'closure of representation' of the social fact of martyrdom/ sacrifice. It is Derrida who observes that Antonin Artaud's notion of the theater of cruelty stands for the closure of representation. The point when the rigour and necessity of life, shuts out all impulses of mimetic desire, that forms the foundation of society, its stamp-bearer, and the grammatical rules of language as representation loses its communicative relevance; that is the point when a discourse of this nature arises.

The example of Sankaran, points to the fact that the people of firka are not prepared to share the guilt of the martyrdom of Sardar and commemorate it as 'collective neurosis'. On the other hand, they have made it into distinct narratives of the arrival of modernity into the firka and thus transformed it into an arena of thick interpretations.
without any recognition of the Law. For example, one of my respondents told me, the Government felt the need for repairing the Tippu Sultan Road (that more or less pierced through the heart of the firka) and make it properly navigable for all kinds of vehicles only after the death of Sardar, and the clash on the First Republic Day. According to him, the authorities were awakened to the necessity of keeping the region under insulation from its potential lawlessness only following the events of the First Republic Day.

It is an interesting example of community development that we see in the narratives and the rituals that bind the social fact of martyrdom. It is in the conquest of dementia or possession that the total social fact arrives at its truest self. The awareness of self or the sense of identity fostered by the fact is only the sediment of healing attained through the process of narrating or performing the fact. Sankaran is the frontier of this consciousness, because sometimes during his dementia he is said to have walked towards the spot where Sardar was buried and spent hours together without telling anyone, when his family and neighbours were panicking to find him. Self-less representation of the Other, is the hallmark of this consciousness, and Sankaran certainly represents the frontier of this consciousness, because in accessing the true nature of his possession, language fails and announces the closure of representation. Sankaran never communicates to anyone the experiences of his states of dementia. The only clear embodiment of memory that is left for the family and neighbourhood is the time Sankaran spends at Sardar's grave. This is one of the reasons for the strength of representation in the rituals of martyrdom on the January 26th. The reason that it (the ritual) assumes within itself the necessary and rigorous closure of representation; with an immanent passion. This is the space of healing; so much as it can be the space of death. It is through individuated utterances of pains and desires (narratives of the martyrdom) that the choice of life and death is made in this space. And it is merely through the act of living or dying itself that the closure of representation is transgressed, and the basic signifiers of this transgression is the act of life or death itself.
The memorial columns built for the martyr, discussed earlier, that constitute virtual theaters of worship\(^2\) and take the place of proscenium or stage for the spectacle of the ritual, are of little significance in the individual narratives of the heteroglossia of ideologies of nationalism that is spawned by the consciousness of martyrdom. Martyr is not the hero here; but, the author of the polyphonic novel in the form of which this consciousness is raised and shared. There are only two parties to this consciousness-the martyr as the author and the individual as the hero with his ideological malediction that represents a modernist disenchantment with the spectacle of the ritual. This consciousness in its polyphonic representation articulates the aesthetic genre of the novel. And novel as an aesthetic genre, represents also a disenchantment with the spectacle. Roland Barthes wrote in a structuralist essay on, the novel, 'The Story of the Eye' by Georges Bataille that the eye is toppled from its privileged place in the social hierarchy to be linked instead with objects and functions more normally associated with "baser" human behaviour (Jay (in) Taylor, 1994: 178).

The two major representations—as an aspect of the consciousness and as an aspect of the ritual in its manifest forms of magic, myth and social drama (theater)—of Sardar's death weave into each other. The result is the production of a harmonious representation of the life of a citizen who the inhabitants of Nattika believe was sacrificed at the altar of the Indian Republic while marking its birth. The very idea of the birth of a Republic is associated with the idea of a citizen and the birth of a martyr. But, in using tragedy as the defining characteristic of this fact, the firka of Nattika is announcing the closure of representing its political identity within the Union, for at least that one day. We shall deal at greater length with the closure of representation, later, although we saw one very illustrative example of it in Sankaran's 'dementia'. Before that, we have to understand what we mean by tragedy itself, because of the intrinsic association of dementia with god Dionysus in Greek myths, the dithyrambs

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\(^2\) Discussed in chapter 3, how the memorial pillar for the memory of Sardar at the junction in the village of Edamultom and the flag post at his burial spot on the beach near the coast of the Arabian sea in the village of Valappadu, become distinct temples of worship similar to the annual festivals in the region for the various deities in the temples and churches, mosques and other religious institutions in the villages of the firka, every year.
sung at whose cultic rites for which god also represent the ‘birth of tragedy’ according to Nietzsche (1993).

**Violence and Ritual**

Before moving on to tragedy as the essence of all representations, there is one important aspect that has to be sufficiently accounted for - violence. In the instance of our study, it is only through aptly contextualizing violence, that we can arrive at the origins of tragedy and the question of representation; the selfless representation of the other, the very basis of mimetic desire/impulse that according to Rene Girard lies at the root of ritual which has only one goal - the sacrifice of the surrogate victim. Ritual, in turn forms the foundation for all great institutions of mankind - both religious and secular (Girard, 1988 : 306-307)

Rene Girard (1988), contextualizes violence not in the disastrous dimensions of the modern arsenal of weaponry developed by the industrialized nations as their final means of conflict resolution; but, in its generative dimensions. Violence necessarily roots itself as a primordial signifying force and hence arrives pre-eminently at the scene of every ritual and forms the basis of community formation.

As an example here may be noted the ritual significance and hence meaningful import the Tupinamba Indians of northwest Brazil, gave to war. Amongst these tribes, a perpetual agreement reigned not to agree; so that, a permanent state of war was maintained. The express purpose was the provision of victims for ritual cannibalism and the number of captives on either side had to be more or less equal in order to constitute a more or less reciprocal exchange (Girard, 1988 :278-279).

Violence plays an important part in portraying the spectacle of Sardar’s sacrifice. In its narrative descriptions, Sardar’s story articulates the images of a human sacrifice as well as a supernatural violence. “The extreme form of power is All against One, the extreme form of violence is One against All........Moreover, nothing, as we shall see, is more common than the combination of violence and power, nothing less
frequent than to find them in their pure and therefore extreme form”, wrote Hannah Arendt (1970: 47).

It was a textbook instance of this violence that one sees in these descriptions of the death of Sardar. It was a unique expression of fury at its fiercest and purest form that people saw according to witness’ narratives. It was a total contrast to the vulnerable human condition that faced aghast a leviathan, in the form of the police. And the day the 26th of January 1950, was a day when the superiority of the Government was absolute, where “power corresponds to the human ability to act in concert”(Arendt, 1970:43). In the terms of Hannah Arendt in her discussion of the ineluctability of violence in resolving social matters, it was a quintessential stand-off of power against violence when the rally led by Sardar confronted the police led by Mr. Nambiar, the Inspector of Police. By some design3 which is by now a well-known secret, all over Nattika, Sardar who was chosen to lead the rally was the only one to remain to fight the police till the last. The end was pre-meditated. Violence was only a means to expedite it.

This two-dimensionality of the role played by violence in the fact of our study, makes it an interesting phenomenon in gaining insight into the characters that make the lives of people memorable in a democratic country; where the meaning given to violence is not derived from the balance of powers derived from the Cold War legacy of the MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction). To such a backdrop, human beings’ innate capability to power even as means of self defence stands meaningless and invalidated. There is a certain dehumanization of power and its concentration within an ordered; rational realm of structures, that is far removed from the ritual context in which the concepts assume a performative meaning. Because, in the representations of martyrdom/sacrifice of Gopalakrishnan, violence appears in its extreme form, as one against all, and likewise, power too appears in its extreme form, of all against one, it should not be taken to mean that violence and power are mutually exclusive. If

3 The virtual courting arrest of K.S. Nair and T.K. Raman, two days before the rally, is the alleged design, by which Sardar was chosen to be thrown into the cauldron of confronting the police on the 26th January.
violence implies resistance, then resistance also implies power. Because, as we read in Nietzsche, power is the happiness that resistance is overcome (Nietzsche, 2000:4). It is in a mutual complementarity of the two conceptualizations, that the democratic ethos sustains its vibrancy. Death is incidental. It can come in many ways; more than one. It is within the chaotic variance of life and death of the species that human beings define the life of an individual; and hence his biography- the time period of his life, the historic, sociological and the cultural milieu that binds a narrative. In our country which ideally practices and cherishes the ideals of democracy, this chaotic variance with which life and death encounter each other, has been more often than not made into tales of heroism. This is not so with distinguished lives alone. This is one basic point that appears clearly from our understanding the phenomenon of martyrdom/sacrifice. Every narrative that emerges out of this chaos does so with the distinctive stamp of heroism that is peculiar to himself/herself. This is a celebration of the idea of the individual, that is characteristic to the democratic ethos of our country. The collective spawns a secret and the individual dispels the secret through distinctively tragic narratives of pain (an inalienable factor in all the narrative accounts, except Sankaran, who appeared to be undermining it by parodying it) and individuation.

