CHAPTER 4
MYTH, MAGIC, THEATER AND NOVEL: THE AESTHETICS OF REPRESENTATION IN THE DEATH OF GOPALAKRISHNAN

The total social phenomena as defined by Mauss reveal three distinctive features that make them much more than collective or group psychology. They are -historical, morphological and statistical (Mauss, 1979: 5-11). In the first chapter of our thesis, we studied the first of these attributes. In the second chapter we saw a morphology of the two social groups that represent the death of Gopalakrishnan as martyrdom and as sacrifice. In the third chapter we saw a rather unwieldy realm of discourse centered around the twin concepts of martyrdom and sacrifice which we tried to unwrap with the help of concepts derived from texts of rather interdisciplinary concern like Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), Carl Jung (1969), Levi-Strauss (1966) Rene Girard (1988), George Bataille (1991) etc, which in effect was meant to highlight the statistical aspects of the phenomenon- the aspects of the struggle over the distribution of land in the village that the phenomenon highlighted from the perspective of a general economy as opposed to restricted economy (Bataille, 1991: 19-44). As we know, in these phenomenon, all kinds of institutions find simultaneous expression: religious, legal, moral and economic. In addition, they also reveal aesthetic types (Mauss, 1970: 1). In this chapter we shall see a realm of categories, forms or genres by which a total social phenomenon, such as a martyrdom or a sacrifice are represented. The structural laws of thought embedded in such forms as magic, myth and theater can be found in these phenomena. The unifying strand that is common to all three forms of representation- magic, myth and theater- in the context of our study is that they constitute the realm of the aesthetic of the social phenomenon of martyrdom/sacrifice. At a deeper level, they represent the emotional ambiguity pertaining to the death of Gopalakrishnan that took place at the fringe of the civil society and has thus far eluded a fixity of meaning in
terms of the Law -constitutional, civil or criminal- of the country. Inherent to the three categories as a unifying strand is also the factor of healing, which magic, myth and theater achieve through their own unique ways of resolving contradictions or synthesizing opposites.

**The Region of Magic**

Magic is a unique instance of a social phenomenon that forms a basis for individual understanding; but, has its origin in collective representation (Mauss, 1972: 144). The collective representation as we know, was a term originally coined by Durkheim to signify such aspects of the consciousness that were shared and universal (Durkheim, 1914: 22-24: 479-487). The faculty to worship and to understand the world as a cosmic unity contained in the principles of the sacred and the profane, collective representations offer a magical unity to the varied worlds of the sacred and the profane analysable through symbolism. To substantiate his thesis Durkheim examined what he called 'the elementary forms of religious life' or the religion of the 'primitives'. His study leads to the conclusion that amongst the primitives the totemic signs and symbols serve to classify Nature into distinct species of objects that are linked through specific individuals to society. Society itself, is a concept, that is *sui generis* to human consciousness and is contracted or perpetuated only through symbols. If Durkheim found the answer to the dynamic of collective representation in the totemism of primitive religions- from the tribes of North West America, Australia and Polynesia, on the ethnographies of which, Durkheim's thesis depended; Mauss saw it's epitome in magic.

Between Durkheim and Mauss there are clear distinctions on their respective understanding of magic and religion. Durkheim held that magic is separate from religion and can never be religion, because when religion is distinguished by the presence of church, magic can never have a church of its own. Magic consequently finds lesser attention than does religion in Durkheim's works.
Bordering on the mysterious, Levi-Strauss assigned to magic, the functions of the 'mana' type. *Mana* is a pure symbol having zero symbolic value. These are susceptible to the reception of any meaning whatsoever (Mauss, 1972: 4). If Mauss could introduce magic in a treatise serious in its own right, then it is thanks to his pioneering denunciation of "the insufficiency of psychology and traditional logic and to disrupt their rigid frames by revealing other forms of thought, apparently "alien to our adult European understanding" (ibid: 4).

Magic was treated as a fore-runner to science or as "primitive" science by anthropologists like Frazer (Frazer, 1932:48-60). Magic was principally opposed to religion and lacking in definition as a social phenomenon, according to Durkheim. Mauss opens a mid way and shows how magic is at once science (because of its effectiveness) and religion (due to its absolute gradient of faith- if there is no faith, there is no effectivity).

James Frazer (1932) made the mistake of identifying magic with sympathetic magic, in the unity of the laws of which he perceived a "primitive" science. He believed that, "Though these laws are certainly not formulated in so many words nor even conceived in the abstract by the savage, they are nevertheless implicitly believed by him to regulate the course of nature quite independently of human will" (ibid:19). From the bulk of instances of sympathetic magic (association of ideas by similarity) and contagious magic (association of ideas by contact), he derives the conclusion that, "the principles of association are excellent in themselves, and indeed absolutely essential to the working of the human mind. Legitimately applied, they yield science: illegitimately applied they yield magic, the bastard sister of science" (ibid:50-51). Frazer dealt with magic in total abstraction. He studied it in comparison with science and religion, as separate and distinct systems of thought, that do not mix.

But, it was Mauss who showed that magic was more than merely an exposition for laws of sympathy¹ and an instance of total social fact, that contained all social

¹ These are the laws of, 1) contiguity- part stands for the complete object, 2) similarity-like produces like and acts upon like, 3) opposition- antipathy or opposite acts on opposite (Mauss, 1972:12).
relations within it. Mauss attempts to define magic not "in terms of the structure of its rites, but by the circumstances in which these rites occur, which in turn determine the place they occupy in the totality of social customs" (Mauss, 1972:24).

While maintaining along with Frazer that the laws of sympathy and contagion articulates the rites of magic, Mauss also adds that inherent to magic are also "representations of the power of the ritual, and its methods of action" (ibid:79). Mauss thus treats the laws of magic as forms of collective representation that are unique for its own reasons. Magic is also an instance of a social phenomenon that attaches great importance to knowledge, and in so far as magic is concerned, "knowledge is power" (ibid:143). It is the only instance of a ritual where the act of simulating the whole or the collective representation is concentrated entirely in an individual.

The symbolic mediation in magic, transgresses the dualistic exchange between the realms of the profane and the sacred as it exists in religion. There can be sacrifice in magic. But it is not associated with the sacred as in religion, it is rather an aspect of the force that presupposes magic- the mana. Mana is the force behind magic, which is objectified through the rites of magic. It can be materialized in an object- tree, stone etc.,- or even a person through possession. The Magician is one who has control over this possession. Even though mana is a very singular and individual expression, its social character can never be denied.

Regarding the dynamic of power produced through magic, Mauss says, "A whole social milieu may be affected by the mere fact that a magical act is being performed at one part of it. A circle of impassioned spectators collects around the action being performed. They are brought to a halt, absorbed, hypnotized by the spectacle. They become as much actors, as spectators, in the magical performance- rather like the chorus in Greek drama" (ibid, 132).

Symbolism in magic is still best elaborated according to the laws of sympathy (Frazer, 1932). For the benefit of understanding how such an event as the death of Gopalakrishnan, may be defined as an instance of magic, it is best to examine it in the light of the laws of sympathetic magic. All laws of sympathetic magic find adequate
reflection in the phenomenon of the martyrdom/sacrifice of Sardar. The *mana* or the force of this phenomenon take possession of individuals when they contemplate his martyrdom/sacrifice. Yet, there is one distinction from the real magic in the instance of this possession. It defines itself within a realm of the aesthetic rather than the religious or the scientific. This magical force or *mana* reflects thus in the novel *Innaley* (Yesterday) that was inspired by his life, in the short story *pena paranja katha* (the story of the pen) that was written on the pen Sardar gifted to his friend before marching into death, and in a number of instances of speech where individuals inadvertently invoke such force and create an aesthetic space in the course of speech.

Once, Ravi a key informant and close associate of Gopalakrishnan was having tea at a shop in the village of Chenthappinny, a tall man in his late fifties or early sixties began talking to Ravi. They apparently knew each other well and in the course of exchanging pleasantries, told Ravi how since the loss of Sardar his life had changed. The utterance had no specific meaning that he continued to espouse; but, had a distinctive dramatic and therefore aesthetic quality about it, which we shall try to explicate with the laws of sympathetic magic.

There are two distinctive entities involved in the construction of this sympathy. They are the spirit of the republic and the spirit of the revolution. The laws of sympathetic magic help us understand the nature of aesthetics of this representation.

The spirit of the Republic as it is transformed by sympathetic magic evoked by the martyrdom of Sardar goes like this.

1) The laws of contiguity- part stands for the complete object (*Nattika firka* stands for an entire Nation, of which it actually forms only a part).

2) The laws of similarity-like produces like and acts upon like (the event of the Republic Day, (positive) produces the citizens’ rights rally (in Nattika) and engenders the spirit of the Republic – Sardar Gopalakrishnan was the first (positive) martyr (positive) of the Communists in the Republic).
3) The laws of opposition - antipathy, or opposite acts on opposite (an authoritarian state (negative) rejects (negative) the rejection of the Republic Day (negative) by the underground rebels (negative) of Nattika as the Betrayal Day).

The same laws hold good for the spirit of the revolution as well. The spirit of the revolution through the prism of sympathetic magic, appears in the following manner,

1) The laws of contiguity - part stands for the complete object (Sardar Gopalakrishnan stands for the whole of the Communist revolt in India representing all its ideological ambiguities on the first Republic Day of India),

2) The laws of similarity - like produces like and acts upon like (the victory of the revolution (positive) invokes a hero (positive) within him, producing his martyrdom (heroic; positive).

3) The laws of opposition - antipathy or opposite acts on opposite (the betrayal of the revolution (negative) invokes the victim (negative) or the passive soul within him producing his sacrifice (negative).

The ideas of republic and revolution are thus magically and congenitally subsumed in the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan thus producing a distinctive genre of aesthetic representation.

The symbolism of Magic thus wields a powerful influence on the imagination of the death of Gopalakrishnan. But the nature of magic itself is such that it cannot be organized into a shared body of knowledge or system of beliefs. Nonetheless, it has its moorings in the collective representations of a group, which is a random formation and hence distinct from religion which as a group is located around a church (Durkheim, 1914).

Apart from its magical realms, the twin interpretations of his death as sacrifice and martyrdom, also contain aspects of mythology and theater. First, we shall consider the former - i.e. mythology.
The Mythic Region

The mythic region is about a space of death of the kind that Michael Taussig talks about in his work Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man (1986), in societies where a culture of terror flourishes. A terror that transmogrifies ordinary lives into phantoms reflecting the depths of uncertainty and insecurity towards a dictatorship (Taussig is referring to the regime of Augusto Pinochet in Chile). 'The space of death is important in the creation of meaning and consciousness, nowhere more so than in societies where torture is endemic and where the culture of terror flourishes' (Taussig, 1986: 4). We already saw in Chapter 1, how the medieval society of Kerala followed diverse ways of torture in its punishment for crimes, which has paved the way for a culture of terror. Tying the criminal’s legs to two elephants and make them walk in opposite direction, thus splitting his body in halves is one of the ways described by P. Sankunni Menon in his History of Travancore (1878). Another instance quoted from Paulino Bartholomew (Voyage to East Indies, 1791) talks about the hanging of a lower caste Channar man for stealing three coconuts from the household of a higher caste Nayar, in the streets of Quilon where his hanging corpse was left for public vigilance with the three coconuts hanging round his neck. In another instance Dr. Francis Day (Land of the Perumals, 1863) talks about a most gruesome way of killing. This involved thrusting an iron rod through the anus of the convict in such a way that without killing him it pierces his body and emerges behind his neck. The rod is then tied to a wooden pole thrust into the ground and the convict is left half-hanging on to the rod with his feet barely touching the ground. Thus left to the mercy of the insects and flies pesterling his wounds and of nature (if it rains, he dies faster owing to infection) he dies helplessly without being able to help himself to even a drink of water (Balakrishnan, 1997: 156-159).

In our study of the space of death, the departure point is not the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan, but the storm-"the rain storm"-that hit Nattika in the 1940s. The devastation it caused to the lives of the people was irredeemable. There was need for a total new beginning itself. The effect of the natural fury on social relationships, and how it provided as an occasion for the tragic end and the time for a new beginning is
also given in the novel inspired by Sardar’s life, *Innaley*. “Everything is destroyed. Now, everything has to be rebuilt” *Ellam Nasichu. Eni Ellam Srishtikkanam* speaks the heroic voice of Gopi, representing the collective, overawed by the fury of nature. It is very interesting to observe that, the mansion of the landlord, serves as the refuge for the displaced and homeless. There is also a transgression of the norm of private property implied in the portrayal of the storm. “Anyone can remove anyone’s wood. Everything has combined into one” *Aarkum aarude maravum vetty edukkam. Ellam onnayi kkidappanu*, muses the hero again reflecting the collective thought.

The beginning was a stark reality where everything from the houses, the fields, the plantations had to be rebuilt. Not just that; the very survival of the villagers was staked when the government banned a traditional occupation like toddy tapping in the years following the storm. This was a grave emergency the people faced in their real lives. An inversion followed in the death of Sardar, when the loss of merely one person launched a crucial offensive in their symbolic lives -or in the fear of life after death. It took a fifty years of mourning which still continues to redeem the village psyche from such a fear. On every anniversary of his death when all over the country the people are celebrating the birth of a Republic, Nattika *firka* alone regards it as a requiem for the martyr.

Questions raised by the space of death spring up even today; they all seek one answer—sympathy and understanding. What were they to do? What could the Law redeem? What can it do today, when allegedly two witnesses to Sardar’s murder inside the lock-up still live? Will one take the initiative to rid a whole village of this ritual cycle of mourning? Will a redemption of the Law carry any meaning to the soul of the departed or the grief of the aggrieved, more than fifty years into his death? Does this silence bespeak of anything? Is that a religious silence that rewinds and occupies specified structures of the mythic in the community? Does it have a bearing only insofar as it promotes an academic intent of unraveling the functioning of the human psyche when confronted with a state of terror? Will the procedures of Law reinstate the courage in the minds of the people so that the martyr will be resurrected to make a second coming of Biblical scenes? Will such a faith in the Law erase the state of terror
from the minds of the people and help them rejoin the milling crowds on the eve of the January 26th before an illuminated Presidential arcade at Delhi, the capital scene of celebrations? Will it grind the perch of localism locked inside these memories to shreds that a new generation be born free of such fear?

