Between

The Kalaripayattu and the Capoeira as Masculine Performances: From Bodies of Resistance to Neoliberal Tourism Bodies

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Knowledge is the result of not only intellectual awareness, but of physical perceptions as well. From time immemorial, bodies have been subjected to discipline, etiquette and surveillance for different reasons. Michel Foucault has dealt extensively with disciplined bodies designed to perform different masculinities, sexualities and other bodily moves under military, gendered, clinical or surveillance gazes.[1] Yet, he shows, bodies are at the same time endowed with epistemological agency potential and offer other forms of experience which have often transformed them into sites of subversion and resistance exposing the politics of domination by power brokers. The body breaks away from its material organic disposition and has a decolonizing effect as it plots resistance through different kinds of counter-narrative moves in order to reclaim lost terrains of belonging as well as being. While it decolonizes, it also liberates the colonizer from dehumanization.[2]

[1] This paper will mainly dwell on his book *Discipline and Punish.*

[2] That decolonization is about an arousing of human consciousness which is not filtered through any racial categories or values is borrowed from Frantz Fanon. The suggestion that decolonization also liberates the oppressor is therefore a very powerful criticism of it being only a one-sided phenomenon, as it argues how decolonization humanizes the oppressor as much as the oppressed.

This essay proposes to look at the emergence of embodied narratives of two martial art forms from India and Brazil as tools of resistance to the process of colonization, on one hand, while comprising different kinds of masculinities in postcolonial national narratives, on the other. The bodies of African slaves and Kalaripayattu martial artists had become the spaces over which the contesting colonial powers met and then wrote their violent histories of dominance and power. These bodies, however, reacted violently through their disguised or secret martial moves, thus creating a counter-narrative with which to write back. Perceived as a threat, they were banned by their colonial masters and independent India and modern democratic Brazil welcomed them back and flaunted them to accommodate them in a deserving space of dignity within their national tourism industries. However, today they risk being appropriated by neoliberal and global promoters of hyper-masculinity or by conservative right wing ultra-nationalists. The struggle for dignity and resistance continues.

Disciplining Docile Bodies

Anthropocentric worldview of the Spanish Renaissance coincided with the geopolitics of European and Catholic expansiveness, leading thereby to the discovery, conquest and colonization of what was to be considered the 'New World'. Such a situation also falls aptly in tune with the emerging commercial interests of a new social class. Moreover, at the end of seven centuries of Reconquista many soldiers had been left unemployed, thus making Spain perfectly disposed for her overseas maritime ambitions of exploring unknown lands. It is in this context that Michelangelo's David was no longer perceived as merely an imagined body carved in white marble exhaling a radiant strength of mind and body, but a very iconic reality of the post-Reconquista Spain. It was an adult man, athletic in his bearing and poised, ready for combat now perfectly equipped to spread out upon those lands and those peoples.

Michelangelo's adult David (rather than a boy David) is symbolic in this sense and the figure of Quixote seems to be reminiscent of this.[3] Using bodies to take over control of the continent was Spain's unique and ingenious strategy. 'Gobernar es poblar' (to govern is to populate) became a famous slogan of the Spanish crown to encourage miscegenation, catholicization and hybridization of indigenous populations and exploitation of the coloured women's bodies served as the key to such end. Indigenous men were brutalized and enslaved as labourers in mines and plantations where they were also vulnerable to European diseases. As they slowly died in large numbers due to overwork and ill health, the Spanish colonizers brought in African slaves to the continent. They were physically strong and also resistant to diseases. In the Americas, the violence unleashed on African people became more organized and using bodies to force subjugation could be further refined. However, miscegenation with African slaves was ruled out. Instead, the Africans' bodies were not only branded with hot-iron patterns burnt into their skins, but also further marked by punitive whiplashes. Hence, these signs on the bodies of the slaves bore testimony to extreme degrees of dehumanizing violence. Such processes involved working at discursive and ideological levels of engaging in various disciplinary strategies that fix the colonized as savage and animal-like that needs to be controlled. This elucidates a process of interpellation of the colonized through the colonial gaze as structured through the European imaginary (Yancy 1).

