Decolonising the Map Through Literary Cartography in Select Malayalam Novels

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Abstract

The concept of mapping that has infiltrated the field of humanities presents many ontological possibilities. Literary cartography, or the act of mapping places in fictional and narrative spaces, implies that such maps are not just representations of the real world but are sites of production, forms of enablement for both the makers and the users, and transferable structures of knowledge across space and time. Using translations of select Indigenous novels translated from the Malayalam language, this paper will study the way in which fictional spaces created by writers of Indian regional languages become a counter-narrative for colonial history and decolonise narrative and physical spaces. It also attempts to examine the transformations of postcolonial texts from ethnographic and social commentaries on colonial binaries to resistance narratives to the hegemonic powers. The process through which regional writers decolonise occidental maps by writing alternative histories and by portraying different versions of postcolonial communities will be analysed. The paper will also address how the cultural agency of these imagined spaces negates the hegemony imposed on them through previous geographies drawn for them by dominant powers.

Keywords: Map, literary cartography, decolonisation, indigenous literature, resistance, postcolonialism

The act of mapping or cartography is colonial in its history and inception. The spaces on the maps of colonised countries have always been contested not just by the native forces but by different colonial powers, and this contestation has continued to the eras of decolonisation and post-colonisation. Preparations of these maps have led to bigger issues of inclusion and exclusion, as, while colonising and decolonising the map, the history of people living in the pertinent geographical area has often been overlooked, leading to inaccuracies. The later event of turning maps of the former "Other" into those of the new "One" carried out by people belonging to their respective geographies and topographies, who decolonise and redraw them,

is often studied within the discourse of postcolonialism. Understanding how the reorganisation of such decolonised societies is carried out is then only possible through the study of the implication of the different lines of forces in a compartmentalised world of colonialism, as Frantz Fanon opines (29).

To understand the nature of the compartmentalisation that the world has gone through, it is important to understand the ideas of the "core" and the "periphery," which do not just pertain to colonialism but also figure in reversing the process. In the simplest terms, they mean the centre and the margins of a structure, but a deeper understanding of both is required in meaning-making. To understand the concept of the centre and its importance, it is necessary to go back to the concepts in Jacques Derrida's essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." He suggests that any structure is perceived according to its centre or point of origin. This centre's characteristics then balance the entire structure, inherently attributing its own qualities to the component elements (279). Since the centre is not the whole, its stability cannot be affirmed since the whole also comprises the periphery, which exhibits very different characteristics. Bringing this concept into cartography and analysing the process of making a map of a place, it can be found that it is not the physical centre of the place which is mapped that plays this role but the authority that creates the map- the point of origin. Hence, in the case of colonial cartography, where the occident creates the map, the centre is the colonial authority, which is unstable and hungry for more power over the native geography that it is considered to "give structure" to. This leads to multiple readings of the maps and their redrawings since the centre feels empowered due to its overarching control over a colony and compromised at the same time due to its ignorance about the periphery that later begins to fight back. The decision on where boundaries should be drawn and who should stay at the periphery thus becomes a point of discussion, where a history of fights of the native forces between themselves and the colonisers can be seen.

During decolonisation, the neglected areas in the coloniser's maps were again included in the official maps. The process was known as peripheralisation, where "a unit, or an area, which was not previously involved at all, is included into the functioning of the world economy" (Hopkins and Wallerstein 98). In India, apart from cartographers, the nation's writers also played a huge role in the process. The confluence of literature and cartography during this period marked a profound transformation in how narratives were crafted and understood. This literary cartographic revolution entails integrating geographical elements into literary works, providing a spatial dimension to storytelling and redefining the cultural and historical contexts within which these stories unfold. India's rich literary heritage, encompassing ancient epics like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, already demonstrated an intrinsic connection between narrative and geography, with detailed descriptions of landscapes, cities, and pilgrimage routes, which served not only as backdrops but also as integral components of the narrative structure. The 19th century was a period of significant transition in Indian literature, with the emergence of regional literature, which began to incorporate geographical elements more prominently. Later, the nationalist movement and a growing consciousness of regional identity in the 20th century played a crucial role in the revolution of Indian literary cartography. Literature became a tool for expressing anti-colonial sentiments and imagining a unified nation. This period saw the emergence of a new generation of writers exploring the relationship between geography and identity. The rise of social realism and regionalism also contributed to this. Post-independence, the literary cartographic revolution continued to evolve, with writers exploring the themes of identity, migration, and displacement. Regional literature flourished, with authors using geographical settings to highlight the cultural and social issues specific to their regions. With the help of narratology, these writers in India started to reintroduce to the readers what Walter Mignolo calls "silenced societies"- geographical and historical locations where the acts of talking and writing take place but are not acknowledged by the overarching power

