CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In November 2011, after many months of caution and postponement, the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia finally declared Saudization, more popularly known as “Nitaqat”, which, belying the gravity it conveys, was a campaign to ensure a modest ten percentage of jobs for Saudi citizens. “Nitaqat” meant ‘range’ and was a reference to the colour-coded range which Saudi authorities employed for identifying companies as per the percentage of Saudis in employment. The Saudi decision had instant tremors in the south Indian state of Kerala, and by the second week of November at least 13,000 low skilled employees had returned home. The state government announced rehabilitation packages for the returnees. Still, those who had come back was just a fraction of the 4,50,000 economic emigrants in Saudi Arabia from Kerala. Not much later, Nitaqat became a by-word for Gulf returnees, conveying not just the sense of having been wronged, but also the indomitable spirit to go on in life. Shops used “Nitaqat” as part of their names to boost sales. A Shajahan, one of the returnees, from Edakkara in Malappuram district in Kerala, justified the name of his ‘coolbar’ – Nitaqatcoolbar – thus: “I might be a foreigner in Saudi, but I am a native here. So I shifted business here and named it Nitaqat. If that helps, let it. And if an Arab happens to pass by, let him start” (Madhyamam, November 18, 2013).  

In the 1970s when the largescale migration to the Gulf countries had just started off, it was a matter of adventure. The journey itself happened away from the sight of the state and

---

2. Translation mine
the statutory security it proffered. The journey was by the sea and its legal status was often dubious. The passengers had to swim for a distance on reaching the shores of the Gulf. There they often led undocumented lives. It was a thoroughly individual fare, the confirmation of a person having made it or not took at least few months to reach back home. The Gulf was then— as would be recalled by every veteran in the days of his retirement— poor, deserted, “not like today”, so different. One can sense in the recalling of those years not just the narrative of individual adventure, but also a claim of one’s labour on a foreign shore, and an acknowledgement of the passing of one’s time.

The Nitaqat episode conveys some of the familiar experiences of globalization—the large scale economic migration, the fickle nature of jobs, the experience of being at the mercy of not one but many governments, the thickening of the boundaries of insider/outsider, and also, the rapid displacement of signifiers from their initial moorings. The expanse of contemporary experiences has, to retell the familiar story, cast much suspicion on the efficacy of the state. However, in other ways, the nation-state remains the horizon in which ideological edifice is made sense of, be it rising xenophobia, or sweetening the harsher demands of readjustments and relocations.3

3Globalization is often understood as a weakening of the nation form and attendant repressions, in front of the onslaught of the global capital. For many (Hall, 1991; Mignolo, 2002; Menon and Nigam, 2007) the weakened state results in new spaces of expression for the hitherto marginalized populations. They are also aware of the strengthening of racist/communal/casteist politics as a defence to the unravelling of earlier certainties. Arjun Appadurai (1990), globalization is characterised by disjunctive flows of the various landscapes—ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes. Mignolo, Hall, and Appadurai (1996) call for a newer configuration of politics on a planetary scale that matches the reach of globalization. SassenSaskia (2001), who has studied the “new territorial and institutional conditionalities of national states” (276) thinks of national economy as being a particular territorialisation of capital, a particular spatiotemporal order under globalization (276). Hardt and Negri (2000) through their formulation of “Empire” similarly points to a new cosmopolitan logic of capital and finds the agency of transformational politics in “multitude”. My own position
A ‘worldly home’ is suggestive of these expanded horizons of our experiences. It signifies vastness, and also of not being graspable in its entirety. It is also, at the same time, an indication of the boundedness, smallness—not pettiness—as opposed to its counterpart—“other-worldly”. A worldly home is circumscribed with the problems of this world, and the need to find solutions for them here. It suggests concomitance with the political economy of the times and shuns versions of solipsistic existence across time and place. It is the need to operate in a certain worldliness, in a language that is in currency, away from mysticism. Worldliness thus suggests situatedness—to be situated in concrete historical conditions, beset with problems arising from those conditions and to be resolved there. It does not arrogate to itself a position of other-worldliness from which transcendental solutions can be formulated. It is also suggestive of the commonplace, devoid of the spectacular, something very worldly as opposed to “out of this world”.

One of the earliest interventions of Edward Said has been to wrest for the text a “worldliness” (1975a) against the notions of ideality of the text or its complete determinacy in the context. The worldliness of the text, in the work of Said, is the dual existence of the text, one in its ideal form and the other its actualization in the immediate historical conditions. A text is not solely determined by its material conditions, it looms over temporalities as yet to be spoken. Yet it is spoken, anew, in each historical contexts. Texts “affiliate” (1983) themselves to the historical context, they are participants in the power play of the historical juncture. They do not just reflect, but actively create realities, effect regarding politics under globalization is to remind of the refractions of positionalities often achieved, to the detriment of the marginalized, under the expanse of such configurations as “global solidarity”. In the binaries of global north/south the subtlety and situatedness in the operations of power is often lost.

