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**‘A PEOPLE UNITED IN
DEVELOPMENT’:
DEVELOPMENTALISM
IN MODERN MALAYALEE IDENTITY**

J. Devika

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DEVELOPMENTALISM IN MODERN
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ABSTRACT

The desire for ‘Development’ — often defined vaguely, working as a catch-all term for economic growth, social welfare, and socialistic redistribution of resources— has been intimately linked to the construction of the idea of a ‘Malayalee People’ as a distinct socio-cultural entity in the post-independence period. In this paper, the effort is to trace out some of these links in greater clarity. Put very briefly, the attempt is to draw upon public sphere debates in Malayalee society in the immediate post-independence decades, more specifically on speech and writing accruing around the distinctiveness of Malayalee culture and *Aikya Keralam* (United Kerala). Through this I hope to demonstrate the centrality of Developmentalism in both the conception of a unified ‘Malayalee People’ and their relation with other similar entities as the other States, and the Indian state. In the conclusion I try to reflect on themes that could possibly take forward the research on Malayalee identity in the late twentieth century and after.

Keywords: Developmentalism, (sub)nationality, United Kerala, Malayalee identity

‘Development’ has been a magic word in the Malayalam language since the mid twentieth century. No concept has perhaps been so ardently discussed; no idea has beckoned so seductively, or brimmed over with such promise. Development has also figured as the dominant concern in social scientific research on Kerala too. Of course, Kerala’s matrilineal communities and communist politics have elicited interest among anthropologists and political scientists since long, and recently, heightening interest in the anthropology of globalization has also attracted social science scholars to Kerala. Yet, it may not be off the mark to claim that a major share of visible social scientific work on Kerala continues to be around the specific configurations of development here. Indeed much of this work has often projected a certain exceptionalism, a claim regarding Kerala’s uniqueness, primarily vis-à-vis other parts of India. All States in India have of course their unique languages, histories and cultures. Through the discourse of the ‘Kerala Model’, however, a further uniqueness, that of the experience of ‘social development’, has been claimed for Kerala. This is all the more important because this idea has been powerfully projected in public discourse and internalized by late-twentieth century Malayalees, and still serves to define the very sense of being Malayalee.

A recent collection of social scientific articles on the achievements of Kerala in social development is introduced thus:

Kerala is a small state within India. Although the population of Kerala is greater than several OECD (Canada, Australia, Denmark, Sweden, for instance) countries, when compared to such large Indian states as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, Kerala looks small. However, being small within India in terms of population and geographical size has not prevented Kerala from attracting attention from both within and outside India.

(Parayil 2000: 1)

The tension between the self-perception of lack on the one hand, and the desire for self-assertion among a community of nations on the other is evident in this quote. This, however, has been an abiding element in assertions of ‘Malayalee identity’ and uniqueness in the post-independence period. Qite early enough, Kerala’s higher levels of literacy, particularly, had been used by these to boost a sense of superiority, if not equality, in comparison with other economically or politically powerful regions or centers of power¹. On the flip side, these often concealed a deep sense of inadequacy resulting from the perception of the lack of economic development². In sum, the elation over ‘Progressive Kerala’ has very often been deployed in speech and writing to minimize and cushion the perception of political powerlessness and economic backwardness.

The above observations appear all the more telling when we consider the extent to which the desire for ‘Development’ — often defined vaguely, working as a catch-all term for economic growth, social welfare, and socialistic redistribution of resources— has been intimately linked to the construction of the idea of a ‘Malayalee People’ as a distinct socio-cultural entity in the post-independence period. In this paper, the effort is to trace out some of these links in greater clarity. Put very briefly, the

attempt is to draw upon public sphere debates in Malayalee society in the immediate post-independence decades, more specifically on speech and writing accruing around the distinctiveness of Malayalee culture and *Aikya Keralam* (United Kerala), to demonstrate the centrality of Developmentalism³ in both the conception of a unified ‘Malayalee People’ and their relation with other similar entities as the other States, and the Indian state.

Such an inquiry into the past cannot but address the present because these are times in which the Development-defined Malayalee identity has been thrown into a crisis. On the one hand, the desire for Development still remains unfulfilled; on the other hand, and even more seriously, the precarious stability provided by the evocation of social development as a supporting prop has been gravely undermined, in several directions. The threats to ‘social development’, both as an idea and as materiality in the 1990s in Kerala⁴, has led to the steady opening up of a certain vacuum, which is generating near-frenzied and compulsive dystopic visions, efforts to ‘fill the lack’, some of which seem dangerous to a democratic polity. This seems to be a rather familiar story, when one turns to the crisis of Nehruvian Developmentalism of the 1960s in the larger Indian context, in which the vision of the Nehruvian Developmentalist nation-state became increasingly vulnerable to contestation (Deshpande 2000). In fact, we are increasingly witnessing the proliferation of identities decidedly and self-consciously located at a distance from a notion of ‘Malayalee People’. The effervescence of political identities that has been palpable in contemporary Malayalee society has engendered a situation that may be described at best as an ambivalent one. On the one hand, the illusions of inclusiveness (Kaviraj 1990) generated by Developmentalism are fading; there are stirrings of several narrowly interpreted religion-based identities. These include the Hindutva ideologues in Kerala, cult-based therapeutic identities obsessed with bourgeois-individual angst, and resurgence of identification with ritualism, often a bid for a scarcely-concealed *savarna* identity. On the

other hand, hitherto-marginalised identities, such as Dalit and gender-based ones, are being asserted as political, with varying degrees of success, through oppositional civil social mobilizations.

Yet it must not be supposed that Developmentalism has gone out of parlance. However, given the fact that the economic and political conditions at the global and national levels which made it possible to consecrate it at the heart of Malayalee identity are rapidly changing, the issue of the grounding of Malayalee identity⁵ itself may have to be rethought. This is a largely exploratory essay focused on writings of leftist intellectuals. It tries to trace the egalitarian Developmentalist ideology of the 1950s and 60s, its centrality within the newly imagined Malayalee identity, which was shaped in the context of the Nehruvian vision of India and in the shadow of the experience of marginality within the Indian nation. This is, no doubt, a miniscule part of, a small beginning towards, the intriguing history of development and the imagining of Kerala as a cultural-political unit, which spans the entire second half of the twentieth century. I do not focus on all the important manifestations of the theme - for instance, I do not examine the debate on the nationality question in Kerala initiated by the radical left in the 1980s. Nor do I examine debates about “essential” cultural forms — in theatre, language, poetry, and so on, initiated by intellectuals like M Govindan. The focus on the left seems justified given that the mid twentieth century was indeed a period of leftist cultural hegemony in Kerala, and that the communists were the major advocates of the linguistic unity of Kerala. In the conclusion I try to reflect on themes that could possibly take forward the research on Malayalee identity in the late twentieth century and after.