structures, past or present (71). Thus, literary cartography, or the art of mapmaking through literary narratives, became an important method of decolonisation, which is continuous in nature and is an ongoing process in most postcolonial nations, a practice of resistance by the people silenced by the colonial archives by creating alternative histories. It is also a method of restructuring the 'imperial project', in which native writers work on the geographical knowledge that Indigenous communities possess, where spaces are reappropriated, demarcated, and renamed.

Postcolonial works in Indigenous languages often offer a symptomatic reading, as the familiar colonial discourse encompasses more than binary oppositions. Imagining locations based on and set within real geography is used by the writers to create representations of "other" people and "other" places. In Indian literature, choosing the texts for studying decolonisation through mapping becomes another point of fracture, as the country contains multitudes of cultures. Here, indigenous literature written in minority languages becomes a strong candidate for analysis, as it offers different perspectives from mainstream Indian literature or Indian English literature that mirrors the lived experiences of the majority community of India that speaks Hindi. Hence, this paper will look at translations of novels written in Malayalam, a language spoken by less than three per cent of the total population of India, native to the Southernmost state of Kerala. The novels *Litanies of Dutch Battery* by N. S. Madhavan and *Tales of Athiranippadam* by S. K. Pottekkatt are important works from the state that were written in the postcolonial era, which presents fictional spaces named Lanthan Bathery and Athiranippadam, respectively. Through these spaces, the writers do not just portray the different events of decolonisation but also the regional struggles for power and the multiple identities of people that the colonisers overlooked while creating their maps. The ideologies of the 19th-century British Empire and other colonisers that were imposed on the Orient are rewritten by Malayali writers who write from their own subjective positions. The imagined

spaces in these texts stem from real ones and the experiences of real people and hence become instrumental in deconstructing imperial discourses through exercising a cultural agency that negates imposed hegemony. As Angharad Closs Stephens points out, "Postcolonial novels offer some material for destabilising the spatial and temporal coordinates of dominant geographies" (254).

The process of decolonisation and mapping Indigenous spaces on the maps of the native land has also included the anticolonial practice of reverting to Indigenous names or configuring new names. In decolonising a map, the relationship of the land with the natives is the primary aspect, whether it is understood through spatial narratives or demarcations of territory. Within the Indigenous mappings or narratives of its spaces, toponymy becomes an essential aspect in binding the native identity to the place. The names of places are inherently connected to the history and culture of the place and are often mnemonic devices that help people remember them. In the attempt of toponymy as a part of decolonisation, the language becomes a site for struggles against colonisation and the colonisers. When Brian Friel talks about the Britishers mapping his home country of Ireland in the mid-19th century, he says how "English couldn't really express us" (25). Reclamation of these names of places is the initial step of decolonising the map. It is, therefore, decolonising both the content of the map and the process of making the map. An example of this naming process can be seen in the novel *Litanies of Dutch Battery* by N.S.Madhavan, where the island is named Lanthan Bathery, a vernacularised version of its previous name, "Dutch Battery", given by the colonisers. As the name suggests, the island has a history of Dutch colonisation, during which their battery was instituted on it. The vernacularisation of the name by the author Madhavan is the first mode of resistance against history written for the natives by the colonisers. Even though it is a fictional location, it represents many such areas in Kerala, including the small islands in the backwaters near the city of Kochi. These vernacular names help in validating regional languages and dialects. The

author thus reverses the attribution of European names to places in the colonies. Such naming of places is important for the history and the culture that they pertain to, as they hold knowledge and help the indigenous people to have empirical supremacy, however small that is. They also influence the identities formed on the soil, informed by their own variations from written history. The new names can also then be a mode to challenge the frames of reference constituted by the colonisers.