Later the essay appeared in a book which was a collection of essays on related themes, see Said (1983).
limitations on who can and how to speak about what can be spoken of. Said was following, in the wake of Foucault, inserting the text into the making of the context itself. Though there has been at least one earlier attempt (Jauss, 1970 [1967]) to attempt a cartography of the presentness of texts and its reiterations over time, it shied away from invoking the role of social power and limited itself to aesthetic reception and production. The question of power was central to Said who implicated the critic too placing himself within the circuits of power relations, in his choice of texts, in his attitude towards the texts, his judgement about the texts and the audience, the context of the critical endeavour and the extend of the willingness to perceive its own history as it produces history, etc. Through the concept of affiliation, Said (1983) was also pointing out the necessity, in the modern world, to break communities formed on essences and instead rediscover ways of community formations. Robbins (1983) has noted the affinity between Said’s own homelessness and the affinity it has with the idea of worldliness⁵ – the latter term suggests, with relation to the text and the critic that they at the same time have been taken away from their ideal locations, but is in active interaction at their sojourn.

The expanse and the situatedness, the minor as well as the cosmopolitan nature characterises Said’s “worldliness”, though its primary concern has been literary texts. In our study the text has been broadened to mean a cultural text rather than the strictly literary. Malabar is thus a worldly text for us, existing at the same time over the ages, yet participating in the now-ness of its existence which is novel each time.

---

⁵Also noted by Giroux (2004), although Robbins and Giroux have contradictory opinions regarding the implication of worldliness for professionalism – while the former sees in the call for an engagement with the mortal rather than eternal a call to professionalism (Robbins, 1983: 75), the latter is emphatic of the anti-professional stance of Said. One needs to pay attention to the strictly qualified “professionalism” in the cited instance as the essay in the first half does attack professionalism, especially of the Paul de Man variety.
Minor Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism has been a term for some intense discussion in the recent years. The various meanings attributed to the term ranges from a condition of being away from one's own culture and territory and meaningfully so (“at home in the world”) to more particular meanings suggesting a regime of human rights, specific directions in institutionalisation of the state, etc. The responses to the discussion has ranged from an outright rejection of the term as a fraud morality after the imperial powers have lost their pre-eminence (Kagan, 2003) to sustained engagement with the advantages of pursuing the course of cosmopolitanism in the juridico-legal order, in the establishment of international solidarities, in fashioning lives, etc. As such the broad range of the semantic spectrum of cosmopolitanism corresponds to the matter at hand in our dissertation which deals with a people who have had a long history of maritime trade as well as migration. The dissertation also deals with the intersection of popular movements and juridico-political order. But it is necessary to state here that we attribute, also, to cosmopolitanism, a progression towards democracy, insofar as the term means greater participation of people in the making of political dispensation as well as the language that governs their being.  

---

6The home-world separation was crucial in formulating a national essence to the otherwise cosmopolitan form of the nation-state. Chatterjee (1993a) shows that Indian nationalism effected a binary of home and the world such that home was the realm of culture while world stood for material progress. To be at home in the world in this sense would be a transcendence of one’s own narrow cultural location in a claim to universality.

7Thus carrying an ethical weight, and not just a term that denotes being able to converse in the world. For example, Waldron (2000) argues that true cosmopolitanism is to be inserted in one’s culture, and as far his argument goes, without recourse to seeing that culture from outside, which is then identity politics and is
The question of a minor cosmopolitanism is at once a challenge in identifying the
cosmopolitan while stressing the particular. In Marx’s “On the Jewish Question” (1992
[1844]) one notices a curious irony in the case of the Jew; he is resented for his religion and
cultural particularism even as the civil society is, and this was Marx’s point, effectively
Jewish in a secular way – it has in the secular sphere duplicated the aloofness that
characterise the Jew for each law is a law to protect the individual, forgetting that human
beings ought to have a communal existence. This ironic Jew, as exemplified in Bruno
Bauer’s scathing criticism of them (which Marx tears apart in this brilliant piece of
materialist analysis), is reduced to a cultural detail, while, and this could be read off Marx,
his real claim to universality has been usurped, his role in the universality erased as would
require a forceful exposition. In the civil society, the Jew’s demand for equality is met with
either a demand of assimilation, or a suggestion towards separatism.

Aamir Mufti (2007) argues that the Jewish question, as it played out in Europe in the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is with much relevance to the question of minorities in the
colonies. The Jewish question has refracted across Europe providing a vocabulary to speak
about minorities as they posed a question mark on the validity of Enlightenment ideals.
Drawing out the cultural resources which sought to settle the minority question in India
territorially (through Partition) in the lines of the Zionist solution in Europe (which
ultimately made a nation of the Jews and thus resolved the question of the irreducibility of
the Jew to the national form), Mufti draws parallels in the Muslim question in India to the
Jewish question in Europe. Both of these identities were not just understood to be
particularistic, but also, by virtue of their particularism, a stumbling block to the

undesirable. But what justifies this unqualified valorisation of culture? Here is an instance where
cosmopolitanism has acquired a non-worldly character, away from questions of power and politics.
Enlightenment ideas about self-determination, which primarily called for a non-reliance on tradition. At the same time, these two identities were also understood to be supra-national. They were caught between insufficient belonging and too narrow allegiances. To record the responses of the Jewish and the Muslim writers to the demands for either assimilation or separatism is also to delineate the minor critique of the majoritarian nation form which insists on complete correspondences of cultural resources to its territorial boundaries.