Pursuing this history, I believe, will also deepen our understanding of the ways in which the national living body (“the people”) is entwined with the postcolonial state, a theme discussed extensively in major debates on nationalism, especially by Benedict Anderson (Anderson 1991) and his interlocutors such as Partha Chatterjee (Chatterjee 1986;1993). If

Chatterjee's neo-Marxist critique of nationalism as the ideology of the bourgeois state has stood in sharp contrast with Anderson's defense of it as 'imagined political community'. To Anderson, nationalism was also an emancipatory popular consciousness, produced through the confluence of such factors as the new sense of empty, homogenous time and print capitalism, ultimately irreducible to an ideology. They have, however, shared much. It has recently been pointed out that:

...these influential accounts of postcolonial nationalism therefore insist on a strict demarcation between organic spontaneity and technical manipulation: between the nation-people and the state in Anderson's case, and between the people/community and capital in Chatterjee's case. This limit or line separating the spontaneous people from the state or capital ultimately turns out to be the line between the organic and the artificial..."[B]oth share a basic distrust of the state as an instrument of dead capital and its corollary, a basic belief in the spontaneous transfigurative power of the people. (Cheah 1999: 234-36)

However, the history of the intertwining of statist developmentalism and nationalism in Kerala may indicate that the lines separating the 'people' and the 'state' are not so clear. This is clearly the case for most postcolonial nation-states. Far from being a case of the perversion of a spontaneous becoming by the artificial and technocratic mediation of the state, Cheah's point about post-colonial nationalism as being receptive, as allowing "the people's welcoming of an other that dislocates it even as this other constitutes the self-identity of the people" (Cheah 1999: 239) seems relevant here. Nationalism, then, may exist not as either the 'pure', 'organic', or the 'contaminated', 'technicist' form; indeed, the technicist state may indeed be the necessary supplement to the nation-people. No wonder, then, that the recent anxious debates that have raged in the Malayalee public sphere about the political changes in the 1990s

were all about the suspected shift of the state away from the ‘Malayalee people’. No wonder, then, too, that such public anxieties appear alleviated when the extraordinary strengthening of the bureaucratic arm of the state — evident in the recent Smart City deal, and mirrored, perhaps, even in the recent action against encroachers on government land all over Kerala — is projected as ‘people’s action’. Indeed, what could well be the shaping of a crucial condition for neoliberal capitalism continues to be recognized, then, as the reassertion of radical national interest — and the government cannot help veering between populist and management rhetoric.

II

One of the most vociferously advanced public demands in immediate post-independence Malayalee society was *Aikya Keralam* — ‘United Kerala’ — a definite political unit comprising of Tiruvitamkoor, Kochi and British Malabar. The fairly strong consensus around this demand was hardly surprising. On the one hand, this consensus was the culmination of long-standing advocacy of more formal sorts of co-operation between the above three political units, which was justified as necessary for the nurturing of an already-present common language, and of a ‘common culture’⁶. A good instance here was the common enough demand for a university that would work as a focal point for various cultural projects centered upon distinctly Malayalee ethos⁷. Nationalist spatial strategies by which geography was to be transformed — anthropomorphised — as ‘Mother Kerala’, and represented in cartogenic ways were also familiar by the mid- 20th century. Consider, for instance, the representation of *Kerala Matavu* (Mother Kerala) that appeared in the *Shreemati* Annual Number of 1935, in which the figure of a reclining woman clad in the putatively traditional garb of *savarna* hindu women is superimposed upon a map of Kerala located within peninsular India with discernible place-names and other markers. Now, *Aikya Keralam* seemed to be both a way to set right the wrongs of history that divided

up a supposedly unified people into three separate political segments and the crucial requirement for the self-assertion of the Malayalee people, but it also served the needs of governance by the central authority. The words of Dakshayani Velayudhan, well-known public figure and member of the Indian Constituent Assembly, illustrate this duality quite well. She remarked thus on *Aikya Keralam*:

Like in language, the Malayalees were once united under a single political authority, and when this history took its natural course, the land of the Malayalees was split into three segments...It is sure that the State of Kerala will take shape in the near future...*Aikya Keralam* is a psychological need of the Malayalees. How will we be able to establish a strong administration in Keralam, which is a geographically distinct unit, without a State of Kerala?⁸

The dual advantage was especially stressed by the representatives of the Indian Union at the inauguration of the Tiruvitamkoor- Kochi union, Sardar Patel and V.P. Menon⁹. The latter side was all the more accentuated in U.Gopala Menon's recommendation of *Aikya Keralam* as a solution to the 'communist menace', since it would facilitate police surveillance, making it easy to trap communists escaping from Malabar¹⁰.

In general, the Indian National Congress had upheld the need to unite linguistically contiguous areas that were territorially divided under British rule. As in the rest of South India, in Kerala too, demands for linguistic unity were accepted as pro-national, while demands for communal representation were read as anti-national. The Congress Working Committee resolution passed in 1921 gave the people of the Indian States the right to send their delegates to the Indian National Congress from that year, and assigned these States to contiguous provinces based on linguistic affiliations. Thus Tiruvitamkoor and Kochi

were allotted to the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee and Mysore to the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee. However it often backed off from such commitments to linguistic unity when they proved discomfiting to native rulers (see for instance, Rangaswamy 1981: 62-3; Pati 2000: 198-230; Rao 1973). Indeed, the Congress's strategic use of the issue of linguistic unity was really nothing new — the British themselves were adept at it (Cronin 1981: 24-38). Also, in particular moments, linguistic unity was used against localized concern for social justice, too readily dubbed 'communalism'; indeed, the Congress was often simply unable to address the predominant local concerns, as for example in Hyderabad, which allowed communists to gain a strong foothold (Benichou 2000). The very beginning of Congress's work in Kochi was marked by deep distrust of the Nair-dominated Congress (Menon 1994), and one of the earliest public functions organized by the Congress Committee in 1921, a reception for the Khilafat leaders from Kozhikode (in British India — Malabar), was marred by violent protests by Ezhavas and Syrian Christians against the non-co-operation movement. The Congress sought to address the issue of caste inequality through the satyagrahas at Vaikam in Tiruvitamkoor (1924) and later at Guruvayur in Malabar (1931), both of which tried to resolve the issue of untouchability in strictly 'nationalist' terms. At Vaikam, the effort was to project it as a mainly religious one, to be resolved peacefully through the efforts of upper-castes and the sufferers, the lower castes (Jeffrey 1978: 136-69). The Guruvayur Satyagraha, Dilip Menon points out, was an effort by Nayar Congressmen to "steal the thunder from the Tiyya movement by allying the ideal of a community of equals to the problem of caste inequality". (Menon 1994: 90). He also argues persuasively that in the context of Malabar the socialists in the Congress "represented a local reaction against nationalism, in view of the subordination of local politics to the exigencies of the national party." (Menon 1994: 120) This subordination caused the Congress to remain weak in both Tiruvitamkoor and Kochi. Indeed, after the Haripura session of the Congress (1938),

the Tiruvitamkoor Committee of the Indian National Congress, despite its abhorrence for 'communal' aims had no way but to suspend its activities and amalgamate with the Travancore State Conference, the nucleus of which was constituted by the Joint Political Conference—an alliance between the Ezhava, Syrian Christian and Muslim communities, which had fought for these discriminated communities against Nair dominance (Rangaswamy 1981: 159-60).

In contrast, the Congress socialists (who later formed the core of the Communist party in Kerala) and the labour leaders were far more willing to cross borders and fight jointly against the rulers of the native States. For instance, when Cherian Manjooran, a prominent labour leader from Kochi was arrested on sedition charges in 1937, widespread resentment was expressed by labour circles throughout Kerala, and protest resolutions were passed at meetings held at various places in Tiruvitamkoor, Kochi and British Malabar (Rangaswamy 1981: 136-37). The unwillingness of the Congress to intervene in the native states despite their ostensible support to linguistic unity was openly criticized in the labour meetings organised by Congress socialists, and they asserted that trade unions could not make distinctions between British provinces and native States (Rangaswamy 1981: 190-91). It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the communists could claim that they were indeed the real champions of unity of the Malayalam-speaking regions (see, for instance, Gopalan 1976), for their politics did not recognise the boundaries between British India and the native States. At the same time, they were more willing to address local issues of caste inequality (Menon 1994: 192) and even when they occasionally berated 'communalism', they were pragmatic enough to attack caste inequality. It was from this position of political advantage that they dismissed the Kochi Maharajah's call for the unity of Kochi, Tiruvitamkoor and Malabar in 1946, at the occasion of his accession to the Indian Union. While the movement for United Kerala blessed by the Maharajah of Kochi demanded the union of these three regions, the communists were explicit in their demand for

a linguistically defined State (Nambutiripad 1984: 168-83). The communist movement pressed the advantage home effectively, and the demand for a linguistically-defined *Aikya Keralam* certainly gave them considerable mileage.