Apart from giving the island of Lanthan Bathery its name, Madhavan also gives a detailed description of the history of the place and how it came to be what it is. Here, the lesser-known stories of the Portuguese and the Dutch colonising various parts of the country and their fights come to light. The writer creates cultural and political maps within his work, which can connect to places and spaces in the past, leading to the creation of a decolonised nationalist historical narrative. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot posits, in such cases, the spaces and the people who live in them become active agents of history rather than being a medium that is infiltrated (205), as in the case of colonial narratives. Madhavan's account of the history of Lanthan Bathery in *Litanies of Dutch Battery* is as follows:

> The Portuguese, who fought alongside the King of Cochin, against their common foe, the Zamorin, the ruler of Kozhikode, slowly established their hegemony over Kochi. They forcefully took many places on lease from the King of Kochi, including a thickly wooded island. Later, it acquired a name, Kamponjikad– Company Woods. In 1663, the Dutch defeated the Portuguese and a Dutch flag began to flutter in the Kochi skies. In the battle for Fort Emmanuel, the Portuguese headquarters, Dutch Presbyterians killed many Portuguese Catholics and destroyed ten of their churches in Kochi. They converted the famous Santa Cruz Church into a pepper warehouse. The Dutch then turned their anger on the local Catholics, converts from Hindu fisherfolk and other low castes, and also on the children the Portuguese had fathered from local women. Many of them escaped from Kochi to save the new faith that had liberated from the slavery they had endured in their former religion, and in their lives. Some reached Kamponjikad, which was under the Portuguese. The Latin Catholics of Lanthan Bathery trace their origins to these exiles. Kamponjikad changed hands and went to the Dutch. They built bungalows in Ponjikkara after they got monopoly over the right to transport drinking water from Aluva, from the King of Kochi. They constructed a palace for their Governor at Lanthan Battery. On the promontory of Lanthan Battery, where the River Periyar bent westward to join the Vembanad backwater, the Dutch mounted

> a battery of five cannons to control the river trade. That's how our island got its name, Lanthan Bathery, or Dutch Battery (35).

While Madhavan's work talks about the Dutch and Portuguese colonial history of Kerala, *Tales of Athiranippadam* by S.K.Pottekkatt discusses the better-known history of the British colonisation of India. Like *Litanies of Dutch Battery*, it, too, strives to decolonise its territories. This work transforms the British-favourite city of Calicut in Kerala into Athiranippadam. These Malayali writers thus challenge the results of the revolution in cartography following the intercontinental voyages by the Europeans in the 15th and 16th centuries, even though they write in a minority language from Southern India.

Decolonising the map is a spatial practice of "making" the world once again since the earlier world was made through colonial cartography, which played a considerable role in the politics of building empires since the 15th century. In order to understand this decolonisation, the colonisation of the map should be understood first. Imperial cartographies have resulted in the indigenous people losing the lands they call home on the map and in the real world. The phenomenon is portrayed in fictional works as well, an example of which is seen in *Tales of Athiranippadam*. The writer presents an instance of how the place called Ghost Ground, a space belonging to the natives, was occupied by the British, who kept the former out, establishing their power over a physical space in a land foreign to them. The British marked it as a geographical area belonging to them and used the place for shooting practice and playing golf, fencing it off so that the natives were denied entry and could only watch these foreign sports from afar. The natives were thus alienated from their own land. The place came to be known as a "shooting range" or "golf course" after the occupation of the British, and its earlier name was erased from the new maps they created. Pottekkatt, in *Tales of Athiranippadam,* details the change of the place named for the rumoured presence of mythological beings like the Yakshi and the Kuttichathan:

> Once upon a time, the Ghost Ground was the scary domain of yakshis and demons, but all that had changed. The white soldiers who camped at the Karakunnu barracks four miles away started coming there regularly for shooting practice. Huge mud walls were erected along one side of the open ground. Lying on their stomachs, some three hundred or four hundred yards away, the soldiers fired one bullet after another at the targets set against the mud walls. The noise and the pungent smell of gunpowder must have got on the nerves of the yakshis and demons and driven them to some other peaceful place. (159)