By configuring the nation as the limit of the horizon of aesthetic responses, the critic is implicated in the erasure of other cosmopolitanisms. Indeed the majoritarian cosmopolitanism of today’s world is the ubiquity of the nation form itself, which on the one hand is cosmopolitan by its sheer disrespect for geographical boundaries establishing itself in every clime, and on the other, as Derrida reminds us (1992), claims for its own particular nationalist content a monopoly of cosmopolitan vision.

Mufti’s work has deep resonances on my own. The Mappila community has been, as being part of the larger Muslim population, on the one hand accused of dangerous anti-national contacts with Pakistan or, lately, Saudi Arabia, their allegiance to these primarily owing to the extra-national character of Islam itself; and on the other hand, marked by the incomplete nature of its assimilation with the secular logic of the state of Kerala, still voting for parties on the basis of communal affiliations, marked by the dialect of language, caprice of spending, economic and family planning, etc. The Kerala mainstream has sought refuge in the contradictory nature of multiple narratives on the Muslim man and woman which casts the Mappilas as the other of the common destiny of the state. The figure of the Pardha-clad Muslim woman –“the penguin” – operates as a phantasmatic figure. That is, it is this figure which gives the support to imagining a particular kind of state, which is the state of
"Malayalam", and a particular kind of community, that is Muslim. On the one hand, the Muslim woman is a figure of the yet incomplete project of the state to deliver a uniform culture, and on the other hand, it speaks about the Muslim community, especially the Muslim man – of his atavism, his insensitivity, as also his undesirability, his paunch, his baldness. The new representation of the Muslim man in Kerala, which is essentially the core of such perverse imagination as the concept of “Love Jihad”, is in effect much more perverse than the previous representations of the Muslim community reflected through its “suffering” women. While the earlier project assumed community as a region as yet unwelcoming of modernity, but could be delivered from its backwardness with ample supply of culture and governmental schemes, the new image of a Love Jihadi, the educated, well-off, handsome, sensitive Muslim is that of an appropriator – one who appropriates the language, as well as the statist projects such as higher education, to advance one’s own fanaticism.

It is not my intention in this dissertation to study the representation of the Muslim man/woman in the mainstream media. The focus here is on the responses of the Muslim/minor exemplary figure to the newer options of governmentality and sovereignty as obtained in the postcolony, which corresponds to the options of assimilation or separatism.

---

8The word “postcolony” is taken from Achille Mbembe who use the word to denote the condition of decolonised Africa. According to Mbembe, a postcolony is characterised by commandement (a patrimonial use of state resources which turn the state into a fetish), a vulgarity or excess of power, a regime of simulacrum, plurality of identities, impossibility of a totality in the structure, sharing of space between the earlier coloniser and colonised, a sharing of the episteme between the rulers (commandement) and the ruled, etc. Mbembe argues that the postcolonial subject has visibility only when two activities overlap: in the rituals that uphold the fetish that is the commandment, and in the deployment of a sense of fun towards the fetish which is turned into an artefact. See Mbembe (2001). It can be seen that not every postcolony is of the same content. Primary among the difference for our sake is the lack of a common episteme between the two domains in India, as explicated by Chatterjee (2004). What characterises the postcolony in the present study is the governmentalization of the state and the logic of communal representation.
that a Muslim or a Jew of an earlier time was advised to opt for. While sovereignty suggests that the particularistic group form a nation-state unto themselves and accept their current nationality as an imaginary to be reckoned with, an equal like oneself, the logic of governmentality requires one to demand precisely in terms of one's particularism—of belonging to particular culture, or being subject to particular economic worries, etc. Minor cosmopolitanism functions in the interstices of these two demands, denoting first of all an inability or unwillingness to cast the national form as and at the limits of one's horizon, and unwilling to forgo the subject's cultural situatedness. Its negotiations with the nation is immediate, unable to ensonce itself safely within; its resources are cross-national and cross-temporal.

It is also pertinent that I point out at the moment two more functions that I have in mind when I have inflected 'cosmopolitanism' with 'minor'. First of all, it is to insist on the particularity of every cosmopolitanism. The focal point of our discussion in the next chapter is Kant's "Cosmopolitan Right"; the third right after the political right and international right which together could provide a condition of perpetual peace. It is nevertheless pertinent to see the particular nature of Kant's right, right at the centre of discussions on cosmopolitanism today, which ensues from a particular concept of world history which moves along the plane of property acquisition. The second indication in the inflection of cosmopolitanism is to show the non-modality of the cosmopolitanism under discussion. The Nation-state form is an excellent example of a cosmopolitanism which has become, due to exigencies of history, a successful model across space. The non-modality of minor cosmopolitanism indicates the

---

9Kant's cosmopolitan right, its location in his intellectual career, as well as the contemporary responses to this right form the organizing principle of the next chapter.
cross-national as well cross-temporal characteristic of the cosmopolitanism deemed invalid by the dominant cosmopolitanism of the nation-form. A finer detailing would suggest that the 'minor' is not a question of social location of the agents whom we study, but rather the strange topographies of their solutions, away from the resolution of sovereignty or governmentality, faced as they were with a task of translation across registers. The minor here is thus an indication of its firm placing in the context in which they operated, with no pretense to replication across time and space. Its resources brook no borders, yet its space of action is clearly bounded in time, place, and language.

