CHAPTER 4

A Present of the Past:
Through the Geographies of CH Muhammad Koya

Basheer's *Ormayude Arakal* [1973] was originally published as a series in Chandrika Weekly. CH Muhammad Koya was the editor of the weekly then. Basheer, later in his life, found it necessary to acknowledge this fact (Kamaludheen, 2011: 28). Basheer also found it necessary that when *Ntuppuppakkoranandarnnu* came out and the Muslim League termed it anti-Muslim, it was CH Muhammad Koya, who was very young then, who had the courage to publicly support not just the author but also the merit of the book (29). It has been said that when the two met each other Basheer launched volleys of questions on CH:

Basheer: Why is it that the Muslim Leaguers oppose my book?

CH: Because they have not read it.

Basheer: And the Congressmen, why do they oppose it?

CH: Because they have not understood it.

Basheer: Even the Communists are against it!

CH: Because they saw religion and the Prophet in it! (Kunhimoossa, 2010:14)

CH Muhammad Koya (1928-1983) was an extraordinary figure in the Muslim politics of Kerala. He became an active participant in the programmes of the Muslim League since 1940. The party itself was very young in Malabar, just three years from entering
Malabar. Rising through the ranks of Muslim Students Federation, he became a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Madras in 1952, the first general elections to be held in India. He was re-elected in 1957 and later was elected to the Parliament as well. In 1961 he became India’s youngest Speaker, chairing over the Kerala Legislative Assembly. In 1967 he became the Minister for Education in Kerala, and in 1971 he responsibilities covered half a dozen portfolios including Home Ministry. For a short time, in 1979, he was the Chief Minister of Kerala, and subsequently was the Deputy Chief Minister in 1981-2.

CH Muhammad Koya is chiefly remembered as the one who led his party from a minimal presence in 1952 to the role of king makers. Muslim League has shown itself, in the period of our study, adept at switching alliances, landing mostly in winning ones, though it cannot be said that they were the first to break alliances. However, at present the position of Muslim is synonymous in the state with the Congress led United Democratic Front, but the general culture of parties switching alliances continue. The strong presence of communists from the early years of Independence ensured that the state was not a Congress monopoly. The Congress and the Communist party (after 1964, parties) battled out for dominance while the partners often alternated between them. Added to this, the presence of numerous parties ensured fractured verdicts and bigger role for smaller players. The state regularly suffered from political paralysis. In the period of our study, the state of Kerala, formed on the 1st of November 1956 by merging the erstwhile princely states of Cochin and Travancore with the Madras Presidency district of Malabar, had been subjected to President’s rules four times.

In a party which was cleaved into the spiritual and the parliamentary, CH Muhammad Koya’s career was nourished under three of the spiritual (and supreme, typically occupying the post of the President of the Kerala state committee of the Muslim League) leaders of the
Muslim League – Sayyid Abdul Rahman Bafaqi Tangal (1906-1973), Sayyid P.M.S.A. Pookkoya Tangal (-1975) and Sayyid Muhammad Ali Shihab Tangal (1936-2009). Starting as a junior to Seethi Saheb (1898-1961), CH Muhammad Koya’s early years marked him apart for his literary career, through his editorials in Chandrika (the mouthpiece of the party), his travel writings, and his literary columns in other periodicals like Mathrubhumi. He was a member of literary organizations and in some way crystallised a particular way of being for the average Muslim. He shared Basheer’s sense of humour, and often wayward jokes find home under his name. Many landmark projects, like the establishment of a university in Malabar as well as the formation of a new district in Malabar, were attributed to his industry and vision. It is no wonder then that CH Muhammad Koya remains the most iconic of League’s political leaders. CH Muhammad Koya is the second exemplary writer who we deal with to map the negotiations of the Muslim public in Malabar to the shifts in their political horizons.  

In 1959, when almost every other party other than the Communists had joined together to oust the latter, on the streets as well as through Parliamentary means (what was, ironically referring to China, called ‘The Liberation Struggle’) CH Muhammad Koya set out from his village Annasseri to perform the holy Hajj; on the 1st of April, 1959. Travelling first to Madras and from there to Bombay by train; greeted throughout the journeys by supporters

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1 For a meticulously researched political biography of CH Muhammad Koya which also charts the political career of Muslim League till CH’s death, see Badakara 2007 [1985]. In the recent years Olive Books based in Kozhikode have brought out books written by CH Muhammad Koya. These will be referred to in the course of this chapter. Other than these, there has been a collection of essays on CH Muhammad Koya’s travel writings [Thayalangadi (2011)], memoirs on episodes in CH’s life [Poonoor, (2012)], a collection of select speeches made by CH in the Kerala Legislative Assembly [Kuttikkulam (2013)], a collection of select speeches on different occasions [Kamaludheen (2011)], and a collection of his writings [Abdullakoya (2012)].
who had gathered in different stations en route to meet their beloved leader, he reached Bombay on the 4th of April. He attended numerous meetings there, partly to do with Hajj, and partly concerned with the political party he belonged to, and sailed to Makkah aboard “Saudi Arabia” on the 12th of April, 1959. On April 19th the ship reached Yalamlam, a region in Yemen, where those pilgrims who have come from Bombay by ship are supposed to change into the customary two pieces of seamless white cloth\(^2\), where they did so. The ship halted at Jiddah, the port city of Saudi Arabia the next day from where they travelled to Makkah\(^3\) by road. CH performed Umra, or the lesser Hajj in the following days and then visited numerous sites in the twin holy cities of Makkah and Medina. He entered the stages of the holy Hajj on 14th of June, 1959, and sailed back on the 28th of June. He reached Bombay of the 8th of July, Madras on the 11th and then back home on the 12th of July, 1959.\(^4\) His experiences on the holy trail were published even as he was still at the journey in Chandrika and was subsequently brought out as a book. This book, titled *Ente Hajj Yatra* [My Hajj Journey] will be our principal point of discussion for next section.

\(^2\) Otherwise called the *ihram* cloth; the act of entering *ihram* includes other obligations concerning personal upkeep too.

\(^3\) The more commonplace transcription of the Arabic name is ‘Mecca’, but considering that the term is not generally well received among Muslims, I am sticking throughout, except when quoting, to “Makkah”.

\(^4\) The Communist Ministry had only a few more days in office, as it was dismissed by the Centre on the 31st of July, 1959.
Travel writing’s association with the rise of novel and that of nationalism is well known as exemplified by the success of *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, the works of Walter Scott, etc. However, it was only with the 1978 publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* that the writing on the Other beyond the borders could be studied as a discourse deeply implicated in knowledge/power, such that Orientalism, a corpus of study over the time about Orient, for Said chiefly Arabia, produced the Orient “politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” (Said, 1978: 3). Said observed that rather than produce new knowledge about the still-being-explored Other, Orientalism produced repetition that drew sustenance and legitimacy from itself. It is a case of mutuality in citation and consolidation. Said’s intervention, in the footsteps of Foucault’s work on discourse has ever since been digging for the archaeology of the rhetoric of domination implicit in the metaphors and etymologies of the terms of travel writing, right from Herodotus. It was also shown that the entanglements between the self and the world in the Western philosophy of the eighteenth century could accrue a climate which could give rise to a particular idea of travel, one which could neatly separate the traveller and the travelled to and could subject the latter to the knowing gaze of the traveller, ‘knowing’ as in a continual sense of being processed, quantified, measured, etc., but also in the sense of being certified as with knowledge, culture, that is, not a barbarian, cannibal, et al.

[Descartes'] ideas about the separation of mind and matter and the ability to think of oneself as a reasoning entity (the result of one’s own inward journey)

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5 For a survey on studies on travel writing, but also on differently produced knowledges out of the cultural Other, see Campbell, 2002.
created a climate in which travel writing could come of age. A narrative that combined inner and outer voyage was not only possible but even predictable. This shift has two consequences for travel writing: the emotions, thoughts, and personal quirks of the narrator become more accessible and more dominant within the narrative and the world itself, its plants, animals, and people, also become a source of knowledge for their own sake. (Blanton, 2002: 11-2)

It was in the eighteenth century that travel writing could consolidate itself as a genre, and it was by the end of that century that the subjectivity of the travel acquired more prominence than the previous objectivity which had gained prominence in the light of scientific treatises such as Carl Linne's *Systema Naturae* of 1735. This tendency of privileging the subjective feelings of the traveller reached its peak during the Romantic age, and continued in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The self and the other nevertheless have undergone transformations. While the other has exchanged its place as the repository of knowledge—as in Lockean philosophy—it has turned itself into property under mercantilism; colonialism turned the other into possessions and gateways to one's own pasts, glorious or bestial, and a new era of hitech wars has turned it into a realm to find celestial harmony. Travelling itself has become traversing a disenchanted space. The self too has changed—the self conscious author of Renaissance, the imperial self of oceanic discoveries, the ordering, measuring, quantifying self beginning from the eighteenth century, the sentimental hero of the late eighteenth century and the self-discovering self from the early nineteenth century, etc. The Descartian body-mind divide has however withstood these changes. (Blanton, 2002: 1-29)
The postcolonial wedge-work on travel writing was soon shown itself to be androcentric. An important study on travel writing, Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*, published in 1992, touched upon the subtlety required on studying travel writing and brought to the fore the question of gender and location. Though thus with much variation and complexity, Paul Smethurst has nevertheless observed there to be a common imperial form for the travel narratives of the western world about its Other:

This imperial form is binarist in nature and so the construction of binaries in the context of imperialist travel writing might be considered a discursive and rhetorical strategy consistent with imperialist ideology. Conversely, the deterring and deferring of binaries could be regarded as post-imperialist/postcolonial move. Imperialist travel writing, as a form, organises binaries particular to the construction of imperialist worldviews and locates these in places which are to be incorporated or maintained within the empire.