The way in which Pottekkatt decolonises the place is by consecrating a native myth within the space for a second time- the myth of the diabolical female, the Yakshi. While in native mythology, the Yakshi is a monstrous female who seduces wayfarers in the appearance of a beautiful woman only to kill them later, Pottekkatt adds an additional layer of history to it. The feared Yakshi in his novel is, in reality, the offspring of a White man and a native woman from an untouchable caste, whom the natives fear because she here is the "unknown other". Her existence confuses the locals- she does not look like them or the colonisers. By introducing her into the narrative, the writer also illuminates the history of violence committed by the colonisers against the native women. It is the history of violence here that becomes a spectre based on indigenous mythology. Through her haunting of the place, it regains its old name of "Ghost Ground". The place, hence, is reclaimed and brought back into the folds of native history, mythology, and geography.

Decolonisation of the map is thus much more than the process of anticolonial mapping, as it is not just a method of resistance to colonialism but also of reclaiming indigenous spatial knowledge. Indigenous mapping dates back to before the times of the colonisers, and A.H. Lucchesi has identified three different forms of it- ancestral, anticolonial, and decolonial (23). These three forms indicate the changes in a map owing to colonialism and thus mark history in geographical terms. The boundaries configure as the most challenging part of analysing such maps, as they sometimes intersect, become hybrid, or become fluid. Decolonial mapping is also described as a "vigilant refusal that required the dismantling of systems of oppression"

(80) by Daigle and Ramírez. This mapping process has the culture at the centre of it and is voluntary. According to Freeman, such maps include proof of an individual's relation to a territory throughout his/her life (22). These maps also diverge from the techniques and heritage of Western cartographical practices, decentering the white supremacy in intellectual empiricism that standardises and homogenises the "other." Thus, indigenous cartography is a method of reinventing spatialities and affirming collective native identities.

Several rhetorical strategies are used in decolonial cartography, including reinscription, enclosure, and hierarchisation of different spaces. The process questions homogenisation carried out by the colonial powers. A cartographic discourse is similar in some ways to a colonial discourse. Even though a map has an authoritative status, it is not always accurate, and reading it always includes a process of approximation. It is a part of the "whole" that only provides geographical information about a space. It is a subjective representation of the real world by whoever is the creator, whether it be the natives or the colonisers. Once the writers in Malayalam become the creators, they dismiss the racial hierarchisation employed by the British and replace it with hierarchies based on native caste and religious relations, once again making the map their very own, reversing their homogenised status. This hierarchisation can be seen in all spaces described in the selected novels. In *Tales of Athiranippadam*, the hierarchies attached to the geography are portrayed, where there are specific places for the cremation of the "cherumakkal" or the lower castes, a bridge known as the Sayed Ali Bridge separating the predominantly Hindu-populated Athiranippadam from the world of the Muslims, and temples with entry to only the upper castes. Athiranippadam also has different sacred groves like the Karot Sacred Grove, Maruthi Sacred Grove, Kuttychathan Sacred Grove, and Poovarashu Sacred Grove, which are places of worship for the lower castes. The Brahmins of the place live near the temple, and foreign communities, like the Gujarati community, settle on the outskirts. The island of Lanthan Bathery also shows a similar hierarchisation of space– the fisherfolk and

the low-caste Pulayas live on the outskirts of the island, on the waterfront. The children that the Portuguese had from local women, also called "Parangis" (native tongue for "Portuguese"), live near the chapel built by the Portuguese. Thus, the different identities within the "other" are brought back and given geographical locations through native hierarchisation.