It still requires us to see how the different cosmopolitanisms stand with relation to the asymmetry of power relations implied in the governmentalized State in a postcolony. Chapter 2 of this dissertation is solely dedicated to the discussion on that front and we shall postpone it until then.

**Mourning and Mimicry**

Our study is as much about the formations and figurations of newer self-definitions as it is about the loss of older ones. How are these losses negotiated? Within the frame of minor cosmopolitanism, the present work advances the analysis via the two tropes of mourning and mimicry, shown to be the modes of minor cosmopolitanism at work. The image of mourning comes from Freud's study "Mourning and Melancholia" (1971 [1925]) where the two terms denote two different responses to loss. While mourning suggests a successful burial of the loss and the recovery of the mourning subject from the loss to live his/her life another day, melancholia suggests the inability to do so since the bonds of attachment are strong and the very strength of it becomes an object of desire. The loss in melancholia is not the loss of an
object inasmuch as it is the loss of the object as an object of love. But the bonds between the self and the object, rather than cutting loose and thereby freeing the subject, displaces itself to the self, and the bond (cathexes) of love is soon turned to hate – an unconscious hate as opposed to the conscious living through it of mourning.

Melancholia has been associated with traditionalism and conformism, a sense in which it was used by Walter Benjamin and has been deliberated upon and rendered in harsher tones by Wendy Brown in her chastisement, in the wake of Stuart Hall, of the contemporary Left: “more attached to its impossibility than to its potential fruitfulness… most at home dwelling not in hopefulness but in its own marginality and failure… thus caught in a structure of melancholic attachment to a certain strain of its own dead past, whose spirit is ghostly, whose structure of desire is backward looking and punishing” (Brown, 1999: 26). Melancholia suggests that the melancholic subject is unaware of precisely what about the object was so deeply loved and is lost now. Brown’s diagnosis is that the lost thing of the Left’s political unconscious was the certainty of an earlier politics to lead to the “good, the right, and the true” (22). The preservation of the bonds of love has turned narcissistic. And as in Freud’s schema of melancholia, the former intense love of class politics and economistic analysis has been now substituted with an intense hatred for identity politics and poststructuralist analysis. Brown does not want to, or so she says, “recommend a therapy” (27), but the suggestion is in evidence as she invokes Stuart Hall and his insistence on the need to engage in the politics of language – not that language would change reality, but that it could harness reality to desired political effects (24).

What Brown accuses the left of, could be easily transposed as an accusation on a party like Muslim League which carries the taint of particularism. After all, Muslim League
has been a beneficiary of the Communal Award as instituted by the British. In Malabar from their establishment in the late 1930s till 1952 they have contested and won the seats reserved for Muslims. They even demanded a separate state of Moplas in 1947 which would consist of Malabar and parts of south Karnataka, a place they claimed to have a distinct culture. Is Muslim League then bearing the melancholia of the lost Ummah, the global community of Muslims lost after the end of Caliphate in Turkey and called to avenge in 1921?

My dissertation has to be understood as a modest attempt at reading the Muslim politics in Malabar against such assumptions. My contention is that the Muslim politics of Malabar has discovered itself in the language of the times. It has made an active effort in translating itself to the realities of the postcolonial life and politics, as is my attempt to show here. In other words, Muslim politics in Malabar has sought a worldly existence. It is due to this reason that I have used “the impossibility of mourning” rather than melancholia.

My suggestion at the 'impossibility' is to denote the more difficult nature of mourning, and is informed by a particular usage of that term by Jacques Derrida, who referring to the impossibility of forgiveness, states: “forgiveness must announce itself as impossibility itself. It can only be possible in doing the impossible” (Derrida, 2001: 32-3). In Derrida, the impossibility suggests an absence of precedence and a demand for decision, to transgress all the laws that govern the action and thereby to discover anew. It requires a

---

10Or, as described elsewhere by Derrida with reference to Hospitality: “It is as though hospitality were the impossible: as though the law of hospitality defined this very impossibility, as if it were only possible to transgress it, as though the law of absolute, unconditional, hyperbolical hospitality, as though the categorical imperative of hospitality commanded that we transgress all the laws (in the plural) of hospitality: namely, the conditions, the norms, the rights and the duties that are imposed on hosts and hostesses, on the men or women who give a welcome as well as the men or women who receive it.” (Derrida, 2000: 75-7)
decision on the part of the minor subject to attend to the unicity of the Other, the memory of an earlier community. The impossibility of mourning thus suggests a sovereign decision on the part of the self in which the mourning has to be carried out, often flouting the languages that govern our being. It is this decisionistic nature of mourning that adds to the minor character of cosmopolitanism—that its rules cannot be set out in advance, that the transcendence is often a transcendence of the registers that define our place. The decisionistic nature as well as the minor status both point to the non-modality of politics. As opposed to the example of the Left politics in Brown’s analysis which is melancholic in its reaction to the new times, the decisionistic subject acknowledges the need to confront the new times without recourse to precedence. It is through this mode that he seeks to transcend his positioning in the past as well as his place in the present, and thus provides the exemplarity of his transcendence.