The primary mode of this form is referential – that is, same and not-same – and incorporating, and its main strategy is to harness the mobility and potential waywardness of travel under the order and control of systematic imperial mapping. In this case, the motion of travel is spatialised in a form of travel writing whose main aim is to fix potentially itinerant geographies into a stable, imperialist scheme. (Smethurst, 2009)

Even as the Western eye travelled to primitive lands and converted to sympathy rather than condescension, it was in the interest of knowledge and translation (Torgovnick, 1990). So is there any way out for travel writing to free itself of this acquiescence, if not active collaboration? This is the question which Bill Ashcroft seeks to answer. Ashcroft identifies
modes of travelling/travel writing which performs alternative tasks, those which go against gaining epistemological certainties. His examples of such travelling are ways to avoid definitions, and/or to deflect the privilege of readership and thereby breakdown the binary between the narrated and the narrated for. Thus “slow travelling” is more of staying in a place and observing it intensely for the life it opens up such that the place cannot be subject to any easy definitions. This he calls “Slow Travel”. His category of “bearing witness” is a representational performance in which the past is dramatized as if it were now and we were being witness to it. “Genre Parody” is similarly a representational technique of upsetting the privileged position of the knowing reader because what is narrated is purely imaginative, but armed with the inventories of objectivity – photos, maps, testimonials, etc. the category of “Reconciliation Travel” involves the narrated in the narration such that the narration becomes a story for the narrated as well as the narrated for. The act of past inhumanity is thus a memory of guilt for the past perpetrator, but it is also a memory of loss for the Other. The category of archiving, which is Ashcroft’s another representational technique of subverting the knowledge/power nexus, is an exercise of suspending memories of a place in epistemological ambiguity, casting it in a space which allows bungled interpretations (Ashcroft, 2009).

It was shown, from postcolonial locations as well as from the metropolis itself that other accounts were possible, accounts of other lives as well as accounts of oneself as others. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988) is read as an encounter with the Other to register the Other as would upset the categories of received knowledge (Campbell, 2002: 272). Muhammad Iqbal, the Persian and Urdu poet’s verses on travel have been shown to break down at once many registers of received travel writing. His Javid Nama takes travel out of absolute spaces of this world and imitates the ascension of
Prophet Muhammad to the heavens. At the same time this vastness of the outer space is seen to be corresponding to one’s own interiority, thus questioning the colonial commonsense of essentialising the communal identity. The travels are ultimately to find one’s station. Thus the binaries of mobility and stability, of inner and outer and that of space and mind have been put to question here (Majeed, 2009: 90-115). Travel writing could thus be a movement against fixity in time, place and registers. The experiences noted by Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1892-1977) as he performed the Hajj in 1929 in which he characterises himself as a runaway slave returning back to his Master has been, similarly, read by Sugata Bose as characterising a resistance against the colonial image of the pilgrim as a victim frequently imparted through their reports on sanity and security reports (Bose, 2006: 221-32). Even in the metropole, travel writing can militate against the charting of ipsiety. London novelist Iain Sinclair’s Lights Out of the Territory, a novel set in London, is read by Campbell as an anti-ethnography, one which foregrounds the Other in oneself (2002: 273).

Jacques Rancière (2005) too is concerned with the discovery of the Other in the self, but he also calls for a proper appraisal of travel as a political factor. He calls for a rediscovery of travel, not just to substitute travelling to the other in the self for travelling to the same by travelling to the Other, but also for a revision of our theories of travel which has been accumulating sameness in its analysis. Rancière would like to see in travel modernity’s tryst with Utopia. “Utopia for me is not the distant island the place of which is nowhere. It is the power of mapping together a discursive space and a territorial space, the capacity to make each concept correspond to a point in reality and each argument coincide with an itinerary on a map” (2005:29-30). Rancière reads Wordsworth’s travel to France to such a strangeness in oneself – the Revolution was not a promised one, it was not announced. It just happened. Wordsworth’s travel was thus a travel to a place where he could see “things and
people identical to their concept” (33). Rancière is here making a re-reading of a period which Casey Blanton, for example, had identified with the “imperial self” (Blanton, 2002: 16). Travelling therefore for Rancière is, borrowing the biblical lexicon “but making the slight move which shapes the mapping of a ‘there’ to a ‘here’. That mapping is the additional way, that is to say the human way of making flesh with words and sense with flesh” (2005: 28).

Travel Writing in Malayalam

Unlike novels and short stories, travel writing has been less forthcoming in Malayalam literature. The first Malayalam travel-writing is considered to be Paramakkal Thoma Kathanar’s narrative of his arduous journey to Rome to meet the Pope interspersed with many of the miracles that he witnessed in the trip. The journey, which started from Madras in 1778, and traversed Italy and Portugal, took him eight years before he landed in Goa in 1786. The next travel writing to appear in Malayalam was Govinda Menon’s “Kashee Yatra Report” [A Report on the Kashi Journey] which appeared in 1872. But considering that Kathanar’s travelogue was published only in 1936 (titled “Varthamana Pustakam” [The Book of the Present] and published by Luka Mathai), Govinda Menon is to be considered as the first travel writer in Malayalam. However, it was the publication of Kathanar’s journey that led to a slow but certain (in hindsight) beginning in the yet unformed genre of travel writing in Malayalam.

Travel writing proliferated in Malayalam exactly at a time when Waugh, referring to travel writing in English, lamented in 1945 that he did “not expect to see many travel books in the near future” (quoted in Blanton, 2002; 23). From the forties to the seventies,
Malayalam produced a number of travel writings from authors like K.C. Peter, K.P.S Menon, Vaikkom Chandrasekharan Nair, Dr.K.Bhaskaran Nair, Dr. K.C. Chacko, N.V. Krishna Varrier, E.M. Kovoor, Dr. M.K. George, et al. However, none of these writers were exclusively travel writers, and most of them have just one title that could be listed under travel writing. K.P.S Menon was primarily a diplomat, Vaikkom Chandrasekharan Nair was a novelist, dramatist and scriptwriter, Dr. Bhaskaran Nair was a science writer, etc. In the three years from 1958 to 1960, Mathrubhumi weekly, to cite an example, had published at least three series of travel writing, and a much larger number of individual articles on places in Kerala and outside from a tourist point of view. The period is also marked by translations of earlier travel writers who visited Kerala and India, like Al Idrisi from 12th century (Al Idrisiyude India [Al Idrisi’s India], 1964), Marco Polo from 13th century (Marco Polo Indyayil [Marco Polo in India], ), Ibn Battuta from 14th century (Keralam Aranooru Kollam Mumpu: Ibnu Battuthayude Drishtiyil [Kerala Six Hundred Years Ago: Through the Eyes of Ibn Battutta], 1962) – all of which were translated by Velayudhan Panikkasseri.

CH Muhammad Koya too has to his credit more than the piece of travel writing under discussion. He has published eight travelogues, Ente Hajj Yatra being the first.

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6 The series are: P.V. Mahmood’s “Persian Utkadaliloode Oru Yatra” (Sep. 28- Oct. 19, 1958), K.C. Peter’s “Sahara” (Dec. 7, 1958- April 19, 1959), Mridananda’s “Himayalathil Oru Theerthayatra” (Dec.7 – Dec. 21, 1958). Other than these it also had B. Madhava Menon’s “Oru Kashmir Yatra” ( January, 11, 1959), N.V. Krishna Warrier’s “Amerikkayiloode” (Sep. 25, 1960) and coloumns about places in Kerala like Pecchi, Wayanad, Thalasseri, Calicut, Mattanchery, etc.

7 This is not an exhaustive list. For travelogues in Malayalam, see Sanchara Sahityam Malayalathil, Sahitya Akademi

8 The other travel writings are Co-London-Cairo, Jnan Kanda Malaysia [The Malaysia I saw], Lokam Chuttikkanda [Wandered around the World], Sri Lankayil Anchu Divasam [Five Days in Sri Lanka], Soviet
Yatra is however special and will be the sole travel book under discussion here. The book was immensely popular – the first edition got sold out in just three weeks (Thayalangadi, 2011: 23), and has been commented on as being CH’s finest (Thayalangadi 2011; Bevincha 2011; Ponoor 2012). The book had an English translation too – Hajj Pilgrimage, published by McMillan (Ponoor, 2012: 194). The book is important for generic reasons too. Hitherto travel writing from the Muslim community in Malabar has been in verse. These were called the “Sarkeet Paatukal” [Circuit Songs]. The other popular model of dissemination of travel narrative was that of Kathaprasangam, a stylised narration of stories interspersed with songs. But these were, as a genre, often fantasies and allied more with the likes of Arabian Nights (which was itself a product of early nineteenth century travel) than a travel writing style which mixed ethnography and subjectivity as in the twentieth century. CH Muhammad Koya’s Ente Hajj Yatra thus might be the first travel narrative from among Muslims in Kerala to appear in prose, or at any rate the most popular first.

Traveller and the Travelled to

CH Muhammad Koya’s narrative is primarily that of a pilgrimage, though it begins right from the beginning, the beginning from home. The beginnings are important, as Edward Said would remind us. Not every culture in the world privilege the ending, not every culture is a performance of the cunning of reason. As Said reminds us, the novel form could not flourish in Arabia because it was an act of creating, but the most perfect of creations have

*Unionil* [In the Soviet Union], *Libiyon Jamahariyil* [In the Libyan Jamahiri (Republic)], and *Gulf Rajyangalil* [In the Gulf Countries (translated to English as From Camel to Cadillac)]. All these travel writings have been now compiled by Olive Press and brought out in 2011 as a single volume titled Yatra.