The collective and the individual are two ways of representing the chaos. An instance of death heightened to the multiple levels of representation as seen in the phenomenon of martyrdom/ sacrifice, or as seen in the heteroglossia of individual lives defined within the paradigmatic backdrop of dialogic imagination is a pointer to the vibrancy of this chaos. The sustainability of this chaos depends on its vibrancy. The vibrancy that forms its life-force is derived from its ability to relate to the present state of our nationhood. Through its multitudinous ways of representation it is defining and redefining our nationhood at the distinctive stages of its growth and development. This chaos does not enter into books of history; nonetheless retains a specific genre of historicity. Without such historicity; which is the product of a ritualistic sovereignty our nationhood becomes a meaningless signifier. It is in the form of a signifier enriched by the meaning of ritualistic sovereignty, that it enters an order of abstraction.
pertinent to the narratives of the lives of the people in the Nattika firka. Without the guarantor —role of the martyr; the tragic symbol of a satyr that binds the signifier of Nationhood with its informing idea of Republicanism in a ritualistic way, sovereignty and social equality in terms of opportunity, that lives through these representations—both collective and individual, would be meaningless terms confined to the pages of the Constitution; and that too the World's largest. But, for the potential of this image of the satyr, the chaos would be lost to a utilitarian ethic of appropriating collective spaces for meeting the demand of 'possessive individualism'. But, for the cultic nature of its commemorating martyrdom and celebrating the ideal of sovereignty, as subjective sovereignty dispersed through a polyphony of heroic voices, our Nationhood, in the firka has the potentials to move towards an insensitivity abjuring the ideological roots of the other; thus confining the idea of the individual within the private realm of his/her own private desires restricted through the specific intent of progressive accumulation of wealth. But, for the pre-eminence of the ritual, a secret can take its place (the death of Sardar being an unproven fact, according to the Law).

As a secret, this social fact of the legally unproven fact of Gopalakrishnan's death can give a supranatural and phantasmic power for the individual citizen of the firka to satiate his/her opportunistic desire. It can occupy overwhelmingly the space assigned for the multicultural representation of desire that the heteroglossia or the collective genres of representation like the magic, myth or theater itself aims to stand for.

It is not that the accumulative logic of the Capitalist economy has made its presence, either. The spot of the martyr's burial, today is thus an amusement park in the making. It is a favorite spot for videographers who film the newly married against the scenic back drop of the sea and coconut groves. It is the site of nostalgic return through family albums. It is a location for the shooting of a film, and a Tamil one at that, bearing the vaguest of all titles, 'Rajasthan'. The ritual of martyrdom rises coherently at one pole, and the secret desire of accumulation proliferates as a spectacle at the other pole, little aware of the past that lay beneath the scenario, the spectacle, they want to possess in order to sell. Conspicuous individual consumption of the private citizen, as opposed to ritualistic profitless consumption of a community. To the
anatomy of the secret we shall return soon, but, first let us finish with the study of chaos inherent to all representations of his death.

In fact, it is a sign of its cosmopolitanism. The stories relating to Sardar has this essential nature to them. All the stories are ruled by a persistent degree of chaos that alone gives his martyrdom a secular and democratic tone that is distinct from other deaths due to political clashes in the region. Although his death be an unproven fact, legally, the overwhelming legitimacy that the Communist movement enjoys in the social history of the place, has ensured that this fact, as a symbolic motif is not exploited by the politicians of the Right. Here Right has to be taken to mean the combination of parties trying to revive ‘Hindutva’ as a political ideology, like the BJP, for instance.

In order to make the different strains of this chaos discernible, it is essential to give that chaos a cognitive primacy regarding the event(s) that has/have originated the chaos. Giving cognitive primacy to these events means looking at the events narrated in relation to the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan in a comprehensive frame of relationships, by which every event relates to the next and gets consumed in the process. If, K.S.Nair and T.K.Raman are portrayed as leaders who betrayed the rally of the Communists’ on the 26th of January, 1950; such portrayal begins and ends here. Their engagements with the political and social life of the people elsewhere, in the State are beyond the judgement of the vantage point gained by the natives of Nattika through Sardar’s martyrdom. The two leaders are no more today, and even if they were alive their voices on the fact of Gopalakrishnan’s death, will not amount to a testimony of their or for that matter, anyone’s innocence, with regard to the responsibility of his death. The same goes for the two living witnesses to Gopalakrishnan’s death in police custody. This is so, because every account of his life, becomes a short piece on the social history of the place, fulfilled in and by itself, without engaging with the meta-narratives of nationalism, socialism, communism, or any other ‘ism’, as ideologies of progress, reform and enlightenment and most important of all, the meta-narrative of the Indian judicature, that given the nature of
the incident may want to take a retrospective interest in it, comprehend and further apprehend, the event within the judiciary’s definition of legality and criminality.

The axis that orientates these events into a singular narrative fashions its consummation through the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan. The mention of Sardar's name excites ideas of death simultaneous with a joyful urge to narrative that spins off from an axis of "overdetermination" adjudicated by the finiteness of death. My dialogues with Sankaran, were very good examples of this. "Sardar, .......Sardar used to come here, sleep over there (pointing to the attic).....stayed here hiding from the police, many times"; Sankaran’s references have no objective value. The house he is talking about, is long lost to him and his family. But, for Sankaran, talking about Sardar is like everything has remained the same; an eternal return to joy and youthfulness. This narrative of death is in fact a transgression\(^4\) of death; or the fear of death, interspersed with a peculiar genre of heroism that can; may (not should be) be considered a specific genre of democratic articulation.

This chaos is but far from the genre of constitutional democracy with its popular assemblies with elected representatives. Nonetheless it’s democratic underpinnings are far from negligible. The spectacle it quite portently displays on the Republic day itself is a remarkable sign of this. Nietzsche’s remarks on the origin of tragedy amongst the Greek is worth considering here, for the reasons of political enlightenment and norms of constitutional democracy that is both assigned to and derived from ancient Greece as the founding traits of “classical-western civilization”.

\(^4\) Georges Bataille(1993) classifies the realm of prohibitions on human behaviour or the realm of rules divides their objects into three areas- those concerning human dejecta, sexuality and death. Accordingly, there are prescribed manner of regulating human behaviour with regard to the three areas in all cultures. The avoidance of filth(concepts of purity and impurity), of incestuous union (concepts of kindred and allied or us and them), of taking life(concepts of self and other) are the concomitant variations of the prohibitions(ibid:61-79).It is in this realm of prohibitions that the concept of transgression assumes meaning. A festival is such an occasion where all prohibitions are transgressed. A moment for unleashing the animality lying repressed within human beings(ibid:89). All cultures had its festivals. In primitive cultures, the festivals provided occasions of ritual licence where all fears instilled by the horror of death shall be overcome in a sovereign way, that the “excess consecrates and completes an order of things based on rules”(ibid:90). It is in this primordial form of transgression that we locate the genre of the narratives compiled on the death of Gopalakrishnan.
"This latter interpretation, edifying as certain politicians may find it—suggesting that the unimitable moral law of the democratic Athenians was represented in the popular chorus, always correct in its appraisal of the passionate misdeeds and extravagances of the kings—may indeed have been suggested by a phrase of Aristotle’s: it can have had no influence whatever on the original formation of tragedy, whose purely religious beginnings rule out the very idea of contrasting the populace with the nobility, as indeed they exclude the whole area of political and social concerns; but with reference to the classical form of the chorus as we know it from Aeschylus and Sophocles, we should also consider it blasphemous to speak of the idea of a presentiment of the 'constitutional representation of the people', though others have not shrunk from such sacrilege. Constitutional representation of the people was not unknown to classical polities, and it is hoped that the ancient tragedies had no presentiment of it (Nietzsche, 1993:36).

Nietzsche’s words are an answer to those who believe that the celebration of the martyrdom of Sardar Gopalakrishnan is a prop to the growth of a democratic-revolutionary politics of development in Kerala. This is what the proponents of the Communists would want us to believe; that the spectacle of the death of Sardar as reaffirmed every year through the rituals commemorating his martyrdom endorses an act of political representation— that of the progressive path of development adopted by the Communists, ever since their coming to power in the state, through parliamentary or electoral politics of legislation and representation.