The second trope that runs through the analysis, which covers the mode of the realization of decision, is that of mimicry. Lacan’s approach towards mimicry is characterized by a refusal to identify in the mimetic activity a purely functionalist motive as well as a strictly interpersonal domain. Lacan identifies three dimensions of mimicry—travesty, camouflage, and intimidation. Camouflage is an act of becoming mottled against a mottled background. The stress is on fitting in, not by harmonizing, which would make it transparent and thereby imply a loss of identity, but by being a stain against a stained background. The impure nature of it has to be recovered to comprehend its effectivity. Travesty intends a sexual finality, but again, it is a level constituted quite different from the sexual aim. It displays thus certain transformation which has as its object other than the end of the task at hand and has to be studied as a performative in different registers, facing
another gaze. Finally, the mimetic act in intimidation is strictly not mimesis at all, but an impersonation of a bigger being, a process of over-valuation (Miller, 1977: 98-100).

The dimensions of camouflage, travesty and intimidation is pertinent to political analysis too. All these are dimensions of translating politics in the postcolony. Camouflage is about the preservation of identity while being part of the stain – it is not an act of being invisible, but to maintain one’s externality while making oneself fit into the picture. In the minority politics the dimension of camouflage refers to the attempts at maintaining cultural identities while stopping short of separatism. Travesty, though of a sexual nature in Lacan’s elaboration here, is also a divorce of ends and means, such that the means could invest in pleasures not strictly consummated at the end. In a governmental state this would signal to the disparity between the means and the end with relation to demands that are of ideological nature but has to be in the language of culture/economy. Intimidation, as we shall see in Chapter 4, is a process of overvaluation. Each of these dimensions require a close analysis of the situations at hand, such that they point to a minor subject active in the appraisal of times rather than wallowing in melancholia.

Each of these dimensions, needless to say, smacks of deception. Aren’t these contrary to my aims and in fact helping the process of strengthening the accusation against minority politics of being a convenience until a majority is achieved? Isn’t this a confirmation that, after all, the minority desires the majoritarian and is only patiently awaiting that day? Definitely no. These strategies are the very predicates of being minor, they are there only under these specific conditions. The claims on what a particular community would do if they are in majority cannot be based on their reactions to some other
structure in place. This is a study of politics as it is obtained in the here and now without attempting any projections beyond the period under study.

In Lacan’s formulation, mimicry is not exhausted by the interpersonal dimension. It is rather also a positioning of oneself in the symbolic. The ambivalence involved in the mimetic process has been illustrated by Homi Bhabha (1984) who has shown, in the colonial context, how the anglicised native man disturbs the colonial discourse precisely because it works between registers, being at the same time “the subject of the scopic drive and the object of colonial surveillance” (130) making the colonial discourse caught between the need to show progress as well as to cling on to civilizational justification for colonial possessions a mockery in the struts and frets of those who occupy the disjunction between a native body and a colonial mind. In our own study impersonation denotes the ambivalence of registers which undercuts the claim to the finality of the symbolic, a degree of mottledness of the postcolonial logic of state. Lacan is keen to state that the act of mimicry is an act of being in the act itself, a bid against symbolic dissolution, “to be inserted in a function whose exercise grasps it” (Miller, 1977: 100).

There has been a governmentalization of state in the postcolony, and it has been claimed that politics in much of the world now, being as it is postcolonial, is the politics of the governed carried out through “political society” (Chatterjee, 2004). Mimicry seeks to imply a notion of transformation of the self in a bid to alter the fundamental conditions of governmentality. It is an act on the side of dignity defined variously than the narrow coordinates of subsistence. Dignity involves being able to be comfortable with one’s past, an acknowledgement of agency in the present, to be not reduced to being recipients. This
dissertation is concerned with how the fact of numerical inexistence was negotiated and attempted to overcome from a minor position in Malabar.

The Worlds of Malabar

Malabar became a definitive region on the map only by 1792, when, after a disastrous campaign for Tipu Sultan in the second Anglo-Mysore war, the areas wrested by him from Travancore, a British ally, were ceded to the British. In 1799 Tipu, an ally of the French, would himself fall to his enemies' swords, unable to resist the onslaught from all four sides of his kingdom. This settled Wayanad too as part of Malabar, which was ruled as part of Bombay Presidency. The district was joined with some other districts in 1800 to form the new presidency of Madras. The district was broadly divided to North and South and had a total of ten taluks.

The hazy contours of Malabar, however, go back many centuries. It had a recorded history of Phoenecians visiting the coast in roughly 1000 BC. Its size varied from document to document, covering at once the entire western coast of India, to the region between Kodungalloor, supposedly the erstwhile legendary port of Muziris, to south Karnataka. Like the polis of ancient times, it had multiple locations along the coasts of Indian Ocean. Its etymology is still uncertain, at times attributed to Sanskrit, at others to Arabic, and even elsewhere to Marco Polo.

While the nationalist movement found takers among the middle class in Malabar, this was mostly restricted to English educated Nairs. The Mappilas, the Tiyas and the Brahmin landlords (jenmis) stayed away from it, each for their own varied reasons. The participation
from Malabar in the national meetings of the Congress was dismal up to 1919, and did not have a single Mappila. However, the hesitant steps by the Congress towards the plight of tenants coupled with the issue of protecting Khilafat in Turkey brought Mappilas in huge numbers to the District Congress Conventions from 1919 onwards. The Khilafat-Non-cooperation-Tenant movement saw the meteoric rise of the Indian National Congress in Kerala.