Several instances from the novels show that decolonisation is an ongoing process of redrawing the maps, acknowledging traces of colonialism. Remnants of the colonial can still be seen on the island of Lanthan Bathery. It sees ships named by and after the English that wake the residents up and tether and untether them from the world:

> Lanthan Bathery was beset with fear every night at half past eleven. That was when *King of Kings*, the last ferry coming from Vallarpatam, departed for Ernakulam, leaving the island on its own, unfastened from the rest of the world. …. Lanthan Bathery would come back to life at dawn when *Lady Willingdon*, the dredger ship anchored in the middle of the lagoon, rattled by with the din of clanging buckets fitted to a conveyer belt… (Madhavan 5)

Other remnants of the island's colonialism are the flora and the fauna. The island is home to trees alien to the mainland, like guava, cashew, anjili, sapodilla, custard-apple, pineapple, papaya, and breadfruit, which the Portuguese had brought. The island is also still home to the battery of five cannons the Dutch had mounted long ago. A few of these traces of colonialism are also slowly erased by the writer by attributing native elements to them. Thus, even when a structure is colonial in its origin, its meaning is made only through its association with native social and political culture. An example is the Malacca House on the island, built by the Portuguese, naming it after the Malaysian city that they had conquered. The natives erase its Portuguese connection by starting the Kundan Music Club in one of its rooms, followed by the Democratic Youth Federation and the C.T.A. Memorial Chavittunatakam Sagham, clubs for regional art forms. The inefficiency of the colonisers in bringing about cultural changes to the island is also mentioned. It is said that the Dutch tried to bring "kakkoos"

or lavatories to Lanthan Bathery over 250 years ago but were never successful with the population who were used to defecating out in the open. The failure of the coloniser is then rewritten as the glory of the native priest Father Pilathose, who finally did it in the 20th century. Thus, both the successes and failures of the colonisers are rewritten with associations with the natives and their cultural history.

The fictional places in the mentioned novels also portray oppositions and binaries existing in a postcolonial nation and become a "contact zone" where mediations between the different levels of hegemony occur. This shows that in the colonisation and decolonisation of the map, there are always some hybrid places where traces of one or the other cannot be fully erased or negated, as discussed above. Clive Barnett says that this middle ground that is presented through imagined spaces "implies the need to shift away from a strong emphasis on the irredeemable Manichean conflict between coloniser and colonised, towards concepts which focus upon processes of cross-cultural communication" (149). Thus, these spaces become the site for the "interconnections and entwinements of different cultures and societies" where relations between representations, discourses, individual and collective subjects, worldly realities, etc. could be studied (Barnett 158). Homi K. Bhabha's idea of mimesis, where he says that the colonial discourse produced a hybrid form that mimics the colonial authority, can be applied here for more clarity. This idea differs from mimicry, articulating a desire for a reformed "other" (Bhabha 126). The intersection of the colonial and decolonial can be seen in the new maps created by the authors, where native versions of foreign concepts like clubs can be seen to spring up, like the clubs operating in both Lanthan Bathery and Athiranippadam, focusing on various aspects of native culture including music, arts, and literature.

The concepts of abstract and differential spaces are vital in identifying imagined places as resistance narratives, which help decolonise the map. The former is related to power

structures that try to bring the latter into their fold either by using force or by giving them recognition, and the latter includes platforms for threats and opportunities to rebel against the predominant spatial, social, and cultural orders. Differential spaces exhibit a dual character as they show how being different from the abstract spaces controls them and enables them to resist, both happening simultaneously. The imagined spaces in the novels are differential spaces and are a bricolage of many contexts of history, cartography, geography, and politics that minority communities have had to live through. The texts thus become products of events and experiences drawn from history for that particular culture and its centre. This causes other redrawings of the map within the colonial era but had nothing to do with the colonisers, as we are reminded by the authors. Bringing back these memories of changes in the maps not caused by the colonisers thus becomes important in inscribing the complete decolonial history. Athiranippadam and its reclaimed cartographical history, which the writer S.K.Pottekkatt writes about in Tales of Athiranippadam, is an example of this. He writes about how the area was under the rule of the Zamorins, the kings of Malabar who were always at war with neighbouring kingdoms. Later, the 18th century saw the place being conquered by the Mysore Kingdom from the north before being taken over by the British. The novel also talks about the plight of the people through all these wars. Thus, the history of powers that ruled the land and changed its map even before the British are brought to light in the novel.