They are not prepared yet to confront the chaotic content of this fact that takes to smithereens the valorized idealism with which they have covered the death of Gopalakrishnan. This chaos that attaches no particular reference to the fact that he died on the first Republic Day of India, is a universal element in the origin of the spectacle; the beginning of the ritual; that inevitably proceeds from the heart of Nature.

If at all the chaos has any concrete roots, it does not exist in the social structure of the villages; but, in the liminal phase of their lives opened up by these floods where all the
existing structure of society was leveled and the casteist or religious boundaries were transgressed in the overwhelming play of violence unleashed by Nature. Therefore, the idea that the martyrdom or sacrifice which is an ideological or cultural construction around the fact of death is only a mirror reflection of the chaos that entered their lives in the form of the storm. The representation of the storm significantly comes up only in the narratives of the heteroglossia and has no indication whatsoever of its happening in the ritual spectacle of martyrdom rites or commemoration. Still, the ritual spectacle in its specific historicity as the ‘true’ political event since the storm ascends to the stage of a new beginning represented in ‘the social drama’ of martyrdom.

Unmistakably enough, the similarities are with the Dionysiac drama of Greece that Sardar's death evokes. The birth of tragedy is split between the satyr and the chorus according to Nietzsche. The satyr imitating the God Dionysus invokes the spirit of tragedy in the chorus and together the chorus transcend evaluations or standardizations of an Apollonian-illusory reality and come to direct contact with nature. Such is the non-conformist symbolism of tragedy as Nietzsche predicates it. As Nietzsche explains,

"Perhaps we shall find a point of departure for our reflections in the claim that the satyr, that invented natural being, relates to cultural humanity as Dionysiac music relates to civilization. Of the latter, Richard Wagner says that it is annulled by music as lamplight is annulled by the light of day. In the same way, I believe, the Greek man of culture felt himself annulled in the face of the satyr chorus, and the immediate effect of Dionysiac tragedy is that state and society, the gulf separating man from man, make way for an overwhelming sense of unity that goes back to the very heart of nature. The metaphysical solace (with which, I wish to point out, every true tragedy leaves us) that whatever superficial changes may occur, life is at bottom indestructibly joyful and powerful, is given concrete form as a satyr chorus, a chorus of natural beings, living ineradicably behind all civilization, as it were, remaining the same for

5Coming in the thick of National and Social movements in 1942, and as reported in many an account during field-work, it was a turning point in the lives of the villagers, that took them to the very brink of existence
ever, regardless of the changing generations and the path of history. (Nietzsche, 1993:39 - italics added).

In order to understand, the reflection of this idea quoted above, one has to use a power of historic imagination, has to try and situate oneself in the thick of the confrontation that took place in the streets of Mathilakom village on the crucial day of 26th January, 1950. The rally of the Communists that began from a sympathizer's house in Perinjanom village, had at least 12-14 students mostly from the Perinjanom, High School, who had no fore-boding about the outcome of the rally. But, once it entered the main road (The Tippu Sultan Road, eventually National Highway 17), the curiosity and anxiety of the villagers from the side walks, shop windows and small junctions changed the entire hue of the rally. It now rose to a crescendo and touched its zenith upon nearing the police out-post at Mathilakom. Sardar was in the lead and Mohammad Younus (mentioned in Chapter 1, in the section on biographies) brought up the rear of a 52 strong rally that moved in two lines.

Towards the face of the mosque, situated at the junction in Mathilakom, the marching procession met a company of policemen marching towards them. The company was not as strong as the rally itself. The Inspector of Police was in command. They were camping in the out-post and few anticipated any confrontation of the kind that they would witness that day. Unprepared as they were, their guns were empty of bullets too.

With the police marching towards them, the volunteers felt the gravity of the situation. The people also started crowding around the rally curious to see what happens. Nobody had the faintest idea what was about to happen, still they were drawn into it like filings of iron on to a magnet. What drew them in is irrelevant. But the emptiness of feeling and an absolute state of consciousness when thinking becomes clearer than seeing, transformed the happenings before the crowd into an event which through the prism of consciousness maintains its colors through its brilliant shattering across generations. With the words nokkikkoda (watch out), it was Sardar who spliced through this nothingness and began his fight with the policemen, and those words
stood out in the spectatorial silence of a tragic drama, that unfolded, making the dumbfounded crowd mere audience. His last words, an invocation to sight; that marked him as the victim but was immortalized literally in the transformation into spectacle, that the memory of his death brings every year.

But, the coherence of the event could not subsist in the nothingness from where it emerged. It gradually substituted the nothingness with a conspiracy; a secret; that it never exposes. It represses it rather. And it is with the conspiracy that Sardar's sacrifice/martyrdom begins. About this conspiracy, later, under the title secret, we shall deal with at length.

Coming back to the role of violence in ritual, according to Girard (1988:80-85), it is violence-collective and generative- that binds the play of the ritual in its compactness and gives it the generative force necessary for the sustainability of the sacred and the continuance of the communion that partakes of the ritual in the form of various institutions- religious or secular. It is generative and its aim is not sustainability. The latter may be obtained through acts such as charity or benevolence. But, the instance of violence alone can reach out to the realm of the sacred, through the slaughter of the surrogate victim, because as Mauss and Hubert pointed out the energy released in the instance of sacrifice is far exceeding the charitable oblations of any kind (1964: 12).

We find examples of the latter in the number of beggars that line up before religious institutions and a giving of alms is demanded of the devotees as if they were exchanging through the alms, not merely the procurement of a meal or two for the beggar, but, is buying for him/herself penance from divine wrath that might visit him or herself for any guilt in their day-to-day existence. This aspect of the religion is totally alien to the cultic aspects of heroism; and especially so, that associated with the death of Gopalakrishnan. From all the accounts of the clash with the police during the

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6 Reference emerges to a secret in the story of martyrdom/sacrifice of Sradar at various levels. At the narrative level, the secret refers to the act of alleged 'betrayal' in the courting arrest of the two leaders T.K.Raman and K.S.Nair, the details of which we discussed in chapter 1. At the analytical level, the secret pertains to a realm from where the narratives emerge. The unifying realm that forms the playground for the different narratives of the death. It is this aspect that we proceed to examine further down.
rally that took his life, the aspect of violence stands singularly apart to signify the depth of energy released in his killing; transforming Communism as an ideology into a ritualistic praxis marking the affirmation of a notion of ritualistic Sovereignty; flying in the face of a Legal Sovereignty declared through the Constitution of India on the same day.

The social role of the school teacher, of the political activist, of the caring uncle, the loving brother, brother-in-law, the romantic who loved books, and set up a library in his home village; by collecting money from not just around the local villagers, but, a good portion of it from immigrant workers in Ceylon from in and around the firka, are all effaced in the instance of his murder in its popular recollection and with a certain unanimity substituted as the surrogate victim.

This pronounced effect of violence where it is produced in its mere excess and becomes an end in itself, in its generative form, may be read also in the words of Nietzsche when he wrote,

What is good?--Whatever augments the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself, in man. What is evil?--Whatever springs from weakness. What is happiness?--The feeling that power increases--that resistance is overcome(Nietzsche, 2000:4).

**Dionysus/The God of the City**

Nietzsche’s thoughts are drawn from the pains of individuation that the satyr undergoes in the Dionysiac fairs of ancient Greece. A lot of reasons contribute towards evoking the analogy of the cult of Dionysus to Sardar, in the narratives of his sacrifice. One is its agrarian nature. As opposed to the rest of the Greek pantheon that lived in the Mount Olympus, Dionysus was a wanderer. As the god of masks, Dionysus appears in many forms, but he most loves to disguise himself as a god of the city, posing as a political deity and expressing absolute power. As an eater of raw flesh, he is also believed to have upset the sacrificial system of eating cooked food,
which also edifies his subversive character. His cult had specific rites of initiation and the followers called the Bacchus, maintain a specific sense of ritualistic and secret organization amongst themselves. According to Orphic theogony (Theogony of Hesiod, its counterpart), Dionysus in his last age, appears in the guise of a child, who is lured by the Titans, with a spinning top, a devilish rhombus and a mirror, slaughtered and then devoured. In his slaughter, he is torn apart into seven pieces, his experience of differentiation; and after the ritualistic consumption of his body in the sacrificial feast of the Titans, he returns under the aegis Phanes-Metis, the primordial god of Unity, in order to return things to the beginning once again. It is Apollo, his divine counterpart, the divine Other that buries him, in the cover and sovereignty of the Dionysiac Night, the primordial power and finally becomes the Sun, the greatest of Gods him self (Eliade, 1987, Vol.4: 358-361). The comparisons of this myth with the sacrifice of Sardar himself is striking as well as illuminating. The Republic represents the Apollonian counterpart that buries his corpse, and rises to shine like the sun. But, it has no claim to total sovereignty. In fact, it has to share, nay, derive its sovereignty, from the Dionysiac Night. The Titans resemble the ideology of Communism itself, and the Soviet power, that lured the Indian Communists, with the promise of the backing of the international working class movement for the Communists' underground activities, till finally backtracking on its stance, through the publication of its support for the national bourgeoisie in the Cominform (Journal of the Third International), on the very day Sardar was to be sacrificed at the hands of the police.