The Capoeira is an eclectic dance form drawing from a range of African dance forms and combat styles being recalled from the cultural memories of slaves from different tribes of Africa. It can be said that this Brazilian form emerged as a historical/cultural consequence of the

[3] This is suggested by de Armas as he reads the contesting images of the Florentine David and that of Hercules. "Are the political contexts of David/Goliath and Herculed/Cacus at play in Don Quixote……? And, it may be asked, when he kills Pandafilando, is he taking on the liberating role of a new David or the imperial mantle of a new Hercules?", 79-80.

enslavement of African peoples. The emergence of the Capoeira dates back to the 16th century. It was initially born out of the Africans' survival instincts in a hostile and unknown land. Slaves from different tribes, even the ones that shared a mutual hostility had been herded together, precisely in order to suspend any communication among them, thereby curbing the possibility of rebellion. They often did not speak the same language. The earliest bodily movements of the slaves may consequently have emerged to communicate and unite through their bodies in a disguised manner, in order to survive the terrible abuses inflicted by the colonizers on them. The disguise served to bypass the colonial master.

In the Indian context, bodies had always been 'disciplined' along caste and gender lines to establish social hierarchy. It is known that, around the 9th century, Kalaripayattu became part of the education programme of a warrior clan from Kerala along with other courses such as Math, Sciences, Language and Astronomy, offered in schools known as Kalaris. Kalari means a battlefield or a combat area in Malayalam, the language spoken in Kerala, India. It was integral to a general disciplining of bodies and minds within an indigenous education programme. Later, around the 11th century, it was nurtured by the local kings (Rajas) of the Chola and the Chera dynasties. Like most martial art forms in India, these have their roots in Indian myths that attribute the knowledge of these forms to the gods. It is believed that the gods had offered this knowledge to members of particular clans/race/communities for survival in order to fight off difficult and wild terrains in South India. Over the years, these men went on to become entrapped in caste hierarchies depending on varying local histories. Their roles also turned political as they were deployed to protect the lives of their kings. They were often patronized by the royal families for taking part in combat battles. They were 'disciplined' bodies.[4] A great amount of knowledge accumulated over centuries has informed this performance. Techniques of the Kalaripayattu martial art

[4] The concept of 'disciplined bodies' is borrowed from Michel Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish*.

have been passed on orally (though written documents on palm leaves also exist) across generations.[5]

What is interesting about Kalaripayattu is that, traditionally, it was always practiced shrouded in deep mystery and mists of secrecy. Hence, it was taught by the masters in total isolation, away from prying eyes. This kind of secrecy was aimed at ensuring that only carefully selected and responsible men and women (till their menstruation began) from the warrior class (so that it would not be abused by potential criminals) would be trained in this art to fight unto death to protect the lives of the kings for whom they were trained. It was a unique and privileged knowledge which the artistes were greatly honoured to be associated with. Colonization had to undo this relic of bodily knowledge of high-level, mostly masculine art in order to domesticate the people through humiliation. The colonialists had selectively labelled male bodies as laughably feminine or brutally savage-like. Thus, these bodies converted into Europe's Other, as a mirror that reflects the colonialist's self-image and a desired image of a fixing of the colonized as subjugated. When the Portuguese landed in southern India, they unleashed terrible violence on a land where religious tolerance and gender parity among the higher caste peoples was exemplary[6]. As far as Kalaripayattu was concerned, the Portuguese had the most influential presence in Kerala. That is how the earliest western account of Kalaripayattu comes to be that of the Portuguese explorer Duarte Barbosa (1480-1521) who had lived in Kerala for many years:

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[5] All information about the Kalaripayattu has been borrowed from the cited websites and from A. Sreedhara Menon's 1967 book *A Survey of Kerala History*.

[6] Although this religious tolerance and intra-group gender parity among the higher caste people did not impact the structural violence perpetrated against the lower caste people in any way. The religious tolerance was restricted only in terms of absence of active resistance from the higher castes when conversion of the lower caste people to Christianity was taking place.