However, at the turn of the 1940s and 50s, too many distinct signs seemed to indicate the non-availability of a harmonious and united 'Malayalee People'. First, for course, was the problem, indicated above, that for many, the prospect of having to separate out areas in which other languages were spoken seemed too big a price to pay. Not surprisingly, such opinion refused to regard *Aikya Keralam* as a demand based on linguistic unity, and tended to stress the importance of geographical, social and cultural congruity¹¹. Secondly, the seemingly-implacable presence of community-based competitive redistributionist politics, despite the waxing of the communist movement, especially in Tiruvitamkoor and Kochi¹², appeared to undercut the very possibility of any homogenized sense of 'Malayalee People'. Community movements which were immensely influential here at the eve of Independence, by and large declared the intention to withdraw from the 'political', claiming the 'socio-economic' as their legitimate space, as if the two could be separated¹³. Most of these pledged allegiance to the Indian nation and promised to become active agents of development, acknowledged as the prime tool of Nation-building¹⁴. At the same time, they held fast to their particularities in the 'socio-economic', pointing to continued inequalities among various communities, and resisted the interpretation of nationalist sentiment as something fundamentally antipathetic to community-feeling. They continued to declare their commitment to the project of securing the conditions that would ensure their members full citizenship in the Development-centred Indian Nation of the future¹⁵. The political task taken up by community movements was that of achieving a subtle balance between these two commitments to minimize conflict. Thirdly, certain evocations of *Aikya Keralam* were sharply criticized as surreptitious efforts to smuggle in far narrower *jati-*

based agendas: thus while the *Nazrani Deepika* was warning its readers against the propaganda that *Aikya Keralam* and the Tiru- Kochi merger were part of a plot to install Christian prepotency¹⁶. Fourthly, Malabar in the north and the southern States differed in many important aspects of culture, social institutions, and economic and social infrastructure, a fact which communist intellectuals like E. M. S. Nambudiripad and C Achyuta Menon were deeply aware of.

Much of the leftist evocation of *Aikya Keralam* was clearly directed against a traditional-upper caste version of Kerala, in which there was a visible preponderance of such symbols, myths and interests¹⁷. Prominent leftist intellectuals like Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai caustically criticized the evocation of the legend of Parashuraman at the *Aikya Kerala* conference at Thrissur¹⁸ as totally inappropriate and redolent of anachronistic hierarchies:

Does the reference to *Keraleeyar* [Malayalees] point only towards the Hindus? What value does this story of Parashuraman have for followers of other religions? Do not Christians, Muslims and Jews have equal status in the united Keralam? The propriety of mounting [a picture] of a brahmin brandishing a weapon, a Hindu invention, which serves to allude to the brahmins' [traditionally-claimed] rights over the land, right in front of a United Keralam Conference held for all *Keraleeyar*, irrespective of caste and creed, is worth pondering upon. (Pillai 1990: 87).

E. M. S. Nambudiripad condemned this display at the United Kerala Convention (Nambudiripad 1984: 170-71). This, however, also seemed to imply that alternate grounding for Kerala in tradition was entirely impossible, or at least, not desirable. Much of the thrust of E.M.S Nambudiripad's explorations into the history of Kerala lay precisely in demonstrating the lack of a 'common tradition' in which to ground the unity of modern Kerala. Further, it was argued that the 'real' Kerala and

‘Malayalee People’ lay in the *future*, to be actively fashioned by subjects who would work towards a developed, fair and equitable society. Different social groups, it was argued, supported *Aikya Keralam*, with distinctly different but not necessarily antithetical interests: the depressed classes saw in it the rout of *jati* oppression; the democratic elements saw the downfall of feudal power; farmers spied the end of landlordism; workers descried the prospect of copious industrialism and fair labour relations; Malayalees employed outside sprung the hope of gaining work in their homeland; admirers of Malayalee culture discerned the chance to strengthen it anew¹⁹. A collectivity capable of addressing all these diverse needs had to be forged anew, and Communists were identified as major agents of this process. Their major task was to recast society according to a new set of classificatory categories defined in terms of labour, and even community movements were to be integrated into this process²⁰. Indeed, this seemed to be the preliminary condition for meeting the demands for modern political regulation or cultural resurgence.

The above-mentioned distrust of tradition notwithstanding, a mythical past seems to be harnessed to characterize this future elsewhere in the writings of E. M. S. Nambudiripad. Here, the modern-day resurrection of Kerala was sometimes referred to as the long-lost *Mavelinadu*, the kingdom of the mythical asura emperor Mahabali, which may be of course read as the very antithesis of *Parasuramakshetram*. Yet, this ‘tradition’ is *immediately dismissed* as not a real past but simply a figment of imagination to be actualized in the future. Writing of the “Mavelinadu— In the Twentieth Century”, he says: “...In short, a new Kerala in which equality and freedom reign, in which poverty and unemployment will be unknown, will begin to emerge. That *Mavelinadu*, which exists only in our imagination, will become a reality in the 20th century.”²¹ Now, the story of the golden reign of the mythical emperor Mahabali was very frequently evoked in literary writings, notably in poetry, that extolled the birth of united Kerala in the 1940s and 50s. In these, the figure of the just and generous Mahabali stood for the emergent

benevolent modern welfare state — which political forces on both the left and right laid claim to. The two putative ‘founders’ of Kerala -- Parashuraman and Mahabali — figured together to provide a contrast, and the fact that Malayalees celebrate the latter and not the former was highlighted, as in Balamani Amma’s poem ‘Mazhuvinte Katha’ (The Tale of the Axe). Secularising the Mahabali myth and redoing it for anti-brahmanical ends, however, was not easy. In too many renderings, Mahabali’s benevolence and sacrifice was fully compatible with his devotion to Vishnu — for instance, in P. Kunhiraman Nair’s poetry, especially his ‘Akhandha Kerala’ (Undivided Kerala) (1946). Nambutiripad’s account differed from these in that in it the story of Mahabali appeared equally unfit a ground on which Malayalee nationalist sentiment could be erected, a dream located in the future and not in the past.

The major instrument with which this goal was to be accomplished was to be Development. This may seem to be in contradiction with the insistence of the Communist movement on the linguistic basis of State formation. Language was certainly not dismissed; however, while the place of Malayalam in imagining the new Malayalee was beyond dispute, it could only figure as an initial condition—quite unlike, for instance, the status of the Tamil tongue in Tamil nationalism (Ramaswamy 1997). The ‘actual’ Kerala was located enticingly in the future. Nambutiripad’s text quoted above presents a detailed projection of the ideal Kerala of the future, thickly populated with large-scale industries, scientifically reorganised and managed farms and forests and hydel projects, enlisting its labour force rationally in productive activities, zestfully promoting scientific research and technical education, to fashion nothing less than a “modern Malayalee culture.” (Nambutiripad 1999 [1946]: 346). The shaping of Kerala was thus made conditional upon the fulfillment of various demands ensuing from different groups of people, among which the material needs were granted a certain primacy, and Development was hailed as the solution.

This is not to suggest that the leftists were the sole source through which Developmentalism gained a foothold in the world-view of the average modern educated Malayalee of these times. Indeed, it was ardently embraced much earlier in Malayalee society, spreading actively through the many community movements in the early-mid 20th century (Raju 2002). But the contrast between the leftist evocation of development as the way towards building a modern Kerala was characterized by an almost unconditional faith that is absent in other evocations. Modern Malayalam poetry of these times, for instance, powerfully articulated both the hopes and the anxieties engendered by the desire for development. To take one example, the poetry of Vailoppilly Shreedhara Menon, one of the most prominent and widely read poets of these decades, exemplifies the tension between the invocation to Development and the fear of the destruction it would bring²². The work of other distinguished poets like Idassery writing in these times too exhibit similar ambitions and tensions: development seems indispensable and indeed, quite desirable, yet the anxiety about what it entails is conspicuous (Satchidanandan 1998). In leftist writings, often, the overweening confidence in the power of development to smash pre-modern belief systems and structures was projected as somehow ‘naturally wedded’ to the socialistic project: the two, it was imagined, flowed together.