It is the intensity of these contradictions that betray a genuine characterization of the martyr with all the pitfalls of an ordinary human being, that eventually leads to his valorization. These are the questions, raised by a ‘genetic phenomenology’ of the historic narratives constructed around the figure of Goapalakrishnan the martyr, as well. ‘Genetic phenomenology’, a concept introduced by Paul Ricoeur (1984), is devoted to the problematic for writing history. Historical explanation as it exists today follows either of two courses. One is an explanatory procedure that emerges from the linking of various causes and events through the framework of a law. Ricoeur calls this the covering law model. Another dominant model of historiography follows explanation by emplotment, the latter, a term borrowed from Aristotle. This involves essentially an explanation by understanding. Between the poles of explanation and understanding, the argument that Ricoeur, constructs is for the sake of ‘genetic phenomenology’, that question back to historic narrative from inside the realm of meaning that is structured by that historic knowledge. The theses of “genetic phenomenology” points to a questioning back on the generative realm of every historic narrative. The generative realm of a historic narrative has three orders of mimesis- 1) its field of synchronicity or the definition of the plot or the realm of the narrative, 2) its diachronicity or the progress of time enhancing the narrative and 3) its consummation, almost equivalent to an Aristotelean purgation of feelings and emotions. (ibid:166-225). The set of questions raised by a ‘genetic phenomenology’ of Sardar’s martyrdom would upset, if at all any one, it will be the creative role of the CPI as regards the events of the First Republic Day in Nattika. This is the generative realm of the narrative of the martyrdom. All three orders of mimesis that portray his martyrdom, according to the iconography of the dominant Communist Parties, will tend to suppress these questions raised above. The Party machinery has so sanctioned that they (the set of questions) were subconsciously locked away within a space of

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death, with a martyrdom which stood sentry to any attempt to transgress the freedom from such fear.

Fresh incumbents into the different factions of the Left would naturally raise the set of questions stated above. But, the reply they would get is no direct one. Any reply that emerges would be ingeniously fashioned within the ambiguity- both ideological and emotional- of the history of the Communist movement in India, that touched its zenith on the occasion of the Republic Day. The ambiguity arising from the uncertainty as to the stance to be taken towards the nascent Indian Republic. Eventually it veers round to the exposition that the valorization of the martyr, is an integral functioning ritual of the society that without it- Gopalakrishnan's martyrdom- no collective thinking in Nattika will be possible. It is about ascertaining the possibility for a heroic death. A death that is the result of a political vision. Indisputably, a political death. The sacrifice had been self-consciously made for values which were yet to be realized. On the brink of breaking free(freedom to speech, liberty and equality), the martyr stands with a word of caution on what the consequences of this freedom could be. Freedom lay on the other side; but, the activist as political hero would cross the barrier of death. It would not be any death, but a death which rose from resistance. It had to be singular resistance to the mortifying, chastening power of an authoritarian regime. Such a resistance then led to a non-erasable trace of memory living within the confines of these sixteen villages which is annually reenacted in the form of a mourning.

They who would raise the questions on the phenomenology of the narratives of martyrdom, have resigned to their own particular characterizations of the event. Sathish, for instance, 26 years of age - a member of the CPI(M), mentioned that Sardar’s historic reckoning at its best as he knew it was when the question was raised to an applicant in an interview for a job in a bank in Trivandrum, that who was the first martyr of the Communists in the Indian Republic. Nawaz, 25 years of age, a graduate of Law and an activist of the SFI, the students’ wing of the CPI(M), plainly reflected that, the Kumbalaparambu clan has almost totally appropriated the historic questions raised in the death of Sardar.
C.K. Raghavan, a member of the CPI, from the Nattika village in the firka, as well as a veteran Communist who participated in the rally organized by the CPI on the First Republic Day, also made a similar reflection on the question of historically evaluating and situating the death within the history of the firka. The CPI and its many divisions that followed in the history of the Communist movement in India have invariably fostered this culture of terror that spun off from the silence or pallor of gloom and fear that descended on the firka following the event of the First Republic Day. An inquiry into the causes of the death of Gopalakrishnan, were all thwarted from its very beginning if such a demand ever came up, in the inner party discussions and debates. C.K. Raghavan was an exceptional instance of a comrade who was even prepared to disclose the apathy that the 'Party' has shown. Many would not do even as much.

It was from this silence of annual mourning, that emerged the content of the myth as we saw it in the villages of Nattika firka. This silence refuses to look straight in the face of death, and does not want to know the reasons why Gopalakrishnan should die on that particular day, in that particular way. It is now a 'sacred history' (Eliade (ed.) 1987).

What the data provides, in the wake of sketching the signifiers of this space of death, is a classification, of events remembered and symbolically represented. The extent of these facts is unending. It has no absolute centre. This classification can combine in various ways, to produce a story, a simile, a metaphor, a joke any time. Its absence of a codified centre, is ensured by the imminent and consequent unraveling of whatever sets us a focal centre.

The dominant representations in this mythic sphere are that of the martyrdom and that of sacrifice. We saw in chapter 2, how the kinship community of the martyr and the political community of the Left, continually alternate between the two major representations of the posthumous persona of Gopalakrishnan as the martyr and the victim, in reaction to specific circumstances of historic, economic or political importance. These form two major contesting forces that constitute a dualism—one that tries to harbinger the idea of a martyr and try to set up a tragic figure of Sardar at
the centre of it. The other force upstages this theory and pushes the tragic hero on to the pedestal of a victim. This dualistic play of forces in the mythic region has so ensured that it is devoid of any absolute centre.

This is a hypermediated set of facts, a form of 'primitive classification' (Durkheim and Mauss, 1970) established by the local community, which tragically does not have any value according to the law of the country. Durkheim and Mauss (1970), analyzed the classifications amongst the primitives as the essential unity of the primitive world, a function of their collective mind. The classification of the universe amongst the primitives is a reflection of the social classification in the primitive society. The idea of society is *sui generis* to all collective thought (ibid: 81-88). Thus their division into separate moieties, marriage classes, clans, totems and other kinds of division essentially pertains to the classification of the nature; the objects of nature, which classification represents the sociology of the primitive knowledge and thought (ibid: 3). With regard to the mythic contents inherent to the representation of the martyrdom/sacrifice of Gopalakrishnan, also there exists a classification of the same kind. Along the fundamental dualism of the law and its transgression it is that such classification is arranged. In our last chapter we saw how certain objects and places identified with the martyr link up amongst themselves to give a ritual dimension to the fact of Gopalakrishnan's death. It is such association that gives the martyrdom commemorations its ritual cogency. It is this association that in the present context we propound as the primitive classification.

The set of facts as constituted by the Law does not give any place to either the two forces /two theories of death that orientate the mythic region, or the set of facts that the mythic region holds to be true. The law is, in every sense of the word, separate and apart from the mythic region. In a certain sense of the term, it (the Law) is a reflection of the set of facts unknown to the myth. But, it lacks the orientating duality that keeps

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2 Durkheim and Mauss' expositions have been criticized and reformulated for the sentimental value they attach to the objects of nature, considered amongst the primitives as totems of specific clans and individuals. Levi-Strauss has analyzed this as having a purely semantic function and no element of religiosity or the virtue of the sacred and the profane attached to it (Levi-Strauss, 1964).
the myth floating and thick in the air, when the Law unwavering and concrete in the presence of an absolute centre- the state, represents an unchanging order of things.

There is an absolute contradiction in the way the mythic region constitutes itself against the power of the State. This contradiction comes about through its decentredness with respect to the centredness of the State. The firka overcomes this contradiction through the staging of martyrdom commemoration as a theater-spectacle, endorsed by the narratives of the mythic region, on the Republic Day.

The theory of the 'primitive classification' will require an extension in order to understand the discourse of power (so much as the space of terror) that orientates this region\(^3\). For this, we also need to locate it (the fact of martyrdom) within the socio-political transformations that happened in Kerala in the last century and a quarter; taking as its departure point the remark made by Swami Vivekananda that the society of Kerala is a mad house owing to the blatant and outrageous way it practiced untouchability when he visited the place in 1892 (Nossiter, 1988:49), to the inauguration of the first democratically elected Communist Government in 1957. Kerala's particular cultural lunacy was to extend the concept of pollution from touch to sight. The lowly Pulaya must remain not less than 96 feet from the Brahmin, 64 feet from a Nair and 30 feet from an Ezhava...... (ibid ,49). This mythology that is built around the death of Gopalakrishnan has an even more fundamental function of resolving a contradiction between the redefinition of a social disparity. This is the manner in which the Indian Constitution reinterpreted the social chasm existing in India. It (the Constitution) through abolition of the practice of untouchability\(^4\), in fact substituted the medieval distinction of men in society into touchable and untouchable

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\(^3\)The point with which we wish to differ with the two theorists, is in bringing in the concept of power to the context of the classification.

\(^4\)The Constitution of India says, according to Article 15, on the 'Prohibition of Discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth', that "(1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. (2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to- access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or (b) the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public ".

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with a modern distinction of equality and inequality⁵. How far this hypothesis holds ground can be seen when we examine the distinctive nature of the world of meaning that comprises the mythic region or space of death surrounding Gopalakrishnan.

In our section on the national and social movements in Nattika against the background of the state of Kerala we saw how the demand for abolition of caste practices formed the axis for organization of the various social movements; the most vociferous of which was the Sree Narayana Guru movement. Gandhi in raising the slogan for the abolition of untouchability had given it a significant and symbolic, nation-wide appeal, although it did not imply a rejection of the caste system as such. In its reflection in the movements in Kerala, especially with the firka of Nattika in focus, the slogan raised by Gandhi became one of the most important rallying point for the nationalists, socialists and communists alike. The landless peasants, from the lowest castes that we acquainted in the course of the field-work, invariably identified themselves as Harijans, the epithet by which Gandhi was the first to address them. Another very good example of the force this movement against the practice of untouchability may be seen in the Guruvayur Satyagraha,1936 which became one of the most important meeting points for leaders from all walks of political opinion. Congressmen like K.Kelappan and pioneering Communists like A.K.Gopalan were in the leadership of the Satyagraha. Interestingly enough, when the first elections to the Parliament took place in 1952, they were again on the same side with Kelappan having broken away from the Congress movement and joined the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party founded by Acharya Kripalani in the wake of Gandhi’s death and the Congress Party’s deviance from the ideals of Gandhism (Balakrishnan,1998:224).

⁵ Nossiter,T.J.(1988:49), quotes a British journalist (Zinkin:1962:152), to show the change in social perspective; the very ordering of the sight of people belonging to different castes in public places, that the democratic changes had brought about in the state following the formation of the Communist Government in Kerala, in 1957. It runs thus, “Paul (a wealthy Christian) stopped to curse, his handsome face turning a slow red. ‘You saw that fellow. He did not get off the path for us.....Of course, we have done away with unsccability a long time ago and that’s only right. But until six months ago that fellow knew his place, when he saw me he would get off the path; today he nearly brushed me aside. That is what they call equality.....’ ”.

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The point that we arrive at is that the question of untouchability as a question of justice had occupied a pride of place amongst the consciousness raised by the national and social movements in Kerala. In Nattika also it was the same. In the novel *Innaley* written in memory of Gopalakrishnan, narrating his life in the form of a novel, the novelist places the Guruvayur Satyagraha in focus, by making it the occasion for Gopi's (the character styled after Gopalakrishnan) initiation into politics. When we explore further into the social structure of these villages, it becomes even clearer how such a demand became the major or the most important arena for the contention of power amongst the different ideologies.

As we saw, in chapter 2, the element of kinship plays a significant role in the construction of the image of the martyr as a sacrificial victim. In our effort at conceptualizing kinship amongst the Ezhavas/Tiyyas in the village, it is essential to have a general understanding of the role played by totem/kinship and caste in social classification in the village. For the benefit of our hypothesis, we shall go back to the morphology of the *kumbalaparambu* clan – the paternal side of the martyr’s clan; identified as the clan to which the martyr was born- in the village and its distinctive pattern of worship amongst the rest of the Ezhava clans that laid the seed-bed for the representation of the martyr as a victim. In the world of reform initiated amongst the Ezhavas by the spiritual reformer Sree Narayana Guru⁶, the clan members accepted

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⁶ See chapter 2, for the change in worship practices that many clans in the village adopted following the reform movements of the Guru. And for sections on Gopalakrishnan’s involvement with the ideals of the Guru, see chapter 1, the section on biography. Not to mention that, neither of these sections go into lengths of discussing the variant of *advaita* Hinduism that the Guru preached. For the benefit of the current study, we only intend to take up, some of the concrete benefits of the teachings of Guru, which came in the form of the organization called the S.N.D.P. (see footnote,48) which was one of the inspiring elements for the Ezhavas to strengthen as a community, that can powerfully articulate its interests for the welfare of the members of the community. Not to mention that, they represented in the *jirka* the interests of the landed or propertied Ezhavas and loudly denounced the Communists, even going to the extent of invoking the Government to curtail the activities of the Communists by force, in their Chavakkad Conference in the year 1949 (Ministry of Home Affairs,1949:51). The Guru - a Yogi and ascetic who had mastered the different arts of Yoga, according to Moorkothu Kumaran(1942), one of his earliest biographers- his life and his vision do not enter the field of our study as such, given the intense mythologization of political events, that become part of oral traditions we are dealing with and remain distinct from the spiritual world of the Guru’s *advaita* philosophy. Sociologically speaking, the biographer represents the Guru, as a “renouncer on the world mentality”(Dumont,1972:283). According to the biographer, the Guru was a follower of such yogic tradition that it transcended the realm of language; for *jivatman*, the individual soul to attain to the *paramatman* or the eternal principle.
and appreciated the system and benefits of modern education, but, did not let the worship practices of the clan be affected by it. The reforms were aimed at a total overhaul of the clan-members' life styles, including an effort to stop their traditional occupation of toddy-tapping. These teachings, were less effective in Malabar, than in Travancore and Cochin. In Malabar, the ideas of a rich landlord, from Northern Malabar, also an advocate of Law, called C. Krishnan, showed the ways for the modernization of the Tiyyas (the Malabar counter-part of Travancore's Ezhavas). His ideas of Buddhism, a religion to which he converted, and the ideas which he published through the magazine, Mitavaadi served the beacon light for the Tiyyas (Menon, 1994: 64-65). This stream of modernization also advised the Tiyyas to stay away from the practice of using toddy and animal sacrifices in their worship of ancestral and other deities like theechamundy, kuttichathan, karichamundy etc. The effect as we saw in chapter 2, was the mushrooming of sanitized institutions of worship, around which a particular clan claimed its ancestry and also served as a meeting point for other Tiyya clan members, that they formed a community of equals amongst themselves. It was to the pull of this general stream of modernization that the martyr's' clan showed great resistance. This is the gist of the effect these reform movements had on the Tiyya clan members in the village. In proceeding further with our analysis, of the totem/kinship and caste symbolism amongst the Tiyyas of this village we have to remember these developments in the backdrop.

In order to come to a general hypothesis on the nature of the totemism or kinship symbolism in the village, a comprehensive coverage of all the totems of all the clans in the village is essential. To gather the totem signs or the veettuperu of the 1,867...
occupied residential house-holds in the village, was an onerous task. That is beyond the ambit of our present study. Therefore, the path that we have taken is to try and situate the paradigm in which totemic classification of the clans or kinship groups have taken place over the years. The Land Survey Records of 1905, and the Re-Survey Records of 1931, that record the names of all land-owning members and institutions in the village. We find that land has remained the essential unit of all social differentiation. The land hence also proves the totemic or emblematic function for the members of a clan/kinship group to forge their sense of collectivity or community. As we have already seen possession of and relations over the production in land was indeed the primary focus of the Communists’ struggle in the state of Kerala. Their commitment to come to an equable state of social ordering reflected in the assiduity or diligence with which they carried their slogan of ‘land to the tiller’ to its conclusion, in the Land Reforms Act, 1963. The predominating agrarian nature of their struggle, found great receptivity in the village, and the sacrifice of Gopalakrishnan is counted as one of the mile-stones, in their advance to the fulfillment of this goal.