*For a discussion on Sarkeet Paatukal as well as for a few songs from this genre composed by Pulikkottil Haider (1879-1975), see Karasseri (1979)*
already been made, and the most perfect of society already lived (Said, 1975b). To begin the travel narrative at home, as CH does, is also to privilege home. The journey leads towards the pilgrimage, the holy sites, the trails of a past, but the inner being nevertheless feels homesick already, for a reason unbeknownst to itself:

‘Dad going peppe?’ (peppe-car); my voice broke as my daughter Fousia asked if I was going away. I could not stay in that plaintive air for long. I somehow managed to say my goodbyes. Why do people cry at moments like these, even in these times? I do not know. May be parting is painful, even if for a short time. (Koya, 2011: 31)\(^{10}\)

CH Muhammad Koya thus travels to the holy site, with the painful need to get back home. He is travelling as a father to his daughter. It is between these two injunctions that the generic affiliation of the narrative is mixed. On the one hand there is the holy site, a shared history, a common past. On the other hand there is the very individuated traveller, the father, the husband, the leader. Between these two allegiances the narrative strives to find anchor: “I do not know to which genre this book belongs. This is not a religious text. Is this travel writing? I do not think that term will exhaust this book. From spirituality to Suleimani, a variety of tea, all sort of things are discussed here” (22).

The traveller is also a generic category, he has common needs. But the comforts of the road, and so the needs of the road are not generic either. Class cuts through them, social location marks mobility, social-situatedness traces the trajectory of the roads at home. CH Muhammad Koya must speak to his class of people, his village:

\(^{10}\)Unless otherwise indicated, all the quotes in this section is from Koya (2011); page numbers will be indicated against. All translations are mine
The 'Janata' train runs only twice a week. One of its special feature is that it has only the third class. This train has rooms with amenities for sleeping. On reserving in advance by paying three rupees, you will get a seat where you can lay your back to rest...There are also very long rooms in this train. (34)

The translation here fails to convey the sense of excitement. Though established in the 19th century in these routes, railway is still a marker of privation. There is transcendence when privation is marked for its bauble. The vocabulary of Annasser, his 'backward village' (31) slips into the travelogue—a dish is still 'basi' for him (95), rupturing the prose for a while in its seamless flow of print Malayalam. But CH Muhammad Koya is also a leader, and the leaders are to be exemplary, the example, the transcendence of an example, removed from the ordinary, to be desired by the ordinary, and to be emulated by the ordinary—part of the group, the part which is picked out leaving the group in limbo while firmly rooting the part.

CH Muhammad Koya should here set the terms for others, he should be the leader-citizen:

Got vaccinated for cholera and smallpox and secured the certificate stating so. That some of the friends here try to avoid this vaccination amazes me. The chances of getting infected is much high in a place where many thousands will be assembling. 'Prevention is better than cure'. Is it so tortuous [that one should try avoiding it]? For just five rupees one can get vaccinated and certified. (30)

"Just five rupees" - CH knows that money matters, especially from his precincts. He should also be part of the group, set to the common suffering, and therefore to be armed with the same strategies, and to find support in mutuality. He should carry words of caution:
Clothing needs the most attention. As there won’t be enough conveniences for washing and so, it would be good to bring along at least a dozen clothes.

The inventory should also list soap, comb, mirror, emergency medicines, tiffin carrier, thermoflask, a small umbrella, pair of spectacles, etc. (30)

The price of things have to be listed out – of laundry, radio, fountain pens, watches, slippers, silk, perfumes… (82-3). CH Muhammad Koya is also a leader, not just of a political party which announces itself to be particularistic (the Indian Union Muslim League), but also of the universality of spirit within its boundedness, that of being Indian. There are moments when the assumed readership crosses over into the refined Malayalee who finds in Sanskrit the language of modernization – thus a joint photo becomes “samyukta photo”(73). But the faultlines do not take long to come clear:

There are people from all states and all districts staying in groups in Musafarkhana. There you can see a Bengali family right next to a Malayali family in the same room. If the next one is a Memon, the next is a Bohra. There are Assamese, Sindhis, Tamils, Telugus, Kashmiris, Chinese… I could see many long shirt and skullcap clad Tibetans this time. A lot of lit stoves. Malabari’s rice-gruel, Hindustani’s chapatti, Bihari’s pulses, cooked and smelling. The odour of coconut oil and groundnut oil. And added to that the leftovers and dirt, the stinking toilet, and the unwashed clothes. The combined stench is suffocating. Though people are not very cooperative, I am trying my best. Those from the interiors of UP, Bihar and West Bengal are unaware of the first thing in cleanliness. (38-9)
It was this author who was nominated as the Amirul Hajj [the leader of the Hajj contingent] for ‘Saudi’ [the ship’s name]. Like many other positions, this too was accidental. It was [however] difficult for me to set myself to the task as I could not handle Hindustani. But the Hindustanis are able to look after their own business. The Hindustani Qadimul Hajis (heads of various groups and intermediary between the pilgrims of a contingent and its leader) were also effective in looking after the needs of the Hajis from their regions. (43)

There is a need to gather, to keep pace:

The women from places other than Malabar were seen to be feisty. It was the same in the ship too. When our women are mostly dozing off in Musafirkhana, the other women collect food, cook food, collect water for ablutions. And our ithathas [literally elder sister, denotes Muslim women] need their men even to go and take a pee. (39)

The backwardness is not limited to his people or their women alone. The backwardness is not limited to matters of deed alone, they impinge on faith too. There is need for reform even in matters of faith. There are differences which even occasions of unity bring forth:

Now a bigger joke. Some Bengalis were drinking and pouring on themselves the rainwater draining down the roof of Haram [grand mosque in Makkah]. Those simpletons felt some (unIslamic) holiness in that water. Their ignorance, of course. The story at Ka’aba [the black cube structure at the centre of the grand mosque in Makkah] is even more horrible...I felt like laughing at the thought of naivety in seeking shortcuts to paradise. (73)
The primary address of the traveller asserts itself in the face of such cleavages, in its mutually antonymic moorings, those who share a common historical memory. Thus numerous mosques are described, among them the two holy mosques of Makkah and Medina, the Kaif, the Quba, the Kausar; but barely with enough details for the unaccustomed. The same goes with names—Ayisha, prophet’s daughter, for example. The historical battles of Islam (Badr, Uhud, Khandaq) are explained in minimal terms, the assumption of knowledge already being there.

CH Muhammad Koya is also not merely a father, a husband, a Muslim, a leader of Muslim League, a Member of the Legislative Assembly, he is also—and this a strategy that spans the length of the text—someone who is capable of commenting on the Saudi government: “King Saud should be congratulated for getting such a good road constructed in that desert” (65); he could even speak to the Saudi government. After visiting a handloom workshop he notes: “The poverty and unemployment in Arabia can be solved if the Saudi government could establish a few centres like this in Makkah, Medina, Riyadh, Dahrarn and such places” (73). After all, he is also a world-citizen. He has words of praise and even excitement at the progress, the big buildings, the air conditioners he sees in Jiddah. He is marvelled at the wonders of science and art as he witnesses the grandeur of King Saud’s palace, that it is “impossible for the poetry in [him] to describe” what he sees there (105), yet he has left a few words, on the cushions worthy of emperors, chairs of gold, chandeliers…

But the scales can slide too. Describing the scene of education in Medina, he notes:

There aren’t many modern educational institutions here—only the elementary school for girls. As against the primary Madrasas in Malabar, one can see in Haram only schools of the old type [othupalli]. The Mullahs sitting at one
end of the room teach their pupils by writing on wooden boards and by reciting from books, and the pupils parrot them. How long will these kids take to learn! Even the style of punishment is ancient. I witnessed a pupil being held in the air by the others while his feet were being caned. I was amazed – "so they are still here!" (72)

The traveller has progressed much more in his journey. He can afford to advice and caution the Saudi government, on the need for better Musafirkhanas (65), on the need for proper signboards (63), on employment plans (73), on the need for proper disposal of carcasses after the sacrifice (79-80).

The travelling self thus dons many garbs, he is a pedagogue as well as a practical guide, he is a leader and a father, a pilgrim as well as one who longs to be back, a citizen of the world as well as a religious reformer. In other words, the traveller is the transcendent traveller. He is at ease with referentiality, the question of same or not same – are these cities clean as ours are, are these things expensive, are the people kind and loving or thrifty and looting, etc. He is also appropriative, he can commit the scenes to language, to their worth and to judge on what is worth writing down and remembering, and what is best left out. In other words, in factors such as these the works neatly fits into the genre. The known traveller is nevertheless an act of resistance too. Colonialism deems certain cultures travelling and certain others to be travelled to. The assertion of the garb of the transcendental traveller is to recover the category of the individual, thus escaping the communal logic of consensus. It is an enactment of selfhood.
Makkah is however a strange place for the knowing subject to travel to. Because Makkah is known -- exhausted. Makkah belongs, theoretically, to all Muslims. Makkah is known as an absolute space towards which the Muslims world over turn themselves to while offering prayers. Makkah is also known historically in its relativity, on the religious history, on the trade maps, on the prosperity of its traders. All these facts are disseminated throughout the Muslim world by the Qur'an, their holy book. Its relational value is assumed, it is after all ensuing from its absolute and relative positions.