> These warriors are seven years of age when sent to schools where they are taught many tricks of nimbleness and dexterity; there they teach them to dance and turnabout and to twist on the ground, to take royal leaps, and other leaps, and this they learn twice a day as long as they are children, and they become so loose-jointed and supple that they make them turn their bodies contrary to nature; […] and when they are fully accomplished in this, they teach them to play with the weapon to which they are most inclined, some with bows and arrows, some with poles to become spearmen, but most with swords and bucklers, which is most used among them, and in this fencing they are ever practising. The masters who teach them are called Panikars. (Zarilli 40)

This martial art became very popular and was eventually adopted by Muslims, Christians and Jews for its ethics of valour and strength which became symbolic of a unique kind of privileged masculinity.

Portuguese India under Spanish domain from 1580-1665 also experienced the Inquisition. The Kalaripayattu continued to operate from the underground. Yet, all European forces found it disconcerting and a formidable martial art and hence were relieved when this art form was banned by the British in 1793.[7] They had always seen it with suspicion primarily for its popularity while they also feared its use against the colonial army in possible guerrilla attacks. Ironically, while the colonizers branded the colonized Indian men as effeminate, the bodies of the martial artists needed to be pushed into invisibility to

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[7]. The Kalaripayattu martial artistes had also put up active resistance against the British on different occasions. As the kings of Travancore and Cochin entered into alliance with the British (The East India Company–Travancore Subsidiary Alliance Treaty of 1795), or when the Malabar province was ceded to the British Raj in 1792, a series of revolts broke out led by Nair soldiers who were also Kalaripayattu martial artistes.

hide their disciplined masculinity. It involved a process whereby the colonizers applied their monarchical order to govern under the imperial banner. Colonization had enslaved the Kalaripayattu bodies, as the European gaze converted them into objects of curiosity, before banning them. It is thus that two worlds meet, the Portuguese and the British, over the body of the Kalaripayattu artiste. Kalaripayattu, however, continued to be practiced from the underground under a new agenda of decolonization. It is still a mystery how they could "organize" themselves clandestinely to produce this kind of knowledge of resistance with their body moves. It was also the case with the Capoeira.

The playful aspect of the Capoeira was meant to disguise the practice as resistance to the injuries on their bodies as a result of being marked with brands of ownership, bent and abused. Creative corporeal faculties were used in search for new movements meant to overcome the restrictions of tied limbs and bodies. This transformation is significant in terms of how disguise and clandestine practice became so important. Consequently, while they practiced this martial art in the plantations, the Capoeira artistes had begun to adorn their movements with music and rhythm in order to give the slaves' cultural project the appearance of a simple recreation. The Portuguese masters, however, would soon figure out the power of alternative communication through this form. They feared revolt as the numbers of slaves practicing Capoeira were a lot higher than they could possibly manage and, hence, they outlawed it until the 1930s. A similar colonial paranoia had also worked behind banning of Kalaripayattu in India, as already addressed earlier.

Colonized Bodies Write Back

The occupants of Kalaris had been shunted out of their places, not just literally but also symbolically. As they went underground, they had also lost all their privileges of social honour and political clout. It was for this very reason that these bodies invented another agenda, which was that of anticolonial resistance and subsequent

decolonisation. They had lost their honours and their patrons as the kings had also fallen to the foreign powers.[8] This situation made them face great indignity and humiliation leading the narrative of their performances towards a new kind of coordinated choreography of confrontation. They were determined not to become mute victims and, hence, responded by different kinds of moves of their martial art involving a new sense of identity and brotherhood bonded by similar goals of defiance against their colonial masters. Such brotherhood revolved around their masculine Malayali identity cutting across different religious groups as a united front against a common enemy.[9] During the freedom movement, a whole range of Indian martial arts from the underground found resistance groups based on the masculinised body of the artiste, which often included women artists/warriors too.[10]

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[8] India also, like the Americas, was colonized by the Portuguese and the Spanish, the Dutch, the French and the British. But there was nobody to act as an arbiter to resolve issues of conflicts among these forces. Colonization of India was therefore very complicated as often they were competing for maximum influence in establishing alliances with powerful upper caste peoples.