Symbolism of the caste and totem was considered by Claude Levi-Strauss in his essay, ‘Totem and Caste’ (Levi-Strauss, 1966). According to him, “both the exchange of women and the exchange of food are means of securing or of displaying the interlocking of social groups with one another. This being so, we can see why they may be found either together or separately” – Levi-Strauss observes the phenomenon of totem and caste with these opening remarks (ibid:109). The finer distinctions of the totemic system have been accessed by Levi-Strauss no doubt in his ethnography of the American Indian societies, but much less the subtleties of the caste system in India, which Levi-Strauss takes as a classic example of the caste system. The generic understanding of the caste system as occupational or functional specialization (ibid:122), thus an exchange of food or services rather than an exchange of women (the basis for the differentiation amongst the tribes into various moieties or wife-land the serfs tended to take the classificatory name given to them by their landlords’ clan or kinsgroup. The details of this classification follow.
giving groups) as in the case of totemism, stops short of identifying the indistinct firmness that actually binds the two systems. To understand the social structure of the Edathiruthy village, in the context of the period of our study (1948-50), the co-existence of the totem and the caste must be admitted to be true with the practice of untouchability serving as the binding element.

The concepts of caste and totem according to Levi-Strauss provide us with little indication as to where one situates untouchability. We have to derive our own paradigm for understanding the interaction of the sign systems of the caste and totem where they co-exist (the possibility of which Levi-Strauss admits). The axial distinction of the world of men into touchable and untouchable serves this function in our study. It also explains the transformation in the structures of power that ruled collective imagination in the period of transformation within the mythic space opened by the fact of martyrdom.

In order to understand the totems amongst a caste it is essential to follow the specific genealogies of space and time that every caste has situated itself in, in addition to the finer genealogy of the totem clan within the caste. Were it not for the umpteen totemic clans divided in terms of occupation, objects, places, divinities and its own deities and places of worship, no caste would form itself into a group of exchange be it women or be it food. Therefore there is no totem without caste as much as there is no caste without totems. Thus *Kaarayil, Kollaryil, Ponathil, Kumbalaparambil, Velaparambil* (different kinship or alliance groups amongst the Ezhavas in the village of Edathiruthy) are all different totem names within the singular caste (Ezhava), which all practice strict clan exogamy (marriage is allowed between different clans) and simultaneously strict endogamy within the caste (marriage not allowed outside of the caste). Amongst themselves they fall into such diverse groups as *Thandar, Panicker, Kuruppan, Choan* all of which observe functional specialization and as a consequence of that, strict endogamy (intermarriage between these groups are prohibited).

Further, within a single clan, there is also further divisions marking each clan into sub-groups of families. These divisions, though do not pertain to any functional or alliance
systems, do make subtle, but strong distinctions of patriarchy within the clan to effect groups relating to places of habit. So we have a universe that is criss-crossed in many sub universes that are at once totemic and casteist.

This was not merely a case with the Ezhava caste. Going by the revenue records of the Land Survey, 1905, we find that, almost every other community or caste had a similar characterization of their social universe- one that is criss-crossed by many divisions. Some of the names gathered from the Land Survey records of 1905, allude to this possibility. The four most important of these divisions according to the criterion followed in addressing the pattadar’s names are of 1) caste, 2) descent-patriarchial or matriarchial 3) profession and 4) kinship group, clan or totem names.

The name of a particular plot of land, identified in the survey-map, according to a specific survey number, is identified, in the locality by its name like *Thozhthum Parambu* (the plot called *thozhuthu*), or *Kaala Parambu* (plot called *kaala*) or *Kadaavanadu nilam* (the plot called *kadavanadu*). There are no specific connections, between the name of a plot and the name of its pattadar. Nor is there a totemistic conjunction of the plot’s name, with the clan name of the pattadar.

Still, most landowners in the village had pieces of land named after their clan or totem name. In many a case, a specific ancestral plot of land, was identified with the name of their clan, which may also be considered its totem name. The totem name here coincides with the place of habit, besides signifying other aspects. For the land-owning clans, the ancestral plot is identified as the *kudiyirippu*\(^9\). In this regard, it - the plot of land- resembles cattle herd amongst the Nuer. If, the Nuer conceive of the ancestor of a clan as having possessed a herd, the clans of the land-owning communities in the village, conceive of their ancestors as having possessed a clan formation of a specimen may be treated for our study here, that of the kumbalaparambil is added in the appendix for reference.

\(^{10}\) *Kudiyirippu* was found used in instances of other communities as well. For example, *chennan itty kudiyirppu* that essentially means the land belonging to their ancestor Chennan Itty. The land, though takes its name from this person, did not belong to him. Such was the fusion that obtained with respect to the ownership of land in the year 1905, in the village of Edathiruthy. Any conclusion that helps to characterize this system of land title, and the classification of totem or clan names is a daunting task.

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particular piece of land. Through exchange by sale or by alliance through marriage, the same plot of land may have changed hands, but they still retain their specific identity through its name. This is so with the Nuer too, wherein the clan is thought of as originating from a herd, that the ancestor possessed which even though dispersed in many clans, still retain the sense of collectivity (Evans-Pritchard, 1956:258). The clans which have legal titles to their ancestral plots transform them into groves where their clan deities are worshipped. This was a special privilege that accrued only to land-owning groups, irrespective of caste or community differentiation. Access to such plots in the revenue map, accorded them a distinctive sense of pride and identity, which was denied to the landless peasants.

Apart from plots of land as ancestral property, named according to clan names, several other criterion expressed themselves in the naming of plots of land. The instance of naming the land in fact, seems to be an innovative realm of native thinking in the village. There are land names that announce feudal institutions like ooralan, which had become extinct under the British regime. In some instances, the name of the plot was the totem or clan name of certain families. Kundukulam, Perinchery are both clan names of Syrian Christians in the village and simultaneously, the names of certain plots of land. The name of the Collector of Malabar District, H.V. Connolly also has been given to certain plots as in Cheriya Connolly Parambu or Connolly Parambu. Not to mention that, the Connolly canal as such skirts the village on its Eastern border. There are lands names after artisans, like Aasarippady (the carpenter’s gate) or Karuvaanpady (the blacksmith’s gate). These plots of land retain their name even to this day, in the revenue records.

Some examples of the names of the land-holders are

1. Blahayil Kundullni Nair which splits like this, Blahayil (clan name) Kundunny (name of the occupant) Nair (name of the caste).

2. Kunnathupadikkal Moidu vaidyar makan Mammathu, which splits like this, Kunnathupadikkal (clan name) Moidu Vaidyar (Father’s name) Mammathu (name of the pattadar).
3. **Valiyakathu Kunjikkader makan Kunju Marikkar**, which reads like this **Valiyakathu** (clan name), **Kunjikkader** (Father’s name), **Kunju** (Pattadar’s name) **Marikkar** (name of a sect amongst Muslims, ussually sea-farers by occupational specialization).

4. **Kanjully Munnamthavazhi Karanavan Thachu Nair**, which splits like, **Kanjully** (clan name), **Munnam thaavazhi kaaranavan** (the family-elder(patriarch) of the third phratry of the clan), **Thachu** (Name of the pattadar), **Nair** (caste-name).

5. **Kanjully Ithiru Amma**, which splits as follows, **Kanjully** (clan name), **Ithiru** (name of the pattadar) **Amma** (the title of family elder- matriarch).

6. **ArayampambaIil Paru makan Raman**, which goes like, **ArayampambaIil** (clan name) **Paru** (name of the mother) **Raman** (name of the pattadar).

7. **Ayroor Edamuttathu Kovilakathu KeralaVarma Raajavu**, which reads like **Ayroor** (clan name) **Edamuttathu Kovilakam** (name of a ruling house), **Kerala** (name of the pattadar) **Varma** (caste name) **Raajavu** (name of title-king).

8. **ThachumpambaIil Porinchu makan Chathu**, which splits like **ThachumpambaIil** (clan name) **Porinchu** (father’s name), **Chathu** (pattadar’s name).

9. **Nambiar Veettil Ikkavamma Makal Kunjikkavamma**, which reads like **Nambiarveettil** (clan name, here in a specific conjunction with caste name- **Nambiar**), **Ikkavamma** (Mother’s name), **Kunjikkavamma** (pattadar’s name, amma also signifying the matriarchial elderly title of the pattadar).

These four –clan, nature of descent, caste and profession- are the main divisions in the society that emerge from the relations of ownership of land. At the same time, the name of a landless peasant Valluvankadu Ainikkadu Koran Chathan splits like this- Valluvankadu stands for the **thara** or the raised land set amidst field, where all the workers in the fields of the **Blahayil** family of Edathiruthy settled. Ainikkadu stands for the landlord family in the north where they were originally the dependents before
exchanged in dowry to the Blahayil house-hold in marriage, as dowry\textsuperscript{11}. migrating to the south. Koran is the father’s name and Chatthan, the name of the person.

Such was the scheme of classification of society amongst the various castes, based upon the ownership of land, which was mainly hereditary or ancestral. This classification, nonetheless, do not reveal the relations emergent from the management of land and its revenue. The management of land was so distributed that the \textit{adhikari} of the village, who was also the highest revenue and judicial power recognized by the Government in the village, held the reins of power. This title for generations lay with the Blahayil Nairs. When a movement for re-distribution of land, began, (that found success in stages- Malabar Kudiyan Act, 1930 and The Kerala Land Reforms Act, 1963) it was targeted at the landed interests of mainly the big land-owners. This becomes evident from the trail the growth of national and social movements have taken in the village, as we saw in chapter 1. The two major forces that opposed the growth of these movements, that at times took the form of movement against caste-discrimination, were the Blahayil Nairs and the Syrian Christian landlords. The same trail, tells us that, towards the 1948-50s, when the peasant movement was at its strongest, and the Communists had taken over the leadership of the movement, it was almost unilaterally directed against, the institution of the \textit{adhikari} who continued to represent the colonial form of authority in the village, the Blahayil Nairs. That, the collusion of the Police Inspector of the \textit{firka} with the Blahayil landlords, against the Communists and the \textit{Harijans} were reported time and again during the course of field work, by various respondents goes to show this.

The Nair \textit{taravadu} discussed earlier in connection with the land relationships in the village, in chapter 1, a unique phenomenon of many a village in Malabar as shown by Dilip Menon (1994), was true as far as the village of Edathiruthy as well. In the same chapter we also discussed the ceremony of \textit{koithoottu}, one of the annual festivities by which the \textit{taravadu} sustained its hegemony in the village. It was this hegemony that became the target of the Communists in the leadership that they gave to the peasants,

\textsuperscript{11} Information according to Sathish, a young activist of the CPI (M), and himself a former resident of the valluvankady \textit{thara}.
in bringing down the zamindari system. That it was the ritual force of Gopalakrishnan’s sacrifice, that came to their aid most formidably in the later years of their struggle, is an aspect of the village’s social history, we have already noted in chapter 1 itself. The dynamics of this opposition is a most interesting aspect to explore, that also shed light on some of the peculiar characteristics of relations of power that emerged in the village, reacting to the historic circumstances that saw the social movement at its high pitch; following Independence, when the Communists denounced the Indian State.

This related to the framework of power that the Communists while leading the peasants in their demand for land and basic human rights, challenged or locked horns with. At that moment was the role of Gopaiakrishnan as the sacrificial victim defined most distinctively and prominently. But in ordering for him the role of the sacrificial victim, the martyr’s clan itself had a most significant and ritualistically assigned role to play. It is in the process of this analysis, that we take up the peculiar nature of the social role of the Ezhava Hindus in the village for study.

In the caste hierarchy sandwiched between the landless peasants, the Vettuvas, Parayas and Pulayas and the landlord Nairs and Syrian Christians, the caste within had many hierarchical relations that it is difficult to say, that all members of the caste were exposed to a similar kind of hierarchical discrimination. There were quite a few land-holders from amongst the caste and many of them were beneficiaries of the new system of education introduced by the Colonial administration. We have charted the spread of the spiritual reform movements by the reformer Sree Narayana Guru that had state-wide influence and its impact in the village, with the example of the martyr’s clan in focus (chapters 1& 2). The alienation that the clan suffered in the face of its diffidence to be adopted into the formation of egalitarian social groups centred around temples, was one of the main reasons for the mortification of one of the clan members in the form of a sacrificial victim. This was not contrived by design, but it happened to be unconscionably so.
With respect to the four main social divisions that reflected amongst the various landowning communities in the village, so far as the Ezhavas were concerned, it was mainly the clan and its patrilineal descent that formed the locus of gift exchanges or the making of alliances whereas the other two— the caste identity and the professions—found their locus in power struggle around the exchange of food. This neat bipartite division (the division of the clan’s engagement with the outside world into one directed by the need for making alliances and the need for exchanging food and/or services), turned acutely perceptible, in the face of police repression. The *taravaadu* complex’s hegemonic effort also intensified through sharpening of the power conflict orchestrated by the need for greater appropriation of the proliferating democratic and public spaces, owing to the social and national movements. This was achieved by reinvigorating the most powerful of the forms of hierarchical oppression, that of untouchability.

The spread of modern education amongst the Ezhavas, were already opening different opportunities before them, when it was that the age–old form of discrimination was being sought to be put back into practice. The number of indiscriminate police raids and the proliferation of a culture of terror all allegedly at the behest of the Blahayil landlords, against the landless peasants and the Ezhava small land-holders bear testimony to this fact, that of the reinstitution of the most reactionary and brutal face of caste oppression—untouchability. Before coming to the impacts of this revival of the practice of untouchability as a ploy to operationalize the dynamic of the feudal power, we first need to understand how the two Ezhava clans the *Kumbalaparambil* and the *Kollarayil* defined a space of totemic ‘opposition’ between them and thus a space outside of the hierarchical structure of the caste society and untouchability.

It is a concept introduced by Radcliffe-Brown (1983) into the study of social anthropology. Radcliffe-Brown arrives at the concept of opposition in his study of Totemism. In a path-breaking essay in the study of totemism¹² Radcliffe-Brown

¹² This essay by Radcliffe Brown was thus applauded by fellow anthropologist Levi-Strauss, “Toward the end of his life, Radcliffe Brown was to contribute decisively to the solution of the problem of
introduces the value of the comparative method for the study of societies. He compares the totems of tribes from two different parts of the world, one, the New South Wales, Australia (the clans Kilpara and Makwara) and the other in North West America (two exogamous moieties of the Haida) he shows how parallels exist in the myths relating to the relationship of the two birds – the eagle hawk and the crow or the eagle and the raven in the latter. The legends serve to distinguish the two birds one as a bird of prey and the other as a scavenger or a ‘thief’ in native coinage. He then proceeds to show how such relations of opposition exist between different social groups in many other parts of the world. Such relations extent to the ‘non-totemic’ Andaman islanders in their classification of species of animals and birds as human beings in society. The relation is also prominent in the ancient Chinese philosophy of the yin and the yang that ruled the marriage relations of the Chinese in 2000BC, which patterns of marriage extends to this day (i.e., in 1935) in China. These are various customs by which the societies have grappled with the concept of opposition or polemos/strife as Heraclitus defined it, in history. As such, it forms the fundamental category of all classification and the elementary tool for social anthropologists in a comparative study of human societies (Brown, 1980: 108-129).