Between the transcendental knowing subject and the transcendent space of the House of God lurks another unknown. It is the inexplicability of enthusiasm itself. Tearing asunder all these knowns is another statement, made quite early in the book:

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11 Though in reality the place is highly policed by the Saudi state. CH does not make references to this, may be also because it was not as stringent in the '50s. He does mention the Saudi government’s efforts to “discourage” improper ways of worship. Sugata Bose, who has studied reports and narratives of Hajj pilgrimage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, notes six factors which came in, in 1926, as part of the Wahabi rule incumbent since just the previous year: (i) Guards were on duty at the cemeteries and holy shrines and beat any wayward criminals denouncing them as idolaters and infidels, (ii) only Wahabi imam were permitted to lead prayers in Ramadan, (iii) the celebration of Prophet’s birthday was abolished, (iv) special pulpits were erected for preaching Wahabi tenets, (v) pilgrims were prevented from calling out to the Prophet (the implication thereby being that the Prophet is alive, in whatever form), (vi) those around the Kaaba were cleared when the king’s father and family arrived. (212-3) These new regulation caused widespread disaffection among the pilgrims from India. There were relaxation in these by 1933, from punishment the strictures came down to discouragement, and guards could often be bribed. See Bose (2006: 193-232). Hajj continues to be a ritual under heavy surveillance of the state. For a recent account of a Hajj Pilgrimage, see Hammoudi (2006)

12 Verse 96 of the third chapter (Aal Imran) of the Quran announces the first home built for the guidance of human being to be situated in Bakkah (Makkah). The succeeding verse announces the obligation of Hajj for those who can afford it. Chapter 106 of the Qur’an is solely on the blessings that God has showered on the Qurash, the merchants of Makkah, making them amenable to the journeys of summer and winter, protecting them from fear and hunger.
Having stayed in Makkah for a few days, we started off on the 28th of April to Medina Munawwara [Medina] where the Prophet's Rauda [the enclosing where the Prophet is buried] is located. In the recent times there have been an effort by some to discourage the trip to Medina. They have not succeeded in it at all. It is their exhortation now that if one is at all going to Medina it should solely be to offer prayers at the Masjidunnabawi [Prophet's Mosque] and that visiting Prophet's Rauda should not be part of the plan. It is rewarding to offer prayers at the Masjidunnabawi, but is even more rewarding to pray at Masjidul Haram (the grand mosque in Makkah). Then isn't the trip to Medina a wasteful exercise?

It was not rubbing against the touchstone of such logic or weighing the rewards that I decided to go to Medina. Medina, where many enthralling chapters of Prophet’s and his companion’s lives were written was the capital of the Islamic Commonwealth for a long time. It is also the final resting place of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), Abu Baker (God be pleased with him), Umar (God be pleased with him) and others. Any Muslim will have a new lease of enthusiasm on visiting Medina, and Uhud, and Khandaq. (61)

This is the ethical moment which surpasses the knowns. It is here that the complicated nature of CH Muhammad Koya’s journey present itself to us for what it is – a shimmer of reflection on the secular world itself. We have here a situation in which the religious duties are neatly codified, a language in which the weights and scales of the judgement day are to guide our actions in this world. But CH Muhammad Koya is also concerned of a worldly home, somewhere where the scales have to be substituted for decisive action. Here, for a
very brief moment, there is the decision making involved as when faced the Other. The Other is a cut within.

The Impossibility of Mourning

In Islam, the difficulty of mourning has to do with its peculiar nature of Utopia itself. The Islamic utopia, where concepts can align with territories and people, is a past utopia. The journey to utopia is a journey to the past, at once one’s own, but also never attainable. The impossibility of the Utopia has to be compensated by the strife to ersatz, or a commendable copy. The past is one’s own, but it is also an Other, for in its unattainability is its infinity. The infinite Other however is also the past. The past has to be lived through, but the past refuses to vacate its lodgings. Mourning gives way to its impossibility; and seeks decision.

Travellers from the period from 1850 to 1950, a group whom Ali Behdad calls “belated travelers” (Behdad, 1994) broke off from the earlier tradition of representing Arabia as a wildly sexual realm, and instead saw in the desert and its tribal life, harmony, “redemptive and purifying powers” (Melman, 2002: 115). But here, it is not in the desert that one seeks redemption. In other words, the travel writing has been sliced through here. In its double life, the one life speaks about the place, the prices, the conveniences, and the other half barely manages to speak. One should be clear here that it is not in CH’s description of the various mosques and their history or the battles of the past that the second travel writing unfolds. The second travel writing unfolds precisely by being folded, unable to convey what it seeks. It has to find refuge in metaphors.
CH Muhammad Koya forsakes the scales. The scales are themselves of this world as much of the other. The word for scale, which is used to weigh the good deeds against the bad deeds of each individual on the day of judgement is called *Meezan*, or simply the scale. But *Meezan* is also this worldly, as in when God declares that He has risen the skies and set the scale, that the humans may not tamper with it (Qur'an 55: 7-9). CH is making a move from the other-worldly to this worldly, a move, not necessarily exclusive, from the needs of the next world to the enthusiasm of this one. In keeping away the discourse of the scales, CH Muhammad Koya displays a deeply ethical action, one which at the face of it defies logic. His situation is thus one of pure ethics, where ethics should give way to duty, “the absolute duty that obligates her with respect to God cannot have the form of generality that is called duty” (Derrida, 2008: 64).

The indeterminacy of CH’s utopia has to be refracted through other metaphors. The place has given rise to a unity among differences within religion:

The people who belong to various Madhabs [schools of thought in Islamic jurisprudence] and those who do not adhere to any Madhab are joined in offering their prayers here. The African dark as coal, the Syrian, fair like snow, and the yellow Japanese, all of them say that we are one. The Hanafi’s hands are joined below (the stomach), the Wahabi above and the Maliki doesn’t even hold their hands. But no one accuses each other of being a kafir (infidel). (84)

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13 This sentence can be appreciated once we know that people of different Madhabs have much objections in praying together and usually avoid so, one of the reasons being the differences in the rules regarding the exact performance of the prayer, including the position of hands, the time spent in different positions of the prayer, the rules regarding recitation of Qur’an and other litanies, etc.
The coming together also gets rid of other barriers, those of hypocrisy:

We are now in an international conference beyond the divisions of race and class. That conference has a history of centuries. The message of that conference is peace, brotherhood and security. That is not a peace conference convened, after having dropped atom bombs and burnt people alive, to bide more time to devise more catastrophic weapons. That is not a conference which waxes eloquent on brotherhood after ensuring that the Blacks are at a safe distance. That is neither a conference convened by those adorned in luxury, to call out "poor workers". This conference is a practical demonstration that we are all created by Allah and that we are all equal before Him. If those who participate in this give some thought to it, then they would definitely earn many a spiritual lesson off it. (96)

However, this is hardly anything new. In fact it is one of the most hackneyed picture of the Hajj14. In the very act of listing it, ironically, the differences stay too.15 But it is nevertheless

14 A quote from Muhammad Asad is representative:

And, again, there were people of all races, garbs and expressions, some with turbans and some bareheaded; some who walked silently with lowered heads, perhaps with a rosary in their hands, and others who were running on light feet through the crowds; supple, brown bodies of Somalis, shining like copper from between the folds of their toglike garments; Arabs from the highlands of the interior, lean figures, narrow of face, proud of bearing; heavy-limbed, thickest Uzbeks from Bukhara, who even in this Meccan heat had kept to their quilted caftans and knee-high leather boots; strong-clad Javanese girls with open faces and almond-shaped eyes; Moroccans, slow of stride and dignified in their white burnooses; Meccans in white tunics, their heads covered with ridiculously small skullcaps; Egyptian fellahin with excited faces; white-clad Indians with black eyes peering from under voluminous, snow-white turbans, and Indian women so impenetrably shrouded in their white burqas that they looked like walking tents; huge Fulani Negros from Timbuktu or Dahomey in indigo-blue robes and red skullcaps; and petite Chinese ladies, like embroidered butterflies, tripping along on
important to see the counterpoints of the scale to which Islam is subjected here. On the one hand there is the liberal democracy of the United States, and on the other the Soviets. Islam is here being compared not to religions but to state structures. It would be however wrong to assume that CH Muhammad Koya is obliquely (or even a bit bluntly) calling for an Islamic state. For any state draws boundaries, that of ethnicity or religion:

Now, when Nasser advocates meaningless Arab nationalism and even Arabia seems to sway to it, Prophet's declaration that no Arab is more privileged [before God] than a non-Arab or a non-Arab over Arab. Has any who believes so blindly in Arab nationalism remembered this? Though it was the minute, bound feet that resembled the hooves of gazelles. A shouting, thronging commotion in all directions, so that you felt you were in the midst of breaking waves of which you could grasp some details but never an integrated picture. Everything floated amid a buzz of innumerable languages, hot gestures, and excitement — until we found ourselves, suddenly, before one of the gates of the Haram, the Holy Mosque. [Muhammad Asad in Wolfe (1997: 377-8)]

Or, as Abdellah Hammoudi notes:

Under the sign of the Kaaba, differences didn't disappear, as apologists never tired of claiming. On the contrary: they stood out clearly and gained strength. They were recognized and simultaneously subjected to the values of solidarity and justice. These values did not imply that conditions had to become equal. Around the black cube, the circle consecrated the equal dignity of all Muslims, but it did not eliminate differences in class or status. People accepted these differences; at the same time, they subordinated them to religion and to testimony, which placed them in the realm of contingency. Equality was expressed in contingent difference, not through measures that would impose it by a universal (and abstract) definition of humanity. I felt this intuition of contingency sharpen in my mind and others'. Injustice that threatened dignity was refused here more firmly than elsewhere. (Hammoudi, 2006: 183-4)

Which seems to be the easiest conclusion but hardly a position put forward. Malcolm X, for example, saw in the Hajj a solution for the problem of race and thus essentially a social version rather than a political version. While for Muhammad Asad, who worked towards building Pakistan which was defined as a nation defined by ideology rather than birth, Islam seems to be the principle of unity rather than system of governance.
Prophet’s last speech in [this] mountain, it echoes across seas and lands. I have come here as one who has understood that message (97).