The privilege of being truly possessed by Dionysus is restricted to women (ibid.360); which expresses in no uncertain terms, yet another analogy with the cult of Sardar's martyrdom in his home village, Edathiruthy. The first ever communion for the commemoration of his death, was marked by scenes of loud wailing and melancholic sloganeering, in which women took the lead as the veteran Communist Kochupennu,

7 A similar myth existed in the Sanghom past of Kerala, according to which the deity of Murukan was worshipped and ritually propitiated with the singing of the song called kalampattu. According to Kurup (1977:17) these songs were sung as exorcisms by priests of Murukan called Velan to exorcise the spirits from love-lorn girls. Kurup also maintains that the cult of Teyyam in Northern Malabar is a survival of this tradition(ibid:34).
remembered it. Yet another incident recalled by her son, a school teacher as well as an activist of the CPI(M), suggests this. In an essay commemorating his martyrdom, in a souvenir brought out in the year 2000, recalls his association with the family of Kunjikader, a teacher in the neighbourhood school, where Sardar used to visit, late in the night, calling out for Kunjikkader’s mother, “Umma” (the Moslems address their mother, likewise). Umma who was specially fond of Sardar, would keep pathiri; a traditional meal of bread prepared from rice flour by the Moslems, especially of Northern Kerala, and beef curry, covered in dishes atop the pathayam or the granary of their house. Here after the meal, he would make his bed and go to sleep. Umma asserts that Sardar saw no taboo in the consumption of beef and enjoyed his food.

‘Teyyam’ or The Man-God

One may naturally raise the question why the prominence of Grecian analogies in the definition of a native cult and why not the native analogies of the sakthi cult, especially of God Siva, who is also the Lord of the Indian equivalent of dementia, apasmara. Apasmara signifies ignorance, and in the iconic representation of Siva at the temple of Chidambaram, it lies at the feet of the dancing Siva. Siva is performing the anadathandava, the destructive dance that also paves the way for all creation. But, the crux of the myth according to the legends of the place koyilpuranam is that, it is through this dance that, Siva personifies the heights of consciousness, the very meaning of the word Chidambaram, being ‘the sky of consciousness’ (Smith, 1998: 1-20).

It is arguably a very strong proposition indeed to equate the violence in the death of Gopalakrishnan to the supernatural violence of Lord Siva from where the process of recreation of the Universe stems all over again. This belief is an essential part of the cult of Saivism as it evolved in South India during the Bhakti movement of the medieval period, and this strand of Hinduism does not rely on the Vedas or the trinity of the Brahma, Visnu and Siva to explain the process of creation and sustenance of the cosmos. Instead it is Siva that is the centre of all creation and it is from him that the
various spirits or *ganas* take birth. This is the Saiva Universe or the Nataraja Universe. This cult holds the *Saivasiddhanta* as its essential draft (ibid: 103-4). Siva is not represented in his oft-celebrated androgynous representation as the ardhanareeswara, in the *Chidambaram* temple. Paravati, nonetheless takes her place next to the dancing God, as Sivakamasundari, or in the form of Kali, in a shrine in the outskirts of the town. All pilgrimages to *Chidambaram*, end with a visit to this shrine for Kali.

The ethnography of the Ezhava temple rituals amongst the various clans in the region in fact pertinently point their adherence to this strand of Hinduism, in their temple rituals and folk songs praising their founding ancestor. One of the songs called the *thottampattu* celebrates the life of a divinity. It can be sung for any of the deities worshipped in the temple like *bahagavthy*, *veerabhadranaa, nagam* or *kutychathan* which are the deities most often celebrated. One of the deities for whom the *thottampattu* is imperatively sung in the clan temples of Ezhavas, with ritual drawings on the floor, is that of *muthappan* or the family ancestor. In a performance lasting at least three hours, often taking longer, the whole life-story of the deity is celebrated as an ordinary man, detailing his birth, his feeding, his naming, his education, his travels, and finally his tryst with the *bhagavathy* with whose blessings he laid the foundation for the particular lineage or the clan. Following the reform movements, many of the temple rituals among the Ezhavas, have been sanitized according to the demands of an enlightenment, that assumed mainly the form of English education and government jobs. Still, these songs in their verses celebrate the deities in their original pre-enlightenment milieu of worship, which included blood–offerings and the use of intoxicants including toddy. It is people belonging to the community called *velans* who perform the *thottampattu*. There are at least five singers, with alternative variation in the lead, with the progress of the song, accompanied by percussion.

One of the verses, from this song, dramatize the adolescent ancestor taking leave of his master from whose school (*kalari*), he learnt the art of reading and writing. Upon the point of his departure from his master, the disciple seeks his final word of counsel, from his master. The master replies, that the palmyra (*ezhuthola*) which is used as paper for writing is his *shakti* and the stylus (*ezhuthani*) that he uses for writing his
siva. It means that, sakthi; feminine in the form of the palmyra and siva; masculine in the form of the stylus shall guide him through his life; also implying thereby, that, being from the sub-group called thandar, amongst the Ezhavas, he shall practice and follow the art of writing. This is an archetypal representation of the life-world for any incumbent into this group of the Ezhava caste and Gopalakrishnan is no exception. According to Sarah Caldwell (1999:27), this also represents the essence of the Sakta cult, one of the fundamental unifying traits of the Malayali identity.

According to a divine text Saundarya Lahiri –sakti is the concept of divine energy in its dynamic aspect. Sakti is inseparable from Brahma. She is the creative and preservative of energy of Brahma. In this way, we find that she is the Adi-Sakti, and therefore pervades all walks of life of human beings. Although Lord Shiva is the debashish (god of all gods), Siva himself is Shava(corps) without Sakti (Jha, 1991:75-76).

According to James J. Preston(1980), the Hindu mother goddesses have different forms in the different parts of the sub-continent and also Sri Lanka. Saraswati is the symbol of learning and culture, Lakshmi represents good fortune, wealth and luxury, Kali or Durga is feared and respected. A devotee of the goddess is known as a sakta. Members of this cult cut across caste lines, though frequently devotees are from lower castes. Saktas perform precise rites with magical overtones. The unique feature of this brand of Hinduism is its “life affirming” quality. The sakta cult emphasizes total involvement with life. Nothing is excluded. Even the sexual impulse must be accepted, transformed and harmonized for one to attain spiritual realization. The fundamental idea here is that the human body is a microcosm and the universe is the macrocosm. Since the physical body is believed to be the abode of Ultimate Truth, it is the perfect instrument for the integration of the male and female principles (Preston, 1980:14).

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8 Sarah Caldwell (1999: 30), gives a similar interpretation of the two concepts given to her by the teacher of a kalaris a martial arts school, according to whom, siva appears as the sword for fighting and the shield represents the sakthi.

9 See foot note 28 to chapter1 for the mythology behind the cult. For further reference on the sakta tradition see, Agchananda Bharati (1985) The Tantric Tradition and Sir John Woodroffe(1929) Shakti and Shakta.
But, as we already saw in chapter 2, the worship practices of the clan to which Sardar belonged did/does not perform any of the ritualistic annual performances. Yet, with the progress of the social reform movements, the clan alongside the rest of the Ezhava clans felt the need for places of community organization, for which the ancestral temples of the specific clans were the primary choice. If most clans in the village revived their ancestral temples for the purpose- a process that continues even today, the case of Sardar’s own clan was an exception. Even to this day, the martyr’s clan does not hold any annual festivals or rituals at their ancestral grove (kaavu) which continues to retain its shape that it had years back when it was founded; the shape of a raised ground, upon which is placed the idol of the Goddess bhagvathy and a smaller similar plot neighbouring this, where the idol of the muthappan or the founding ancestor of the clan is placed. On ceremonial occasions, a lamp is lit before the two idols and in the absence of a permanent priest, one of the clan members themselves dons the role of the priest. This is the usual practice of worship amongst most Ezhava clans that continue to be largely poor and uneducated. In a short story, Asokan Cheruvil, a writer from the village of Kattoor neighbouring Edathiruthy, writes, about the land in the setting of the period, “every house has its own divine grove (kaavu) and training ground (kalari). Karimkutty, Theechamundy, Muthappan, Brahmarakshassu are worshipped. Early in the morning, only after lighting the ritual lamp, at every one of these deities’ idols, can the Communist leaders reach the Party Office at Trichur.” This is the nature of worship amongst the poorest of the Ezhavas; the ones who continue with the traditional occupation of toddy-tapping. The deities mentioned in the story are lower caste deities and do not belong to the savarna (or the upper caste) pantheon amongst the Hindus. The story is a comprehensive picture of the devotion with which a generation of early Communists saw Soviet Russia as a promised land and Karl Marx as a prophet.