Totemism according to Radcliffe-Brown, is thus a grouping of society according to relations of opposition and is therefore an ever inventive process, thus coinciding with the formation of new social groups in conjunction with objects of nature or culture. It was Radcliffe Brown, who thus paved the way for structural study of totems by Levi-Strauss that also harped on the inventive characteristic immanent to totemistic coinage in language. For Levi-Strauss totems retain their heuristic value for long periods of time, because “they are good to think” (1964:89).

The phenomenon of totemism was considered alien to the Indian society because of its caste system and hierarchical structure. Totemism definitely implied if not anything at least a lack of hierarchy amongst the different totem clans. Caste system apparently revolts against this equality as a norm. But, J.V.Ferreira (1965) in ‘Totemism in India’

totemism by his success in isolating and disclosing the real problems which lay hidden behind the phantasmagoria of the theorists” (Levi-Strauss (1964:58).
has studied the existence of totemism not as vestiges of an ancient tribal existence but as a symbiosis by which the two communities the original inhabitants of India, and the invaders from outside, to whom are attributed the tradition of the Vedas have co-existed over millennia and continue to do so. Quoting another scholar of repute who studied Indian totemism, H. Niggemeyyer, he says, the ‘Aryans’ when they came in contact with the original inhabitants of the sub-continent did not practice exogamy, or if at all they did, it was blood-relationship exogamy and not group exogamy as is the main attribute of totemism. Out of the encounter of these drastically different cultures have arisen the Indian phenomenon of totemism, as Ferreira argues. Quoting Niggemeyyer, he further clarifies that it is impossible to define the phenomenon of totemism based on the Indian examples. This is so, because every totemic phenomenon has to be derived from the cultural and natural relations under which it has arisen (Levi-Strauss, 1964:17). There may be no way to prove that Totemism arose in India, but Indian totemism is historically connected with other regions of the world. It has forms of phenomenon which are common to other parts of the world- the naming of a human group after an animal, plant and the rule of exogamy which forbids marriage between members of the same totem clan, etc. Ferreira illustrates the process by which this symbiosis of the immigrant culture and the aboriginal culture took place in the Vedic and the following periods, with the help of a concept called continuum. Originally postulated by F.G. Bailey (1963), this continuum has at its one end, a society whose political system is entirely of the segmentary egalitarian type, and which contains no dependents whatsoever; and at the other end of which is a society in which segmentary political relations exist only between a very small proportion of the total society, and most people act in the system in the role of dependents. Between these two extremes of the continuum it may be said exists the Indian society with its various castes, with the Brahmins allowing for group exogamy amongst themselves by their division into various gotras and the mountain tribes that allow for the most generous amount of totemism, replacing animal, plant and ancestral spirits with Gods.
The exposition of Ferreira may be seen in other commentaries of caste as well. Iravati Karve (1961), says that the Indo-Aryan system of stratification into three major occupational and hereditary ranks or varnas namely priests, administrators and commoners was grafted onto and above an indigenous Indian pattern of interdependent and ranked tribes, thus creating a hybrid system of stratification. As Karve says, “I think the full-fledged theory of caste very probably represents the working together into a single theoretical system of two separate types of organization present in two societies. Through this formulation of the caste society the two separate societies came to be represented as one society. The union of varna and jati is a matter of fusion of two systems from two cultures” (ibid: 58).

Stephen Gould (1971) on the other hand suggests that, jati emerged out of the “occupationalization of labour” in which “occupational role and role occupant were identical” (ibid: 8). He sees it as a universal feature of division of labour in pre-industrial societies. Ethnicity is historically assimilated to occupation and occupational rank in some cases, and in others, occupation assimilated to ethnicity and ethnic rank.

Gerald D. Brennan (1983), who considers these two points of view, takes a view more akin to Iravati Karve’s, without dismissing the views of Gould. He comprehends the Indian caste system in a phenomenon called the ‘evolutionary status of caste’. He says that, jati is not merely a stratified formation. It has features also of unstratified societies within them. He understands this phenomenon, again in the light of the Indo-Aryan immigration and the meeting of two cultures. The phenomenon of caste hence is understood as evolutionary (ibid: 179). Louis Dumont (1972) also has maintained that clan exogamy was essential for the castes to hold their ranking and status in position (ibid: 158).

That caste is not the final independent or ‘self-sufficient’ unit of social analysis of the Indian society has been pointed out by Louis Dumont (1983: 132) as well. Highlighting the instance of the caste of Nairs in Kerala, Dumont argues that the caste cannot be taken as an independent endogamous unit for analysis, for studying the Indian society. The ritually sanctioned nuptial union between Nambuthiri men and
Nair women, known as *sambandham* is cited by him to prove this fact. As a result of this, the Nair caste is so variegated in its formation, that one finds, in the same caste, sub-groups ranging from landlords to washermen, some of whom are also untouchable within the caste. Although not a general phenomenon noticed elsewhere in the sub-continent, this exception proves valuable in contextualizing the institution of matriliny or matriarchy, which forms one of the foundational aspects in understanding the Malayali psyche.

Dumont (1972) elsewhere says that isogamy was the general norm of marriage in South India, whereas in its counterpart, the Gangetic plains hypergamy was the norm. The prevalence of hypergamy in the North accounts for status differentiation within a caste, which fact is not possible in the South. It would be mistaken to hold the *talikettu* performed on a Nair woman occasionally by a Nambuthiri man to be an instance of hypergamy, the only instance of hypergamy, that can be shown, if at all. The *talikettu* marriage ceases to be as soon as it is instated. Dumont(ibid:162) says that, it is a custom followed to maintain the Nair institution of matriliny, even at the base of the patrilineal Nambuthiri system. There is a rise in the status of the women following the *talikettu*. In normal hypergamy the rise in status is neutralized following the *kanyadaan* or the gift of daughter in marriage. Whereas in the *talikettu* symbolizes a Nair-Nambuthiri symbiosis, and a ‘rite of passage’ for the lower caste Nairs to a caste of higher ranking.

If we consider the marriage practices of the Ezhava caste from the village, it may be seen as allowing for the use of both totem and caste symbols in articulating its world view or in constructing its social role. The system of exchanging services that ordained the basis for the functioning of the village economy, formed the caste system in a nutshell. But, independent caste groups observed strict endogamy and for this purpose they were divided into separate clans. Such clans are known by their totem names, what in common parlance is called, the house name or the *veettuperu* (Ferreira,1965). The functional utility of these names were strictly exhausted in the
The co-existence of caste and totem that allowed for a combination of the patrilineal and the matrilineal in defining the world view of independent caste groups, but had no effect whatsoever in deciding the power relations amongst the caste groups, in which sphere a strict hierarchy held together by the practice of untouchability prevailed.

The marriage practices amongst the Ezhava clans in the village have undergone radical changes in the last less than seventy or eighty years. The onus or responsibility on the part of the family of the bride to get her married has gone high over these years. The institution of dowry that was not in practice amongst any of the castes, except the Brahmins also has gained much prevalence of late. L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909) while writing about the marriage practices amongst the Ezhavas, observes, “Among all castes below Brahmins, the proposal for marriage always comes from the side of the bridegroom. When a young man has to be married, his father and maternal uncle go in search of a suitable girl. When she is rightly chosen, they open the subject with her parents, who give their consent after being satisfied with the would-be bridegroom” (Iyer, 1909: 289). Not merely that, the groom’s party was expected to

13 See Levi-Strauss (1962), section on Australian Nominalism, to see how the totem signs serve as clan emblems classifying them into different marriage groups or how rules of marriage and totemic classification coincide in the case of Australian societies bordering the Arnhem land (ibid: 39).

14 According to the ethnography of Anantha Krishna Iyer, we also find that the practice of paying a dowry, or a price to the groom in the event of marriage by the bride’s party existed only amongst the upper caste Brahmins or the Nambuthiris. Similarly, all the caste lower to the Brahmins performed two marriage ceremonies in the life of a girl. One was called the talikettu ceremony or the tali tying ceremony, with the co-operation of a vicarious husband, who would leave the girl after the ceremony. The marriage may be resumed later, only if he takes the steps necessary for the consummation of the nuptials following the real marriage. The girl at the same time becomes free to welcome in marriage any other suitable man as her husband, even though her talikettu has been performed by someone else. Writing on the custom of the talikettu ceremony, Iyer explains, “It is also understood that, with the tying of the tali, the virginity ceases, and he who brings or takes her that stage has a right to cohabit with her, which he relinquishes on the fourth day of the Talikettukalyanam. Further, the woman observes a sort of pollution for fifteen days for the death of the man who tied the tali, which proves that he is her husband” (1912:27). Amongst the Hindus, only Nambuthiri women were denied of this privilege of a talikettu ceremony. Amongst the Nambuthiris only the eldest male member of the family had the right to marry and all his brothers had to “solace themselves by forming fugitive connections with the Sudra women” (ibid: 198). The eldest Nambuthiri male that married, took an enormous price in the form of varudakshina (the groom’s price) from the bride’s family, as well. This and many such reasons made
pay a bride-price to the bride’s party for the marriage to be ritually sanctioned by the elders. Both the parties have to pay a customary fee of eight annas and a betel leaf to the village head man (Thanadan) to get his permission for the union. He issues a letter to Ponamban, his deputy to oversee the ceremonies of the marriage. He gets a smaller fee of three annas and eight paisa and a betel leaf for the function.

In the social setting of the village, in 1940s and 50s, it is possible to argue that ‘Gift’ formed the foundation of this society. The distinction of the caste system held by Levi-Strauss (1966) stated to be its dominant principle the exchange of food rather than the exchange of women. Gift as exchange with the binding liabilities to give and take on its partners could be the most unifying element of this society.

“Material and moral life, as exemplified in exchange, functions there in a manner at once interested and obligatory. Furthermore, the obligation is expressed in myth and imagery, symbolically and collectively; it takes the form of interest in the objects exchanged; the objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them the communion and alliance they establish are well nigh indissoluble. The lasting influence of the objects exchanged is a direct expression of the manner in which subgroups within segmentary societies of an archaic type are constantly embroiled with and feel themselves in debt to each other” (Mauss, 1970:31).

the marriage of many a Nambuthiri women, an impossibility and Iyer writes that many of them even died unmarried, and virgins at an advanced age.

According to another scholar on the ancient society of India, the custom of procuring a wife through payment of bride-price exists according to the Vedic literature, from the time of the Rig Veda, where such instances are cited. There are citations in the epic Mahabharatha as well as in other texts from more or less the same period. They mention the practice of purchasing the wife, by paying a price for her to her guardian by the suitor. By the time of Manu, who wrote the Manusmriti, that for centuries controlled the social life of India, this type of marriage was termed the Asura marriage. Such marriages were castigated by Manu, as sale of daughters by their Fathers or Guardians and was described as a heinous act. The Manusmriti advises, the high born castes as well as the Sudras not to indulge in the sale of their daughters.

Manu designates as Arsa form of marriage, one in which the maiden is given away to the groom from whom a pair (of cow and bull) or two cows are accepted. Here as opposed to the Asura form of marriage, the acceptance of the cow and the bull, is deemed as a gift and not as a price for the bride (as a commodity for sale) —(Sastry, 1967)
Mauss calls the most archaic economic system known to man, a system of total prestation-prestation (exchange) between clan and clan in which individuals and groups exchange everything between them. Mauss highlights the *potlaches* of the North West American Indian tribes as the best example of the *potlach* ceremonies. He even cites the *kula* ceremony amongst Australian tribes as prestation or gift exchanges of a total nature (ibid: 41); that is a prestation and a phenomenon, that is at once economic, political and juridical. In the Indian context, he finds from the Hindu scriptures, that the priestly caste of Brahmins were allowed to live only on gifts presented to them by the king and other patrons (ibid: 53).

Amongst the Ezhavas of the village, a gift economy of the nature that Mauss talks about if at all existed; it did so only in exchanges amongst these clans of a singular caste. The number of divisions within a caste made the idea of prestation amongst the castes insignificant. The gift economy prevailed only within individual caste groups bound within the alliances of marriage amongst the specific clans of each caste group. In terms of exchange of finished products or artifacts, strict utilitarianism was followed. The functional specialization of the different caste groups had made it indispensable. This realm of exchange was one of rigorous objectivity, and taboo - "of the institutional localization of danger, both by the specification of the dangerous and by the protection of society from endangered, and hence dangerous, persons" (Steiner, 1967: 147); one that operated with the axial distinction of its members into the touchable and the untouchable.

Edmund Leach (1966) also has pointed out the exclusivity of the clan's ritual or kinship relations from the realm of economic or political contestations. He maintains that, the cultural rules of caste behaviour establish a dichotomy in the total field of social relationships- political, economic and ritual relations are external, kinship relations are exclusively internal. He says, "in any system of kinship and marriage, there is a fundamental ideological opposition between the relations which endow the individual with a membership of a "we group" of some kind (relationship of incorporation), and those other relations which link "our groups" to other groups of like kind (relations of alliance) " (ibid: 2).
In demarcating the realm of kinship ('relations of alliance') and caste ('relations of incorporation'), in the everyday day form of existence, Leach is overcoming one of the fundamental shortcomings of structuralism in its effort to come to grips with the caste society, while also appreciating its one major contribution to the study of symbols. To reckon with ritual as an aspect of the 'external', along with the 'political' and the 'economic' is to understand it as more than merely a part of the superstructure. It in fact deems it as a part of the base, in the Marxist problematic of the economic base and the ideological superstructure, Levi-Strauss defined his method of understanding the human psyche (Levi-Strauss, 1966: 130). Levi-Strauss made this vital distinction in his study of myths and their relation to the ideological superstructure, in exclusive relation to which alone can it be defined. Leach certainly makes a breakthrough, in defining the ritual in the context of the caste formations, as a part of the economic base but thereby implying that a change in the ritual relations can affect a change in the socio-economic order of the people.