Building the *Mavelinadu*-of-the-future, therefore, seemed to involve easing out community identities and reintegrating people into a single nationalistic community. In 1961, when the non-leftist government of Kerala declared Onam to be the national festival of Kerala, the noted trade unionist and communist R. Sugathan questioned the moral right of the Congress ministry to do this. The Congress, he accused, had no right to do so because it was injecting community politics into the working class: “The Industrial Age has broken the back of caste-consciousness. But some are trying to inject the dangerous violence of community-politics into workers’ issues....This tendency, which undermines national economic development and socialist ideologies, must indeed be checked.”

(Sugathan 1979 [1961]). The ideal new Malayalee society could be nothing less than ‘a people united in Development’. Mobilizations around caste and community, in this scheme of things, were rendered legitimate only insofar as they contributed to national development, which, in turn, seemed unshakably allied to ‘socialist ideologies’. And whenever communists defended the use they made of caste grievances, for instance, their reliance upon Ezhavas and Dalits, they did so from the vantage-point of class politics, which bore the stamp of the modern (see for instance, Karat 1972).

However — and this is the important point — it is vital to recognise that there were many layers in the communist invocation of Malayalee identity that were entirely amenable to the restoration of the *savarna* at its heart. In a recent essay, Dilip Menon has suggested that the acceptance of parliamentary democracy, linguistic Statehood, and the coming of the communist ministry engendered a distinct shift towards political conservatism in cultural expression in Kerala among the left (Menon 1994). He points to E M S Nambudiripad’s defense of the caste order as a ‘once-rational-now-irrational’ economic system, and his subtle acceptance of brahmanic culture as the high cultural grounding for the modern State of Kerala in his *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi* (Kerala, the Motherland of the Malayalees) (1948) as the expression of a “growing closure”, which culminated in the late 1950s. It appears, however, that the elitism within the left was achieved through achieving a ‘balance’ by deploying various, strategies, often opposing ones. It may be important to note that the silent reinstating of *savarna* values and culture as the foundation of Malayalee identity was simultaneously accompanied by the advocacy of a technical-rational- scientific vision of the future of Kerala. In this second frame, linguistic unity was indeed taken to be only an initial condition for the shaping of Malayalee sub-nationality. Nambudiripad’s own zigzagging between the above-mentioned distinct invocations of Malayalee identity in his writings served well his championing of the ‘developmental unity’ of Kerala —

which, to this day, keeps invisible the inequities of caste and gender, while appearing ‘scientific’ and ‘modern’. In other words, he emerges as a major figure in the history of the forging of a *refurbished* caste elitism, of those groups that gained from the economic and social transformations in Malayalee society since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, highly visible in present-day Malayalee society. Here Nambutiripad’s writing on modern Malayalee identity participates in the new caste elitism of the Indian post-colonial modern, which as M S S Pandian puts it, “not only constitutes lower caste as its Other, but also inscribes itself silently as upper caste”, such that caste and its history seems to belong exclusively to the lower castes (Pandian 2002: 15). Nambutiripad retrieves upper caste culture by subjecting it to a process of selection and reinscribing the selected items as ‘beyond caste’; further, he invokes the developmental modern to further create the impression that the oppressiveness of caste is a ‘thing of the past’.

To illustrate this, one may compare his *Onnekaalkoti Malayalikal*, with his histories of Kerala written in the 1940s and 1950s. In the former, both the images of the ‘founder’ of Kerala, the axe-wielding brahmin (who is recognised as an avatar of Vishnu), and its benevolent ruler, the devotee of Vishnu, are rejected. Instead a technical-developmental modernity is recommended as the core of the new Malayalee-ness, which replaces the traditional elite with the new elitism of scientific knowledge. His historical work *Keralam Malayalikalute Mathrubhumi* (1948), however drew severe criticism from leftist-radical intellectuals such as Joseph Mundassery and P. K. Balakrishnan, who found it to be an expression of ‘feudal socialism’ in its enthroning of brahmanical feudal elite culture as the first expression of a ‘common Malayalee culture’ — a point recently reemphasized by Dilip Menon’s essay. Nambutiripad’s response to the criticisms took the shape of another work, *Keralattinte Desheeya Prsanam* (The National Question in Kerala) (1952), in which he claimed that the earlier work had taken a confusing mid-position that found ‘some truth’ in both pro-Aryan and pro-Dravida positions. In this,

he dismissed both, arguing that while the first served the interests of the British colonialists and local feudal elements, the second bolstered local bourgeois interests (Nambutiripad 2000 (1952): 34). Interestingly, his alternate account engages in a careful ‘selection’ in which aspects of elite culture are reinstated as the ‘foundation’ of Kerala’s national identity. Thus even as he admits that the cultural institutions and forms that arose under the brahmanical feudal order were largely Hindu, Nambutiripad is keen to establish that it was through these institutions, and “through the mingling of the [male] artists who fostered these art forms and the audiences who were attracted by them, through generations, that the cultural consciousness that has been part of the specific mindset of Malayalees was largely shaped.” (Nambutiripad 2000 [1952]: 198). Again, even when he admits that elite art forms and literature were highly exclusionary, he would still argue that they “laid the foundations of a style and technical form that was truly national and overcoming the boundaries of caste.” (ibid.). Indeed, Marxist teleology serves the useful purpose of reinstating the ‘objective’ worth of brahmanic feudalism, and Nambutiripad quotes Engels’ statements on the ‘objective’ significance of slavery in human history, its importance in advancing productive forces in society, to strengthen his claims (p.196). Comparing these texts, one is struck by the difference — one espouses a rational-technical future defined by scientific temper, while the others legitimize brahmanical elitism subtly, through a historical materialist narrative of the past of Kerala. But one cannot fail to notice the sharing too: how the figure of the traditional elite as the repository of productive knowledge and refined culture blends with that of the new elite — the technical expert and the modern-educated intellectual, the recognised purveyors of the Indian modern — quite seamlessly. Also, holding out the promise of Developmentalism to create in the future a community free of the divisions and inequities of caste worked in effect to legitimate the retention the ‘higher’ products of a caste-ridden past as a ‘common legacy’ that somehow seemed beyond the egregious oppressiveness of caste.

Developmentalism in the new Malayalee identity thus signalled not the end of elite dominance but the coming of the era of the new elite. New elite casteism works through two major strategies: that of retrieving portions of savarna culture as ‘high culture’ untainted by the oppressiveness of caste, and that of foregrounding the developmental modern, which, as M. S. S. Pandian remarks, silently inscribes itself as upper-caste (Pandian 2002). The destruction of caste oppression is thus cast as a developmental, rather than political, question.

III

But ‘Development’ also appeared as the ideal solution to pervasive insecurities about being ‘backward’ and the repercussions of being so, which had already been drawing abundant speech and writing in Malayalee society, ever since the late 19th century²³. By the mid-20th century, Malayalee society was found lacking in many other ways as well, for example, to be helplessly dependent upon its neighbours for its food requirements, to possess too little land and too many people, and even in the danger of being subsumed by its better-off neighbours etc. As early as 1925, the authors of the *Report of the University Committee of Travancore 1923-24* (1925) remarked that its query whether the predominantly Tamil district of Tinnevely (which was part of Travancore) was to be included in the scheme of the proposed university of Travancore seemed to disturb many of their respondents: “The idea of the inclusion of such a large Tamil population has, in some quarters, generated a feeling almost bordering on panic, that the interests of Malayalam will be lost sight of with so powerful a Tamil partner.” (*Report* 1925: 201). This contrasted with the views that the Committee found regarding the inclusion of South Canara, which was seen to ethnically, culturally, and geographically closer to Kerala, and especially because “The traditional definition of Kerala places it between the two limits of Gokarnam in South Canara and Cape Comorin in Travancore”, besides other similarities like the existence of matrilineal communities (*Report* 1925: 202-3).