Travelling is here an act of giving answer to a call from the past. The call is clear but the answer is muffled. It would be wrong on our part to assume that CH had a ready-made answer to this call, which, more than being a question of the other world, was preoccupied with this world. It was preoccupied with dignity and equality. It was concerned with theory and praxis. The answer to the call had to be negotiated and performed. It did not lend itself to an easy answering, but had to be experimented against the mottled background of the postcolony. Its worldliness had to alternate between worldly and other-worldly language.

II

The politics of dignity had to be performed in mixed registers, as amenable for its concretization. CH Muhammad Koya’s party held up the slogan of “For Honourable Existence”. Yet honour and dignity are empty signifiers which require concretization, and as a requisite a translation into real world terms. CH’s Hajj pilgrimage, in its slicing of the two movements that I have noted in the last section, one between the journey in the absolute space of the self-asserting knowing individual, and the other, the temporal, scaling, vainly, out of breath and words, the infinity of the Other, is itself an act of concretization, an absolutization of the space of the Hajj. The detailed narrative of the arrangements in the ship, the measures to be undertaken, the articles to be bought and secured etc was also an act of rediscovery. Journeys in the Islamic lexicon are of four categories, according to Eickelman and Piscatori (1990). These are Hajj (pilgrimage), Hijra (emigration), rihla
(travel for learning), and ziyaret (visiting shrines). All of these are primarily physical travel, or travelling in absolute space, though it might be accompanied by spiritual or temporal movement (xii). CH Muhammad Koya was making the first of these. Yet, Makkah had to be taken out of this generic familiarity and re-presented as an absolute space.

Makkah has been long available to the people of Malabar, as the centre of not just spiritual power, but also as the mistaken (by colonial authorities) centre of political legitimacy too. In 1922, the Chief Secretary of the Government of Madras, for example, thought it best to obtain a fatwa from King Hussain who was now reigning over Makkah to put a leash on the post-rebellion activities in Malabar. The move was aborted as the Secretary of State in London felt that it would set a bad precedent and that the rebels too would get fatwas from abroad which the British administration would be in no position to overrule (Gangadharan 2008: 189). Makkah was also, in political terms, one of the places of exile, self-imposed or otherwise, and one of the most important icon of the pre-1921 Malabar Mappila rebellion to be exiled there was Syed Fazl Tangal (1824-1900), deported in 1852. The efforts to bring home his family, who were also in exile, had continued unabated, and as late as 1937 there were mass petition to the Government of Madras demanding their return.17 Hajj has also been associated with other political tumults, such as the one when the Ulema declared Jihad on the Portuguese in 1502 after a ship returning from Hajj was set to fire by the Portuguese and each of the 240 pilgrim was charred to death.18 Makkah and Hajj was thus cast in a cast of relationality of emotions associated with the glories of the past and the losses of the present. It was also cast in the relativity of political conspiracies and resistances

17 For a rare English biography of Syed Fazl Tangal, see Sathar (2012)

18 For a more detailed study of the Portuguese period in Malabar, see Bahaudheen (n.a.)
to those. Makkah had to be discovered afresh, concretized as a space and rescued from the fogs of clogging memory of past grandeur and present privation. It had to be shown for what it was, for its squalor as well as plenty, for its stench as well as scale.

Ali Shariati (1933-77), the liberation theologian of the revolutionary Iran describes Makkah, "Mecca is called "Baite-Atiq". Atiq represents being free! Mecca belongs to nobody. It is free from the reign of rulers and oppressors; therefore, no one controls it. Allah is the owner of Mecca while the people are its residents." (2004: 27). The statement is more programmatic than a description of reality, as his own countrymen have not just realized but also tried to put across. In reality Hajj was a much policed affair, beginning in the nineteenth century by the colonial might of Britain who ruled over India and thereby a considerable chunk of the pilgrims (though until the Depression of 1933, pilgrims from Dutch East Indies was double of that from British India) (Bose, 2006: 204). At the beginning, the claim of Makkah being the land of every Muslim and that every Muslim has a right of access to Makkah dissuaded the British from enforcing a passport system on the pilgrims. The access to Makkah was understood not just as a way of proving one's benevolence to colonial subjects but also as a tacit way of extending one's influence over the Arabian heartland (Singha, 2013). The cholera epidemic of 1865, which, originating in Java and Singapore spread as far as Europe via Hijaz was a turning point in the policing. Soon the plague of 1896 brought forth another manifestation of the dangers of congregation. The port in Calcutta, one of the three ports from which the pilgrims could embark from British India (the other two being Karachi and Bombay) was consequently closed for thirty years (Bose, 2006: 202-3). The battles fought against the Ottoman suzerainty in Arabia by Arabs and aided by the British (who were inter alia miffed by Turkey joining the Germans in World War I) brought new political settlements to Makkah. Sharif Husayn ibn Ali, the chief Arab rebel
leader became the ruler of Makkah with the defeat of the Ottomans and the British held sway. The Sharifs (Sharif being the family title) were soon taken over by the Saudis, who, allied with a stringent version of Islam, made Makkah an ideological ground zero where the pilgrims could be persuaded by sermons and disciplined by guards, as we have already seen.

The last chapter in CH’s *Ente Hajj Yatra* is an encyclopaedic entry on the present state of Saudi Arabia. After briefly narrating the biography of the present ruler and his father, CH goes on to list the allegiance of the Saudi king to the Palestinian cause. What follows this is however a detailed description of Saudi Arabia’s educational and health policies, their source of income with statistics, their diplomatic ventures abroad, etc. CH Muhammad Koya’s Makkah was this new Makkah. It had to be taken out of the fuzziness of memory and cast anew as a site that was empowering. It was empowering spiritually, but it was also empowering the formulation of a Muslim self who could transcend not just his own backward village and class position, but also the weighing scale of religious duties and even his own national boundedness in thought and action. Makkah also was to be shown as linked to one’s own present. It had to be commented on and drawn from, and thereby the commenting, admonishing and appreciating self had to be concretized out of the stereotype of the pilgrim lost in spiritual transcendence. Makkah was empowering because it was empowered by ‘us’. After noting the paucity of doctors and nursing staff in Makkah inspite of the availability of medicines and hospitals, CH Muhammad Koya goes on to describe how the dispensaries set up by India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Sudan, Malaya, United Arab Republic and others were offering valuable services to the pilgrims. He notes that the Assamese doctor was good enough to attract even Pakistani pilgrims. He also notes the services of a Naematunnisa from Madras. He is respectful to the care and concern of Dr. Jamaluddin from Kerala who attended to his patients even after a crippling car accident (81-82).
Makkah as a place itself is then shown to be not far from those in Malabar. CH Muhammad Koya notes that Makkah has many Malayalis who either did not return after their Hajj or were exiles from the 1921 Malabar rebellion. Many of them are now well settled there. He lists out a few of them – Bakruqayath at the Telegraphs, Muhammad Ahmed with the wireless department, another Muhammad Ahmed who works in a hospital, a Muhammad Backar who also works at the hospital... He notes that they are an endogamic lot as marrying to Arab families is an expensive affair. He also notes that brides are now being imported from Malabar (85). Those from Malabar have also established two Musafirkhanas in Makkah too (though CH would like them to merge) (87).

Makkah is thus taken out of the relationality and presented here as a space to be explored. Honorable existence demanded concretisation of memories, such that memories did not turn out to be oppressing. Past had to be freed of ceremonies and infused with fresh life. CH Muhammad Koya’s words cannot be divorced from the political career he and his party under his leadership had undertaken. CH Muhammad Koya has been serving as a Member of the Legislative Assembly from 1957. In 1962 he was elected to the Parliament from Manjeri constituency. By then he had emerged as the undisputed leader of the Muslim League, next only to Bafakhi Tangal, who was also the spiritual leader.19 After the President’s rule in Kerala from 1965 to 67, the elections to the State Legislative Assembly and the Parliament were simultaneous. This time CH Muhammad Koya contested to the Legislative Assembly and went on to become the Minister for Education of the south Indian

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19 Though not official designations, the Muslim League politics in Kerala has maintained an informal distinction between the spiritual and political leaders, of which the spiritual leader, who is also a repository of the values of the party and is usually above condemnation even from other political opponents, is the supreme leader. The spiritual leader belongs to Tangal families (Syeds). CH was thus the political leader of the party, but was accountable to and ordained so by the spiritual leader.
state. The Muslim League was again in alliance with a section of the Communists, the CPI (M), who had broken away from their parent organization, the CPI, in 1964. In the term of the Ministry from 1967 to 1971, CH led his party to fulfilling two major landmarks of its career. The first one was the establishment of the University of Calicut, which was formally inaugurated on the 13th of September, 1968. The second one was the formation of the Malappuram District.

Conjuring a Place: Malappuram District

CH Muhammad Koya passed the resolution stating Muslim League’s demand for a new district in Malabar in the state conference held in Calicut in the month of February 1968. Sub-nationalisms in India have been primarily discussed in terms of linguistic states, while a district is just a revenue collecting unit for the state. This might eventually help us in identifying some of the ironies and misperceptions of memory itself when we locate in a district an imagination of a separate cultural identity.