The analysis of Susan Visvanathan (1993: 169), shows how the Syrian Christians of Kerala under the influence of the nineteenth century reform movements, changed the role of Mary in their liturgy from an active one to passive one, thus fundamentally altering the mythic consciousness, for that denomination which accepted the reforms. By and large, this has to be seen as a phenomenon, that many other communities including different castes amongst the Hindus also adopted in their social reforms. The reforms have almost in all cases been initialized in a renewal or reordering of the sacred and spiritual realms. The path taken by Sree Narayana Guru towards monism (advaita) and the decimation of worship of many an ancient deity in its wake is a case in point. The reforms in any case, were to affect the richer sections of the caste, more so than the poorer sections. The Communist leadership, in the Edathiruthy village and the neighbouring villages in the firka in claiming the support of the poorer sections of the community, on the other hand, encouraged the worship of the lower ranking deities of the Hindu pantheon, like theechamundy, karichamundy, kuttichathan etc. The veteran leader of the CPI from the village of Anthicaud, comrade Sankaran, stressed how far these deities were significant in their everyday lives, when faced with the
stiff opposition from the Madras Government, that banned the sale and tapping of toddy, their traditional occupation, in the year 1948. The same fact (how Communism co-existed with the worship of these deities) is reflected in a short story written by a writer from the same village, ‘How Many Jennys Are There In Anthicaud?’ Or Anthicaudud Ethra Jennimaarundu?

The reform movement also affected another realm of their lives, that of marriages and subsequently the matriarchal form of social organization. As observed by L.K. Anatha Krishna Iyer, prior to that the Nayar norm of matriliney held good for all the lower castes, as is evident from the upper hand given to the bride’s party in choosing the husband of their choice. Effectively, this matriliney it was that was brought down in the ritual implantation of Gopalakrishnan as a sacrificial victim. This is an aspect that we have discussed regarding the ritual ordering of the muthappan cult that lie beneath the commemoration of his martyrdom. But, the curious aspect of the commemoration rites of Gopalakrishnan’s martyrdom is that, while recharging the patrilineal cult of the muthappan, it is at the same time endorsing or strengthening the saktha cult of the bhagavathy, that hallmark of Malayali worship according to Sarah Caldwell (1999). This aspect of the fact of martyrdom is something we shall study in detail in chapter 5.

For the time being we focus our attention, on the effects of the reinvigoration of the practice of untouchability, that the Blahayil landlords of the village, resorted to when faced with the crumbling of the hegemony of the taravadu complex in the village.

The first casualty of this revival was the kind of social interaction that existed between the various castes, even within the hierarchy of caste the system. Discussing the nature of authority exercised by the landowning taravadu or the Nayar household and its tenants and cultivators, Dilip M. Menon says, “The degree of interaction between taravadus and cultivators was extensive, and there may have been less of a feeling of ‘us’ and ‘them’. At the end of a working day, and more often on the occasion of festivals, the men of all castes would gather at the local toddy shop and experience a temporary camaraderie with their work mates” (1994:21).
The police atrocities and raids intensified, they particularly targeted the lower castes that effectively nullified the social reforms of the earlier decades. The alleged naked parading of a harijan woman, an incident which according to Bhaskaran (2000:75) was even raised in the Parliament by the then opposition leader A.K.Gopalan, also added to the phenomenon of marking the human body as the site of social divisions. Considering that in the rigid demarcation of social spaces that arose from the situation of strife that followed the Communist movement’s underground challenge to the Nair hegemony in the village, the man-woman relationships were also strained. Every relationship outside of marriage was considered either licentious or incestuous (the caricaturization of Gopalakrishnan as licentious and promiscous without ample evidence itself is a good enough proof of this). Thus a man had right to touch a woman or vice versa only in the event of marriage, and this he had to for the act of procreation.

In the context of the exchange of food and other artifacts too, this demarcation held sway.

The cognitive primacy of the virtue of contagion/lack of it (touch/not to touch) in the public space wrought by the functional specialization amongst caste groups made the totemic signification subdued. Exchange of women implied a certain touchability (between man and woman) and exchange of food implied a certain untouchability (between men). As a consequence the society was sharply divided and men themselves transformed into objects within the sharp divisions maintained by the definition of touchability/untouchability.

It is in this demarcation of social spaces and the isolation of castes as communities that bent under the weight of the oppressive caste-system that the ‘culture of terror’ earlier discussed found its manifestation. In the event of such objectification in the public as well as the private sphere the human beings had lost all ability to subjectivity. Everything refined about human beings were annulled and they became either objects

15 Regarding the notions of purity/impurity, a variation of the touchability / untouchability, Dumont (1972:98) says that “the opposition of pure and appears to us the very principle of hierarchy, to such a degree that it merges with the opposition of superior and inferior: moreover, it also governs separation”.

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for procreation and sustenance of the species or units of production for the sustenance of the economy.

If totem classified the objects of nature into taboo/not taboo, caste did it with men in society. The intelligible structures of understanding in such a society separated men with a high precision in signification of touch/absence of touch. This division and the harsh objectivity it invited on men, prepared the foreground for the severe forms of cruelty and torture as punishments to taboo, early pre-modern society of Kerala is recorded to have had and consequently its 'space of death' and the 'culture of terror'.

If, totem still provided the clue for alliance formations through marriage or exchange of women, it no longer ruled the relations of power. It was merely a subdued realm of hospitality where terms of kinship was paid its due obeisance without upsetting the ritual hierarchy that ruled the relations of power. The rules of power that sharply distinguished kinship or totemic groups from caste groups, made it certain that no totemic signification or rules of marriage entered the realm of power.\footnote{Discussing the relations of authority, in this formation, and the force of power in grounding their acceptance, Dilip M. Menon (1994) makes these valuable observations. The exercise of this power directed the movement, dress, and speech of lower caste tenants and labourers—"It was not so much the operation of an abstract set of rules which is evident in the restrictions but the fact that deference was embedded in quotidian routines of speech, dress and manner. It was in the practice of certain actions and modes of behaviour within a specific situation, i.e. the interaction between high and low castes, that the relations of power were emphasised. The enforced repetition of gestures and speech forms sought to make seem natural what was arbitrary and imposed" (Menon: 1996: 19).}

Coming back to the two neighbouring Ezhava clans-\textit{kumbalaparambil} and \textit{kollarayil} – in Edathiruthy, we saw that they achieved through their formation into a relationship of oppositional unity, a space of equality outside of the rigid organization of caste principles. The legend that the two clans had ancestors who were two companions or friends who migrated into the village proved the basis for the revival of a primitive egalitarianism between them. The clan names even though not exactly identifiable with totem names, in the kind of relationship that emerged between the two clans, their identification based on the respective clan names allowed for a revival of the primitive or totemistic attributes inherent to them, though to a great extent congealed with the caste based classification. The space of equality between the two clans, was
institutionalized by the prohibition of intermarriage between the two clans. Thus amongst the collection of freely intermarrying Ezhava clans in the village and elsewhere in the Nattika firka, the two clans formed a union of opposites. Their occupational specialization and the respective reputation they earned in the village was already dealt with in chapter-2. The significance of this revival of totemic association in the canvas of caste-based relations was that it offered a power of resistance to the hegemony of the Nayar taravadu that was trying to revive the practices of untouchability in the face of the peasant organization led by the Communists. Sardar Gopalakrishnan epitomized the height of this resistance and at the height of its opposition offered his life in sacrifice, that led to the resolution of the crisis.

The social chaos that arose out of these developments in 1948-50, was brought to its dramatic end with the sacrifice of the victim, and the abolition of the taboo of touchability/untouchability. But, this resolution presaged nonetheless the reinstitution of the distinction of men into the touchable and the untouchable based on the norms of caste hierarchy in another form that of equality/inequality. The image of the victim in containing the preceding universe of power served simultaneously as a barrier and a conduit of exchange for associations with the past. This image thus aroused a distinctively erotic-aesthetic carnival in the presentations of the victim’s martyrdom in the earlier days.

Over the years, with the splits in the Communist movement, this universe splintered in its exchanges with the past and the image in itself became a memorium for it. This suppression of passions was endorsed by the literalization of the event in an effort to create into an event in history. The transgressive sexuality, the imageric potentiality and the spectral variability the image offered was subsequently tamed through works of literature and articles in magazines and newspapers about the martyr. These works have served to de-eroticize the image and transform it into a sign of progress, development and linear history. The martyrdom or the sacrifice, whichever way one puts it, thus serves as a ‘rite of passage’ for the people of the firka from one phase of history to another.
Now we proceed to examine the description of the event that precipitated the martyrdom of Gopalakrishnan as a ‘social drama’ and the genre of theater that many respondents resorted to in plotting their narratives of martyrdom.

The Social Drama of Transformation- The Region of Theater

A social drama gradually takes shape out of this attribution of a definite direction and purpose to the flow of events. Drama is derived from the Greek term *dran*, “to do”, and in Greek drama means a “deed” or “act” and was only later applied to an action represented on stage. It is a genre of performance universal to all cultures just like ritual, carnival, film and spectacle. All dominant genres of performance constitute what is called a liminal phenomena. A *limen*, as the French Ethnologist Arnold Van Gennep (1960:10-11) pointed out is a threshold, the central of the three phases in what he called, “rites of passage”.

The three phases or sub-divisions of the rites of passage according to Van Gennep is rites of separation, transition rites and rites of incorporation. They may be also classified as pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal (VanGennep, 1960:10). The ‘social drama’ a concept styled by Victor Turner after the ‘rites of passage’ of Van Gennep which he held as the generative realm in culture of all performance genres including theater, ritual, games and carnivals have four instead of the original three phases of the ‘rites of passage’. These are, *breach* of regular social relations, *crisis* representing the threshold or limen between stable phases of the social process, *redressive action* implying various modes (ritualistic, rational or otherwise) of resolving the crisis and *reintegration* of the disturbed social group, with a recognition of the social conflict that caused the *breach*. A ‘social drama’ is the process by which a society deals with the conflict- situations in the modern-secular society or a pre-modern atavistic society alike (Turner, 1986:74).

Of the three phases of the ‘rites of passage’, the second phase forms the generative realm of theater, of marginality or liminality that puts everything into the subjunctive mood as well as the reflexive voice, dissolve all factual and common sense systems
into their components and "play" with them in ways never found in nature or in
custom, at least at the level of direct perception (Turner, 1986:25). Central to the
concept of social drama is the aspect of liminality derived from the word *limen*,
meaning threshold, it is the central in the three phases of "the rites of passage". The
three phases were derived from his observation of ritual experiences in different
regions and different societies of the world. "Rituals separated specified members of a
group from everyday life, placed them in a limbo that was not any place they were in
before, and not yet any place they would be in, then returned them, changed in some
way, to mundane life" (Turner, 1986:25).

The Liminal stage dissolves all factual and common sense systems of quotidian life
and play with them in a subjunctive mood\(^\text{17}\) detached from all direct correspondences
to reality. In the imagination of the death of Sardar, the liminal stage becomes most
essential, given the fact that his death is a legally unproven or judicially unexamined
fact. The liminal stage opens in its uncertainty or non-ascertainability of the death of
Gopalakrishnan, according to the Law. The Law presumes innocence and in the
indicative mood points to nothingness in the space of Gopalakrishnan’s death. It is the
subjunctive mood of liminality that ascertains positively the fact of his death, and in so
doing opens up a huge possibility of meaning in his death as opposed to the
nothingness that the Law in its indicative mood has imposed upon their minds. The
liminal phase thus heralded in through the signifiers of a space of death, twists and
turns through a multitude of heroic representation\(^\text{16}\), dramatizing the character of
Gopalakrishnan, along with the rest, until finally summiting in a rendezvous with the
same Law, from which the liminal phase took its parting from. This rendezvous or
‘redressal’ is realized through an affirmation of the sovereignty of the collective, along
with; but distinct from ,the declaration of the sovereignty of the Law, both of which

\(^{17}\) Subjunctive and indicative are mutually contrasting moods of signification according to Turner
(1986). In the indicative mood, there is a direct correspondence of the signifier to the signified, whereas
in the subjunctive mood, there is a broader leeway of meaning, so that the signifier and the signified
may not correspond exactly in a one-to-one relationship. The subjunctive opens up the possibility for
transformations of an object from something that it is in the indicative mood of quotidian life to a wider
possibility of meaning. A piece of stone according to indicative signification may be a sacrificial altar in
subjunctive signification

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The fact that this dynamic is true equally of the ritual and the drama (Turner includes, carnival, film and spectacle as well in the performative genre), helps us to conceptualize the stories about Sardar's death, as a drama, in its intricate sign formations and role allocations.

The analogies of ritual and drama are very insightful in understanding the dynamics of the Communist insurgency or underground in the Nattika firka of 1948-52. The works of Turner (1986) and Richard Schechner (1988) in contrasting the structure of ritual and theater and the further comparison of these with the skeletal framework of social conflicts, prove extremely resourceful, in this context. Turner says that the aesthetic form of theater is inherent in socio-cultural life itself; which he calls the “social drama” (discussed above).

Theater as is popularly conceived is an art form, that is practiced by only theater professionals. This notion maintains strict demarcation or differentiation between the profession of acting and the so-called real life. With regard to the sacrifice of Sardar Gopalakrishnan this cannot be true. Here we have to derive the understanding of the subject from anthropological explorations into the idea of theater as a distinct cultural form that is universal to civilizations (Schechner, 1988:6). The basic apprehension herein being that theater is not something always confined to a Stage, enacted according to a prepared Script, under the supervision of a Director. Theater, in the context of our study, is a compact performative genre, that does not require any of the above-mentioned pre-requisites, but thrives on a specific form of human agency, that objectifies into a distinct totality through an act or performance of fatal significance (in terms of its prognosis), to the individual and the society. As seen with the sacrifice of Gopalakrishnan, theater is regarded by the society as an example, an embodiment of its supreme values and virtues. But, the theater of politics in this case represents much more than that. The violence with which it is born and the confrontation and challenge that it throws on the existing order of things make it an act of subversion at its moment of enactment. In its brush with an oppressing order of reality the human agency

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19 The agency mentioned here is the same as that present in the universals of human culture as play, games, sports, theater and ritual (Schechner, 1988:6).
coincide on the 26th of January every year. This dramatic rendition of events skirts a very important dimension of the fact, that of criminality.

A question that may be very aptly raised in this context is about the disregard for Law. Upendra Baxi (1993) has sought the reason why in subaltern studies there is a disregard for Law. For example, he cites, Ranajit Guha’s 'Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency', which according to him, “celebrates the violence of the law and the law of violence” (ibid:249). What Baxi alleges Guha of doing is, valorizing ‘crime’. He says, “If the violence of the law converts an act of insurgency into a series of crimes, the law of violence seeks to valorize ‘crime’ as a pathway to justice” (ibid: 249). As a final result of this, the subaltern historian becomes a victim of the colonial law as any of the subject he studies. Even though not a study of subaltern history, the subject matter of our research has much in common with that branch of inquiry. The methods of contemporary history and anthropology have much in common as the work of History Workshop journal represent. We have also used methods of narrative and visual anthropology18.

In comparing and contrasting ritual and drama as distinct performative genres, Victor Turner tells us that in performance they serve the similar function of reflecting on the quotidian life in a subjunctive; not, quotidian the indicative, mood. Crossing the limen, the threshold, and entering the subjunctive world of the drama or the ritual, filled with tropes, metaphors, metonymy etc., to endow these alternative worlds with magical, festive or sacred power, creates an aggregate of selves in a community or society, metaphorically thought of as a self. This is the world from where role allocations begin to the various actors.