Such fears very often underlay the most rational-sounding pleas for development. The fear of being relegated to an insignificant position in the Indian Union was voiced as early as the 1930s. Writing in the early 1930s, Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai touches upon this in his attempt to imagine the future of the Malayalee:

It is time now to ponder upon the status that will be accorded to the Malayalees in the free India that is likely to become a reality in the near future. It is very likely that self-governing provinces constituted based on common language may be established in India in the not very distant future. When that happens it is quite possible that Malayalees will have a most insignificant status in comparison with other peoples.... (Pillai 1934: 14)

It is suggested that Malayalees, thus constituted as lacking in numbers, capital and land, and precariously positioned, almost in a fearful opposition to Others, stronger than and capable of subsuming them, should hold fast to Development. It appears as the ultimate means of redressing the lacks of the Malayalee (now appearing as a unified population, thus set against various Others). They must modernize all modes of life-sustenance and multiply the means of wealth-generation. A grip over wealth and knowledge²⁴ seems to be the only way out of the painful condition of lack, which makes one vulnerable:

People fewer in numbers may gain an important place in ruling their motherland and in other affairs by developing their abilities in other matters. But Malayalees seem to possess no such advantage in comparison with other peoples. Economically and industrially, the Malayalee's position, when compared to that of others, is very backward.... There is the possibility that in the independent India of the future, Malayalees may become an

insignificant minority and gradually decline, becoming slaves to other peoples. This terrible future is not because Nature has been unfavourable.....(Pillai 1934: 24)

Such fears continue to be present in the debates around *Aikya Keralam*, especially in the context of proposals for a common 'Southern State' or a 'West-Coast State' of which Malayalees could be part. The Other to be guarded against was not always that which seemed to hold up the threat of outright political domination (as in the above quote). That which was perceived to be obstructing the process of leveling traditional hierarchy was also to be guarded against. For example, in the prominent Communist leader A.K.Gopalan's justification of *Aikya Keralam*, the forces behind the original loss of unity are external (Gopalan 1954). The central government is accused of continuing to play such a debilitating role. Political unification of Kerala is primarily justified as a political measure, of self- defense, and developmental initiatives are hailed as measures to bolster this. In many texts the anticipated shaping of the unified Malayalee People is narrated in two phases, first, being constituted as a unified population defined against the impeding Other, and then, being really unified through the leveling of internal hierarchies. A lucid example would be N.V.Krishna Warriar's poem *Aikya Keralam*, written on the occasion of the *Aikya Kerala Conference* at Thrissur in 1947 (Warriar 1986: 254-55).

The prospect of Development was, indeed, the answer to the advocates of the 'Southern State' or the West-Coast State' that Kerala was not endowed well enough to attain economic self-reliance. The advocates of the 'Southern State'²⁵ argued, for instance, that Kerala and Tamilnadu should be united under a common government as it would solve the problem of land scarcity acutely felt in Kerala, and because an Industrial Revolution was nowhere in sight. Besides, it was claimed, there was a significant degree of sharing in culture between Tamil and Malayalee societies, and that being a minority need not necessarily be a

position of disadvantage. Such positions did not downplay the need for a distinct ‘Malayalee People’; nor did they reject Developmentalism. Indeed, most often, the progress of the Malayalees was firmly bound to the advancement of efficient wealth-production through Development. But the Other—here, the peoples of adjacent regions—is not a deterrent, but someone to enter into a strategic alliance to overcome crucial lacks. In this frame, strict adherence to the demand for linguistic unity seemed to hamper the long-term economic interests of the Malayalee people. Though a great deal of what was pointed out in such positions was conceded, this certainly did not allay the widespread fear of being overpowered by Other peoples: it was remarked that the Tamils would surely not tolerate any Malayalees in powerful positions, and that peaceful co-existence would be simply impossible (Kurup 1977: 370-78). Economic advancement of the Malayalees could not be but bound to the formation of a separate linguistic unit; moreover, it was also argued that ‘freedom’ (of the Malayalee People) meant not just the freedom to strive after worldly gain, but also “the multi-faceted and creative development of internal force.” (ibid.) One find here a redeployment of what by then had become almost an axiom regarding the shaping of modern Individuality in modern Malayalee society: true Individuality, it was claimed, could be fashioned only through the active hollowing out of internalities²⁶ in human beings; wealth or status alone could not be its markers. Here it is argued that joining with other peoples may guarantee wealth, but not ‘Individuality’. Development continued to be enthroned as the tool for ascendancy, and the fullest fruition of the Individuality of the Malayalee People. As far as economic prosperity was concerned, the suggestions regarding Southern and West Coast States seemed only to aggravate the lacks of the Malayalees on the one hand, and facilitate the overlordship of their neighbours, on the other. Such moves, wrote E.M.S. Nambutiripad, would have limited impact in that “.except that a share of the financial burden of the Malayalees will now be foisted on to the Kannadiga or the Tamil, the economic situation of the Malayalee will

not improve...besides...it is not impossible that in the Southern (or) West-Coast State, the Malayalee may be subjected to the domination of others.” (Nambutiripad 1956: 36). The tussle between the need for Individuality and the urge to corner more resources informs many of the proposals put forth, such as, for instance, the demand made by the *Aikya Kerala* Conference at Kozhikode in 1954²⁷, which wanted linguistic unity, economic prospects and convenience of government to figure in considerations of a unified state of Kerala. It demanded a State of Kerala consisting of Malabar and Tiru- Kochi, to which the relatively less-populated Coorg and the Gudalloor and Ootacamund districts of the Nilgris were to be merged.

Not surprisingly, the central authority appears in such dreams often as potential ally or source of succour. It is often asserted that such help could be rightfully claimed because the cash crops from Kerala were certainly an essential source of revenue for the Indian government (Nambutiripad 2000 [1954]). But beyond such demands in times of need, it was averred that the central government had a necessary role to play in initiating large-scale developmental programmes in Kerala, without which the ‘backwardness’ of Malayalee society would be perpetuated. Since massive industrialization was held up as the way out of the impasse faced by the Malayalees, the resources would have to come from the central authority to a very considerable extent. When the demand for active central aid for industrializing Kerala was put up, it was almost always accompanied by the reminder that Kerala was an integral part of India both politically and economically, and could hardly attain developed status on its own. Writing on solutions to the economic questions facing the Malayalees, E.M.S.Nambutiripad remarks thus:

The State of Kerala—its people and its government—however, cannot carry out this task, by themselves. (*This is so*)..precisely because Kerala is not an independent country but an integral part of India; our economy is not

an isolated one but part of the general economy spread throughout India....So we Malayalees can find solutions to our problems only as part of the organised efforts carried out by the people and the government all over India to reform and develop India's economy. (Nambutiripad 1956: 7)

E.M.S. states unambiguously that the way out of the economic ills of Malayalee society lay in an “.. all-India economic plan that will help the speedy growth of large-scale industry, the reform of agriculture based on this and improvements in fields of trade, industry and transport.” (Nambutiripad 1956: 53) For this reason, linguistic nationalism appears an apt tool aiding the central government to set a national development programme in operation. The goals of the Malayalee people, of achieving internal homogeneity, and secure and well-defined identity vis-à-vis their neighbours, seem to blend effortlessly into the goal of the central government seeking to transform a multiplicity of cultures into a unified, economically powerful and modernized nation-state, in and through large-scale developmental activity:

...therefore it is wiser to adopt the mode of reorganization of states which is most conducive to the enhancement of co-operation between the center and the States and between the central- state governments and the people.... One—the form of States created through linguistic criteria is conducive to greater participation by ordinary people in matters of administration; so it aids the people's co-operation with the government. Two— peaceful rule is relatively easier in a state inhabited by people of common language and culture... (Nambutiripad 1956: 37)²⁸

IV

Mavelinadu-of-the-future never became a reality. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, the Malayalee media, as well as countless number of

meetings and memoranda on behalf of the ‘Malayalee People’ bitterly inculcated the central government for being grossly unfair in neglecting not just their immediate food and other requirements, but also their long-term developmental ambitions²⁹. In most of such texts, the ‘Malayalee People’ or ‘Kerala’ emerge as if unified, a precarious, often outright rancorous unity forged in opposition to various hostile Others. Accompanying this were expressions of desperation and insecurity over the lack of development: for instance, newspapers urged Malayalees to limit their births so that more resources could be made available for development (Devika 2002). Ever-more intense soul-searching for the cause of the inertia in developing was practiced in the editorials of newspapers, and several causes, like laziness, militant trade unionism etc. were identified³⁰.

