

Mapping the Postcolonial
Domestic in the Works
of Vargas Llosa
and Mukundan:

Tales of the Threshold

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By

Minu Susan Koshy

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*To
Mangattu,
The Naalukettu of memories,
&
To the person who made it 'Home' for me,
Appachi, my grandfather.*

*To Ichayan, for all that he is and for being mine. . .
&
To all those I love, to all those who made this work
possible. . .*

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ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES

The following abbreviations have been used to refer to the titles of primary texts. Bibliographic information has been included in the list of works cited.

<i>AJSW</i>	<i>Aunt Julia and the Script-Writer</i>
<i>CC</i>	<i>Conversation in the Cathedral</i>
<i>TDH</i>	<i>The Discreet Hero</i>
<i>DV</i>	<i>Daivathinte Vikrithikal</i>
<i>KTM</i>	<i>Koottam Thetti Meyunnavar</i>
<i>KV</i>	<i>Keshavante Vilapangal</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil</i>
<i>TWP</i>	<i>The Way to Paradise</i>

Translations of quotes from the Malayalam works by M. Mukundan are mine unless otherwise specified.

INTRODUCTION

The representation of the domestic in literature has been an area long ignored by theorists and critics alike, over the centuries. Considered as marginal and inconsequential, the domestic has been allotted an inconspicuous niche in the vast cosmos of the academia. Where works have been done on domesticity, the focus has largely been on women, to the exclusion of men and queer subjects, as well as concepts like domestic space, objects, the family as a social institution, domestic servitude, and the entrenchment of gender roles. Here, it is significant to note that the latter factors assume an importance of vast proportions in postcolonial societies like those of India and Latin America as, unlike the uncolonized countries, these parts of the world have had to undergo drastic transformations in the domestic arena, because of the imposition of norms distant from their reality, by the colonizers.

In social orders under the dominance of foreign powers, the domestic assumed the status of the 'inner' realm where the colonized subjects, marginalized in the politico-jural domain, could assert their autonomy. The domestic was characterized by the tussle between the colonized subjects' desire to preserve its 'purity' and the colonizers' insistence on reformation. The colonizers adopted the reformation of the 'barbaric' nations as their mission, utilizing it to camouflage their political agenda. The 'reformation' was to be implemented in the domestic arena of the colonized nations so as to impress upon the colonized people, a sense of their own inferiority even within the private domain. However, liberation struggles emphasized an increased adherence to 'traditional' values which were to be preserved through the mechanisms within the private. The private was to be shielded from the imported culture of the colonizers.

The nuances of domestic life in colonized nations reflect the paradigms of power that sustained the public domain. The domestic transformed into a privileged venue for the enactment of the daily life of the colonized subjects and a site where the public and the private were permitted to intersect without impinging the autonomy of the subjects located within them. Hence, the domestic realm possessed the power to reflect the lived experiences of the colonized subjects. Every minute aspect of the domestic

is imbued with meanings – cultural and political – that leave traces through a perpetual deferral of multiple significations. The multiplicity of voices that emanate from the domestic makes it a potent site for the exploration of the mechanisms of colonialism at a micro-level. The focus that has been given to the external manifestations of the imperialist process has made the micro level expressions seem ‘trivial’. However, it is these ‘inconsequential’ manifestations of the internal mechanisms of colonialism that enable investigations into the manifold expressions of imperialism possible. It is only through such investigations that the complete magnitude of the colonial mission be understood and its resultant processes explicated.

The book examines how domesticity manifests itself as a way of tracing an alternate history in the postcolonial social orders of India and Latin America, with focus on the novels of Mario Vargas Llosa (Refer to Appendix 1) from Peru and M. Mukundan (Refer to Appendix 2) from Kerala. Llosa’s *Conversation in the Cathedral* (1969), *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (1977), *The Way to Paradise* (2003) and *The Discreet Hero* (2013) and Mukundan’s *Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil* (1974), *Daivathinte Vikrihikal* (1989), *Keshavante Vilapangal* (1999) and *Koottam Thetti Meyunnavar* (2010) would be taken into consideration. The postcolonial domestic, as reflected in the literatures of Kerala and Peru would be scrutinized with reference to these works.

Here, it is imperative to examine the mutually illuminating connections between the two authors – Mario Vargas Llosa and M. Mukundan – which facilitate the current comparative investigation. Being postcolonial writers, their fictional writings share features that are intricately linked to the socio-political contexts from which they emerge. Psychological parallelisms, where the literary phenomena in one culture get reflected in another owing to psychological similarities in the general mental make-up of the people, can be observed in the works of Llosa and Mukundan. This is especially potent since both Llosa and Mukundan are from locales previously under colonial rule. The renowned comparatist, Alexander Vesolovsky argues in his *Historical Poetics* (1940) that the external stimulus from one culture generates reciprocal currents in another and this accounts for literatures from diverse nations and communities sharing features, without either one being in a superior or inferior position. Latin America exerted a powerful hold over the Malayali imagination by virtue of its status as an erstwhile colony and more importantly, as a locale where Communism had a strong footing. Kerala was extremely receptive to Communist influences from

Latin American countries and literatures from these areas were particularly appealing to the Malayali audience.