The archetypes of Siva and Sakthi do portray to a great extent the consciousness of the lower caste peasants, as well as upper caste landlords. But, it is in the multiplicity of the lower caste deities that the peasant communities found divine solace, as it is evident from the citations of the deities in the quote above from the short story. These
deities have their own ritualistic forms of worship, the quintessential form of which can be found in the Teyyam performances of Northern Malabar. The lowliness, and lack of conspicuity or loudness in terms of staging annual festivities, in worship practices that the martyr’s clan has maintained must be attributed to the self-reflection of the caste on its migratory origins and the subsequent refusal to rise in ritualistic hierarchy by adopting worship practices of the higher castes.

This has allowed for an imaginative space of cosmopolitanism, where even Soviet Russia and Karl Marx share aspects of divinity. In the instance of Sardar, owing to his martyrdom on the Republic Day, an inherent association with the idea of Sovereignty, has taken lead over that of Communism, and hence a latent invocation of the symbol of God Dionysus, which proves immensely worthy for us also in explaining the ritualistic origins of martyrdom or sacrifice in commemorating the death of Gopalakrishnan.

The ritual performance of Teyyam lies at the root of Sardar Gopalakrishnan’s martyrdom. The cult of muthappan and bahagavathy are the two important cults that Sardar’s clan follow. They are also celebrated Teyyam deities of Northern Malabar. According to the particular folklore that celebrates the performance of the muthappan Teyyam, he was an abandoned child who was adopted by a childless couple. He grew up to be a renegade who showed much interest in palm wine, eating tabooed meat, and stealing fruits. Once when caught red-handed, his fury raged so hot that everything that he looked at turned to ashes. He was turned out of his home by his parents. He then wandered and lived at various places, the most important of which, parachilli is the place where he is celebrated every day in ritual fashion. According to Vishnu Nambuthiri (1998:116-117), this specific cult transcends distinctions of time. Whereas all the rest of the Teyyam deities are rooted in their folkloric existence through other deities of the Hindu pantheon (like Siva, Vishnu, Parvathy) or legendary characters in the local-genealogical periodization of history (like local warriors, Kathivennur Veeran for instance), or historic, like Kaavil Thekkan Polla which is a heroic Teyyam

\[\text{Kurup}(1977:16)\] has also maintained that, the cult of Teyyam has an identity with that of the Sangahm institution of hero worship.

298
commemorating the Pulaya (a lower caste) warrior who ingeniously and innovatively fought and won over the forts at Bakel and Ettikkulam for the local chieftain, Kolathiri from the occupation of the Portuguese; the Muthappan Teyyam is one that defies time sequencing of any kind. This is probably one reason why it became one of the most popular deities also elsewhere in Kerala, especially, in Southern Malabar, where at least so far as the Ezhavas go, every clan tends to identify their origin and settlement in their respective plots with the divinity of a muthappan. Its particular currency in the recent times, may be due to the specific nature of the folklore, that celebrates him as the only son of his parents, and that too born after several years of intense longing.

Bhagavathy, the other cult of the clan is also celebrated as Teyyam. With regard to Bhagavathy, we already saw, how it forms a part of the larger sakta cult, one of the basic elements of Malayali identity according to Sarah Caldwell (1998). The author has also identified strains of Moslem influence in the attire of Mutiyettu; another ritual performance for propitiating the Goddess, prevalent in Central Kerala, parts of Trichur and Cochin. But, the most interesting aspect of our study is that the two cults though largely followed by the clan, still, do not have the ritualistic regalia with which the deities are identified in the parts where they are celebrated as Mutiyettu and the Teyyam.

The cult of the Mother Goddess along with that of the founding ancestor thus formed one of the defining features of the religious universe for the martyr’s clan. This is interesting, because it helps us to draw parallels with the cult of Dionysus and Semele in ancient Greece, from the rituals for whom we shall derive our method for contextualizing the modern theater of ritual that was begun with the martyrdom of Gopalakrishnan. The coupling of the Mother Goddess and her young, heroic, protégé is a primordial and hence archetypal form of worship according to comparative mythology. James Frazer, opens his classic path-breaking study of mythology, ‘The Golden Bough’ with a description of this very archetype- that of Diana and Vibrius in Ancient Rome.
One of the major challenges that the Communists of Southern Malabar faced in the time span of 1948-52, was the absence of any deeds of courage or bravery, as opposed to Northern Malabar, where there were several incidents of the Communist raids of police stations and clashes with the police, in which many attained martyrdom. This according to Sardar’s nephew, an activist of the CPI(M), who teaches Malayalam Literature, was one of the main reasons that inspired Sardar to take up the leadership of the rally, knowing pretty well, that the act would be suicidal.

The reference to Northern Malabar, both in terms of origins of the clan, as well as in the inspiring motif in the political history of the place as defined by the martyrdom of Gopalakrishnan, shows us the ritualistic parallel with Teyyam performance, that his martyrdom commemoration.

A Teyyam is a performative ritual when man becomes God/dess. The profane rises to the realm of the sacred. It is a lower caste ritual. Only lower caste men are allowed to don the mask of the Teyyam deity and perform the ritual dance for the deity, to the accompaniment of ritual songs and drawings. When the Teyyam moves in possession of the specific God/dess for whom the adornment is made, all other men and women, irrespective of caste hierarchy are expected to offer their obeisance to the Teyyam. In the performance of the ritual itself, about fifteen different communities or castes of people are known to participate (Nambuthiri, 1998:2).

There are a host of deities for whom the Teyyam rituals are performed annually, they include the likes of Muchilottu Bhagavathy, Makka Bhagavathy, Soola Kuthary Amma, Poomaruthan Teyyam, Palottu Deivam, Kaaly Chekon, Kutty Chathan, Bhairavan, Pottan Teyyam, Vettakoru Makan, Kshetra Palan, Vayanattu Kulavan, Muthappan Deivam, Kathivanuur Veeran etc., to cite a few examples.

The transgression of caste prohibitions in the performance of the Teyyam ritual is what prompts us to draw its parallel from comparative mythology with that of the cult of Dionysus in ancient Greece, that also help us to arrive at the root of our hypothesis regarding the nature of representation, in the martyrdom rites for Gopalakrishnan, every year, on the Republic Day of India.
A nucleus of drama is an essential feature in the enactment of these rites, which is also a representation of the element of chaos inherent to our Democracy, earlier discussed. Every trace of memory that surrounds the death of Sardar is related or narrated as if the incident related to that memory is held within a proscenium. This makes the various reminiscences very fresh and suggests the effervescence of a placid, subterranean current of pathos that run through their minds; notwithstanding the chaotic variance at which it makes its representations. Within this chaos, these aphorisms in use in the language of day-to-day living, the feelings for the martyrdom of Sardar transcend the casteist, religious and political distinctions that exist in the village.

There is an essential stem of heroism coupled with all human fragilities immanent to these descriptions. Sardar is believed to have taken flight from the spot after the confrontation. But his escape was blocked by the root of a tree on which he tripped and fell, or the throw of a stick by one of the policemen that tore his calf nailing him to the ground, or a similar event. This image of the flailing God in a sacrificial strain veering to a fatal and premeditated end is a powerful metaphor in world religions as we learn from the study of comparative religions. In comparative mythology he represents the cthonic Gods who is retrieved from below the earth at the time of his festival. The cults of Adonis (Babylonia-Syria), Attis (Phrygia), Osiris (Egypt) and Dionysus in ancient Greece are examples (Frazer, 1932).

This is a characteristic boldness that lies at the annihilation of all virtues and a return to a base humanity; that becomes one with nature and transcends distinctions of good and evil in the cultic performances of all these kinds. Nietzsche marked the birth of tragedy, in this return of man to his primordial assimilation with nature. And no one, more than god Dionysus represented for him the spirit of tragedy. In a global

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11 Here we again come to Nietzsche (1993:17-18), where he says, "God as the supreme artist, amoral, recklessly creating and destroying, realizing himself indifferently in whatever he does or undoes, ridding himself by his acts of the embarrassment of his riches and the strain of his internal contradictions. Thus the world was made to appear, at every instant, as a successful solution of God's own tensions, as an ever new vision projected by that grand sufferer for whom illusion is the only possible mode of redemption". To the people of Nattika this state of self abandonment is one of the liberative spectacle or the vision that the death of Sardar evokes.
discourse, wherein the growth of democracy is located in the ancient city-states of Greece, such a comparison may only seem natural. But, the simile of Dionysus, has to fulfill its function in also reckoning with the question of representation in the death of Gopalakrishnan, the most important question that it raises in terms of how the sustenance of this ritual fifty three years into his death can contribute towards understanding the nature of conflicts happening due to identity-based politics.