[9] A Malayali is a person from Kerala who speaks Malayalam.

[10] The most popular forms were *Raibenshe* from Bengal, *Lathikhela* from Punjab and Bengal, *Gatka* from Punjab among others, *Kusti* from Northern India. Thus, for example, *Anushilan Samity*, an Indian anti-colonial organisation of Eastern India that was established in 1902 to put an end to the British Rule in India used to run *Akharas* (a dedicated open air space) as their cover to execute body building activities using the indigenous forms of martial arts to prepare their activists for anticolonial resistance. Though members of this society were by and large men, some women members also joined the group and learnt and mastered these martial arts. See http://radhikaranjanmarxist.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/history-of-armed-revolution-anushilan_01.html, http://indianmotherland.blogspot.co.uk/2011/07/anushilan-samiti-embodies-martial.html

In Brazil also, it was this sense of bonding which emerged as the word spread of the Quilombos created by many rebel slaves who had fled the colonizers' plantations across the country.[11] Theirs were black settlements in the deepest and most inaccessible of the Brazilian terrains. As they went out and settled, word of these Quilombos spread out. Thereafter, many more slaves dared to run away and, thus, the strength of these settlements grew, and they became formidable organisational terrains of black resistance in Brazil. Here, the Capoeira was practiced and perfected freely as a unique form of martial art by the slaves who had earlier worked in Brazilian plantations, where it used to be performed clandestinely in small groups in order to face and encounter possible physical violence by the masters. Later, it was perfected in the Quilombos to a form meant to be used for war. The elements of surprise and ambush were important aspects of the art of disguise. Performing together also helped build a comradery among them which established an African-American slave identity and countered the dilution of original, ethnic and tribal differences.[12]

As these bodies of slaves performed, often with their limbs tied or injured, they translated their writhing pain and humiliation into meaningful body-narratives. They built up resistance as these body moves archived their experiences and equipped them to become a united front against their colonial masters. The slaves of the Palmares, the biggest and most organized of all Quilombos, had already begun to rebel by burning plantations and killing their white masters. When the Dutch invaded Brazil (1830), the slaves took advantage of this situation to run away from the plantations and join forces with the Palmares to fight the Portuguese Army. The Dutch won, but the slaves also felt more confident. The Dutch attempted to attack the Palmares in 1644 in an expedition organized to try and retrieve the escaped slaves.

[11] Quilombos were runaway slaves' settlements in deep jungles of Brazil.

[12] The Quilombos also included Brazilian-Indians (who helped the runaway slaves to survive inhospitable terrains) and Whites who did not support the abuse of the slaves. To explore further how nineteenth-century Brazil dealt with Capoiera, see Chapter 1 of Talmon-Chvaicer's book.

However, they were unsuccessful as they encountered the power of the slaves' combat skills. Subsequent attempts by the Dutch were also unsuccessful, although these expeditions were formed by very experienced, trained and well-armed soldiers. The main reason for the success of the slaves was this aspect of disguise and clandestine performance of the Capoeira which had translated into a system of fighting called "jungle war" or ambush. Many such experiences of defeat of European colonizers by the Capoeiristas give evidence of how in the free spaces of the Quilombos, this martial art was perfected, to the extent that many attempts at raiding them were foiled as the Capoeira warriors took the raiders by surprise (*A Brief History of Capoeira*).

At this point, the question of the Kalaripayattu 'secrecy' and Capoeira 'disguise' converge, partially. In colonial India and Brazil, the Kalaripayattu and the Capoeira work from the shadows, from underground. The artistes' bodies become a site of subversion and political strength. Alternate masculinities challenging European imaginations of savage bodies were being consciously constructed in both these parts of the world; they realized the new-found strength of their body powers to perform a sustainable counter-discourse, a new pedagogy of decolonizing bodies enmeshed in historically different racial and ethnic frames.