The Mappilas, who formed the single largest community of Malabar, were notorious in colonial literature for their fanaticism. The Mappila reactions were often termed as “outrages”, for the British could not comprehend the logic behind the desire for suicidal attacks on the part of Mappilas where the number of opponents killed were negligible compared to Mappila losses. The Mappila Outrages Acts of 1854 brought further repression on the Mappilas. The dispersed and episodic acts of rebellion nevertheless continued and a special Police force was created for the Mappila Zone in 1885. However, there were outbreaks again in 1894 and 1896. The Mappila insurgency was explained in terms of fanaticism and a desire to get to heaven. Ansari (2005) has pointed out that the British could comprehend the Mappila acts of rebellion only in terms of fanaticism, such that the words came to be the organising feature of a host of actions of rebellion inspite of the divergent causes in “economic hardships, mere criminality and madness” (Ansari, 2005:49).

The 1920 Nagpur session of the Congress saw the party’s reorganization on linguistic lines, and subsequently the Kerala Province Congress Committee was formed at Calicut on 30 January 1921. The Congress started growing in the villages of Malabar. For the purpose of Khilafat agitation Kerala was treated as a separate province with the consent of the Central

Various origins have been attributed to this word which in earlier times denoted children of mixed Arab and Malabari origin. For a discussion on etymology, see Miller (1976).
Khilafat Committee and around the same time the Kerala Province Khilafat Committee too was formed. The Non-cooperation movement started in Malabar in January 1921 with some lawyers suspending their practice. However, in the Mappila dominated areas of southern Malabar, the Hindus were largely absent in the Khilafat-Non-cooperation movements, to such an extent that, in the words of Moyarath Sankaran “the success of each meeting and speech was measured in terms of the number of Hindus who joined the Congress” (Gangadharan, 2008: 75). At the same time Congress membership was significantly less in the Muslim majority taluk of Eranad. Thus, while the Muslims attended the Congress agitations of Khilafat-Non-Cooperation *en masse*, only a few were officially members. The nationalist movements also used social violence to ensure cooperation with the agitators. Social boycott of the British sympathisers was the most prevalent *modus operandi*.

1921 witnessed the culmination of sporadic Mappila acts of resistance and the Khilafat movement. The Mappila rebellion of 1921 remains one of the most contentious uprisings of the freedom struggle, matched only by Chauri Chaura for the notoriety it earned in the nationalist mainstream. Various terms as ‘madness’, ‘fanatic’ and communal, the sheer variance of its lived memory primarily among the Muslims and Hindus of Malabar still makes it ‘that which dare not speak its name’. The rebellion commenced on 20 August, 1921 and was put down by the end of that year. According to official estimates 2337 rebels were killed, 1652 injured, 5995 captured and 39,340 surrendered voluntarily (Gangadharan, 2008: 250 n).

The Muslim character of the rebellion was very much in evidence. The use of Mappila war-songs, usually narrating the battles of Prophet and early years of Islam, in the war marches by Mappilas has been widely cited. One of the three leaders of the rebellion, Ali
Musliar, a religious teacher, educated in Makkah, whose ancestors were involved in previous Mappila rebellions. He is believed to have preached violence believing that an offensive on the British Empire in India by the King of Afghanistan was imminent. A Malayalam version of a speech by Moulana Muhammad Ali in Madras was also in circulation and spoke about the duties of the Muslims in the event of an Afghan invasion. Some even expected the arrival of Mahdi, the just ruler to arrive in the end of times according to Muslim traditions. F.B. Evans, the Collector of the Malabar District from 1915, stated that the slogans of the rebels were ‘Mahatma Gandhi ki jai, Shaukat Ali ki jai, mingled with takbir’ (Gangadharan, 2008: 176). The rebellion, which started as a part of the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation movement in Malabar, later attracted much criticism for its alleged anti-Hindu character, forced conversion, looting of property, violence, etc. Gandhi said that the Mappilas have “gone mad”\(^\text{12}\) and the event remained a scar in the Congress annals. The reports and counter reports of the happenings in Malabar, fuelled by local incidents, gave rise to many communal conflicts in northern India in the subsequent years - Multan (1922), Sohranpur (1923), Kohat (1924), Calcutta (1926) and Bombay (1929) (Gangadharan, 2008: 261 n). The rebellion also forced the Indian National Congress in Kerala to turn itself into affairs exclusively dealing with the Hindu sectarian issues with an aim to create a unified Hindu society which could then become its base. The Congress activities hence turned towards matters of temple entry and untouchability (Menon, 1994). Gangadharan (2008) notes that the alternative system was clearly rooted in the Islamic idea of Khilafat, with a view to social justice.

The tragedy of heavy-handed repression and the isolation by the Congress after the rebellion led to deep disquiet. It is in this climate that the Muslim League makes an entry in

\(^{12}\)M.K. Gandhi, CW, vol.21, p.120; quoted in Ansari, 2005.
Malabar, and having set up in the region in 1937, has remained successful in the region ever since. The major force in Malabar, the Communist Party was simultaneously building up its base in northern Malabar, and in 1948 E.M.S. Nambudiripad published *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi* [Kerala, the motherland of Malayalis] which established Kerala as a region with specific history and laid foundations for the Marxist side of the linguistic struggles of the '50s. A move for linguistic reorganization was current in Congress from the '20s.