The socio-cultural similarities between the two locales made the Malayali literary sphere open to influences from Latin America. As such, the works of many contemporary Malayalam writers are influenced by Latin American literature in terms of style, technique, themes and motifs. The works of Mukundan and Llosa explicate this argument. Mukundan's works were influenced by the magic realist techniques utilized by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Mario Vargas Llosa. For instance, *Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil* showcases the *velliyan kallu* or the magic rock which houses the spirits of the dead and those yet to be born. It is depicted as a 'reality' rather than as a myth. The folktales that find space in Mukundan's works are similar to those in the novels of Llosa and Marquez, with elements of magic and the fantastic enveloping them. In the fictional writings of the two authors under consideration, we also observe the phenomenon of borrowal of motifs and themes. The engagement with Communism and its effect on the domestic realm in postcolonial nations is an instance. Presumably, Mukundan has borrowed from Llosa in the form of themes such as the generation gap that is manifested in families where youth adopt ideologies much against the wishes of the older generation. The depiction of the family as part of domestic cartographies can be observed in the texts of Mukundan and Llosa. Kinship forms the crux of their novels in as much as blood ties and conjugal relationships are held in esteem by the social orders in which they are located. The similar political affiliations of the two writers, which are reflected in their works, also facilitate a comparative study between the two for a broader comprehension of their literary leanings.

Works from Kerala and Peru have been chosen primarily because of the similar trajectories followed by the two locales in their historical progression. Being postcolonial nations with a history of liberation struggles, the two locales share a common past, characterized by struggles against the colonizers – both internal and external. These locales exhibited a marked shift towards a non-European modernity, peculiar to their own cultural realities. The concept of modernity was intricately tied to coloniality, as the nomenclature 'Modernity/Coloniality' group¹ suggests.

¹ El grupo modernidad/colonialidad or the Modernity/Coloniality group is a section of the Latin American academia, comprising Anibal Quijano, Walter Dignolo, Fernando Coronil and Enrique Dussel among others, who advocates Latin American modernity as distinct from 'normative' European modernities and

Coloniality is constitutive of modernity and they are deeply intertwined, making any analysis of one impossible without the other in the contexts of Kerala and Peru. Kerala, although not a nation state in itself, has followed a trajectory representative of the history of colonized nations. Even as India obtained independence from British rule, Kerala was struggling to obtain autonomy from the French who still dominated parts of the state. The liberation movements against the French in Kerala were isolated from those in the rest of the country due to geopolitical reasons. As such, it would not be a fallacy to perceive of the state as possessing a distinct history of colonialism and liberation, making a comparison with a nation state such as Peru possible.

The common colonial past has had an impact on the domestic realms of both the locales, with colonial impositions making their presence felt in the domestic, even after independence. The domestic in Peru and Kerala demonstrate pronounced similarities in terms of the material and social cultures prevailing within the domestic realm. The resemblances range from the significance accorded to the family as a social institution to the use of domestic objects like items for decoration and furnishing. The gradual opening up of the economies and social-cultural systems of Peru and Kerala to globalization and neo-imperialism has further promoted the possibilities of comparison between the two locales. The factor that makes the book particularly potent is that, being a comparative study involving social orders located at two disparate continents with a shared colonial past, it can contribute to a wider understanding of the phenomena of colonization and its impact on the hitherto overlooked 'inner' realm of colonial experience. At this juncture, I take the opportunity to highlight the potential of the study to serve as a cosmopolitan project, establishing a mutually illuminating liaison between two continents, through an analysis of the micro-narratives being performed within the domestic realm.

In attempting this task, I take into consideration the multifaceted realm called the domestic in its manifold aspects, most of which still remains

emphasizes on the notion of decoloniality, which links colonialism to the referential paradigms of ethnicity studies. Colonialism is highlighted as an integral factor that led to processes of modernization in Latin America. For this reason, it is termed "la cara oculta de la modernidad" (Mignolo, "Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity" 155). They argue that the colonial heritage manifests itself through the triple process of the colonization of power, knowledge and being and they attempt to reach an understanding of Latin American modernity through the lens of decoloniality.

unexplored. Domesticity at various levels would be explored with special emphasis on the material and psychological manifestations of everyday life through domesticity. The work attempts to delineate the domestic as an integrated whole through its constituent components – domestic space, in the form of the house, material culture in the form of domestic objects, the family as a pivotal point in the life of the colonized subject and the cultures of servitude that characterize the domestic realm. These seemingly disparate entities collaborate in constituting the fabric of the domestic, formulating a coherent postcolonial domestic narrative which would serve to demystify the ‘inner’ sphere of colonized nations. The micro-narratives that constitute postcolonial cultures would be mapped through an investigation into the domestic. The everyday life of the postcolonial subject, shaped as it is, by the mechanisms of power manifested through the inconspicuous spaces, objects and relationships within the domestic has hitherto been obfuscated by the onslaught of critical material on the cultural and political implications of colonialism. The book seeks to illuminate this arena so that the ‘little’ narratives of colonial history can be foregrounded in order to arrive at a better understanding of the trajectories colonized nations followed during and after the era of colonialism.