Yet, the dream of ‘Progressive Kerala’ was very much alive. Some conditions widely acclaimed as necessary steps towards the ideal Malayalee society of the future seemed to have arrived here in the 70s. For example, the widespread popular assent to Family Planning in the early 1970s — population reduction had been projected as vital to Kerala’s future as a prosperous region — as was a cause for exultation for the Malayalee press, which read this as a sign indicating the emergence of the people as active contributors to Kerala’s goals, as individuals. Also, the land reforms, which promised greater productivity and fairness in the distribution of resources, were successfully carried out, and this kept alive the dream of egalitarian development. Yet social divisiveness did not seem to be alleviated (Heller 1999). By the 1980s, fresh reversals to the Developmentalist dream surfaced in the form of serious scepticism about Development itself in the emergent environmental movement in Kerala. The Developmentalist dream itself underwent interesting metamorphoses in the last three decades of the 20th century. First, it reemerged as a revaluation of ‘social development’ as important in its own right and not merely as an adjunct to or condition for economic development. It was as though one had to take relief in the fact that even

if economic development had not actualized, some aspects of the desired *Mavelinadu*-of-the-future had already manifested here—the high literacy rates, high female literacy, high life expectancy, reduced poverty, low death rate, birth rate and infant mortality rates etc. This seemed to offer grounding for a certain more or less homogenous ‘Progressive Kerala’ characterized by unique and positive attributes—its high ‘social development’—in academic and non-academic circles alike³¹. However, this ‘Social Developmentalism’ was quite unstable, plagued by self-doubt, and the articulation of achievements often served to etch out the failure in economic development in bolder relief. The other source of instability threatening ‘Progressive Kerala’ was the bundle of critiques mounted by those social groups excluded from social development in Kerala, or by groups for whom it had brought, at the best, paradoxical gains. These have gained vim and vigour in the 90s.

Secondly, there was the proliferation of different and critical versions of Developmentalism. Some of these – like ‘people’s development’— are critical of certain assumptions of the Nehruvian version of Developmentalism, such as the status of Nature as an inert resource for human transformation, and the inherent desirability of unfettered productivity. At times, they have been correlated with projects of resistance to globalization, against which a ‘Malayalee’ unity is sought to be actively constituted. However, none of these, especially ‘people’s development’ have been exempt from the critique voiced by marginal groups in Malayalee society. Indeed such critiques raise questions about the erasures effected by the focus of the future and the hopes about development’s capacity to erase all inequality among the elites in mid-20th century Kerala, such as, for instance, of the so-called ‘minority languages’, the tribal languages. New fissures thus begin to be recognised. Regional disparities no longer plague the State — the gap between Malabar and Tiruvitamkoor-Kochi in the provision of public medical facilities and education has been bridged forty years after independence.³²

Studying social change in the region, however, would certainly have to go beyond the vicissitudes of the idea of Development or its actualization here. Events that effectively alter the collective sense of geographical and political boundaries — such as the Malayalee migration to the Gulf — cannot be overlooked in research on the shaping of the sense of region in Kerala. The growth of prosperous diasporic Malayalee communities seems to have led to the intense commodification of the ‘regional’, rather than a sacralization of it. The region would then have to be rethought of as not subsumed under the Nation alone. Rather, it would have to be thought as (a) as an entity swayed and shaped by national and global forces and other regions too, and (b) as an entity shaped in discourse, within specific institutions and always subject to the diverse pressures of the market. It is quite doubtful whether the retrieval of the region as a place where certain fixed sorts of identities are produced as the result of the development of unique fixed sorts of material culture in that geographical area would suffice here. For here, the net result of the intensification of the processes of globalization has been to mix up social identities, national affiliations, cultural allegiances and geographical locations in myriad ways, yet the ‘Malayalee’ does persist, in ever-newer forms. Perhaps the questions raised about Kerala, as a region raised by scholars in the future will be about precisely this persistence.³³

J. Devika is Research Associate at the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. Her research interests include History of Malayalee Modernity, Feminist Theory, Development Theory, Social Science Methodology.

Email: devika@cds.ac.in

Notes

- 1 As early as 1933, certain indices of social development such as high female literacy were being cited as elements of ‘unique progressiveness’ of Tiruvitamkooor (commonly known as Travancore, a Princely State which was integrated with Kochi and British Malabar in 1957 to form the state of Keralam). So also, such positions were being critiqued—see, for instance, the trenchant editorial by Kesari A.Balakrishna Pillai, of some speeches made about Tiruvitamkooor at London, ‘Tiruvitamkooorine Pattiyulla London Prasangangal’ *Kesari*, Jun 21 1933, in A.Balakrishna Pillai 1989.
- 2 In the post independence decades, innumerable accusations that adequate recognition of Kerala’s unique strength of efficient, productive human capital remained unrecognised were to be made. See for instance, editorial, ‘Natturajyabharanaghatana’ (The Constitution of Princely States), *Nazrani Deepika* Oct. 6 1949; Dr. P.J.Thomas, ‘Kutiyettam : Keralattinte Adiyantaravashyam’ (Migration: The Crying Need of Keralam), *Nazrani Deepika* Aug 15 1958; editorial, ‘Delhiyile Kerala Sammelanam’ (The Kerala Conference at Delhi), *Matrubhumi* Nov.3 1966; editorial ‘Verittu Nilkkal’ (Separatism), *Kerala Kaumudi* May 21 1968. However, the story of the mutations and transformations of this ‘uniqueness’ in its varied deployments is yet to be told in substantial detail and depth.
- 3 Above everything, ‘Developmentalism’ refers to *faith*: the faith in the effectiveness of specifically modern interventions in all spheres of life in transforming all the diverse peoples and societies of the world in the image of the industrially advanced, socially rationalised, politically powerful ideal of society rooted in Enlightenment modernity. As a strategic apparatus producing governable and productive subjects committed to the modern

Nation, Development was a major element in the generalising-normalising practices of the modern state, and the promotion of Developmentalism was clearly in its interest. See, Manzo 1991; Bhabha 1991.

- 4 On the one hand, 'social development' has been critically interrogated regarding its claims to 'progressiveness' (see, for instance, Eapen and Kodoth; Saradamony 1996), and on the other hand, it has even been claimed that "...Kerala's weaknesses may, in fact, stem from tendencies and constraints inherent in the model.." Tharamangalam 1996: 176. Moreover, the achievements themselves are under threat today, given the desperate attempts of the state to dislodge itself from commitment to social development in contemporary Kerala, and a whole array of arguments have been forged to justify this retraction.
- 5 This may include reflection on whether a unified 'Malayalee identity' is necessary, at all, and if indeed necessary, how to ground it in a non-parochial, non-discriminating way.
- 6 It may be pertinent to remember that this 'common language', high Malayalam, was constructed through excluding highly localised and numerous local languages-in-use; it was also debated upon, for example, the extent to which Sanskritic influences in Malayalam were permissible was a hotly debated theme. See, P.Kunhiraman Nair, 'Kairaliyute Kalavara' in A.K.Nambiar (Comp.), *Pakshikalute Parishat*, Kottayam: D.C. Books, 2001, pp.68-71; M.P.Paul, 'Malayalasaahityattinte Kuravukal', in *Purogamana Sahityam Enthinu?*, Kottayam: SPSS, 1946. 'Common culture', however, was far more difficult to construct because the existent ways of life were far too diverse, and in any case, none of them appeared to provide a model for all to emulate. When such an exercise was attempted, it tended to privilege *savarna* or Nair socio-cultural norms or past. For