In 1947 Muslim League demanded a state of Moplas tan in Malabar as part of Pakistan, but the move was soon aborted. The League claimed the region to have a distinct culture and history and therefore distinct destiny.

In the meanwhile the Communists were planning revolutionary struggle in the agrarian belt of Malabar. Armed clashes took place between armed agricultural labourers and the Malabar Special Police. The linguistic reconstitution of states fused Malabar with Kasargode to its north and Tiru-Kochi (a combination of the two erstwhile princely states of Travancore and Cochin) to its south to form the Kerala state, coming into effect from the 1st of November, 1956.

The career of the two major parties in Malabar other than the Congress – the Communists and the Muslim League – are instances of two different kind of universalisms, both suspect, allegedly more loyal to forces outside the nation. 1952 marked the year in which both the Communists and the Muslim League would fight general elections in India, thus beginning a period in which the two parties would ally and oppose each other in the curious twists of coalitional politics in Kerala. Yet, while in the case of Communists the internationalism, the revolutionary line and the pro-British stance during Quit India struggle
could soon give way to a popular mobilization which redefined the party in terms of the backbone of a different contemporary experience for Kerala as a region and as a model for the greater nation, and even as part of the special Kerala heritage and difference from the rest of India (save Bengal, occasionally), Muslim League has found itself, in spite of repeated electoral successes and ministerial berths, unable to translate their particularism to a universalism. Muslim League sought to effect within the hegemonic secular logic that informed the rhetoric of the left politics a cognitive division between minority politics and communalism. One of its most succinct expression is given by Pulikkottil Hyder (1879-1975):

Wake up quick, Mussalaman,
Join Muslim League
Don't you hear the upright calls
To organize in full.
Let us live as Muslims
Let us die as Muslims
And with peace to others
Let us live with our spines straight...
We are not communalists
Nor should there be communalism
It is not our way
To argue on communal lines.
We will not go to Pakistan
We will not be a Pakistani
If you dream to send us to Pakistan
Your dream will forever remain one.
We do not doubt a bit
That on this Indian soil
Built on eternity
We have a right. ("We, Indian Citizens" Karasseri, 2007: 171-2)

As in the song above, the voice of Muslim League had to adopt a double posture faced with double addressee – the Muslim and the others. The party had to articulate two positions, one of right and the other of community, insisting on particularity to the Muslim, and on the right to be treated as a general citizen to the state.

Though both the Congress and the Communists have over the period worked along with Muslim League, the taint of "communalism" is yet to go away, and has become stronger in the recent years, which have also seen an unprecedented strengthening of the party on the electoral front. The Muslim League had, in the initial years, owned up its legacy of having derived itself as the Indian edition of the earlier formation led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The recent years have seen, at least at the popular level, a disowning of that past.\(^\text{13}\) The party has however kept alive the traditional link which the Mappila political leadership has with the Arab countries, which framed a cosmopolitanism of the Mappila politics of the past. The Mappila traditional political leadership were routinely educated, and in many cases born, in Arabia. This has been a fact from the earliest records of Mappila resistance, namely the resistance to the Portuguese in the 16th century. The Syeds ("Sayyids", or "Tangals", as they are called in Kerala) who assumed the political leadership of Malabar Muslims continued to be educated in Makkah or Egypt in the nineteenth century, and the trend is still prevalent, with the latest popular Muslim leadership secure with the family at Kodappanakkal House at

\(^\text{13}\) For a history of the early activities of Muslim League in Kerala and its justifications, see Badagara (2005) and (2007)
Panakkad in Malappuram district, who claim inheritance from the Ba’alawi clan in Yemen and have been variously educated across the Muslim world.

**Minor Translations of the National Project**

The time frame of the dissertation is the first three decades of Indian independence, and to put it precisely, it is 1947 to 1977. Yet any time frame is arbitrary, for movements do not just take place in overlapped times, they also take place in the circularity, which Walter Benjamin has insightfully called a ‘then’ and ‘now’. “In reality, there is not a moment that would not carry with it its revolutionary chance – provided only that it is defined in a specific way, namely as the chance for a completely new resolution of a completely new problem” (Benjamin, 2006: 402). Benjamin’s emancipation lives the split life of Said’s text, in its ideal condition as well as in its immediate circumstances. The texts that we study are placed within their circumstances, yet they draw on resources which cannot be fixed in the now, leading circular lives through collective memory. Movements live reiterated lives. The time period has to be hence taken as just convenient landmarks on a road which extend beyond the signboards. However, there are certain considerations that have gone to the period. 1947 is obviously the definitive year of India’s formal independence and its emergence from being a colony. How much of the colony has still remained within is condensed in the ambivalence of ‘post’ in ‘postcolony’, of temporal succession, of having been built upon, of aberrant continuities. 1977 looks more hazy. But the ‘70s is a significant period for the region. It was in the ‘70s that the Muslim League, a party which could be said as driving its electoral existence solely from the region of Malabar, became a formidable consolidated force in Kerala, handling important portfolios. The party even enjoyed the post of Chief Minister of
the state through the person of CH Muhammad Koya for a brief period in 1979. The ‘70s also marked a period of the Gulf migrations in Malabar. Migrations of an earlier period, predating our time frame has been to the plantation zones of Malaya, Ceylon, etc. The new wave of migrations has greatly altered the material conditions of Malabar life – a topic for a different study. One notes that it was as a means of coming to terms with the increased labour migrations after the Second World War and formal decolonisation in many parts of the world that the last decade, especially, has seen high stakes in the formulation of cosmopolitanism. Are we then forcing a contemporary term to study an older period? Very much so, inasmuch as theory itself is an act of retrospection, such that the actions are packed into a narrative in the here and now. However, what we discuss as minor cosmopolitanism is located very much in the particular characteristics of that time, characterised by a pedagogic state, logic of indirect rule of communities, and local configurations of electoral and cultural power. It would be noted, as we proceed, that our local resolutions did not have recourse to international solidarities or the regime of human rights as is wont now in a globalized world.