The postcolonial domestic encompasses a wide range of discourses centered on the domestic realm in postcolonial countries, deeply intertwined with the socio-political particularities of the colonized locales. The domestic in its manifold aspects has never been considered as an independent entity worthy of academic attention. The postcolonial domestic comprises multiple aspects of everyday existence, constituting the ‘inner’ realm of colonial experience. Although the domestic is a highly contested term, whose significance varies across cultures and locales, its constituent components can be identified in some form or the other in all social orders. The principal elements that constitute the domestic include domestic space, domestic objects, social institutions (especially the family) and the cultures of servitude within the domestic. These factors are of great import in postcolonial societies since the impact of colonialism was felt most acutely on these arenas of the domestic during the postcolonial period. However, these aspects have been submerged under the onslaught of critical attention emphasizing on the domestic as the domain of the woman. The domestic has mostly been chosen as a unit of analysis for studies on nationalism and gender in colonized nations.

One of the first steps in this direction was Partha Chatterjee’s explication of the ‘inner’ realm of colonial experience in *The Nation and Its*

Fragments (1993). He argues that, unlike in Europe, modernity was predicated on the divide between the public and the private in India. Since colonial rule rendered the public domain as the colonizer's property, the intimate realm of the family could not be conflated with it as this would "inevitably mean a surrender of autonomy" (75). The nationalist movement emphasized on the construction of a new private sphere marked by difference rather than universality. The new private was to be distinct from that of Europe. The nationalist movement thus could utilize the private domain of the family as a site of resistance to colonial rule by refusing colonial values to make their presence felt in the 'inner' sphere.

The inner or spiritual domain of colonial rule was projected as the "true self" (120) of the nation, which was to be protected from the onslaught of the colonizers. Since the 'outer' sphere was the colonizer's domain, the colonized had to conform to European ideologies. It was a site of humiliation and suppression. However, the inner domain – i.e., the spiritual realm – provided them an opportunity to exercise autonomy. This was the space where India's cultural distinctiveness could be preserved intact, making it the pivotal point for nationalism to flourish. Chatterjee remarks:

Applying the inner/outer distinction to the matter of concrete day-to-day living separates the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*, the home and the world. The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents one's inner spiritual self, one's true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world – and woman is its representation. And so one gets an identification of social roles by gender to correspond with the separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*. (120)

The home, being the "inner core of the national culture" (121), was to preserve the marks of tradition. The 'domesticated' woman was entrusted with the task of passing on traditional values to the younger generation in order to prepare them for the nationalist struggle. The woman was the quintessential mark of spirituality and hence she had to preserve the "spiritual signs of her femininity" (Chatterjee 130) and be submissive to the authority of the male within the domestic. Nevertheless, she was to have some exposure to the 'outer' sphere so that the household could be regulated in accordance with 'modern' norms. But it should not be at the cost of her 'femininity'. This was the fundamental condition of liberty for women as laid down by the nationalist project. It led to a novel form of patriarchy which "conferred upon women the honor of a new social

responsibility and by associating the task of female emancipation with the historical goal of sovereign nationhood, bound them to a new, and yet entirely legitimate, subordination” (130). Chatterjee’s analysis of the domestic as the inner realm of colonial experience adopted as its locus, concepts such as traditional values, womanhood and male gender roles. It neglects the other aspects of the domestic realm, such as domestic space, the significance of objects and most importantly, the cultures of servitude that prevail within it. The domestic is not perceived of as a whole, which could be treated as a microcosm of the colonized nation by virtue of the power relations inherent in its functioning. Nevertheless, Chatterjee’s analysis serves as a starting point for any investigation into the domestic as an independent entity.

Anibal Quijano, in his essay “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America” (2000) argues that European colonialism imposed race as a category for social stratification, thereby reducing the significance accorded to gender as a marker of social status. The prevalent notions regarding the inferiority of women were subsumed under the new stratifications based on race. Race came to be the defining force in deciding the occupation of the subject. While the Whites and creoles came to occupy the upper rungs of the social ladder, the Blacks were confined to manual labor and domestic work. The Blacks became a fundamental part of the Latin American domestic. But this did not negate the ‘inferior’ status of women as belonging to the domestic sphere. The “coloniality of power” (Quijano 533) accounted for a part of the domestic in terms of the intersection of race and gender within the private realm. But it overlooked the role of domestic space, objects and consumption as means of entrenching hierarchies and colonizing power. The concept of ‘power’ is limited to an analysis of race, labor and (to some extent), gender, in the global capitalist world order in Quijano’s theory of coloniality. Domesticity in itself features rarely, if ever, as a site of power struggles.