- instance, see, Chelanattu Achyuta Menon, ‘Kerala Samskaram’ (The Culture of Keralam) in P. Krishnan Nair (ed.), *Gadyakusumavali* Vol.II, Kottayam, 1934, pp.26-48; K.Bhaskaran Nair, ‘Keralattinte Atmachaitanyam’ (The Spiritual Essence of Keralam) in *Dhanyavadam*, Kozhikode: Matrubbhumi, 1951, pp. 32-8. Even much later attempts to locate a Malayalee ‘essence’, rooted in environment and history, have referred back to savarna life. See, for example, M. Gangadharan, ‘Keraleeyata’ in *Anveshanam, Asvadanam*, Kottayam: SPSS, 1981 (first published, 1974), pp.32-44.
- 7 See, for instance, Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai, ‘Malayaliyute Bhavi’ (The Future of Malayalees) in P. Krishnan Nair (ed.), *Gadyakusumavali* Vol.II, Kottayam, 1934, pp.19-25; Dr. P.J.Thomas, ‘Keralattinte Bhavi’ (The Future of Kerala), in *ibid.*, pp.11-18; P.Sankaran Nambiar, ‘Keralabhyudayam’ (The Welfare of Keralam), in *Sahityanishkudam*, Kozhikode: Deccan Publishing House, 1948 (first published, 1943); Malloor Govinda Pillai, ‘Aikyakeralavum Keralasarvakalashalayam’ (United Keralam and the University of Keralam) in K.Sivarama Panikker (ed.), *Prabandhatilakam* Vol.II, Kottayam, 1948, pp.99-106.
- 8 Dakshayani Velayudhan, Speech, ‘Kochi- Tiruvitamkoor Samyojanam’ (Unification of Tiruvitamkoor and Kochi), *Nazrani Deepika* (henceforth, *ND*) Jul 1, 1949, p.2. also see, G.Sankara Kurup, ‘Samyukta Keralam’ (United Kerala) in *G-yute Gadyalekhanangal*, Kottayam:SPSS, 1977,pp.350-51.
- 9 V.P.Menon, Sardar Patel, Speeches at the Tiru- Kochi Union Inauguration, Reported in the *ND* Jul 2 1949, p.2.
- 10 U.Gopala Menon, Speech at the Minachil Taluk Annual Conference of the State Congress, reported in the *ND* May 6 1949, p.3.

- 11 See, for instance, the declaration by the Chief Minister of Tiru-Kochi, Paravoor T.K. Narayana Pillai, that the Tiru-Kochi merger was not on the basis of common language but on the basis of a common way of life. Reported in the *ND* Apr. 25 1949, p.3.
- 12 See L.Owerkerk 1994; P.M. Mammen 1981. Indeed, this issue came up in the disagreements that surfaced in the *Aikya Kerala* movement, with K. Kelappan, prominent freedom fighter from Malabar claiming that unification would spread the contagion of community-based competition to Malabar. Reported in *ND* Oct.31 1949, p.3.
- 13 See, speech by Joseph Naduvattumuri at Latin Christian Mahajanasabha Annual Conference at Thiruvananthapuram, reported in the *Nazrani Deepika*, May 13 1949, p.1; Joseph Maliakkal, 'Catholica Conference: Oru Tiruttal' (Catholic Conference: A Clarification), *ND*, Jun 15 1949, p.3; sections of the Travancore Muslim League also announced the renunciation of their political programme in 1949, though it was strongly opposed by others—see, for an account the biography of P.K.Kunhu (Jamal, *Kunhusahib*, Kochi 1975: 175). By 1961, this was accepted as normal. In an editorial, the *Kerala Kaumudi* discussed the implications of such renunciation, arguing that community politics was a necessary evil, which however, was tolerable only because almost all community movements had agreed to remain non-political. See, 'Vargeeyatayum Mukhyamantrimarute Sammelanavum' (Communal Politics and the Chief Ministers' Conference), *Kerala Kaumudi* Aug 15. 1961, p.2.
- 14 Indeed, it was even argued that the politics of redistribution was taking too much space and in the conferences and meetings of community movements, they were urged to pay attention to the task of Nation –building and Developmental activities. Endorsing the exhortation of the Tiru-Kochi Joint Nair Conference in 1947

that community movements should focus on Developmental activities, the *ND* wrote: “Community organisations have long concentrated on political affairs. Although political programmes have been abandoned now, many community movements continue to focus on political affairs. They are not seen to be displaying this interest and energy shown in political matters, in economic programmes.” Editorial, ‘Samudayasanghatanakal’ (Community Movements), *ND* Sept. 14, 1949, p.2. Also see, speech by Paliath P.K.P.Achan at the Tiru- Kochi Nair Conference, reported in the *ND* Sept. 13 1949, p.3. Almost all speeches by Mannath Padmanabhan in the 1950s and 60s uphold this point without however, sacrificing the communal viewpoint. See his speeches in Kidangoor A. N. Gopalakrishna Pillai (ed.), *Mannathinte Sampoonakritikal* (The Collected Works of Mannam), Kottayam: Vidyarthimitram, 1977. The suggestion that community organisations must relinquish struggles over redistribution and turn to wealth-creating Developmental work appeared much earlier: see, for instance, editorials, ‘Samvidhanalakshyam’ (The Aims of Planning), *ND* Jun 16 1941, p.2; ‘Samudayasanghatanakal’, *ND* Jun 17 1941, p.2.

- 15 See, speech by Manamadhan Nair at the Tiru- Kochi Joint Nair Conference, reported in the *ND* Sept. 13 1949, p.3; speech by Seeti Sahib, ‘Vargeeyatayum Desheeyatvavum’ (1958) in Abu Siddique, *Seeti Sahib—Jeevacharithram*, Kozhikode, 1966: 208-15; resolution by Joseph Chazhikkad at the All- Kerala Catholic Conference, reported in the *IND*, May 5 1949; speech by Joseph Naduvattumuri, *op.cit.*, n.15; ‘Vargeeyatayum Mukhyamantrimarute Sammelanavum’, *op.cit.*, n.15; speech by Dr. P.K. Sukumaran at the SNDP Sabha Conference, reported in *Kerala Kaumudi* Nov. 15 1967, p.2; editorial., ‘SNDP Yogam’, *Kerala Kaumudi* Dec. 16 1970, p.2.

- 16 ‘ Observer’, *Nazrani Deepika* Apr. 22 1949, p.1.
- 17 See, Nambutiripad 1967; also, E.M.S. Nambutiripad, ‘Kochi Rajavinte Aikyakeralam: British Kammattathiladicha Kallananayam’ in P.Govinda Pillai (ed.), *E.M.S. Sampooranakritikal* Vol. 7 1946-47, Thiruvananthapuram: Chinta, 1999, pp.176-201, first published, 1946. Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai, ‘Parashuramachitram’ (The Picture of Parashurama) in *Kuttippuzhayute Prabandhangal* Vol.3, Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1990, pp.85-88. Powerful arguments against pegging Malayalee ‘essence’ to the established *jati*-based social order had already been made earlier by figures like Kunnath Janardana Menon. See his ‘Purvasmriti Pole Venamo Ippozhum Nadavady?’ (Must Present-day Practice Confirm to Custom and Tradition?) in *Lekhavati*, Kozhikode, 1955, pp.78-91, written in the 1930s.
- 18 The first *Aikya Kerala* committee was formed as a sub-committee of the Congress in Kerala in Oct. 1946; the first *Aikya Kerala* Conference was conducted at Thrissur in Apr. 1947, with the cooperation of the Maharajah of Kochi and a Committee was constituted there. In 1946, the Maharajah of Kochi had sent a resolution demanding the formation of united Keralam to the Kochi State Legislature Afterwards in 1949, legislators from Tiruvitamkooor, Kochi and Malabar came together with members of the Indian Constituent Assembly came together in a representative committee to form another *Aikya Kerala* Committee. Such conferences were being held all over: see, report of conference at Thiruvananthapuram, *ND* Sept. 19 1949, p.3; at Palakkad, *ND* Nov.7 1949, p.2; at Madras, reported in *ND* Jan 17 1949, p.2; preparations for such a convention at Aluva reported in *ND* Jan 17 1949, p.3.
- 19 E.M.S. Nambutiripad, ‘Aikyakeralattinu Vendiyulla Samaram Randam Ghattathil’ (The Struggle for Aikya Keralam Enters