The history of different powers and their activities on land is influential in understanding the existential nature of the place. Madhavan, in *Litanies of Dutch Battery*, through the narrator, says that history is the most critical commodity Lanthan Bathery ever imports, which grows dense in the confinement of the island. The narrator talks about how no historian was ever interested in excavating the island, which led to history missing out on finding the stories behind Venetian ducats, Chinese jewellery, belongings of Carmelite priests, etc., which were plentiful on the island, remnants from its earlier days of trade relations. The

island is home to a Portuguese-built chapel on the road north, a battery consisting of five cannons mounted by the Dutch, and a Dutch palace built for officials. Another undiscussed history that the novel brings back up is the presence of black slaves in Kochi, brought there from Africa by the Portuguese. After the Dutch seized Kochi, the Portuguese are described to have dug holes and buried their gold and treasures in nearby islands, along with living slaves, to guard them. The author unearthed these obscured histories anchored to the power struggles witnessed by the land.

The selected texts show that the native writers of Postcolonial nations engage in a structuralist activity through which they try to reconstruct the map of their land by giving it its functions. Roland Barthes considers the structure to be a simulacrum of an object, as it brings to light what was invisible before or what could not be identified in the actual entity that the object imitates. In the case of cartography, this is the map and the actual space. Barthes goes on to say, "The simulacrum is intellect added to the object, and this addition has an anthropological value, in that it is man himself, his history, his situation, his freedom, and the very resistance which nature offers to his mind" (214). Producing a simulacrum of the world is fascinating as it involves reorganising what it represents through abstraction. This process is intellectual. The colonial maps try to structure the Orient with the colonisers as the centre, often neglecting native peripheries. The colonial map and the Indigenous map thus clash due to the play of alternative simulacra that both employ as, due to contradicting elements, the object that is represented and the subject in the real world cannot be easily distinguished. Decolonial cartography thus involves a process of implementing a binary logic in the production of spatial data that contradicts the data of colonial maps that are formed as a part of the ideological imposition of the dominant logic that justifies and enforces the creation and maintenance of a socio-political system that concludes in a power play (Culler 150).

Cartography also enables the writers to create and sustain a space that exhibits its own nature. The most important element of a map is its scale, which allows the map to be read and understood compared to the real world. Neil Smith says they are the "most elemental differentiation of geographic space and are key frameworks for the construction of place" (73). The scales divide the maps and, inherently, the world and geography associated with them into different sections like urban, national, regional, etc., which is a way through which geography gives order to this world. Since these scales are not fixed and do not have a continuum of hierarchy in regional literature, they provide multiple meanings in the maps. They are the products of the discourse that the cartographer (the writer) making that particular map adheres to. These maps and narratives also lead the way to creating authentic national identities. Grewal and Kaplan are of the opinion that "national identities often exist at intersecting supranational and local scales" (33). What comes into question is how a nation-state identifies itself. As Karen Culcasi argues:

> A "nation" is generally considered to be a community of people bound by a sense of shared history and culture, and often an attachment to particular territory. By contrast, a "state" is usually understood as a politically sovereign territory with a centralized government. Thus, a nation-state is the theoretical unification of a culturally homogeneous population residing within clearly defined political and administrative boundaries. (254)

Creating such a nation-state in imagined communities includes absorbing individual groups and indigenous minorities into the dominant group (Anderson 14). The function of a map is to provide a way for the reader to visualise what is, in other words, this very abstract space. It gives the reader clear definitions of the boundary and names of the space that provide meaning to the abstract space. Hence, the colonial inclusion and exclusion of spaces within these maps raises the question of what the discourse the map stems from finds interesting and suitable. For a discourse like that of the colonisers, who are not acquainted much with the Orient, the map becomes the "logo of a territorial specific imagined reality" (Anderson 25).

The Orient, to them, is then "born in the map, and nowhere else," as Winichakul Thongchai says (174).