The postcolonial domestic, thus, has not been analyzed as an integrated whole in any significant way. The existing oeuvre of works on domesticity (which itself is very limited) perceives of the domestic as the ‘woman’s realm’. Gender – that is, the location of *women* –appears to be the predominant concern of the works produced on the domestic. Besides, these works have taken European domestic sites as their point of reference. There have been very few attempts to document the domestic as a site of negotiation and conflict in colonial or postcolonial social orders. Space in the form of the house, domestic objects, the family or servitude have, in the first place, never been analyzed as an integrated whole constituting a

larger entity called the domestic. There have been fragmented studies on each of these aspects, but never on the domestic in its entirety. In the second place, researches on these entities have been mostly Eurocentric, relegating the domestic experience in colonial nations to the margins. The book attempts to bridge this gap and locate the postcolonial domestic as an unequivocal site of postcolonial inquiry, where domestic space, objects, social institutions and cultures of servitude converge to constitute an all-encompassing whole of postcoloniality.

The work proposes to critically analyze the postcolonial domestic as a polyphonic site located at the intersection of multiple categories which formulate and shape each other. The domestic arena is projected as a particularly potent site for the formation and dissolution of identities which are constantly in flux. The colonial agenda as well as the nationalist sentiments as reflected in the domestic realm would be interrogated in order to arrive at a better understanding of the cultural and political underpinnings of the imperialist enterprise. The book aims to arrive at a theoretical understanding of the postcolonial domestic as a site of conflicts and negotiations. The broad objectives of the book are outlined here.

The work attempts to comprehend the postcolonial domestic as an entity constituted and shaped by the historical trajectories undertaken by the respective social orders as an aftermath of colonialism. Both Kerala and Peru, with their histories of multiple colonialism(s), share a peculiar relationship with the domestic arena in that the latter served the dual function of being a foil and at the same time a complement to the public sphere, especially during the colonial period. The domestic was the 'inner' sphere, located away from the turmoil of the colonized public sphere, where the colonized subject could assert her/his autonomy. The lack of autonomy in the public was compensated for by the domestic. As such, during the nationalist phase in both the cultures, it was of prime importance in instilling nationalist sentiments in the minds of the colonized people. The 'purity' of the domestic was to be preserved as against the 'polluted' outer sphere. It also reflected transformations in the public arena in terms of class, social institutions and other socio-political factors, even after independence. Since both colonial and postcolonial Peru and Kerala witnessed far-reaching transformations in the social, economic, political and legal systems over the years, the domestic becomes more important than ever in comprehending the nation in its entirety. Being a microcosm of the nation, the domestic assists the study of the postcolonial state in its diverse aspects, from a vantage point different from that of mainstream history. The works under consideration feature

the domestic arena in Peru and Kerala (with emphasis on French Mahe) across the years, reflecting the transformations the postcolonial cultures underwent during and after their struggles for liberation from Spanish and French colonial powers respectively.

The book engages with a plausible definition of the (postcolonial) domestic and its significance for the colonized subject. The domestic is, in very simplistic terms, that which is concerned with the interior realm, complementing the public sphere of human existence. From time immemorial, the two have co-existed in a symbiotic and at the same time, conflictual relationship. Work and socialization in the public domain had always been accompanied by life in the inner realm of the house(hold) which acted sometimes as a foil and sometimes “as a limit upon” (Chatterjee 12) the social/ the outside. The identity of the human subject is inextricably linked to his social and material surroundings. Hence the dynamics of the relationship between the domestic and the ‘outside’ play a pivotal role in shaping the subject as well as his interactions with both the spheres. The simplistic understanding of the domestic as the sphere opposed to the ‘outside’ is fraught with complications, considering the fact that the boundaries between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ are blurred, especially in the context of postcolonial social orders. Hence, it becomes necessary to identify the domestic as an entity in itself, rather than as a mere antonym for the ‘outside’, for, if that were enough, the term ‘inside’ would have been sufficient to describe it. It becomes essential to identify the ‘the domestic’ as an independent entity constituted by distinctive components in order to arrive at a holistic understanding of the term.