The Ritual And Its Other

The striking similarities of the original spectacle of Gopalakrishnan’s death with the classical form of tragedy and its coherent representation in the ritual enactment of commemorating the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan every year on the 26th of January, the Republic Day of India is often mistaken for a romantic association with the period of revolution when the nucleus of everything Good that is seen today was conceived. We already saw how Nietzsche resisted this interpretation of tragedy. Such ideological strains, that resist the edifying interpretation of tragedy for the benefit of democracy as a form of Government arising from a ‘social contract’ but, can be found within the representations of Sardar’s death itself. It is the prevalent stories of torture wrought on the body of the martyr that upsets this interpretation. Every single hair on Sardar’s moustache was plucked by the cops while torturing him in the police station. This is one of the prevalent cliches that etch the immolation of Sardar in his death. To what extent such pain is shared amongst the people through these representations may be grasped with the aid of the concept of theater of cruelty advanced by the dramatist Antonin Artaud in France during the early twentieth century. Theater of cruelty according to Artaud, “......means a theater difficult and cruel for myself first of all. And on the level of performance, it is not the cruelty we can exercise upon each other by hacking at each other’s bodies, carving up our personal anatomies.....but the much more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us. We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theater has been created to teach us that first of all” (Stoller (in) Taylor,1994:88). According to a critic, Arataud’s
vision for theater of cruelty was inspired by pre-theatrical rituals in which powerful symbols were used for therapeutic ends (ibid: 88).

In treating the martyrdom/sacrifice as a 'theater of cruelty' we are also deriving a certain kind of historicity that lies at the bottom of the social phenomena. This historicity is not a positive historicity as in judging the epochal transformations in the process of a teleological progress. It is better to understand the meaning of the term from the historicity implied in the concept of the theater of cruelty itself. Derrida evaluates why Artaud's 'Theater of cruelty', has the value of a historic question. "A historic question not because it could be inscribed within what is called the history of theater, not because it would be epoch-making within the becoming of theatrical forms, or because it would occupy a position within the succession of models of theatrical representation. This question is historic in an absolute and radical sense. It announces the limit of representation" (Derrida, 1978:233-234). Derrida thus locates the historicity of the theater of cruelty outside the conventional norms of representation, the essential form of which is language. Such historicity can thus reach back to the pre-literate stages of human civilization.

"Thus we can distinguish the sense of cruelty as necessity and rigor. Artaud certainly invites us to think only of "rigor, implacable intention and decision," and of "irreversible and absolute determination", of "determinism," "submission to necessity", etc., under the heading of cruelty, and not necessarily of "sadism," "horror" "bloodshed" "crucified enemies", etc.................. Nevertheless, there is always a murder at the origin of cruelty, of the necessity named cruelty. And, first of all, a parricide...... In the theater as we conceive it, the text is everything. The absence of an author and his text does not abandon the stage to dereliction........ It seems indeed that where simplicity and order reign, there can be no theater nor drama, and the true theater, like poetry as well, though by other means, is born out of a kind of organized anarchy " (ibid: 239).

According to Derrida, what Artaud invites us to participate in is the limits of true representation itself and hence the end of theater itself as a form of spectacle. It is
towards a bold confrontation with nothingness that the theater of cruelty takes us. An alternate vision of totality as opposed to the ritualized enactment of theater, arrives only through this bold prestation of nothingness or the closure of representation that the theater of cruelty makes to the spectator who thus becomes the other of this nothingness or this closure of representation. The marks of torture on the deceased body of the victim for the sacrifice; the curse of death that marked the martyr as the victim that followed him as his nemesis are ‘gifts’, that give rise to a crisis of responsibility, because the counter prestations to these ‘gifts’ are unknown; are secret, if known, because they are closed to representation. This is how an initiate feels about the story of Sardar’s martyrdom or sacrifice, when he is confronted by the depth of its passion.

Let us now do a dissection of the secret- as a logical category of collective thought- to see what actually lies underneath the closure; keeping firmly in our mind that it is in search for a meaningful localization of the chaos that underpins the Indian Republic that we have taken this track.

The Secret

According to Derrida every ritual contains also its other- the secret. The ritualistic spectacle of Sardar’s (as opposed to the heteroglossia of its individuated rendition) death often betrays any full narrativity because of its nature of a secret and hence evades the essential question of representation that the fact of martyrdom/sacrifice raises -the question of representing the other. The secret as Derrida tells us, “never allows itself to be captured or covered over by the relation to the other, by being-with or by any form of “social bond”. Even if it makes them possible, it does not answer to them, it is what does not answer. No responsiveness .Shall we call this death? Death dealt? Death dealing? I see no reason not to call that life, existence, trace. And it is not the contrary”(Derrida,1995:31).

The two versions of the spectacle drawn from his death (martyrdom and sacrifice) would bind into their narratives intrepid eulogies of suffering and sacrifice at the heart
of their renderings. But, they do not affect the passion lying at the bottom of his death. Such passion that underlay his death, yet remains beyond the 'secret' behind his death. The two dominant representations of his death define this passion in a non-pathological sense, well-encapsulated within the dualistic distinctions of sensible/intelligible, passivity/spontaneity, \textit{intuitus derivatus/intuitus originarius}, etc., according to the moral law of the sacrifice or martyrdom (ibid:16).

The moral law that divides the representation of his death into the dualism of sacrifice and martyrdom; ensure the omnipresence of this secret in the stories of his death. The companionship of morality and secret is omnipresent and omnipotent to such an extent that, “There is ritual everywhere. Without it, there would be no society, no institutions, no history. Anyone can specialize in the analysis of rituals; it is not therefore a specialty” (ibid:3).

The two stories of the death of Sardar have formed their own ritual or language to define the customs or ceremonies associated with his martyrdom. These languages are specific to their own communication and refer to their inner proximity to the passion underlying a sacrifice essential to the perpetuation of these languages in their own ways. If one of these languages would speak about the kinds of torture to which Sardar was put by the police, the other would talk about the ways in which any reports of his death were hushed by even his comrades for some time after his death\textsuperscript{12}. One would talk about the pains or suffering he withstood in his struggle against the police while the other would talk about the transparency in which he saw the rest of the Communist leadership and walked towards his nemesis fully aware of it. Both the theories provide canonical affiliation to the respective axes of political and ethnic virtues that orientate them. They may all be considered specialists in the sense of ritual analysis given by

\textsuperscript{12}Ravi in a short story reveals how he and another comrade were chided by the local leadership of the CPI, for raising a red flag on Sardar’s grave on the first anniversary of his death, calling their act an act of stupidity, though adventurous, given the legal ban that continued on the CPI. It was in the year 1952, when the Party was veering towards a policy of parliamentary struggle, and in Malabar, they were preparing for the elections to the District Board of Malabar, and the provincial legislature of Madras, that the death of Sardar was retrieved from oblivion to derive a mimetic representation of his death as heroic and a momentary apotheosis granted to him as a martyr along with the Communist Party that was 'legalized'. The story is added in translation in the Appendix.
Derrida cited above, because they are well aware of the potential of the secret behind the ritual as such, and can shift their narratives from martyrdom to sacrifice or vice versa as to suit their specific articulation and in allegiance to either of the ritualistic communities they bind their commonality with. This is also done according to suit the need of the moment. If, in identification with the CPI(M), they could espouse that Sardar's sacrifice was due to a betrayal in allegiance to the CPI, they could announce the symbol of progress and the ideal of dedication that Sardar proved/s to the ranks. The element of heteroglossia is lacking in this dualistic dispersion of the discourse, that tantamounts to a theorization in a stunted polemic, and the allegiances for any coming moment is unpredictable.

The conclusion to which Derrida drives us, is that we cannot "describe or objectify the programmed development of a ritual, still less of a sacrificial offering" (ibid: 23).