The story of Malappuram district is not that of a routine drawing up of maps. Though just another district in India, it was formed amidst a forceful popular movement on one side and bitter acrimony on the other. The new district would have 64% Muslims, and the there were allegations on the future state of the district given such a chunk of minority population and the dominance of Muslim League. The district was formed on 16th June, 1969, by the E.M.S. Ministry of Kerala, under pressure from the Indian Union Muslim League, whose
support was crucial to the coalition government. The term "mini-Pakistan" used even to this day to derogatorily refer to the district, dates back to that period.²⁰

In the words of Hargrave Jr.:

In 1969, in response to the demands of the Muslim League in Kerala and as a reward for its political support, the United Front Ministry of E.M.S. Namboodiripad redrew the boundaries of Kozhikode and Palghat districts so as to carve out the new, predominantly Muslim district of Malappuram. Denounced by its opponents as 'the illegitimate child of the Two Nation theory', Malappuram - 'Moplastan' to its critics - combined within a single district those taluks which forty eight years before, in 1921, had been the scene of the Mapilla rebellion. (Hardgrave Jr., 1977: 57)

The demand for the creation of the new district was also a demand for concretization. The memory of the 1921 rebellion was still fresh as a nationalist struggle though its ramifications have been communal. It was a necessary act of claiming an honourable existence to demand

²⁰ A website, hindubooks.org puts it this way: When the Communist-led United Front Government succumbed to the League's pressure tactics and acceded to the carving out of the Muslim-majority district of Malappuram, the entire national press denounced it in unequivocal terms. Hindustan Times, in a special article, termed it as a 'dubious' and 'sinister' move which was bound to create a communal problem where none existed before. The Times of India feared that pampering the League, 'a chronic divisive force in Kerala's affairs', by the creation of Malappuram may 'give rise to similar demands not only within the State but also, outside'. Hindustan Standard of Calcutta bluntly said: "The creation of Moplastan is a security risk which could become a fertile ground for Pakistani propaganda." The Free Press Journal of Bombay carried a special article titled: 'Kerala's Mini-Pak Plan Spells Danger'. It said: "The Communists and the Muslim communalists have joined hands in a conspiracy to disrupt national unity by constitutional means."

a space of one's own. I have elsewhere analysed the parliamentary debates around the
creation of Malappuram district and documented in detail (Shafeeq K., 2014) how the need
for an honourable existence also needed to be translated to the language of the postcolony. It
had to be translated to a case of economic backwardness. That the language of economic
backwardness was one which made sense only in the protocols of legislation is attested to by
the enthusiasm the demand aroused as well as the condemnations it generated.

The demands of honourable existence needed to be translated into the language of the
world. It had to, in the process, undergo the gain and the loss of any process of translation.
The gain was the absolutization of memories in space. But the loss is that which is exactly to
be lost in order for the desire to turn into a demand. In other words, the concretization of
memories required one to discover the self afresh, but at the same time resort to masquerade
with the loss of any original substratum.

Malappuram District was in real terms just another district, and if at all anything,
bringing the structures of the state closer home. The performance of the formation of this
district has to be seen in its double life, one as a rhetorical device which brought home closer
to the state and the other as the only possible way of translation of a relational concept into
an absolute one. Within Malappuram existed another Malappuram, one which was framed
by memories of the rebellion, its tragedy and sacrifice, and this other Malappuram at once
allowed the hegemony of a governmental logic while also allowing oneself to see as the
logic's arbitrator rather than its receiver. It is my endeavour in this section to flesh out the
rhetorical logic in CH Muhammad Koya's literary works towards the fashioning of this
arbitrating self.
Barely two years after the formation of Malappuram District, the ruling coalition, which had consisted of seven parties, collapsed. In 1971 the Muslim League returned to power, this time allied with the Communist Party of India (CPI). The alliance had suffered from mutual distrusts. Congress filled in for the lack of strength provided by CPI (M) who now occupied the opposition benches. CH Muhammad Koya rose in ranks in this ministry, with his office now handling the portfolios of Home Ministry, Civil and Criminal Justice Administration, Election, prevention of corruption, Hajj, Tourism, Printing, and the earlier portfolio of Education. It was in during the tenure of this Ministry, in 1971, that the government recognised the 1921 Malabar Rebellion as part of the freedom struggle and granted pension to the fighters. Theodore P. Wright Jr., who studied the career of Muslim League since Independence, wrote in 1966 that these frequent realignments of power that the party engages in is a minoritarian tactic (Wright Jr., 1966). In order to evaluate the efficacy of this tactic, it would be worth our while to know the logic of the state in India.

The Problematic and the Thematic of Indian Nationalism

In his earliest work, Partha Chatterjee tries to write a history of the ideology of Indian nationalism, retrospectively breaking them into moments as would explain the ideology of the contemporary Indian state, which is passive revolution (Chatterjee, 1986).21 The question that he tries to answer is, to put simply, ‘What is Indian in Indian nationalism?

21 Gramsci argues that when faced with historical impediments of three levels—named the objective limit, the political limit and the politico-military limit—the bourgeoisie aspiring for hegemony has to undertake a war of position. The three limits are (i) the objective limit, referring to the undeveloped nature of the material forces of production and classes such that a rapid emergence of a developed capitalist system is ruled out, (ii) the political limit, the condition in which the bourgeois hegemony in its twin aspects of the state and associated coercive
Chatterjee studies the history of Indian nationalism as effected by three key moments, which he calls the moment of departure, the moment of manoeuvre and the moment of arrival. The moment of departure is when, in the beginning of bourgeois nationalism, the nationalist, represented here by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, conceives of a split between the cultural/spiritual and the material/scientific. The superiority of the West was conceded in material matters and matter of the outer world, including statecraft, but in the realm of culture India was deemed superior. The effort at this moment is to re-organize the culture so that Indians could out of their subjection. As explained by Chatterjee elsewhere (2012), another feature of this split was that the foreign ruler was considered illegitimate not because of the failure in governance, but that it was a foreigner who was at the helm. However, the moment of departure had its failure in reaching the masses. It was elitist in character and was reliant on a post-Enlightenment thought of history to arrive at its own conclusions.

It was at the moment of manoeuvre that the nationalist bourgeois could effectively challenge the colonial administration at a politico-military level. It was the moment, as Chatterjee repeatedly stresses, when the thesis incorporated a part of the antithesis for its own advancement. The thesis here is bourgeois nationalism, and the antithesis is the peasant communal-consciousness which did not have any positive programme, but was marked by the negative consciousness of being anti-capitalist. It was the often puzzling and disturbing (from the bourgeois standpoint) character that was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who could take this moment to its desired conclusion. Gandhi’s thought were marked by anti-capitalism and a constant call to moral salvation. It was under Gandhi that the masses would

power as well as the intellectual-moral leadership is fragmented and the society is not homogenous, and (iii) the politico-military limit, in which the nation is currently occupied by foreign forces and the only way is to thin out the forces of occupation by widespread insurgency, a condition not yet available. (Chatterjee, 1986)
become a part of the national movement, but yet be kept outside the decision making process. The relation was marked by its pedagogic content. The mode was articulated in a language of 'responsibility': "Peasants were 'ignorant' and subject to 'passions'. They were 'dull certainly, uninteresting individually, but in mass they produced a feeling of overwhelming pity and a sense of ever-impending tragedy'. They needed to be led properly, controlled, not by force or fear, but by 'gaining their trust', by teaching them their true interest." (quotes from Jawaharlal Nehru, in Chatterjee, 1986:148)

In retrospect, the Gandhian experiment's historical task was to incorporate the vast multitudes of the agrarian masses who constituted the majority of the population within a movement which aimed at the establishment of the bourgeois hegemony while keeping the peasants away from the state structure.

The genius of the moment of arrival, exemplified through the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, with its insistence on planning, centralization and in the process a more powerful state structure was that it could reduce Gandhism - which had aimed at a stateless society – to the level of a morality, such that the appeal was no more to his ideas but what thought or moral inclination – self-respect, sustainability, removal of poverty – would have gone beyond those ideas. When formulated so, Gandhi could be incorporated as the guiding light of idealism who had to be read in to the organizational structures immersed in the realpolitik of interests groups, castes, religions and regions. The primary target at this moment was the capture of state power and its ideology is the state ideology. Once the state power is captured, problems of communalism and casteism can be solved; for these are problems of economic nature with communal colouring and can be removed with the legal guarantee of full and equal rights of citizenship. The need for equality was a pre-requisite of progress, for only equality would
ensure participation from all sections of population in the entire range of new economic activities. Universal Reason, with the primacy of economism and a belief in the eradication of age-old problems through central planning forms the thematic of this moment.

Chatterjee is careful to state that this is a study in retrospection. One need not then assume the inevitability of the present. Rather, the post-colonial state that we live in today is the product of a certain dialectic of each moment in which the result of the dialectic between the two opposing elements—the bourgeois and the masses—were contingent, in a relation of a dynamic uncertainty with the subsequent moment. In each of these moments we have a problematic—the idea of a nation that is autonomous, active and capable of self-determination; and a thematic—the idea of a national culture that is originary and essential and its susceptibility to objectification by a Western epistemology. In each of these moments there are assertions as to what the nation could achieve, and the justifications for these assertions, and these structure each other.