In attempting any definition of the term ‘domestic’, it has to be remembered that it is a term that is continuously deconstructing itself in as much as there is no fixed ‘domestic’ that is a constant for all social orders and individuals during all epochs. The term assumes different dimensions in different social and material situations and ages and is also deeply intertwined with other discourses such as class, race, gender and community. Thus, while for a upper class woman in Victorian England, ‘the domestic’ might have been signified by the space of the Victorian mansion, supervision of servants and organizing banquets, the case is different for an upper-class woman in colonial India for whom the term must have meant the physical and metaphorical space of the kitchen and the family which was to be protected from the ‘modernity’ of the West as also a more rigid patriarchal social control than that which might have existed in England at the time. While for a man in colonial India, the domestic might have signified the ‘pure’, ‘inner’ realm, where his autonomy, which was

curbed in the colonial 'outside', could be exercised, the case might be different for a man of the 21st century whose agency could be asserted in the public realm. If, for a middle-class citizen, the term 'domestic' implies the existence of a physical domestic space in the form of the 'house', what does it signify for a homeless subject? Does a domestic exist for the homeless (wo)man and if it does, what does it comprise? What constitutes the domestic for a queer subject, whose gender identity renders her/him a quasi-liminal subject? Also, in communities with rigid caste/race structures, the domestic is a spectrum which each group possesses in its own distinctive way, depending not only on the race hierarchy but also on the location of this structure within other discourses. Thus, it is to be kept in mind that the domestic eludes an unproblematic definition. It is basically a variable deeply intertwined with the structure and the intricacies of the structure which contains it. The (postcolonial) domestic cannot thus be approached through a fixed definition of the term. Circumventing a definition, we can approach it through its component parts and/or features, which, albeit not similar, at least exist in some form or the other, in all social orders. The book attempts to define the domestic as a conglomeration of different entities including domestic space, objects, the family and also, the power relations inherent in it.

The study also interrogates whether the Western theories on domestic space as a private haven hold ground in colonial and postcolonial locations and to identify the extent to which the house can function as an emancipatory space in nations with divergent histories of colonialism. In as much as the domestic is primarily the 'inner' realm of human existence, the 'dwelling' in the Heideggerian sense of the term becomes a constant in all social orders. There is a sphere where the Dasein is 'at home', a familiar territory where the dynamics of everyday life can be played out in its variegated shades. Whether this 'dwelling' is the constructed structure of a 'house' or a 'building' or the naturally available locale where existence becomes possible for the human subject, there does exist, for all beings, an 'inner' space where quotidian life unfolds. Heidegger argues that dwelling involves 'sparing' or 'being free'. Thus, in a postcolonial context where 'being free' is deeply linked to the socio-political conditions of the locale, 'dwelling' in the domestic space involves questions of autonomy or lack of it in the public sphere, intersections with caste, class and gender as categories. The postcolonial house is a unique one in that it contests established notions of 'the house' as an entity. It is not a 'pure' point of origin unscathed by the 'outside' as argued by Western theorists. Rather, it is deeply implicated in discourses of the 'outside', entrapped in a web of relations established primarily by colonial rule in the public realm.

The domestic space in the form of the house also becomes a psychic entity through the living that takes place inside it. Nostalgia and 'colonized' memory become associated with the autonomous domestic space of the house. The work would explore domestic space in the form of the house as the primary loci of enunciation for the colonized subjects.

Domestic objects are located as carriers of a distinct aura of colonial history. Objects form an important constituent of the postcolonial domestic in that they possess the power to attribute certain characteristics in terms of wealth, class and status to the postcolonial subject inhabiting the domestic. The domestic object assumes a personality of its own, shaping and being shaped by the identity of its users. 'Memory-objects' such as photographs and souvenirs within the postcolonial domestic serve as repositories of memories of a colonial past and imbue the domestic with an aura of long-standing nostalgia. Objects for decorating the house possess both utility-value and fetish value within the postcolonial domestic. This includes furniture, curtains, and carpets, which not only decorate/protect, but also function as status-symbols. The same holds true for cutlery, utensils, clothes and food. These objects within the postcolonial domestic not only reflect the socio-political conditions which produced them, but also the location of the postcolonial subject 'owning' or using them. Shifts in the form and utility of these objects also point to the transformations the domestic sphere and thus, the socio-political arena of the nation underwent over time. The intricacies of the domestic object would be analyzed in order to arrive at an understanding of the concept of 'distinction' in postcolonial social orders.

The book attempts to locate the family as the site where postcolonial identities are negotiated and established and to highlight its status as a socio-cultural and economic unit. Since the domestic is often the microcosm of the wider socio-political realm of the postcolonial country, it is but natural that social institutions, especially the family, play a major role in constituting and shaping the domestic. The family, as the center of all 'domestic' activities is the primary institution which, while reflecting the colonial and postcolonial nation as a whole, also gives a more or less concrete form to the domestic as a visible entity. The cultural and legal systems of postcolonial nations have devoted singular attention to this institution and as such, studying the family as an institution in postcolonial nations can illuminate the ways in which the domestic is shaped by the state and its machinery. The family also functioned as an instrument to instill in the colonized subjects, nationalistic sentiments and the desire to preserve markers of cultural identity. Since the public was dominated by

the colonizers, the domestic became the primary venue for fostering nationalist fervor in the colonial subjects and the family was used as a tool for this purpose. An investigation into the realm of the family would reveal how the socio-political and cultural systems that govern the social order are structured. The dynamics of the economic processes that determine the allocation of resources within the family would also be explored.