Then, what is the nature of this secret that defies the kernel (let us call it 'passion') of the sacrifice? Derrida says, "it would not be a matter of an artistic or technical secret reserved for someone - or for several, such as style, ruse, the signature of talent or the mark of a genius, the know-how that is thought to be incommunicable, untransmittable, unteachable, inimitable. It would not even be a matter of that psychophysical secret, the art hidden in the depths of the human soul, of which Kant speaks in connection with the transcendental schematism, and of the imagination ......................... it would not be a question of a secret as a representation dissimulated by a conscious subject, nor, moreover, of the content of an unconscious representation, some secret mysterious motive that the moralist or the psychoanalyst might have the skill to detect, or, as they say, to de-mystify. This secret would not be even of the order of absolute subjectivity, in the rather unorthodox sense, with respect to a history of metaphysics, that Kierkegaard gave to existence and to all that resists the concept or frustrates the system, especially the Hegelian dialectic. This secret would not belong to any of the stages (aesthetic, ethical, religious a or b) that Kierkegaard distinguishes. It would be neither sacred nor profane." (ibid: 24-25). The secret belongs "no more to the private than to the public" and, "No more than religion,
can philosophy, morality, politics, or the law accept the unconditional respect of this secret” (ibid: 25).

The narrative possibilities of this secret are unlimited. “One can stop and examine a secret, make it say things, make out that there is something when there is not. One can lie, cheat, seduce by making use of it. One can play with the secret as with a simulacrum, with a lure or yet another strategy. One can cite it as an impregnable resource. One can try in this way to secure for oneself a phantasmatic power over others (take for instance the fact that his burial place lured the industry of film makers to shoot films ). That happens every day. But this very simulacrum still bears witness to a possibility which exceeds it ............ The secret never allows itself to be captured or covered over by the relation to the other, by being-with or by any form of “social bond”. Even if it makes them possible, it does not answer to them, it is what does not answer .............. even if one precisely cannot here trust any definite witness, nor even any guaranteed value to bearing witness, or, to put it another way, as the name suggests, to the history of any martyrdom. For one will never reconcile the value of a testimony with that of knowledge or of certainty-it is impossible and it ought not to be done. One will never reduce the one to the other-it is impossible and it ought not to be done.

*That remains, according to me, the absolute solitude of a passion without martyrdom.*” (ibid: 30-31).

The immense significance of Derrida’s thoughts on the nature of passion as something that is always known only in excess and the incontestable lie of the secret, owing to the fore-closure of the truth it contains before allowing it any representation lets us gain a glimpse of the competition for the extraction of reality in the midst of the stories of a death that is retold in many ways. The two main contenders to appropriate “the truth” are the theories of sacrifice and martyrdom. In their mutual contention to allay forces the death of Sardar shrouds itself in a mystic lure of passion sustaining by itself the charms of the unknown and continue to attract newer and newer generations into seeking the “truth” and “revelations” about his death. There are ever new
testimonies that appear time and again regarding the 'true' nature of his death. The people of Nattika can never be content with the number of these testimonies or so it seems. Such a mystery was only posthumously constructed in concretizing the death of the martyr and immortalizing his myth. The absolute negligence on the part of the State to acknowledge the fact of death of the martyr acted on its opposite, the social fact of death that immortalized his death through collective, abstract and impersonal representations. The institution of martyrdom assigns to the State, the role of the Other, the scrutinizing, moralizing agency of god and for society the role of the subject. The death of the martyr is taken as the death of a victim like in a sacrifice. But, a despicable scheme of treachery and connivance binds itself forbiddingly on the iconism of the martyr, that allows for an inexhaustible discourse that seeks to preserve its veracity; its objectivity through maintaining to itself a secrecy that is generic to ritual, in its conceptualization. The shroud of secrecy or mystery built around this dualistic conceptualization of death as martyrdom/sacrifice, obscures the rigorous necessity of ritual as a means of destroying the victim, which in the words of Bataille, "is surplus taken from the mass of useful wealth. And he can only be withdrawn from it in order to be consumed profitlessly, and therefore utterly destroyed. Once chosen, he is the accursed share, destined for violent consumption. But the curse tears him away from the order of things; it gives him a recognizable figure, which now radiates intimacy, anguish, the profundity of living beings" (Bataille, 1991:59).

It is the same "intimacy, anguish, profundity of living beings" that extricates the victim within the obscurity of a secret, and pulls him away from the necessity and rigour of the ritual. Does the secret, then through its omnipresence in the collective representations of Sardar's death explain the objectivity of a ritual, or to put it bluntly, is the commemoration rites of his death, merely a spectacle, that is shorn of all meaning, its resplendent charm or beauty, merely a façade for the lie lurking within as a secret? No, far from it. The secret is something that obstructs the access of the passion underlying a ritual by any means of language.

Sexuality is often mistaken for this passion in the case of Sardar Gopalakrishnan, although its importance cannot be undervalued. Many say, it was the reason for
Gopalakrishnan's untimely death. His relationships with women is a scandalous aspect on the one side (promiscuity) and incestuous(a sexual relationship with one of his own family/clan) on the other. The scandalized perspective ties it with martyrdom as a theory of his death and the incestuous one ties it with sacrifice. In either case there is no independent evaluation of his relationships with women. Very often it is even linked with heroism. This is unmistakable and true. The credibility of having made progenies in illicit relationships is a general theme of heroism that the Communists' underground movement has generated in Kerala. There are no proofs or documents of factual value that can be ascribed to this theme. But nonetheless the prevalence of such stories is undeniable. So is true with Gopalakrishnan as well. One of his claims to 'greatness' is the illegitimate children that he fathered despite his banishment from public life. This is certainly an accentuated mark of masculinity that one garners from the narratives. But its opposite end, femininity is no better than a betrayal, either. Kochupennu an elderly woman with a cherished remembrance of the memories from a vigorous resistance against power and domination, was often castigated in the talks as a mid-wife; not 'legally trained' and hence attracting a lot of reprobation and rebuke in the utterance of the very name, and considered a woman of rather loose morals. Women like Kochupennu were difficult to find from the Edathiruthy village and it was hardly surprising why. She fought for elections as early as 1952 in the elections to the District Board of Malabar, when the Communists decided to participate in the parliamentary democracy. She lost. The reasons would be not far to seek, for her being a Harijan women, uneducated and on top of that with the reputation of having illegally assisted child birth (allegedly called for in cases of illegitimate conception) the Communists' shift of policy (to contest elections) would help her little in terms of gaining respectability in the face of such castigating talk.

The general norm of sexuality was defined within the kinship relations of alliance and incest prohibition. Other forms of sexual relationships were not accepted in the village. The matriarchal alliance group prevailed amongst the Nayars as a community allowing for polyandry that necessarily escaped the exchange patterns.
among the rest of the communities. They in turn allowed for their own rules of marriage and alliances, in general accepting the hegemony of the Nairs in the village, until that was seriously challenged by the Communists. Within this space of community relations the space for a reciprocal relationship of the sexes that was opened by the radicalization of perspectives of development served to sabotage the local genius of sex. In fact the local genius of sexuality was one of the first and primary losses in the formation of the underground by the Communists for political activism. It led to the formation of an essential in-breeding that was extremely chauvinistic. It has retained an undeniable presence in the language of both Communist eulogization and parodization in the later and more recent days.

The persona of Sardar is a good example in this light. It is often cited in relation to the extreme or the border; transgressing which the event would invite the same fate that befell Sardar. Velayudhan who spoke of Sardar concluded thus, “what if all of a man’s bodily needs were taken care of …..why should he marry ,have a family or be a part of the rest”. Proceeding from here are the inklings of an isolated persona which would feature its end in the most tragic way, expiating for the sins it had invited in its departure from the normal.

The martyrdom and sacrifice both look at the martyr’s sexuality in a surrogate light that there is a specific “inducement” to talk about it. Foucault (1990) discusses the incitement to discourse that Catholic civilizations have ascribed to sexuality from the seventeenth century onward. In the instance of both these representations—as sacrifice and as martyrdom—this proposition holds true. The specific inducement to discourse is a part of the mythology that seeks to glorify and further rationalize the martyrdom of Sardar. What evolves from this sequence of narrativity—of a martyrdom (glorification), its subsequent rationalization (the sacrifice theory), is a

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13 See foot-note 129 on the *taliyettu*, the marriage ceremony for girls of the Nair community. To continue with the husband obtained through the ceremony was optional. If the girl so desired she could choose another man as her husband. The Nairs also allowed for nuptial union outside of marriage with Nambuthiri men, a practice called *sambandham* (Kumari, 1984).
subdued realm of sexuality that is subdued with the same intent of earning the right to discourse.

These are provocative aspects of life in a village where the last fifty years of the Nation’s polity tries to encompass it’s existence. Nattika thus yearns for the martyrdom of Sardar as a distinct mark of its modernity. Viewed within the paradigm of the Indian Republic, this is a brilliant example of post-modernity. That is what the spectacle arranged annually by the firka on the Republic Day goes to show. There is dissent from the Republic yet not a revolutionary one, but a subversive one; there is representation of the Republic yet not as a sovereign; but as an anarchic one; there is historicity in the acceptance of the Republic yet not in a singular nationalized narrative; but in a number of plural and localized narratives and the narratives are not modern-rational narratives about an atemporal Republic; but with a signifying force rooted in a firm periodization thus earmarking the Republic as a local entity.