18 A branch of the discipline that critiques the visual media, from an anthropological perspective. Ethnographic film-making beginning with the Nanook of the North by Richard Flaherty (1922), through the works of David and Judith McDougall, Robert Gardner has evolved into a distinctive academic field today. Visual anthropology trains the methodology of classical anthropology to critique the media of the film as study and representation. The main writers of this field include Michael Taussig, Martin Jay, Homi Baba, try to locate art forms, or rituals in the specificity of their cultural contexts, thus deconstructing their fetishism and the autonomy of the market forces such fetishism helps to grow.
breathes out an elaborate sequence of events that constitute the script of theater. The plight of human condition, ineluctability of a tragic end and self-denying resistance to any force or domination beget the hallmarks of this theater of politics. Spaces of social life and categories of collective thought and imagination that would otherwise be decimated under the tag of convention and hence feared for the order of repression that they symbolized in the undemocratic stages of the history of society are sought to be resuscitated through the perpetuation of this theater of politics. It is such a theater of politics as we witness in the concatenation of events in the death of Gopalakrishnan, that Turner addresses by his concept, social drama.

The social drama is a mirror (not a planar, but a matricial or magical mirror; meaning, as a genre of cultural performance, “they exaggerate, invert, re-form, magnify, minimize, dis-color, re-color, even deliberately falsify chronicled events”, (Turner, 1986:42) ) on the social consciousness and hence the parallel structures found in the two versions of the drama – the social and the aesthetic. In both versions of theater the driving force or agency behind the structure is a ‘spontaneous communitas’ which is a liminoid phase that is born and consummated within the phases of breach and re-integration. The communitas is the revolutionizing agent between the phases of crisis and redressive action. Turner’s hypothesis is that the forms of theater and its sub-genres derive from the ritual processes of redressal rather than the legal-judicial or political processes of redressal (in the case of Sardar’s martyrdom the latter is conspicuous by its absence).

The martyrdom rites for Gopalakrishnan are rooted firmly in the local signifiers of martyrdom and/or sacrifice. This is a matter of analysis in chapter 5. The central event of these rites is a rally, that intonates the original event (a social drama, in the terms of Turner) that took Gopalakrishnan’s life. This transformation – the transformation of the original event into its enacted form - is made possible through the mimetic form of theater whence proceeds the distinctively modern allotments of roles and stages in the narratives informing the death of Gopalakrishnan.
Regarding the role of sacrifice in social drama, Turner writes, "It (the application of redressive or remedial procedures in a social drama) may also or additionally be in the metaphorical or symbolic idiom of the ritual process, and not infrequently involve an act of sacrifice, in which the tensions and animosities of the disturbed community are discharged by the immolation (real or in token form) of living subjects or valued objects" (ibid: 35). Turner's thesis on sacrifice in the social drama, finds a near-to-perfect illustration in the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan.

Communists when they went underground and in hiding, in fact entered this realm of imagination and became iconic presentations of the social drama. The metaphor of the underground accentuates the element of theatricality in the recollections of their revolt.

Asokan's memories retell the *dramatis personae* of the Communists in the underground, and illustrates how the whole movement is conceptualized in the form of a drama. A member-activist of the CPI(M), today, he was in his teens when he joined the Communist movement following the Independence. A study class was organized by the comrades for the fresh incumbents into the movement. One of the teachers was Sardar. In one of the classes, Sardar raised a question to one of the young initiates, pointing at a banana leaf to tell him what it was. The young comrade replied, that it is a banana leaf. Sardar raised his voice, and asked once again, what it was. This time the young comrade, stuttered in his reply, and said, it is a banana leaf, or may be it is not. Sardar now pointed to his uncertainty and stressed the ambiguity that underlay his answer, to finally point out the crisis of faith in oneself, which is the last thing a Communist should fall target to. This is in itself a good example, that contrasts, the subjunctive and indicative moods that we earlier discussed. The fact that, there was a crisis is pointed out by Gopalakrishnan himself, adds to Turner's hypothesis on the social drama, that it begins with a crisis followed by a breach of the existing peace. Such elements that point to the dynamics of a social drama were scattered at many a point in the narratives. Now, we continue with Asokan's narration of the incident.
Following the class, held under cover of night, the comrades were dispersing and returning to their respective homes or shelters. They moved scattered along the paddy fields, but in concert. On the way, they saw a group of people approaching them, that startled them. Asokan remembered that no one knew what to do, for every one feared the police who came on regular night beats to look for the Communists. Sardar’s firm and loud voice rose again asking the group approaching, who they were. They replied, they were locals who were looking for a calf that was missing from the herd. Everyone heaved a sigh of relief, remembered Asokan.

The realm of uncertainty or the mood of the subjunctive was overwhelmingly fearful and threatening as resonates in the account of Asokan. The underground movement of the Communists following the adoption of the Calcutta Thesis was a fatalistic drama, as many look back on it in retrospect. Its historicity having already been sabotaged by the institutionalization of the CPI, within the Parliamentary Democracy of India following the Palghat Congress in 1955, it was the subjunctive elements of the movement that were left for the imagination of the people to play with. In the thickness of narratives and interpretations, they gave it dramatic and hence aesthetic dimensions.

But, the distinctive play of power between the different actors adds to this drama. The time and space within this universe that creates the syntax of power that connects the opposites of life and death, is specified within the perimeters of the taboo of untouchability. The taboo is one that has already transformed human beings into signifieds of language by treating them as objects open to touch and not open to touch. The body is transformed into the site of power split between the contestations of touchability and untouchability. The most elementary unit of this discourse of power or this social drama, was the human body itself. The power of this signification was challenged through a breach that the Communists had made. The end of it as players in the drama they little knew. But all their bodies were open to severe challenge in terms of extermination from the agency of nemesis that held the rock bottom of this signification binding it into a totality, the agency of the state. The abrogation of the
discourse and its redressal made by the communists became possible only through a sacrifice.

A sacrifice has often been represented, as in Frazer, as an aboriginal agrarian rite that indicates the surplus or the well being of a community. In the sacrifice of Sardar this surplus was a surplus of signification when the agrarian relations of production were infused with a subversive domain of signification that flung open the deep seated prejudices of the existing sign world. Sardar was the powerful actor who in an act of self-sacrifice, assumed the role of the victim for the sacrifice. His body became the site of the bitter contestation of power between the subversive discourse and the dominating discourse of the state. In a short story, written in the memory of Sardar Gopalakrishnan, D.M.Pottekkattu, acclaimed writer and theater personality in Malayalam, writes, "He was not an individual. He was a movement. When maashu (master) moved through the streets, it was like a thousand masters on the move. There was something about him, that lay beyond all desires. Seeing him on the move, was something, that more than fulfilled the eyes, ears, all the senses. It really was more than fulfilling, that one never had enough of it. Yes; his body represented the brightness of the new and exuded the uninterrupted flow of a rebellion" puthumayude prakaasavum, porveeryathinte pravahavum poleyulla oru deham. These words, quoted in translation celebrates his body as the challenge to the order of power. This way of its representation in his death, i.e., his martyrdom, or his sacrifice, gives it the dramatic effect, which effect is one of its hallmarks.

Its most striking resemblance, is with one of the commonest forms of sacrifice in world religions, the sacrifice of the God, that "has penetrated into the most recent religions and given rise to beliefs and practices still current" (Mauss. M & Hubert. H., 1964: 7). This is an agrarian rite in which there is a close affinity or better an identification between the victim and the God. Dionysus with Ram, Rudra with Bull, Adonis with Corn, Soma with Soma-the plant, Varuna with Barley etc. "like is offered to like and the victim is the food of the gods" (ibid: 91). Soma is represented as the archetype of heavenly sacrificers in the Vedas. Soma is the food of gods, the intoxicating drink of men, is there in the sun, moon, the nourishing principle in nature.
etc. In soma as the victim all these forms are combined. They are concentrated, created and distributed anew by sacrifice. The sacrifice of Soma is the epitome of self-less sacrifice which is necessarily present in all sacrifices of God. The concept of God sacrificing himself is, "the highest expression and, as it were, the ideal limit of abnegation, in which no apportionment occurs" (ibid: 101). In God here is fused the entire meaning of sacrifice- all its actors and participants the sacrificer, the sacrifier and the victim enter into each other and become mixed together (please refer to the Introduction). Such mixing, but, is possible only for mythical, that is ideal beings.

The intensity of the social and political transformation, the course of which we charted in chapter 1, came to its summit on the eve of the First Republic Day of India, when the Communists of Nattika firka decided to protest against police brutality in the firka and make a statement for Citizens’ Rights. Sardar Gopalakrishnan, the moment when he was chosen to lead the Rally for Citizens’ Rights, perceived the choice as fatal. An informant Chandru states that, one day before the rally, he came to take leave of his eldest brother, who for him represented his family, his clan. Gopalakrishnan disclosed to his brother, how inevitable it was for him to lead the Rally on the Republic Day. There was no useful counsel, that Kumaran, Gopalakrishnan’s eldest brother could offer him. Virtually, from that moment on, for his clan, his being, was pushed into the realm of the mythical or the ideal. It was left to the machinery of the State, now to complete the sacrificial process, and seek redressal for the realm of power from the chaos thrust on it, by the challenge thrown by the Communists from the underground. His ordinary quotidian life as a school teacher and a social-political activist had ceased to be. This momentary essence of his self (that of the sacrificial victim) as his clan identified it with its aura of mythicality carried into the realm of collective social imagination, the moment the State took Sardar’s life. The ‘rite of passage’ from the colonial yoke to the world of Sovereignty, thus was achieved for the firka through the sacrifice of Gopalakrishnan. It was not done to avert any danger; a social or natural calamity, which is usually the case in collective sacrifices, according to Evans-Pritchard (1956: 198). Yet, it was a collective sacrifice, because a whole kinship
community and a whole political community, were party to the sacrifice, consciously or unconsciously. In the years that followed, the sacrifice assumed ever more its collective character. The martyrdom commemorations had turned into a piacular rite, to appease the spirit of the departed victim. There were not to be any more bloody sacrifices. In its integral association with the political ideology of the Left, the ‘rite of passage’ attained consummation; its ritual Sovereignty. It is towards ascertaining this identity, that the firka hosts the martyrdom commemorations, ever year.

On the other hand, in the ‘social drama’ of transformation, his death also became the sacrificial moment of redressal of the breach made by the Communists to the peace in the firka and the institution of a different order of symbols that form veritable transgression of the ritualistic demarcation of the public space into the signifiers of untouchable and touchable.

In this chapter, so far, we saw how two distinctive aesthetic genres of scopic (ritualistic-theatrical) and phonic(mythical) thought (based on the eye and ear, respectively, as its centres of perception) coupled with the intuitive aesthetic genre of magic, are premised within the narratives of modernity, in the context of concepts like nationhood, republicanism etc. Our intention was to show the ways in which the study of collective representations serve to resolve social contradictions in instances wherein positive signifiers of Law that seeks to define ‘the legitimate’ notion of nationhood is conspicuous by its absence.

Death as a Polyphonic Novel: The Aesthetic Genre of the Novel in Representing the Martyrdom/ Sacrifice

Now, we shall consider a different genre of aesthetics in the representation of Gopalakrishnan’s death, which is also a critical counterpoint to the three genres we already studied. This is the aesthetic genre of novel interpreted according to Bakhtin. If myth, magic and theater ordained the death of Gopalakrishnan as a total social phenomenon; the genre of novel fragments this totality and openly questions the very existence of the phenomenon or the presumed objectivity of the social fact by locating
it within a larger framework of ideologies rather than be restricted by the hampering of the localism that is central to the three genres discussed above.

The genre of novel represents a selection of the narratives where any notion of the collective is virtually absent. They call for special attention being narratives of personal lives in the course of the social changes of the last century in which the tragedy of martyrdom plays a crucial part.

These narratives also enter the ritual in a way apart from any of the structuralist or collectivist notions of the martyrdom or sacrifice of Sardar as a cult. The representations of martyrdom in these narratives often exude the intensity of a generative force equal to the original event. In the commemoration rites or festivities, but, this is not the case. There are no sacrifices equaling the event, that gave birth to the rite itself.

In this regard, to begin with, we find the observations of Freud on the origins of totemism as the religion of primitives more edifying than the collectivist theories. In Freud (1950: 141) the sacrifice is equated to a parricide, that stands remorsefully at the root of all annual ceremonies or rites of martyrdom. Guilt is the unifying element in the proliferation of totemic representations that follow from this original sin that aim at the expiation from the sin of the parricide. But, if the parricide cited by Freud was merely of symbolic significance, in the martyrdom of Gopalakrishnan it is a historic event. The intensity of the political milieu that begot the parricide in our context was far from what the ethnologists of Freud’s time (upon whose writings Freud based his formulations) had witnessed or imagined.

The democratic spaces and the opportunities of participating in diverse cultural spaces opened up by the coming of Independence and other post-colonial developments initiated a cultural transformation in which the clan or the collective was no longer the primary unit of social organization. Therefore, the unity of the event was sustained even if the cult was practiced without the actual presence or participation of individual members. This was made possible only through the arrival of the conjunction that united the locality of the firka with the Nation and the dissipation of the collective in
various directions of the post War scenario of life chances, which integrated the Nation within a larger brotherhood of sovereign Nations or Republics. It is in these individuated renditions of the memory of the sacrifice that we find the beginning of the 'heteroglossia' that stands in contrast to the collective representations. There is no community here; only the memories of it. Self- representation through ideologization is one of its overweening aspects. The sacrifice here occupies the crucial position of the speech of the individual, through mimesis. So much so that, as we observed in chapter 1, with respect to the consideration of biographies, the martyr rises to the position of the author of a novel that speaks through the voices of many of its heroes.

To this backdrop, Gopalakrishnan's nephew remembers, how while working in Abadan, Iran he received a letter from his uncle that carried a black badge on it representing the passing away of Gopalakrishnan. Or as yet another of his nephews recall, who when working in Colombo, Sri Lanka, made the effort to publish the news of his martyrdom in the daily brought out by the Sri Lankan Communist Party, called Navasakthi. These stories are only a couple of examples. The place of their work and the distinct conceptions of their identity in such circumstances give us the basic grounds to argue for the element of heteroglossia in the representations of martyrdom. These representations also allow for a transgression of the limited space allocated for the rites (within the firka of Nattika) of martyrdom and in thus doing constitute a distinct genre of representation itself.