Domestic servitude would be analyzed as a phenomenon located at the intersection of caste, class, race and gender. The postcolonial domestic is marked by the power relations that are enacted within it. As a site where daily life intersects socio-political concerns, the domestic encompasses a microcosm of the 'public' where power relations determine the course the social order as a whole takes. Just as in the colonial 'outside' sphere, in the inner domain of the domestic, hegemony and the consequent marginalization of certain sections become concerns to be reckoned with on an everyday basis. Domestic servitude is the domestic counterpart of the colonial master-servant relationship that existed in the public realm of the colonized country during the colonial period. Servitude finds expression in the form of both class and gender politics in the postcolonial domestic. While servitude based on class exists mostly in middle class and upper class households which can afford to keep servants in postcolonial countries, domestic servitude based on gender is a universal phenomenon, although the forms in which it manifests itself differ. The book intends to explore the "cultures of servitude" (Ray and Seemin 3) that characterize postcolonial cultures through an interrogation of the master-servant relationships and the process of gendered socialization. The capability of hegemonic discourses to empower and disempower various groups located within its referential paradigms would be explicated.

The domestic is analyzed as a microcosm of the postcolonial nation, characterized by and in opposition to the power relations that govern the functioning of the public domain. The phenomena that characterize the postcolonial nation manifest themselves initially in the private realm of the domestic. This is especially true of hegemonic practices, where certain groups are subordinated and marginalized. The power structures that govern the nation are fundamentally a reflection of those that govern the domestic realm. Notions regarding distinction, social mobility, the interface between the private and the public and negotiations with alternate discourses stem from the subject's lived experiences and socialization in the domestic. At the same time, the domestic serves as a buffer to the postcolonial subject by providing her/him with a space where autonomy

can be exercised. It also provides a haven for the colonized subject – a locale where the established power structures can be subverted through the individual's agency.

One of the fundamental goals of the work is to locate the postcolonial domestic at the nexus between the private and the public in social orders under the control of foreign powers. The public sphere in colonized countries is inevitably dominated by external powers. The colonized people are denied access to most realms of the politico-jural domain and their agency is limited by the administrative systems instituted by the colonizers. The private realm was also vulnerable to foreign influences, especially since the colonizers believed in the veracity of their 'civilizing mission' which sought to reform the inner realm in colonized nations. However, the nationalist project aimed at defending the private domain, while simultaneously opening it up for reform. This was possible because the domestic was located at the interstices between the public and the private. It could be open to reform even while upholding the values, customs and traditions that were prevalent in colonized nations for centuries. Being an in-between space, it could negotiate successfully with both the external sphere and the internal sphere of colonial existence.

Being a comparative study, the project seeks to establish dis/connections between two former colonies, seemingly unrelated to each other and their representation in literature through an analysis of 'common ground' – namely, the domestic – in tandem with the principle of cause and effect. The principle of cause and effect perceives of literature as the effect of historical phenomena. The book interrogates whether the historical phenomenon common to Kerala and Peru, namely colonialism, has had an impact on the domestic and its representation in literature produced in these locales.

The comparative nature of the work also enables the researcher to utilize the study as a means of interrogating whether the theory of historico-typological analogies² holds ground in the case of social orders located at

² The theory of historico-typological analogies was propounded by the Russian comparatist V.M. Zhirmunsky. He analyzed the concept of the stadial progress of civilizations and argued that similar discourses are created across different cultures due to the similar patterns followed by these cultures in their movement across time. He remarked that the laws of literary phenomena are associated with particular stages of social development and that comparative studies must attempt to unveil the synchronicity between the two. He utilized the theory of historico-typological analogies to explain the similarities between literatures from diverse

disparate locations and colonized by two different foreign powers. The domestic is the most potent venue for analyzing this aspect, since it has existed in all social orders in some form or the other across historical epochs. The trajectories the domestic followed in colonial and postcolonial Peru and Kerala would be analyzed in order to arrive at an understanding of the mechanisms of the colonial enterprise in various colonies. The study aims at identifying the commonalities and differences that characterize the imperialist discourse at different locales, at different points of time and interrogate the underlying causes of these phenomena.