This dissertation reads the works of two exemplary writers, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer (1908-1994) and CH Muhammad Koya (1928-1983). While the latter is from Malabar, Basheer had made Malabar his home from the late ‘50s. Both of them are immensely popular, Basheer for his writings, and CH for his achievements in electoral politics. I have studied these writers as operating in the ambivalence of the two registers of nation-state and Islamic universality.

While we read Basheer through his writings, CH, apart from his writings, also has to be read through the major political events of his time, as I have tried to do by juxtaposing the analysis of CH’s works with the creation of the district of Malappuram in 1969. It is the marked character of these writers as well as the Mapplia Muslim in Malabar, and the
apparent failure of translation to a universality and thus in the hitherto battle for hegemony, that I have chosen them to read the negotiations over the nation-idea and novel imaginations of community formation.\textsuperscript{14}

Basheer's achievements in the Malayalam literary field as well as CH Muhammad Koya's achievements in politics defy their minor status by the gains they have achieved in their respective fields. Neither of these writers is, I claim, the representatives of the minorities in Malabar as a whole. Surely even the minorities have internal differences of class and denominations. Basheer and CH Muhammad Koya held contrasting opinions about faith and nationalism. For Basheer while faith represented a domain that could pervade religious differences and hence displayed a relation of immanence\textsuperscript{15}, for CH faith was a principle of secular ordering itself. Basheer does not seem to have been comfortably disposed towards Muslim League. On the other hand, there is ample evidence that at personal level both of them were quite appreciative of each other (Malayil, 2012). Basheer has in one and the same occasion called CH "a friend" while castigating Jinnah's League (2009f: 20 & 39). We shall see the implications of these positions for minor cosmopolitanism in the following chapters.

\textsuperscript{14}Curiously the historical narratives of the Mappila community, inasmuch as it is strictly 'political' ends with the 1921 Mappila rebellion against the British. See, for example, SaiduMuhammad (1951), Dale (1980), Hussain (2008), Mandalankunnu (2009). Studies on the contemporary are usually pitched at the sociological register, for example U.Muhammad (2007). Miller (1976) and Lakshmi (2012) are attempts at comprehensive study of the community, but the contemporary often revolves around educational practices, and in the former, of electoral successes of the Muslim League. Osella and Osella (2008) do read contemporary political aspects, but the stress is on social reform.

\textsuperscript{15}Basheer notes that his first introduction to Islam was through the Qur'anic verse which states that Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth — thus establishing immanence (Basheer, 2009f: 36)
Though with such differences between them, each of them do represent the minor populations, not through election or delegation, but in a case of substitution, as figures “endowed with a legitimacy to represent” (Prasad, 1999: 46). Basheer and CH Muhammad Koya are figural representatives of a universe informed by the Muslim everyday life. Both Basheer and CH Muhammad Koya are self professedly particular, as we shall see. Both of them also have been treated as particular, the former as the one who opened the doors to the Muslim house, and the latter as one who could successfully deploy fractional politics for particular gain. Detailing of this can wait until after the next chapter. Both of these claims/accusations, needless to say, are descriptions afforded by an access to unmarked secular subjecthood which were not uniformly available. Yet the currency of that description is indicative of the minor status of these figures. This dissertation is just a minor effort to look beyond the buying power of these descriptions and to see in the efforts by these two Muslim men their own attempts to think through the places they found themselves in, in the new dispensation. It is not an endorsement of their politics, each of them different from the other, but a sympathetic reading to see in their attempts the reactions to the limited options extended to the national majority’s particular other.

Chapter 3 reads the works of Basheer. The chapter is hinged on the concept of realism and its performance of the nation. The effort is to show the subversion of the realist mode by Basheer and the imagination of a new organizing principle which overcomes the binarist model of postcolonial nation-building. In Chapter 4, CH Muhammad Koya’s travel writing and stories of self-fashioning is juxtaposed with the formation of Malappuram district to lay bare an alternative universality based on an organization of the self as opposed to the control of populations put forward by the governmental logic.
But before we attempt such a rereading, it is necessary that we turn our attention to the recent debates on cosmopolitanism, as well as elaborate on a concept of minor cosmopolitanism, which would be my point of departure.