In classifying these representations, a concept of tragic heroism is essential. A hero who in struggling against the oddities of life, throws open his/her character in sympathy with the pains of the tragic victim represented in the sacrifice of Gopalakrishnan. Although Bakhtin evaluates tragedy as a genre that is classical; epic and fully formed as a genre of aesthetic representation the tragic nature of Dostoevskian hero is not fully lost in the analysis of Bakhtin. The characterization of the hero in a novel as a social malady is itself proof enough for this. Bakhtin is not alone either in representing the hero thus. Rene Girard also highlights the surrogate victimized role of the hero in a context that is not necessarily divergent from the novel; anyhow, convergent with the ritual of sacrifice. He is contrasting his
expositions on the theory of sacrifice as distinct from that of Freud's many of whose observations he acknowledges. "Freud made an important discovery. He was the first to maintain that all ritual practices, all mythical implications, have their origins in an actual murder" (Girard, 1988: 201). But, the mistake that Freud makes is "The hero monopolizes innocence; the mob monopolizes guilt. The flaw attributed to the hero is not his, but belongs exclusively to the crowd. The hero, then, is a victim pure and simple, charged with a crime he did not commit. This concept of a simple one-way projection of guilt seems to me inadequate. Sophocles is wiser; he makes it clear (and Dostoevsky was to do the same in *The Brothers Karamazov*) that the surrogate victim, even when falsely accused, may be as guilty as others" (ibid: 203).

Girard's observations on the nature of rites of sacrifice and the pertinent remark that he makes regarding the characters of Dostoevsky's novel gives us reason enough to understand the nature of these stories, that also spin the martyrdom or sacrifice of Gopalakrishnan into a total social fact. In their syntagmatic collation, we may look at them as a novel. Girard also serves the crucial methodological connection in linking the collective-mythical, magical and theatrical- and individual forms of representation in this fact; the image of the surrogate victim, who can be as guilty as the rest.

It may be far-fetched to say that the stories that abound on the death of Sardar actually constitute a novel. Indeed, as Bakhtin observes, "of all the major genres only the novel is younger than writing and the book: it alone is organically receptive to new forms of mute perception, that is, to reading" (Bakhtin, 1981: 3). As an aspect of the consciousness novel is a distinctively modern phenomenon. Approached in this way, from the insights gained from studying Bakhtin we thus learn that the novel can be more than merely a written piece of text in a compact bind. Its characteristics can co-exist with the several other dimensions of culture. As Bakhtin himself observes, "But of critical importance here is the fact that the novel has no canon of its own, as do other genres.........studying other genres is analogous to studying dead languages; studying the novel, on the other hand, is like studying the languages that are not only alive, but still young" (ibid: 3).
An interesting comparison in this regard would be the novel *Innaley* that was written inspired by the events of Gopalakrishnan’s life celebrating the legendary heroism around him in the *firka*. The former, does not succeed as a novel, because, what it ends up doing is give Gopalakrishnan’s life an epic dimension by trying to evolve it out of a memory lodged in the minds of the people. Whereas in real life, what happens is, his stories are recounted with a feeling of the present, and not a distanced past, which serves the fodder for epics, according to Bakhthin.

A retrospective study of the moorings of this historic novel from the Bakhtinian perspective of heteroglossia the feature that decides the genre of the novel, and the current reflections of this heteroglossia in the memory of the people who were alive and reacting to the events narrated in this novel (an appreciation of the novel is included in the appendix) provides valuable insights. The novel *Innaley* merits an analysis, more for it’s epic features than it does for it’s features as a novel. In that sense, the novel is severely limited, because instead of a serio-comic hero, the construction in the novel is that of an epic hero, who does not exist, but, in an epic dimension of time and space. Whereas, in a dialogic remembrance of the same narrative, the construction of the hero is significantly different from the construction seen in the novel. There is a peculiar emphasis on the innovation of language to express phenomenon and ideas beyond the routinized expressions of everyday language.

The ideological determinism that binds the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan is unshackled by the stories that proliferate about it. There is an intimate dialogue in progress when one imaginatively approaches it. Bakhtin’s observations on Dostoevsky’s heroes/characters (because every character in Dostoevsky is heroic and hero is a sign of social malady and incompleteness in Dostoevsky’s novels) captures the nature of this dialogue. Bakhtin says, “one of his (Dostoevsky’s) basic ideas which he sets forth in his polemic with the Socialists, is precisely the idea that man is not a final and determinate quantity upon which stable calculations can be made, man is free and therefore can overturn any rules, which are forced upon him” (Bakhtin, 1973:48).
Bakhtin denies the existence of any single, unitary language that expresses all the discourses of any society. For, Bakhtin, there are many languages in the society all at once. There is a poetic language, the novelists’ language, the professional language used by the people of different professions and even narrower social circles like families who invent a special family jargon and who shape their own languages. Bakhtin calls this state of affairs a heteroglossia. Accordingly, all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views each characterized by its own objects, meanings, and values.

The theories of sacrifice, theater, magic, myth follow an essentialist definition of culture, where it is looked upon as a fundamental attribute of being human. This is a monologic definition of culture as well, and even reduces the human beings to the level of a classificatory norm; like a species of animals. It is against such a singular or monologic construction of culture that Bakhtin writes. His major area of study, as we already know is the poetics of the author or the novelist in Dostoevsky.

In Dostoevsky's novels, the category of speech, is multivocal and is heroic. Such heroisms produce distinct social types that the author identifies with. This is a manner of looking at culture from a position that is resounding of the grounds of the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan.

Culture as ideology and not merely structure finds a brilliant reflection in the writings of Bakhtin. Bakhtin does not welcome the category of mythical or magical thought with the same warmth as he does the discourses of other kind. Mythical thought assumes a fixity of meaning to the words spoken and the language used presupposes the idea of a unitary and singular language defining the confines of a separate nationality. This revolts against the idea of a heteroglossia as defining the linguistic-ideological sensibilities of the people that conceive in every language a distinct mode of thought that decentres the very idea of language itself thus not allowing any singular entity to take its place. Language according to Bakhtin becomes one of many possible ways to hypothesize meaning. The heteroglossia anticipates an inner
dialogism of the word that fulfills its meaning in the response of the listener. Thus it is also apart from rhetorical speech that presumes the listener as a passive entity. Needless to say, for Bakhtin the literary form par excellence that gives ample space to the revealing of the heteroglossia is the novel.

Contrasted to novel stands poetry. Poetry, which is not dialogical. It is not rhetorical either. It operates on the basis of a single unitary language nonetheless. Poetry in its strife for maximal purity, works with its language as if it were the only language. This is where it avoids any contact with the heteroglossia of the languages that always surround it without ever coming into contact with it. The novel on the other hand is a dialogic involvement with the language that is stratified and as the result of uninterrupted ideological evolution, is fragmented into languages-language here should be taken to mean an ideology that shapes distinct ways of life.

In studying Bakhtin we are actually trying to get to the bottom of a conception of heroism. The ramparts of this consciousness that perpetuates the heroic death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan is Dostoevskyian, for life as ideology itself does not find a better portrayal than in Dostoevsky's novels. The hero lives for the sake of an idea that lives within his consciousness and is continuously in a polemic with him. A hero and an idea are inextricable elements of every one of Dostoevsky's novels. This idea more often than not assumes the form of a double that pulls the person away from himself.

Ironically it may seem this is not true of not any single character of his, but every character of his. Therefore hero is not the absolute focus of the novel over whose thoughts the novelist sways absolute command. On the contrary every character is so much in command of the story that all of them individually seem to exercise their power in sketching the narrative. It is in this vein that Bakhtin argues that Dostoevsky's novels are celebration of polyphonies/or as another Dostoevsky commentator, Viktor Shklovsky, writes that the conclusion of a novel signified for Dostoevsky the collapse of a new Tower of Babylon (Bakhtin, 1973: 33).
What ossifies the memories of Sardar Gopalakrishnan is his death. No matter what; every memory related to him wind down on the category of death. It grips every thought, every event into its final unrelenting grip. It is a throw back from the present to a past that is more uncertain than the future. The singular instance of Death covers all the memories associated with the personality of Sardar. January 26\textsuperscript{th} is remembered for his death. A period of political struggle is remembered for his death. Members of his family are regarded for his death. A mere mention of the word ‘master’ is coupled with the tragic sentiments compiled in the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan who is the prototypal ‘master’ for a generation. Any memory associated with January 26\textsuperscript{th} 1950 hence is stumped by a pervading gloom of death. Benumbed by the fright of Gopalakrishnan’s death and the horror of the police arson that followed had driven the villagers to a juncture from where prospectively anything was possible. But something stood high in front of them that blocked out their vision not letting them discriminate what they saw. This was the nothingness of a space of death, that the law refused to take cognizance of; nor, let others do so. In the later years this nothingness would work its way into celebration and merry-making for the world to see on the 26\textsuperscript{th} January. Not for the cause of the Republic that was born on that day but for the death of Sardar for a redemptive freedom from fear. It is a unique complementarity that guides the extremes of this thinking - the death of Sardar and freedom from fear. The perimeters of its play are indefinite especially with the concrete caricaturing that it makes of the Indian Republic on its day of ratification. Against such a background there emerges the destruction of the rhetorical unity of personality, act and event, all accomplished through the licentiousness of the heteroglossia.

All the old links between a man and his act, between an event and those who participate in it, fall apart. A sharp gap now opens between a man and the external position he occupies –his rank, his public worth, his social class. All the high positions and symbols, spiritual as well as profane, with which men adorn themselves with such importance and hypocritical falsity are transformed into masks in the presence of the rogue, into costumes for a masquerade, into buffoonery. A reformulation and
loosening-up of all these high symbols and positions their radical re-accentuation, takes place in an atmosphere of gay deception. (Bakhtin, 1981 :407-408).

Sardar's memories by some endemic design shows itself as a heteroglossia in Bakhtin's definition. It contains ideologies of various strains even though he is known as a martyr of the Communists. This unifying tendency is coarsely violated by the very constitution of this memory. It makes any singular interpretation of his death an impossibility. Therefore the people of Nattika spawn stories and stories in the course of preserving something dear. The distinction between fiction and reality gets eclipsed in the overplay of events and incidents. A chronologization of the events is an incongruity to this mode of thinking. Even the best chronologization would end with a tragic fore closure as it approaches the death of Sardar on the 26th of January. For the consciousness that orientates it, the event has been abstracted out of their lives to enter an order of infinity. This level of abstraction in its turn offers itself for the staging of a unique criss-crossing of ideologies. It has elements of how the people relate to each other and also to a community with a distinctive idea of its past, present and future. That is where the heteroglossia of martyrdom enters the narratives of Kerala and Indian history. As signified in the discourse of death articulated through the martyrdom/sacrifice of Sardar, these narratives hypothecate the image of a nationality in a dialogic form. This is its entry to another order of abstraction where the multitude of ideologies far surpasses the heteroglossia of Sardar's stories itself. Through the invocation of this idea it evokes a dialogue with all the national ideologies marking the cue or leaving the trace for a new discourse altogether. By the sheer coincidence of the First republic Day with the death of Sardar it excites tremendous force in its signification. This is not exactly a derivative of courage, bravery or any personal virtues or social values. On the contrary, it is a derivative of exactly the opposite of everything, which the society stood for. It is in the course of this tremendous exercise

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20 The letter stamped with a black badge of mourning on it received by Gopalakrishnan's nephew in Abadaan, Iran and the efforts of another nephew to publish the news of his death in the organ of the SriLankan Communist Party may be seen as concrete examples of engagement with the heteroglossia of ideologies that constitute the Nationalism in this Country.
that the consciousness, which inhabits it, spreads its tentacles of linguistic re-ordering for ordaining a new language of representation.

After having said this, it is essential to discuss the character of at least one person, who in a quintessentially heroic voice, spoke about the turbulence and pace of change in the events, about the period of our study, and how it connected with the evolution of his own life. This may also be considered an example of a narrative of the heteroglossia that constitutes the phenomenon of death into a martyrdom.

My introduction to Ravi was a crucial point in the development of my thesis. The enthusiasm with which he treated the venture of doing a biography of Sardar Gopalakrishnan evinced in no uncertain terms the manner in which he was associated with the nationalist and communist movement in Nattika of which Sardar was one of the victims/martyrs. Coming from an Ezhava family in the village he is referred to as thandar which is an epithet reserved for the highest ranking amongst the caste. But little does the epithet reflect on his personality, and even if it does, it is not for the reason ascribed to it by tradition or power. For example, I may illustrate an incident that Ravi narrated to me. By way of inheritance, he received precious little, in terms of ancestral property. The onus of getting his two sisters educated and married, fell mostly on Ravi, once his Father expired early in life; when Ravi was in school. Added to the responsibility of winning the daily bread for the family, his communist activism saw him fleeing to Bombay at a very early age of fourteen. Upon return, Sardar, one of his peers, was already killed and the lacuna that he saw in the political scenario magnetically drew him back into the Communist movement and he was the Party Office Secretary of one of the local committees of the CPI in the firka. He received a monthly salary from the Party for the responsibilities he attended to. Upon the Party’s coming to power in 1957, the scheme of monthly salary was scrapped which was a blow to many comrades like Ravi. Over and above that the institution of a State Lottery by the first Communist ministry of Kerala raised serious ideological questions for Ravi. He could not reconcile to the idea of a Communist ministry

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21 As Ravi said, no one in the village those days dared to say ka; the first syllable in the word communist for fear of arrest
legalizing gambling, for whatever reason or however revenue it raised. This led to his resignation from the Party and his passage to Srilanka where he found a profitable job till his return many years later. Upon his return, he had no place to live or no land to build a home, because all the money that he earned working in Ceylon (Srilanka) was spent on the education and marriage of his sisters. For a few years following his return, he was ‘on the road’ touring many parts of Kerala with a theater company that he had set up. It was at such a juncture that he came across a piece of land that was allotted by the Government for the welfare of Harijans in the village of Chulur neighbouring Edathiruthy. This plot of land originally belonged to the Blahayil Nayars. But, following the implementation of the Kerala Land Reforms Act 1963, it passed under the possession of the State Government. A fragment of this plot after it was allocated to the building of a technical school for Harijan students was given to a Harijan from the neighbourhood. This fragment or portion was lying unused because the Harijan family had a plot of their own and a house in it. Ravi sought to buy it so that he could build a house there. In the 1970s when Ravi approached this man with the proposal of buying this land he voluntarily gave it to him for a summary price without any measurement of its area. As Ravi recalled, this man said, “thandar, you may take as much as you require”, implying there is no need for measuring the land as such. This is the context in which this traditional epithet of thandar was explicated in a modern setting. The land where Ravi lives with his wife now, is no more than 3-4 cents in expanse and he has his dwelling made of palm leaf thatch, the way the poorest house-holds in Kerala are built, with a room, a kitchen, a squarish living space where a table is spread and a few chairs around it. The compound wall of the Technical Training school forms the wall of his house as well. Ravi thus lives even today as an epitome of the virtues of modesty and simplicity in social life in his village.