The book attempts to deduce the extent to which the domestic can be utilized as an instrument to trace the colonial histories of Peru and Kerala as representatives of two socio-political and geographic locales, so as to arrive at a broader understanding of the postcolonial domestic in South Asia and Latin America. Although there are large scale variations across nations in their experience of colonialism, there are domains within these social orders where the colonial experience created commonalities. The domestic is one such realm. Through the imposition of imported rules and structures, the colonizers transformed the domestic arena in colonized nations to a great extent. The colonized subjects, in turn, attempted to preserve the domestic as a 'pure' realm where the colonizers could not intervene. Colonial histories in Latin America and South Asia are characterized by the tussle between these two forces, revolving around the domestic. As such, a study of the domestic in representative nations would inevitably illuminate the broad trajectories the colonial domestic followed in the respective continents.

As a literary inquiry, the work aims at promoting further studies in the field, especially comparative studies, involving the domestic as the pivotal point around which colonial and postcolonial micro narratives can be formulated and analyzed. An exploration of various aspects of the domestic – space, objects, social institutions tangential to the inner realm and the prevalent cultures of servitude – would serve as starting points for a broader understanding of coloniality and its impact on domesticity in postcolonial nations. The work seeks to endorse the consolidation of the tri-continental model of comparative literature.

As opposed to most studies on domesticity, my focus would not be directed exclusively on the concepts of 'home', 'community formation'

and 'gendering'. Other areas such as household work, domestic objects and domestic space in the context of postcolonialism will also come under scrutiny. So will the dynamics of the relationship between the domestic and the postcolonial nation. Major concepts from feminism and Marxism would be incorporated, although a detailed investigation of these would be avoided, as critical materials on these abound.

Tales of the Threshold is a study of how the postcolonial domestic has been interpreted, especially in the context of fictional writings. The title merits some amount of attention. The threshold, which features prominently in the works under scrutiny, becomes a metaphor for the liminality of postcolonial identity and its reflection within the domestic. Being a liminal space located neither inside nor outside the house, the threshold signifies the fundamental liminality of postcolonial subjectivity, which is a defining feature of the postcolonial domestic. The domestic in postcolonial locales always becomes the site of tussles between multiple identities, acquired or adopted in order to suit the demands of coloniality. Besides, by functioning as an in-between space, the threshold provides the residents of the house a vantage point within the private, from which the public can be 'observed'. Here, the postcolonial subject becomes a voyeur, detached from the 'public', directing her/his gaze at that which is beyond the boundaries of the domestic. The desire to 'see' without being 'seen' is a natural corollary of colonialism, where 'being seen' implies questions of power and hegemony and associated objectification and/or disciplinary mechanisms. The threshold provides an opportunity for the colonized subject to view the colonized realm, without inviting censure by interacting directly with it. The book, in some ways, functions a threshold in as much as the postcolonial 'public' is analyzed from within the realm of the domestic. The rhythms of the public dominated by colonialism are experienced in tandem with the 'tales' unfolding within the domestic. The book functions as a semantic threshold from which the colonized public sphere can be observed from within the boundaries of the private.

The work has been divided into six chapters, based on the thematic concerns that are explored in each. Chapter 1, titled "Stories Houses Tell: Locating the House as Postcolonial Domestic Space" scrutinizes domestic space in the form of the house in postcolonial cultures. Theoretical inputs from Martin Heidegger, Gaston Bachelard and Hillis Miller have been adopted and contested keeping in view the postcolonial location of the houses represented in the works, as opposed to the generic houses imagined by Western thinkers. As such, questions of 'dwelling' in postcolonial social orders, the relationship between postcolonial nostalgia and the space of the

house, and other themes of import have been explored. Chapter 2, “Objects that Speak: Interrogating Material Culture in the Postcolonial Domestic”, analyzes the significance of everyday objects within the postcolonial domestic. The representation of domestic objects like carpets, photographs, furniture, cutlery and food in the works of Llosa and Mukundan and what it implies for the postcolonial domestic arena are some of the topics explored. Chapter 3, titled “‘Family Matters’: Conceptualizing Familial Interfaces of the Postcolonial Domestic”, investigates the representation of the family as a component of the domestic, in the literary texts under consideration. The chapter traces the transformations the institution underwent in Kerala and Peru during and after the colonial period and the consequent transformations in the socio-political and legal systems concerning them. Chapter 4, titled “Domestic ‘Cultures of Servitude’: Intersecting Mechanisms of Power within the Postcolonial Domestic” interrogates domestic servitude within the postcolonial household. Servitude based on class and gender distinctions that underlie the postcolonial public and private sphere is scrutinized, locating it within the theoretical praxis of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic and Marxism. “Cultures of servitude” (Ray and Seemin 3) in postcolonial nations would be interrogated with respect to servant-master relationships and gender roles within the domestic. The concluding chapter, titled “Rhythmanalyzing the Postcolonial Domestic” is a “rhythmanalytical” (Lefebvre 71) project, exploring the domestic as constituted by a set of rhythms that coexist, shaping the everyday life of the postcolonial subject. Located at the intersections between space and time, domestic rhythms are invariably constituted and shaped by the political discourses that dominate the ‘outer’ sphere. The chapter argues that domestic rhythms are permeated by the ideological nuances of everyday life in the postcolonial outer realm and constitute postcoloniality as the reference point for reading the everyday in postcolonial social orders.