- Second Phase), in P.Govinda Pillai (ed.), *E.M.S Sampooranakritikal* Vol 13 1952-53, Thiruvananthapuram: Chinta, 2000, pp.248-52. First published 1952. Also see, N.Sreekantan Nair, *Aikya Keralam*, Thrissur: Kerala Bhoomi Book Stall, 1947.
- 20 E.M.S. Nambutiripad, 'Nambutiriye Manushyanakkan' (To Make the Nambutiri Human), speech at Ongalloor Conference of the Nambutiri Yogakshema Sabha, 1944, Kozhikode: Deshabhimani, 1945. Seeking to clear up some of the confusion apparently unleashed by this speech, Kambiseri Karunakaran wrote: We can be satisfied only when each of the present-day communities progresses in an ideal way and glows in the radiance of social consciousness. On that day, each of these will shine as the sub-centers of activity of a central social organisation." In 'Communisavum Communalisavum', *Prabhatam* 1 (8), 1945, p.12.
- 21 E.M.S.Nambutiripad, 'Onnekalkoti Malayalikal' (One and a Quarter Crore Malayalees), in P.Govinda Pillai (ed.), *E.M.S. Sampooranakritikal* Vol.6 Thiruvananthapuram: Chinta, 1999, p. 346. First published, 1946. Mavelinadu refers to the kingdom of the great Asura king, Mahabali, whose boundless charity and benevolence made the gods jealous. Under his reign, so goes the folk-song, "...all men were alike/ there was no falsehood, no cheating, no lying/ no danger to anyone". The Malayalees, it is said, were his subjects.
- 22 See, S.Rajasekharan (Comp.), *Vailoppillykavita Sammeksha*, Thiruvananthapuram: The State Institute of Languages, 1986 for bibliographical information regarding the poet's work. It may also be remembered that his later work often displays a thorough disillusionment of Developmentalism, as in *Mritasanjeevani* (1980).

- 23 For an excellent instance of self-construction of one-self as backward, and in need of Development, see a speech made by the First Prince of Tiruvitamkoor in 1874 to a local debating society, Prince Rama Varma, 'Our Industrial Status', Kottayam: C.M.S. Press, 1874. Also see, Raju. S 2002.
- 24 The coupling of *Vidya* and *Dhana sambadanam* (the creation of wealth) in reformist projects of social transformation in 20th century Malayalee society is really too frequent to be cited. In 1844, the Tiruvitamkoor government issued a proclamation giving preference to the English-educated in government service (K.K.N.Kurup, cited in N. Sam, *Keralattile Samuhya Navodddhnavum Sahityavum*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1988). In the 20th century the coupling remained intact in the pronouncements and writings issuing from the movements for community reform. To quote just one instance, a speech made by Shree Narayana Guru to a meeting of the Pulayas, who were the lowest down in the *Jati* hierarchy, at Muttathara, near Thiruvananthapuram: "All men belong to the same caste. There is no Jati difference between them, only difference of status. It is not possible (otherwise). Some may be better off in wealth, education and hygiene... The Pulayas are at present highly deficient in wealth and education. You must strive to amass these two. Education must be urgently acquired. If that is attained then wealth and hygiene will follow..." Quoted in T.Bhaskaran, *Shree Narayana Guru Vaighari*, Perumbavoor : Kunnattunad SNDP Union, 2000, pp.222-23. K.Saradmoni points out that the "...first strike by agricultural workers in Kerala was organised by Ayyankali not for economic gains, but for the right for entry to schools." K.Saradmoni 1980, p.149. 'Development literacy' was being fostered in early-mid 20th century Keralam quite actively in several ways, for example, through magazines. See, G.Priyadarshan, *Kerala Patrapravarttanam: Suvarnadhyayangal*, Thirissur: Current Books, 1999, pp.180-96.

- 25 See, for instance, Taryattu Kunhittomman, 'Keralavum Tamizhakavum Onnakanam', *ND* Apr. 3 1954, p.6.
- 26 'Internality' refers to both a space supposedly 'inside' an individual/collectivity, seemingly the seat of one's true abilities, weaknesses, tendencies etc., and to the very preoccupation with that space which is deemed essential to the shaping of modern Individuality. For an elaboration of this idea in early Malayalee reformism, see Devika 1999.
- 27 Report, *ND* Jun.1 1954, p.4.
- 28 This is again not to deny that the first Communist Ministry in Keralam did make effort to transform Keralam into a truly self-sufficient economic unit, as seen, for instance, in the unique attempts to popularise the planting of the *Sheemakkonna* tree, a cheap source of green manure, and the project to manufacture tapioca-based macaroni, in a bid to counter the food deficit. I am indebted to Dr. P.K. Michael Tharakan for pointing this out to me.
- 29 To mention just a few, see, Statement by Dr. P.J.Thomas on Five Year Plan allocation to Tiru-Kochi Union, *ND* Jun.26 1954, pp.3-6; editorial, 'Keralattinte Vyavasayavalkkaranam' (Industrialising Keralam), *Malayala Manorama*, Nov. 20 1958, p.2; editorial, 'Vyavasaya Vikasanakkaryam', *Malayalarajyam* Jan. 16 1959, p.3; editorial, 'Keralattinu Labhikkenda Vankida Vyavasayangal' (The Large-Scale Industries that Keralam Must Rightfully Get), *Malayala Manorama* Jul. 28 1961, p.2; editorial, 'Keralattinte Paddhati Vihitam' (Keralam's Share in Plan Allotment), *Matrubhumi* Jun. 25 1965, p.4; editorial, 'Indiyum Keralavum', *Matrubhumi* Sept. 3 1966, p.4; report on speeches by Malayalee MPs in Parliament, *Matrubhumi* Jun. 9, 1971, p.1; editorial, 'Bhakshyarashtriyam' (The Politics of Food), *Kerala Kaumudi* Jul.5 1968, p.2; editorial, 'Kendra Governmentum

- Bhakshyaprasnavum' (The Central Government and The Food Crisis), *Kerala Kaumudi* Nov. 16 1967, p.2; editorial, 'Parihasikkarutu, Apamanikkarutu' (Do not Taunt, Do not Insult), *Matrubhumi* Jun.5, 1970,p.4; editorial, 'Nalaunso?' (Only Four Ounces?), *Matrubhumi* Jan. 7 1966, p.4.
- 30 See, for instance, editorial, 'Tozhilillatta Engineeramar' (Unemployed Engineers), *Matrubhumi* Mar. 5 1970, p.4; editorial, 'Tozhillaima Prasnam' (The Problem of Unemployment), *Kerala Kaumudi* Jul. 20 1971,p.2; editorial, 'Paddhicchavarute Tozhilillaima' (Unemployment among the Educated), *Kerala Kaumudi* Oct. 4 1969, p.2.
- 31 For academic versions, see Franke 1993; Jeffrey 1993. For non-academic versions, the discourse of Keralam's Popular Science Movement, Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishat, is quite revealing.
- 32 Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen 1995, pp.200-1. However, new 'backward regions' are indeed emerging as outliers — for instances, the districts of Idukki and Wayanad, and here the impact of globalization on agriculture has been particularly devastating.
- 33 For examples of recent work that reworks the region thus, see Ritty Lukose, "Consuming Globalization: Youth and Gender in Kerala, India", *Journal of Social History* 38 (4), 915-35; Sharmila Sreekumar, "Inside/Outside? Contemporary Malayalee Woman", ('Akatto/ Puratto : Samakaaleena Malayali Stree') *Pacchakkutira* 2 (1), 2005, pp.15- 26.

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