The concept of literary cartography also includes the processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. The new forms of cartography move away from trying to portray a national culture and localise on regions instead, showcasing the differences between cultures that transition throughout the formation of their postcolonial identity. This event can be seen in all the spaces mentioned in this article - Athiranippadam and Lanthan Bathery. The map thus progresses from being approximate to being absolute. The site of the map becomes the site of resistance and experimentation. The critics Deleuze and Guattari discuss further this particular concept. For them, a map operates in all dimensions and can be connected, reversed, or modified by anyone, individual, or society. The map works simultaneously as a work of art and political action (Deleuze and Guattari 12). Since the map is flexible, Deleuze and Guattari compare it to a rhizome, saying, "its deterritorialising lines of flight effect an asignifying rupture against the over-signifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure" (9). Postcolonial cultures can be analysed from this standpoint, as the various discourses within them make the connections and disconnections of the said rhizome and make significant patterns. The maps of different fictional villages in Kerala are thus open constructs, moving away from the colonial maps' previous homogenous and closed nature and involving making new maps instead of deconstructing the ones that existed prior. Cartography is hence freed from the mimesis in its structure and procedure from the influence of the West who used it as a "stabilising power" to ascertain their superiority.

Creative revisionism is an attractive characteristic of the postcolonial discourse that the Malayali authors use to create maps in their works. Here, through the narrative, they subvert and displace discourses that do not pertain to the topography, such as that of the colonial. They

also critique their own cultures and their transitional nature within these narratives. They question the decolonial nationalist movement that neglects indigenous and minority communities and misappropriates them into the overarching umbrella term of cultural diversity without considering the various aspects of identities of each individual society. Thus, through creating their maps and their own spaces, these writers rebel against the colonial discourse in which they were placed earlier, which culturally and historically negated their identity. At the same time, they also question the postcolonial that engages with decolonial nationalisation, often overlooking the cultures that are not mainstream.

Digressions on the map in literary cartography, as in the concept of détournement in the psychogeography, engage with what was exempted from the map made by the colonisers and bring them to the fore. It invokes realism in the act of cartography, having dealt with the culture and the society firsthand, and improves mapping, moving away from the traditional bird's eye point of view to mapping the population's emotions as well. As Simon Sadler says, they "piece together an experience of space that is actually terrestrial, fragmented, subjective, temporal and cultural" (82). In the cases of regional literature, the terms "colonial" and "decolonial" do not suffice for a reader to understand the different kinds of such experiences that the place's population goes through. Colonialism did not just pertain to an extended period of political rule but also influenced the country and its cultures in unforeseen ways. Even though decolonisation just talks about the resistance towards the domination of the Occident, it was much more than that in a country such as India. There was resistance within the dominance and dominance within the resistance, as Magali Carrera posits (74). As Joanne P. Sharp says, the resistance struggles of the suppressed constantly fracture the dominant power (21) while there was still a hierarchy of powers within the resistance movement. Hence, the dominant powers of the Indian resistance against the British and other colonisers often overlooked their regional identities, cultures, and needs. The tug of war between the occident

and the Orient, as well as the national and regional, thus become entangled spatially, as space can never be homogenous in nature and, as a result, cannot behave the same. The writers then make thematic maps within their literature and use imagery associated with it to portray the cultural, social, and economic aspects of the Indigenous natives to reascertain their history and their identity. Thus, they create alternative decolonised national identities that have their own agency and are subject to their own history. Every map they create is a representation of an active space. Kerala's space and topography are thus described through the literature produced, along with the interpersonal spaces and relations moulded in the same geography. This is owed to the observational nature of cartography, a medium producing knowledge from time immemorial.

The maps created by the writers in Malayalam thus give the characters, as well as the people of the actual geographic area, a sense of belonging, as lived experiences are used to create the cultural environment of the space. It is also for the readers from such spaces that the writers write, willing them to comprehend implicitly, as their identities have a common ground. Hence, as Graham Huggan says, the "deconstruction and/or revisualization permits a 'disidentification' from the procedures of colonialism and other hegemonic discourses and a (re-)engagement in the ongoing process of cultural decolonisation" (30). Narrative mapping thus provides the advantage of marking boundaries for borderless places on an actual map by contributing factors of commonality and inclusion, bringing people and spaces that were excluded in the past, either on cartographic and geographic maps or narrative spaces. Hence, in the case of Malayalam literature, literary cartography is much more than the decolonisation of the map. It is a rewriting of a spatial paradigm that influences different phases of history-from colonialism through significant postcolonialism effects, from resisting a hegemonic homogenising power to reiterating individual identities in a multicultural country going through decolonial nationalisation.

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