“And is mine one?” : Governmentality and Politics in the Post Colony

So what is it that of the present that makes these three moments the key moments in the form that the Indian state exists in today? The first is that of the division which the educated elite nationalist section instrumented between the realm of culture and the realm of politics. It is this cultural inner domain which would become what is specifically ‘Indian’ in nationalism. The second split is that which the modern nationalist bourgeoisie saw as separating them from the ordinary masses of Indians—a commitment to the modern ideals of equality and liberty—this is in Chatterjee’s scheme the statist function.
It was a shared belief of the Indian ruling elite that for the transformation of the masses from their habits unlettered in the culture of equality and liberty and caught in their pre-modern associations and shackles of superstitions, it was necessary for the state to engage in pedagogic and welfare activities. Towards this end, the postcolonial state appropriated the ethnographic knowledge that had conditioned much of the colonial state’s programmes. However, in the narrative of the postcolonial state, we witness this project of republican citizenship was soon superseded by the Governmental state.22

This regime secures legitimacy not by the participation of citizens in matters of state but by claiming to provide for the well-being of the population. Its mode of reasoning is not deliberative openness but rather an instrumental notion of costs and benefits. Its apparatus is not the republican assembly but an elaborate network of surveillance through which information is collected on every aspect of the life of the population that is to be looked after.

(Chatterjee 1998a: 279)23

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22 One could notice how, having started with passive revolution in (1986), Chatterjee shifts focus solely to Governmentality – a major point of later criticism, which we shall see. However, Foucault’s power-knowledge serves as the backbone of The Nationalist Thought too. The shift was rather from the realm of republican ideals. On the other hand, Sudipto Kaviraj [1987] identifies the beginning of passive revolution with the insecurity that set in around Nehru as the socialist bloc of Congress left him to form regional groupings which would brandish the scepter later. Governmentality, on the other hand, makes an appearance in Kaviraj’s analysis of the career of passive revolution in India after Nehru’s period where the arrangement of Planning Commission enjoyed much less autonomy thanks to the precarious situation which the till then secure Congress party found itself in. See “The Passive Revolution in India: A Critique” pp.100-43, in Kaviraj (2010).

23 Foucault enumerates the characteristics of Governmentality:

" 1) The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.
Governmentality worked through a regime of difference. Thus the arena of politics, which is understood to be the civil society, is a "walled in" realm of a minority, mostly of similar sociological conditions. The national leadership belonged to this arena. Citizenship though true formally, was not a real condition of engaging with the majority of the population. Instead they were divided into determinate, multiple and cross-cutting population groups, the relation with whom for the state was that of policy. Thus there is a realm of theory and the realm of policy. (Chatterjee, 2002)

Civil society as an ideal realm of equality and liberty continues to energize an Interventionalist political project, but it is demographically limited. The legitimacy of the state could therefore not be based on its promise of delivering republican values, but on taking care of the population, addressing poverty, etc. An important feature of Nehru's thought was that the problems facing the nation was often thought of as, at its root, economical problems (Chatterjee 1986).

The opposition between the universal ideal of civic nationalism based on individual freedom and equal rights and the particular demands of cultural identity which calls for differential treatment is symptomatic of the transition that occurred in modern politics from a conception of democratic politics grounded in the idea of popular sovereignty to one in which democratic politics is shaped by governmentality.

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2) The tendency which over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led towards the pre-eminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, etc.) of this type of power which may be termed government, resulting, on the one hand, in the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses, and on the other, in the development of a whole complex of savoirs. 3) The process, or rather the result of the process, through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages, transformed into the administrative state during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gradually becomes "governmentalized." (Foucault, 1991:102-3).
Ruptures of the Suture

Chatterjee's universalisation of the governmental logic does not sit pretty with many other commentators on the logic of state in India, only the most relevant of which I shall refer to here. Primary among these is Thomas Blom Hansen's (2001) criticism, which is of a fundamental nature and is an observation on the nature of the state. Hansen argues, after detailing the use/abuse of Shiv Sena activists of the Municipal offices when they are in power, that Chatterjee's assumption of a state that is separate from the other two domains is a non-existent state. The triad state-civil society-political society has to be rethought. State, which in Chatterjee's scheme is supposed to legitimize itself by welfare measures, does not have such a positive quality, but is rather dependent on who occupies its offices. The political society, as it acquires power, converts the state to one's own persuasion.

Dipesh Chakrabarty (2005) draws out how the everyday political culture in the postcolonial India as it still persists is a direct continuation of the modes of popular protest in the colonial India. Politics then as well as now consists in undermining the legal structure, even when it was constitutional in its mode of activity. The state is seen as an adversary, and often the popular protest has its climactic moment when a representative of the state, who stands in for the state itself, comes down to meet the people, and offer promises (regardless of whether they would be kept at all) thus asserting people's sovereignty as against the state. State has to keep down the principle of sovereignty before the people, thus fragmenting the idea of sovereignty itself. Chakrabarty further claims that the Foucauldian scheme does not operate in India because India does not have a Society yet, that is a condition in which internal wars have been externalized, a condition central in the transformation from mere
Sovereignty to Governmentality. What we obtain instead is a state of constant war between communities.

Susie Tharu et al. (2007) have, in a perceptive essay on the issue of reservations for the Other Backward Classes (OBC), put to question the validity of the concept of governmentality as an all-encompassing feature. Unlike Hansen's concern, the point at stake here is not the fragmented quality of governance, but the very idea of governance. That is, from whose viewpoint is it governance and therefore a question of crisis management? The authors argue that reservations are an end in itself when viewed from the policy approach, but is a question of furthering the idea of the Republic itself when viewed from the side of those asking for reservations. Moreover, as against the assumption that the nation-state adopted the governmental form of the state, it is reservation, what can be called a governmental measure, that founded the Republic. To constitute the idea of a minority and a majority, in essence to claim for the state a majority and thereby present itself eligible to be a sovereign state, reservations were inevitable. Today reservations are an active site of political struggle itself. One could see, as they show, if one follows the curious case of debates that followed the implementation of reservation, that the arguments were not between the state and the political society. Rather it is between different communities. The state therefore (in my words) does not have to be treated as a separate entity. Rather, the state is (as the authors say) larger than the nation (Chatterjee's elite). The state is an inorganic complex of communities with no specific character except its necessity to provide an illusory wholeness, a community effect, to itself. "From the other side, the struggles for and over reservations are struggles to reconstruct the national citizen subject and reconfigure the state, and it is imperative that we represent them as such. They articulate a politics that exceed the formal modernity of the state and make claims on a future democracy." (Tharu et
The authors are laying out a field in which the state form is open to reconfiguration and there are ways out of the mere formality of democracy into future real ones. The state form, as it exists today, is not the end of a road, there are possibilities of change, possibilities that, when it is underway on the ground, escapes the gaze of governmentality which sees it as yet another crisis-management. In other words, what is pointed out here is that of another realm itself, not open to the governmental gaze, but responding to and even actively undermining the other sphere.

Allying more with Thomas Blom Hansen is Gopal Guru, who, in his essay “the Idea of India: Derivative, Desi and Beyond” (2011), referring to Ambedkar, shows how Dalit’s position in the hierarchical structure of the society contributed to an oppositional idea for the nation to the more prevalent notions of the ‘Brahmin-nationalist’ and the ‘capitalist-nationalist’. This discourse of the Beyond (the dalit idea of India) offers at first a position of negativity inasmuch as its first task is to oppose the other currents, but subsequently to also provide a positive content which was intimately informed by one’s own spatiality. To quote him:

Since Gandhi’s political existence operates through a seamless spatiality, it tends to create only corresponding concepts like "seva" or trusteeship. In the Gandhian case it is seamless because for Gandhi, every space becomes quite hospitable and receptive. That is to say Gandhi can move in and out of any space, even the "Bhangi colony". This choice to walk in and out has a bearing on Gandhi’s thought. It changes the character of his thought thus making it more placid. Ambedkar, on the contrary, does not have a choice and hence has to open up spaces that are not only hostile but are also fragmented around
social stigma. Thus physical spaces which are otherwise empty get constructed through negative or positive meaning depending upon who is assigning this meaning. (Guru, 2011)²⁴

Guru is problematizing here the very taken-for-granted-ness of the governmental structure. The greater point he would be driving would then be that rather than speaking of governmentality as the default way of governance, one should take it as the result of the very specific social location of who got to constitute the very idea of India itself. Taken along with our previous commentators, this opens a new line of inquiry into the governmental state.

Fractions and the Governmental State

The above-cited criticisms point to certain overlapping factors of the Indian polity, one that governmentality is not an inevitable logic; two, the state logic is itself at the mercy of those at the helm; three, sovereignty is fragmented in India which brings to question the fairness of the very process of distribution; and finally, what is governmentality on one end could also be rightly construed as a furthering of the Republican principles.

In the south Indian state of Kerala, certain other factors too accrue. One of this is that unlike most other parts of India, the state polity is almost neatly divided between the religious-caste fractions, they being the Nairs, the Ezhavas, the Muslims and the Christians. While the Indian political scenario can be seen as an alliance of the bourgeoisie, the landed elite and the intellectual-managerial class (Kaviraj, 2010: 101-43), the realignments suggested a bid to outdo other classes for ascendency rather than a change in class

The fractional nature of Kerala politics when aligned with a multitude of political parties engendered a coalitional politics in which numerical minorities could still play a big role. It would be remembered that the 1967 Ministry which founded the new district had seven parties. Kerala continues to stick to the coalition politics, though many of the parties which were prominent at the time under our study are non-existent. Muslim League has been able to play a major role in the Ministries (though in the recent years is losing the battle for cultural hegemony) primarily due to its ability to consolidate the Muslim identity in Muslim majority areas. The creation of the Malappuram district, the establishment of the University of Calicut, the pension for the fighters of the 1921 Malabar rebellion could be articulated as gains for the community, the specific ways in which these were opposed (as being “the little Pakistan”, for example) only led to the consolidation of the party. From the five MLAs elected to the Madras Legislative Assembly in 1952, it stood at thirteen in the Kerala State Legislative Assembly and two in the Indian Parliament in 1977, which covers the period of our study.