Ravi’s multi-faceted personality plays a very important role in elucidating the dimensions of the martyrdom- his activism in politics, his involvement in theater production as a sciptwright and director, his poetry(mainly improvisation of folk sonnets and lyrics, a couple of which are about Sardar), his penchant for Marxist philosophy with which he is engaged even today and showed me the manuscript in
Malayalam of recent treatise he wrote titled ‘Materialism in the Computer Age’ *Bhauthikavaadam Computeryugathil*. It was in the course of a conversation with one of Sardar’s nephews when he mentioned about Ravi as a “jack of all trades” that we first learnt about Ravi. Later it was mentioned by a local shop-owner at a junction in the neighbourhood of the village where Ravi lives, in hushed tones, that this man (Ravi) had really terrorized the village in his youth, alluding perhaps to a number of fights he has had in the village for various reasons or the days spend in hiding during the days of the Naxal uprising in India during the seventies. One also learnt about him through the words of the widely read poet and literary critic of Malayalam K. Satchidanandan, when he wrote thus about Ravi’s literary venture in preface to a play written by Ravi, “All his works bear the stamp of optimism in the final victory of revolution. This is a really wonderful thing, especially, in the recent times. These works must be looked upon as historic documents of the experiences of a handful of youngsters who encountered the reality of a phase of Kerala history”

Yet another epithet used for him in the village was *vettvachaoan*. He earned the epithet in his younger days of budding Communist activism for sharing a meal with a member of the *Vettuva* caste, which was a taboo derived from a rigorous practice of untouchability. The practice of this custom in those days went to the extent that in a public place like a tea shop for instance, separate cups and other utensils were kept outside the shops for the use of the Harijans (mainly, *pulaya, paraya* and *vettuva* castes). These remarks resounded like the depiction of a character from the novels of Dostoevsky, where every one of his characters takes shape within a space of dialogic imagination, and each of his characters represent a multitude of life-styles, every one of which is an ideology in itself, but an unfulfilled one. None of them represent a fulfilled and fully formed career, speaking in a voice of wisdom, pertaining to a moral

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22 In translation from Malayalam, from the preface to *Chuvappu Thaavalathileyykku* Indranath (1991), Chuloor: Indra Theatres.

23 *Vettuvas* and *Choans* or *Ezhavas* are different castes; the latter higher in the caste hierarchy as opposed to the former.

24 If we take his novel *The Idiot* for instance, the characters ranging from Prince Myshkin, to Radozhkin and Natalia Zvereva who emerge from divergent social spaces of the decadent Russian aristocracy of the pre-revolutionary times, but coalesce within the dialogic space of the novel, and the author as its only witness.
law of personal success or achievement. The character of Raskolnikoff in ‘Crime and Punishment’ represents that of a student in Moscow, living in penury, and at the same time a criminal, as much as a caring brother, a loving son and a true lover. Ravi seen thus, is a hero, but, not a hero of epic stock, but of a serio-comic stock, containing within his person, a polyphony of voices of distinct languages of different castes, classes and social groups.

Ravi considers Sardar to be one of his peers. His true peer as he later revealed, is a comrade called K. Damodaran, one of the founding members of the CPI and who was the chief ideologue of the Socialists writing in the weekly Prabhatham started by the Congress Socialists in 1935 (Krishnan, 1975:36). He is also the author of a number of books on philosophy; especially Indian philosophy like Indayude Aatmavu (The Soul of India) or Bharateeyadarsanam (The Vision of India) which were path-breaking attempts in Malayalam to read ancient philosophical texts of the land in the light of the philosophy of historical and dialectical materialism. He along with another veteran Communist P.C. Joshi was also instrumental in setting up an ‘Archives on Contemporary History’, in the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Ravi being from the kollaryil clan identified with Sardar Gopalakrishnan in the dyadic formation - the clans to which both Sardar and Ravi belonged were so closely knit in terms of their settlements and lands that they formed into a singular exogamous kinship association (a moiety). They prohibited any exchange of women between the two clans. The two neighbouring clans in the village of Edathiruthy, thus formed a symbiotic cultural milieu between the two clans thus re-interpreting their kinship in the light of this dyad.

Ravi was a teenager at the time he knew Sardar. He looked upon him with great awe. This is not without its own reasons. Ravi saw Sardar from close when the most turbulent phase of his life was happening. This is the period stretching mainly from 1948-50. Ravi had his teenage dreams budding at that time of winning the whole firka’s acclaim by becoming the first martyr of the communists. In fact this dream was so profound as to have a fatal influence on the life of Sardar Gopalakrishnan, whom
Ravi today identifies as the real life protagonist of his dream. The incident that makes him say so convincingly happened one day in the office of the local communist party, and is also a good example of the narrative potential proverbs have in the language of Malayalam; simultaneously illustrating the mythical or proverbial nature of Sardar’s death.

One night in the late 1940s, before the ban came on the CPI, Ravi was camping in the office of The Beedi Workers Union in Kattur, 25 a village neighbouring Edathiruthy with Sardar and another Comrade all three of whom woke late into the night discussing several problems related to their organization. Ravi remembers that they were discussing ways to raise funds to help the laid off workers from a tile factory in northern Malabar who were in dire straits and knew nothing of what to make of their living. The Communists had taken over the responsibilities of their starving families and decided to collect money for their benefit. It was as a part of that campaign that Sardar, Ravi and friends reached back in the office that day. The discussions lived late into the night and upon finishing all the rest left for their respective nestling places and only Sardar, Ravi and the other comrade (name or whereabouts unknown) remained. Ravi went to sleep towards the early hour of morning, but Sardar and the other comrade kept awake and continued the discussions. Ravi in the meanwhile had this dream of his becoming the first martyr of the Communists from Nattika and woke up shouting his own name aloud as the first martyr of Nattika. Sardar he recalled listened to it with a very familiar sense of humor and chided him saying *poda chekka...avante oru swapnam...nattika firkayile aadyathe rakthasaakshi......athu njaan thanne aayirikkum*, (“you kid, will you shut up! the first martyr is only going to be me.

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25 The Beedi Workers’ Union office in Kattur was remembered by Ravi as a unique example of cultural symbiosis that existed between the people of Malabar, who since 1792 was under the Colonial administration, prior to that under Tippu Sultan and even prior to that the Zamorin’s rule, and in 1948-52, the period of our study, a part of the Centrally administered district of Madras province and the princely state of Cochin that accepted the British suzerainty in the year ....... but, continued to have a king of its own. This was so because, the villages of Edathiruthy and Kattoor had a joint Beedi Workers’ Union, when the idea of a unified state of Kerala was still a distant dream and no signs of a linguistic reorganization of the states in the Union was yet on the cards, apart from the 1920 Kanpur Congress resolution of the Congress, under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi to organize Congress Provincial Committees on the basis of language.

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and be done with your innocent dreams). But Ravi believes to this day in a strain of fatalism how those words proved to be his nemesis, which he expressed in the Malayalam proverb, *aram pattuka*. The proverb stands for self-invited nemesis that ominously conveys the biography of a tragic hero. The proverb singularly covers the entire narrative or biography of the hero in its intricate design of events. It may be equated to a chronotope as in a novel.

Ravi’s narrative twists and turns with a distinct sense of destiny, that is beckoning the heroic-individual sense within him. His description of the Edathiruthy village upon his return from Bombay, is a good enough example of this. Ravi’s reflections also conveyed in no uncertain terms the pallor of fear that had gripped the village of Edathiruthy, following the death of Sardar Gopalakrishnan, which we shall report at length, given its graphic description of the kind of terror that he witnessed in the village.

Ravi did not expect what he saw when he returned from Bombay. The sum of twenty eight rupees and thirty paise had been difficult to get. It kept him waiting for a couple of months in Bombay working as a delivery peon with some obscure firm he does not remember the whereabouts. But sure enough, they made good his desire to reach Edathiruthy his home.

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26 Bakhtin has dwelt upon a similar theme in his study of the ancient forms of biography and autobiography (Bakhtin:994). He identifies a similar entity in ancient Roman autobiography and biography. The genre itself is called *prodigia*. In the *prodigia* the auguries of a man’s fate- his separate acts and undertakings as well as his life as a whole- individualized and personal elements fuse with state and public elements. It becomes the form for expressing a personal identity and the course of a whole life. Bakhtin calls them, forms for depicting the *public self-consciousness of a man*. Thus, it was evoked in the instance of personality whose fate is indissolubly bound up with the destinies of the state (as expressed in Sardar’s desire to be the first martyr of an Independent and Sovereign Republic). They have their origin in the state level or the public square (the *agora*)(ibid:140-141). The proverb employed by Ravi to narrate the death of Sardar as martyrdom, does a similar task of moulding the personality of the martyr in its wholesomeness; but, it moves from the state level to the individual level integrating the individual personality of the martyr as a biography or an autobiography, because in the realm of the public square (*agora*) any distinction between the two does not hold water. The loss of such a life had telling impacts on the people of his home village, most distinctively of all the places in the *firka* of Nattika.
It was March 1951. Irinjalakuda is the nearest railway station to Edathuruthy. At a distance of eight kilometers from Edathuruthy. Ravi had taken the bus to Edathuruthy from Irinjalakuda. *Karivandi* is a literal description the villagers gave for the bus, since it spewed burnt charcoal droppings all along the road.

The bus went till Kattoor, and no further. After crossing the bridge at Kattoor across the man-made Connolly canal one would step into Edathuruthy and enter a different dispensation from the one in Kattoor. This was Malabar. The days of a unified Kerala were still not realized. Kattoor village was a part of the princely state of Cochin, and not infrequently offered hostage to the Communists escaping police persecution in the adjacent village of Edathuruthy. Today, the two villages are part of the same District, and the same State; or succinctly, the same set of laws apply to the two villages. But, not so in 1951. The crisscrossing of a colonial dispensation still fractured the landscape of a young Independent Sovereign Republic called India.

Ravi had gone to Bombay for many reasons. One was his search for a job, another was in the village he could be nabbed by the police anytime for his involvement with the CPI which would mean disaster for his family, having already lost his father who was the only earning member for the family.

Crossing the bridge and entering into the market street of Edathuruthy, he noticed the shocking diffidence with which familiar faces fleted past him with little air of recognition, especially to someone seen after a long gap. He felt that, a Communist was marked in the streets of Edathuruthy for the first time, with a certain opprobrium. Ravi no doubt was one, as at least he realized then, at that moment.

Stepping outside the main market street and into the thoroughfare that would take him home he broke down. There were no easy answers to be found for this ineffable apathy that had taken over the villagers. He reached home to see an equally perplexed mother, who was little different from the rest he saw. But, she nonetheless had a story to tell her son. Well, it was no less than a story for she told Ravi what had happened in his absence in the most dramatic way which Ravi would later reproduce in one of his dramas. His mother’s narrative left him suspended in anxiety and anguish over what
had really happened when he was making his livelihood as an early school dropout from Edathiruthy in Bombay. The son of a father whom he lost early in life and brought to nothing much by way of inheritance, the only boy in the family had a rather difficult time to make things work with his mother and two sisters. So like all vagrants of that time as they were seen, the ideology of communism made an escape route for Ravi. Here was an opportunity to study for all your life even if you drop out of school. So, with little remorse Ravi left school when it became increasingly difficult for him to continue in Edathiruthy amidst the launch of intense search for the communists by the police. The entire village was divided into friends and allies of the communists when Ravi left. On his return, he saw an even worse animosity written into their minds, that made him anxious to seek and find out where he fitted in.

For a boy of fourteen who had invited on himself the sarcasm of a whole village in earning the alias of “vettuvachhon” for sharing his food with a person from a lower caste Gopalakrishnan master’s sacrifice was a foolish act. Yet, Ravi concludes today that master invited such a fate very willingly upon himself. Master was alive meant a lot of things were assured for the young mind. He was no more, meant Ravi had to be man on his own.

The strains and stress of an individual fighting a lonely and courageous but a loosing battle is the hall mark of his narratives. He continued thus. Abandoning any thoughts about his family’s future and fortune, Ravi immersed fully into the activities of the CPI. The Communist Party literature, in the form of leaflets, and circulars had to be circulated in the various branches and the members of the Party. Given the ban, this proved a challenging task. Therefore, certain comrades were chosen as couriers for the Party publications and any other messages. Whateoeer publication or information, that was meant to be distributed, had to be done so at the earliest, or else, there was a possibility that such information became stale and finally leaked to the authorities.

27 This part of his story was reminiscent of Tarkovsky’s (a renowned Russian director)’Ivan’s Childhood’ The subject matter of the movie is a child’s- Ivan’s- revenge against the Nazi soldiers who massacred his family. For this, he joins the Russian Army and gathers and couriers information about enemy movements, to and fro in the remote corners of the frontier, for which he puts into a brilliant display, the craft of ingenious stealth as a boy, he was gifted with.
Ravi was the courier for the Party, during the ban, in Nattika. The firka stretched for almost a length of twenty two kilometers from south (Aala) to north (Chettuva). Ravi's journey would begin from Aala, where he regularly collected his parcel everyday from a Party sympathizer's house. There was no motor transport on the road. He was given for expenses on the way a quarter of a rupee. Half of it would go into payment for a crossing by ferry. On his way, he invariably found time for a tea, but no food. After reaching his parcel at its designation in Chettuva, he would have his dinner of porridge and dry fish cooked in charcoal, and sleep the night there itself. The next morning, he returned to Aala, carrying the consignment from Chettuva, with him in the process. Thus, he provided the two ends of information for the firka unit of the CPI, for almost two months, when one day, he started leaking blood in his urine. The leadership, intervened and send him into treatment, at an Ayurvedic practitioner's house, who was also a leader of the Communists For the perseverance, with which he served the Party, he was one of the first to receive a regular salary from the Party. Later, in 1956, when the decision was revoked, under the light that, such devotion is not demanded of its comrades, it was that, Ravi split ways with the CPI.

He remained wedded to the ideology and philosophy of Communism, even while his charting his commitment to it in his own unique and varied ways. His marriage four times, and divorce three times is anathema to conventional ideas in the village. Contractual monogamy, is what is demanded by the civic morality of the village. The organized Left does not find him good enough to be a Communist, even though he has remained in their membership at various stages of his life. He notwithstanding the taboo, associated with his character, has gone ahead with publishing his ideas and staging them in the form of dramas. At the point, when we met him, he had just finished writing a treatise on 'Materialism in the Computer Age', bhauthikavaadam computer yugathil. To get an idea of its contents, please refer to the Appendix, where we have added a translated version of its preface.

Ravi's biography helped us understand the essential stem of Dostoevskian, carnivalesque, heroism inherent to associations with the period, that was there in most
of the narratives\textsuperscript{28}. However there were exceptions, as with the instance of Sankaran, in the following chapter.

In the final chapter of our thesis, we shall examine the possible continuity between the two distinctive genres of aesthetic representation in the social phenomenon of martyrdom that we have chosen to study. The two distinctive genres are those of the collective (the magical, mythical and theatrical-social dramatic) and the individual (polyphonic). Our contention will be that there is a distinctive continuity between the two genres of representation; a continuity offered by the binding element of tragedy.

\textsuperscript{28} We shall leave our description of Ravi for the time being (we have discussed him in chapter 2 also regarding the one-man procession he took out on the Sardar Dinam 1976, and an interview with him is transcribed in the appendix), about the ways in which he saw, understood and acted upon certain developments of his time.