The work would involve historical studies in that the postcolonial histories of the ex-colonies would be traced through the transitions the domestic sphere underwent over time. It is to be noted that since the work is partly cultural and anthropological in scope, it would be an interdisciplinary study, involving literatures from two different cultures, which, nevertheless, share a common colonial past (thereby avoiding the problem of incommensurability). A thematological approach has been adopted as it would be conducive to a tracing of the changes the social orders of Peru and Kerala underwent over time.

The project is structured within the paradigms of comparative studies, with special focus on the thematological approach. It is a scrutiny of two cultures that are radically different from each other in terms of geography, practices and political situations, but share a common past in that both were under the rule of imperial powers. An inquiry into the history as well as anthropological and sociological elements would be inevitable as the work is, in a way, an exploration of the domestic in relation to the political history of the country and the domestic includes various institutions like the family, marriage, and internal power structures which are of concern to sociologists and anthropologists. The domestic is a supranational assemblage in that it is a factor common to all cultures and nations. Although a term that deconstructs itself continuously, varying from culture to culture and group to group and across the genders, it exists in some form or the other in all nations.

The project would draw on the tenets of the American and Russian Schools of Comparative Literature in that there would be a stress on humanistic essences and also on psychological parallelisms, the idea of the stadial progress of civilizations and interdisciplinarity. Colonialism can be considered as a stage in the stadial progress of the two cultures under consideration. For Peru, Spanish colonial rule lasted for more than 3 centuries – from 1542, when it was made one of the two Spanish Viceroyalties, with its capital at Lima, to 1879 when Spain signed a treaty recognizing Peru as independent. Kerala has a more complicated history in that Kerala, as a state, was formed in 1956, almost ten years after India gained independence. Moreover, European expansion in India began through the spice trade the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British had with the state. Thus, unlike Peru, it was under the domination of several colonizing nations at different periods in history. The history of colonial rule in Kerala thus extends for almost 500 years, from 1498, when Vasco Da Gama arrived at Kozhikode, to 1956, when the States Reorganization Commission declared it as a state of the Indian union, merging Travancore-Cochin with Malabar. It is interesting to note that colonial powers reigned in Kerala and Peru at around the same chronological period.

Since the two areas share a common colonial past, it is but natural that psychological parallelisms abound in their literatures. Also, the humanistic essences that the American School stresses upon, can be found in their literatures at a horizontal plane, tinged with elements of the colonial past/present. Since colonialism involved transformations not just in the political arena, but also in all other spheres – the domestic, architecture,

social institutions, technology, transport and communication – a certain element of interdisciplinarity is inevitable.

The study undertakes an application of the Bakhtinian notion of the chronotope, albeit to a limited extent. The literary chronotope, where “spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole” (Bakhtin 85), can be observed in the works under scrutiny. The novels are as much a product of the time period during which they were written as that of the places that feature in the works. The works are constituted by the intersection of the temporal axis (the post-colonial era) with the spatial axis (Mahe/ Peru), functioning as chronotopes reflecting the socio-political conditions under which they were produced. Llosa’s works are mostly set in postcolonial Peru and novels like *Conversation in the Cathedral*, *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, *The Way to Paradise* and *The Discreet Hero* project the political scenario from the vantage point of the domestic. So do Mukundan’s works like *Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil*, *Daivathinte Vikrithikal*, *Keshavante Vilapangal*, and *Koottam Thetti Meyunnavar*. The background to all the eight works under consideration is the postcolonial political and cultural situation in the respective areas. And all of them have as their locus, the domestic scenario. The domestic serves as the vantage point for observing the political scene.

The synchronic method of comparative enquiry has been adopted. The comparison would be among the works of writers who belong to the same time-period, and who write more or less about the same epochs in the history of their countries (although there are variations from novel to novel). For example, both Llosa’s *The Way to Paradise* and Mukundan’s *Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil* are set in areas on the verge of gaining independence from imperial rule. *Aunt Julia and the Script-Writer* and *Keshavante Vilapangal* are set in postcolonial Peru and Kerala respectively. Such analogies abound in terms of temporal settings. So do thematological concerns. The work is based mostly on the themes of the works under consideration. They will be dealt with at the dual level of the historical manner in which they evolved and a macro-level comprehension. Motifs like that of the house, decoration, furniture and food would also be taken into consideration. It is through the evolution of the themes as represented in the works that the history of the ex-colonies would be traced and similarities as well as differences located.

The inadequacy of Eurocentric notions regarding domestic space, to explain the postcolonial experience of space has been highlighted through