The politics of the Kerala state thus worked in a logic of difference, where the clear dividing line between the state and the masses were absent. This absence is not a given but was to be performed. The founding of Malappuram district was such a performance where the governmental logic could be tilted to afford a consolidation and concretization of memories such that further growth could ensue. In other words, the logic of emancipation can now give way to the logic of freedom. In the classical case of emancipation there has to be a clear dividing line between the oppressor and the oppressed. He oppressed would then be cast away by the oppressor. There is an aporia between the universal project of emancipation and the particular agent of emancipation. The particular is at the same time a characteristic of the totality as well as its radical transformer. The universal project of
emancipation, thus being an attribute of the particular—in the sense that it is imagined and
acted out by a particular—is universal only insofar as the particular can claim to be the
universal. This claim is acted out through the act of incarnation, a concept which short
circuits the particular to the universal (Laclau, 1996). The conditions of incarnation does not
obtain in a postcolonial society where class is substituted by hierarchical ordering of caste
with religions like Islam and Christianity playing a role fitting into the structure. The
colonial logic of communal representation too discursively produced other topographies of
congregation and consolidation. In other words, a condition in which “established a
correspondence between two levels: a formal structural analysis of the tendencies of
capitalist society and of the social agents resulting from them, and an intuitive identification
of those agents” (Laclau, 2000: 298) was not available.

The logic of difference suggests that other universalities are in play (Laclau, 2000:
305). This other universality had to be performed through rhetorical strategies as would
make ready for the Muslim League a rank and file which would not cast the state in
opposition but would assume its mantle. This required a masquerade, and I am calling this
impersonation.

State, Sovereign and Benevolent

The focus of attention in the rest of this section is on two books which CH Muhammad Koya
published somewhat towards the end of his career.\textsuperscript{25} These are \textit{Mughal Bharanakaalam}

\textsuperscript{25} The original publication year of these remain elusive even after some effort on my part. The probable period of its publication was indicated to me in personal conversation by Abdul Rahman Mangad. There is a
Kathakaliloode [The Mughal Era through Stories] (MBK) and Nabiyum Sahaabimarum [The Prophet and His Companions] (NS). Before I turn to discuss the books under question, I would like to draw your attention to the speech made by CH Muhammad Koya in the Legislative Assembly of Kerala supporting the Land Reforms Bill. The Bill, introduced by the Communist Ministry, fixed a ceiling for landholdings, and, at the least symbolically, ended feudal landholdings in the state of Kerala. The Muslim League supported the Bill\(^\text{26}\) and CH Muhammad Koya articulated their support in the following terms:

The decision made by the party (to support) is not made after a survey of the number of landlords in the party. In fact this legislation is meaningful only when those who have such holdings undertake it; then there is a sense of sacrifice in it. There is no point in such a legislation when made by those for whom the earth is their floor and the firmament their roof. (Koya, 2013: 86)

The Land Reforms Bill in Kerala is widely celebrated to be the single most important piece of legislation of the Kerala Legislative Assembly to this day, such that the hegemonic sway of the Communists have been largely built on such credibility and it has been subjected to revisions as to show the partisan nature of it. Rather than terming the struggle as one, or indicating the landmark nature of it or acknowledging the Republican and revolutionary change this might signal in the politics of the state, CH Muhammad Koya supports the Bill yet discounts from the proposers of the Bill the moral efficacy. When the struggle for land is cast in terms of sacrifice, what is reformulated is the relation with the state itself. CH claims possibility that these books were published post 1977, but in view of the broad consistency of the books with the events mentioned so far, I am not giving the probability much of a concern.

\(^{26}\) Though they had reservations about the status of coconut which came under the ceiling, while rubber and other cash-crops were exempted. See Koya (2013:90)
for his party, one which does not have many landlords either, a moral claim of giving, of being at the arbitrator’s position. It is this that I call impersonation, and this act of masquerade involves not transparency but being a stain inasmuch as the state itself is a stain. In other words, governmentality is but a particularism which has to be further stained by another particularism.

Impersonation simultaneously marks both being and not-being. It is negative in its tone, the positive term being personification. But one would, as I do, rather settle for this negative term for it marks the arrogation to oneself of a place. At the same time it asserts the arrogation as a need in the postcolonial state. ‘Impersonation’ assumes that there is an original to be occupied. But this original had to be brought forth.

MBK is a collection of anecdotes, mostly from the Mughal era but not exclusively so. It starts with incidents as recorded in Babur’s autobiography and extends the Mughal line to Aurangzeb. But it is not exclusively Mughal. It narrates stories from Sher Shah, Deccani kings and others too. It is may be due to this that when it was reprinted (2010a), the book was titled Muslim Rajaneeti Kathakal [Stories of Muslim Statecraft]. CH is undertaking a bold and self-assertive mode: first of all, ever since the communal periodization of Indian history, starting from James Mill, the Mughals have largely been a disconcerting topic, except for the regular paens to Akbar’s secularism and the period’s architectural opulence. Secondly, and ironically, of the Muslim population of any considerable size in India, those in Kerala were completely outside the Mughal heritage – except for a brief period under Tipu Sultan, the Muslim rule in Malabar was next to nil.27 This being the case, the task of the book is circumscribed in the present: first of all, one could argue, it is to effect the category

27 Though the Arakkal family had some holdings in northern Malabar.
of a national Muslim, now to be bound within national memory. The Muslims in Kerala were otherwise loosely connected to their Indian counterparts. While leading mostly isolated lives, their leaders were typically educated, now for centuries, in various parts of Arabia. The spiritual leadership was secure in the hands of the Ba'Alawi family, who claimed their ancestry in Hadramawi in Yemen, and Mappilas themselves are etymologically understood to be born of marriages between Arab traders and Malabar women. Ironically, one may wonder if it was not the relative isolation of Kerala which could sustain Muslim League (apart from other factors, of communal distribution, leadership, etc.) even as it withered away in the other parts of India under the sustained attack by the detractors for its parent organization's (All India Muslim League – led by Jinnah) role in the partition of India.

The anecdotes in MBK typically display not just the benevolence, wit, wisdom and just nature of the sovereign, but also his sovereignty in display. Here is a typical example:

Malik Fais Sherwani, the Governor of Badaun, murdered one of his guards; the former was inebriated. After many years it so happened that Sultan Ghiyasuddin visited Badaun. The hapless widow of the murdered guard complained about the incident to the Sultan. Sherwani was tried by the King, sentenced to death, was executed in public and his body kept for public display. (2010a: 28)

28 Sayyid P.M.S.A.Pookkoya Tangal (-1975), Sayyid Muhammad Ali Shihab Tangal (1936-2009) and the present incumbent Sayyid Hyderali Shihab Tangal belong to the Kodappanakkal House which trace its ancestry to Ba'Alawis. For a magisterial study of the career of Hadramis along the Indian Ocean, see Ho (2006)

29 However, considering that the population of Mappila Muslims saw an unusual upward swing in the nineteenth century, this would rather be a case of communal memory than empirical fact. The unusual rise in population is registered in William Logan's Malabar Manual [1887].
The premise of the book is that these are stories from history. But one could see that these stories perform in the present. Other than remapping the Kerala Muslim public, they were also moral instructions, on how to behave in a position of power. Here is another example:

Once Hyderali of Mysore was on an evening outing. An old woman fell on feet crying. When asked the reason for her state she replied that Agha Muhammad, kotwal of Hyderali has abducted her daughter. Hydersha who is now in the post of Agha does not heed her plea either.

Hyderali returned to his palace. Hydersha was sentenced to 200 lashes. The soldiers who proceeded on the King’s orders returned with the abducted woman and the severed head of Agha Muhammad. (2010a: 41)

Giving much more stress to the question of personal conduct are the stories and anecdotes from Nabiyum Sahabimarum (2010b). The peculiarity of the stories of the Prophet is that, even if he is materially lacking, his position is always that of a higher being. His sufferings and his forgiveness for those who made him suffer are made from a position of power rather than from helplessness. But in spite of this, this book too has a fair share of stories from stories of material power after Islam had acquired prominence. The stories bring forth not just elements of sacrifice, like the story of Abu Backer who sacrificed every last bit of his possession for Islam (2010b: 31), simplicity in life (39), justice (42), decision (32), etc.

CH Muhammad Koya’s historical characters display determination and is not shy of using power. But in reality the Muslim community’s material status did not correspond to anything like the sovereign power that was displayed in these anecdotes. The function of these stories is then to configure an alternative universality where the rationality of governmentality has to be substituted for a rationality that clearly privileged the discretionary
power of the individual. What characterises these stories is their negative modality, that is, they cannot be a model, they cannot set a precedence. Rather they concretized a particular self, a self which is ready to take up reigns. This person is an impersonation.

**Between Governmentality and Sovereignty**

CH Muhammad Koya’s discursive universe is propelled by individuals who derive their energy from a Utopian past. The energy so derived, spiritual in its trope, are deemed to be deployed in concretization of a simulacrum of that utopia, for after all the utopia is an impossibility. The transforming horizons of the symbolic structure in Malabar, when negotiated through a masquerade that derives its energy from the Other lodged within, creates an alternative universality within which the logic of the postcolonial state is transformed into an arena of individual achievement. The postcolonial individual operates in different discursive registers. On the one hand it is the subject of realism, the one who makes sense of it. But the reality so imbibed reveals the particularism behind the universal assumptions of nationhood. The individual is also an assertion against the governmental logic with its insistence on populations rather than people. Perhaps CH Muhammad Koya’s achievement, in the world of his letters, is the creation of a world in which each individual could aspire to be a law-maker. And perhaps this is why he has dedicated an entire book, *Niyamasabha Chattangal* [Protocols of the Legislative Assembly] (2013), as a know-how for functioning as a legislator.