Removed from the environs of phallic heroism, sought to be installed by the dualistic representation of Gopalakrishnan’s death as martyrdom and/or sacrifice, the question then rises, what is it then that helps our understanding of the ritual? The answer is- a "receptacle"; a receptacle for the many stories of sacrifice or martyrdom that spill from it. To understand the true nature of this “receptacle”, one needs to consider the essay of Derrida on Plato’s Timaeus. Two concepts central to Derrida’s understanding of the ritual are – the trace and the receptacle or the khora.

To understand what is trace we have to consider the essay, Freud and the Scene of Writing (1978, 196-232). Writing; is the opening of a trail or a trace in the unconscious. Writing is the act of staging words. It is the “scene” of writing that is so much more significant than the rules of language that seems to contain it from the position of a logos. In fact such a containment is only very vaguely said to be possible for writing because it relates to a distinct periodicity that pertains to writing so much as precedes it inside the psyche. The originary trace opened by writing lasts so long as the periodicity lasts. It is a specific act of the unconscious in making contact with the outside-real world, that we see in the scene of writing and hence it is a stage for
representations of the unconscious and hence the title of his essay, *The Scene of Writing*.

*Khora* on the other hand, finds itself in the philosophical discourse stemming from the opposition of *mythos/logos* in the philosopher's effort to understand mythology. As Derrida says, "It is well known: what Plato in the *Timaeus* designates by the name of *khora* seems to defy that "logic of noncontradiction of the philosophers" 

...............that logic "of binarity, of the yes or no." (Derrida, 1995:89). What then is *khora*? "*Khora* is not, above all not, is anything but a support or a subject which would give place by receiving or by conceiving, or indeed by letting itself be conceived." (ibid:95).

We already saw how the ‘secret’ appears as the unrequited and unreciprocated passion of the ‘gift’ made through sacrifice/martyrdom. Secret here is the other of the sacrifice or/and martyrdom ; its feminine side, that is the opposite of all that sacrifice/martyrdom stands for as lie stands to truth and as light stands to darkness. But the structural diaphragm of this dualism is not what Derrida sets out to explicate. He on the other hand is trying to arrive at the "absolute solitude of a passion without martyrdom". This intention becomes clearer once we read more about *khora*. Derrida says, quoting Plato himself, "And it is convenient to compare the receptacle to a mother, the paradigm to a father, and the intermediary nature between the two to a child" (ibid.124). At the same time, he cautions us to the simplicity of conceiving of the *khora* thus, "let us go back behind and below the assured discourse of philosophy, which proceeds by oppositions of principle and counts on the origin as a normal couple. We must go back toward a pre-origin which deprives us of this assurance and requires at the same time an impure philosophical discourse, threatened, bastard, hybrid. These traits are not negative. They do not discredit a discourse which would simply be interior to philosophy, for if it is admittedly not true, merely probable, it still tells what is necessary on the subject of necessity. The strange difficulty of this whole text (the *Timaeus*) lies indeed in the distinction between the true and necessary. The bold stroke consists here in going back behind and below the origin, or also the birth, toward a necessity which is generative nor engendered and which carries philosophy,
"precedes" (prior to the time that passes or the eternal time before history) and "receives" the effect, here the image of oppositions (intelligible and sensible) : philosophy. This necessity (khora its sur-name) seems so virginal that it does not even have the figure of a virgin any longer" (ibid: 126).

The reason why we quote Derrida at such length is because it brings out the specific nature of politics that we are studying about. It would be too presumptuous to stretch the imagination of Derrida flowing from his study of Plato and his musings on the origin myths of The Athenians in this essay to the social situation of the villages in the firka today. Nonetheless, the conceptual debunking of a mode of a mode of thought (mostly; binary) that it achieves is of no little importance in understanding the kind of politics in the firka of Nattika onwards from April of 1948 till the beginning of 1952, when the police had unleashed a witch hunt on the communists. The movement to the underground engendered the receptacle for the conception of a mythology that would exceed the limits of the dialectical philosophy in that the Communists situated their world. The arena for operations for instance would take a radical shift from the public gaze of the street corner to the kitchen yards and attics of the poorest households. This was not something anyone was prepared for. The shift would reflect with similar impact on the Communists as much as the villagers at large that the drawing of any borderlines was impossible. The sign potentials of this shift would be so huge that it would carry with it an oneirio-criticism along into the future that it would have to be told and retold in order to attain the necessary distanciation from it that alone would make life possible henceforth, and here lies the relevance of the khora in forming a receptacle for these stories, that precedes the cult of heroism which in any case was institutionalized in 1952, following the legalization of the Communist Party by the Indian Government.

The nature of this representation (of the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan) is certainly not political; but, political, legal-juridical and aesthetic all at once. It overwelms the limits of representing the Indian Republic and the law whose gift of sovereignty it transgresses, by making to it a counter-prestation, that of death within an anarchic
fusion of facts as seen in the myth, magic, spectacle or the novel and heteroglossia; in short, the aesthetics of representing his death.

What the fact of martyrdom/sacrifice summarily achieves through its representation in the various forms-historic, juridical, economic, legal, political or aesthetic, which we already discussed although not in that order--; bound together by an unquenchable thirst for tragedy; is resolving a severe contradiction in the Constitution of India, that was pointed out by Ambedkar himself and which is already quoted in the introduction to our thesis. This is the contradiction between the equality that the Constitution promises in social life; which it does not in the economic life of the citizens. In doing thus, the firka is in fact, not merely representing this contradiction but is also resolving the contradiction in its different manifestations. This representation and this resolution is but distinct from the political challenges that the Constitution of India faces in terms of its legitimacy vis-à-vis a number of political organizations that are banned in the country today for their pronouncedly anti-constitutional stances or positions. Therefore, it is impossible to draw parallels for this kind of representation with the representations of those political outfits—especially the radical Marxist-Leninist formations like the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Bihar or the Peoples War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh—that are operating in different parts of the country and hinges their political formulations on the same disparity—between the rich and the poor of economic inequality. By amalgamating traditions of cultural practices, let us call it praxis of martyrdom/sacrifice, it—the firka—crafts within the historic time ordained by the Constitution, or within the limits of the historic reality called the Democratic Republic of India seeks an absolution for the principle of sovereignty given in the Constitution, in a manner so that the legacy of this principle as they existed prior to their codification as Law, lives on. K.C. Gopalakrishnan, the martyr thence becomes an extra-constitutional source of legitimacy in his representation as the martyr, the victim, the Sardar (chieftain), maashu (teacher), the communist, the satyr, the brother, the uncle, the romantic; a hero of a carnivalesque space where people interact and celebrate their nationhood with the power of an assertion or a sovereignty that transgresses the number of divisions amongst them, that of the rich
and the poor being the most evident, and brings to light the layers of superstructure, in the Marxist problematic, that gives the country its nationhood in the form of a Democratic Republic, and in the process vaporizing the conformist notion of legislation as the ‘true’ form of democratic representation and articulation. The extent to which the protagonists of this act the people of the firka, ardently preserve the genuineness of this fact as a local, regional space of ideological contestation goes to show the negation of any singular conceptions of a Nation state; thus expressing its angst or desire for a community as an alternative to the power within which the modern nationhood of India sought to define itself on the First Republic Day of India; representing itself thus through an act of legislation; of the corpus of laws known as the Constitution. The possibility of defining our nationhood; especially its sovereignty as expressed through its avowed Republicanism as given in the Constitution does not arise merely from legislative processes but from the subtle paraphrasing to these ideals that emerge as critical exceptions in the domain of local wisdom thus offering themselves to reformulating the problematic of the sovereignty of our nationhood, in the process liberating it from the confines of the courts of law, and opening up traces for critically self-examining the platform on which our nationhood is raised. In its function as a diatribe to the ethos of the Constitution it thus endorses the critical spirit of engaging the other/the Constitution, raising from within the locale of a firka a historically extinct conglomeration of no more than fifteen villages, it seeks to diversify the best ways of democratic representation; far exceeding legislation or the implicit notion of democratic representation as the right to represent as the right to speak for the other. This it does with an overwhelming veracity by negating for itself a place in the restrictive world of electoral politics, in that the verve of tragedy underlying the ritual of sacrifice or martyrdom is a totally non-profitable exercise detached from the accumulative world of the capitalist production and processes which in fact is what the Indian Constitution sanctified according to its very architect, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.