Literature and popular cultures in both these parts of the world have remembered these historical experiences of decolonization. Cinema is an interesting form of popular culture as it is easily accessible across languages and digital technologies. The film *Urumi* (Santosh Sivan, 2011) explores this history as it weaves real historical figures with some fictional ones in its cinematic narrative. It juxtaposes two stories from two periods, one situated in contemporary neoliberal times and the other in colonial times. The contemporary story is set in the conflict zone of a group of tribal people fighting a mining industry. The owner of the property which is soon to be sold to the miners is reminded of his past life when he had fought the Portuguese people. This takes us back to the colonial story of a martial warrior of the sixteenth century, Kelu, who wanted to avenge his father's death by

Vasco da Gama. He is assisted by his Muslim friends, Vavvali and a warrior princess, Ayesha. Globalization, here, is seen as another layer of the colonial discourse.

Similarly, *Cordão de Ouro* (Antonio Carlos da Fontoura, 1977) explores a time warp in which the ancient colonial situation is juxtaposed with a dictatorial one. It tells the story of the regime in Brazil and Jorge (Mestre Nestor Capoeira), who is a runaway slave from the Eldorado goldmines. In his battle with the local dictator, Jorge meets different elements of the Afro-Brazilian culture, including capoeira, *maculelê*, and *candomble*.[13] Matthias Röhrig Assunção's *Body Games* (2014) is an award-winning documentary film which retells the history of Capoeira in very interesting ways. Disciplined bodies had unlearnt their situations of victimhood and had become conscientious subjects of their own moves, their own histories and their own futures.

Post-coloniality and Accommodation of Colonised Bodies

Colonization either suppressed martial art knowledge systems, as in the case of Kalaripayattu in India, or became the reason for organizing new ones, like the Capoeira in Brazil. It was during the period of anticolonial struggles that members of the colonised societies went back or resorted to their own cultural resources of using their

[13] Maculelê was a common dance in Santo Amaro da Purificação, Bahia, at festivals commemorating the saint of the city, Nossa Senhora da Purificação. It had almost been forgotten until 1943 when Paulínio Aluísio de Andrade, got together family and friends to teach them how to dance Maculelê. This was also a kind of fight disguised as art. See in http://www.capoeirabesouro.com/about_maculele.html.

Candomble is an Afro-Brazilian religious practice of African origins where dance and music are integral rituals. In colonial Brazil, they practiced this religions in secrecy. Thus, when the catholic priests suddenly appeared, they would pretend to be practicing Catholicism. See in https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnQfOXUFHws

bodies as the only available instrument of combat, resistance, and self-defence. Post-coloniality, thereafter, had to first discover, acknowledge and finally tame this performing body into a national narrative of culture and history in order to decriminalize it, as in the case of the Capoeira, or to legitimize it, as in the case of the Kalaripayattu, in order to eventually accommodate it within a neoliberal tourism industry. The taming took some time, though, as the practitioners refused to submit to any fixed and monolithic nationalist agenda. The martial artistes negotiated and contested any prescribed ways of belonging, as they also went global and hybrid; the Capoeira and the Kalaripayattu were to be performed across linguistic, religious, racial/ethnic and caste boundaries.

In Brazil, these bodies performing the Capoeira had to be retrieved from criminality and embedded in a disciplinary and institutional genealogy of national discourses to flaunt multiculturalism which, in turn, enabled a space for the survival of the people of Afro-Brazilian descent. In independent India, the Kalaripayattu emerged once again from the underground, but it had lost its royal patrons to a socialist, secular and democratic new State. Under the circumstances, it had to be assigned a new niche in a different kind of national narrative. Kalaripayattu's role in anti-colonial struggles slotted it into a highly valued and special kind of belonging in this new positionality in the newly independent modern nation-state. This attempt of adjustment of an ancient martial art form into a modern nation structure can be clearly seen in the renaming of institutions to teach these martial arts in Kerala. For example, the Rajkumar Kalari (meaning Prince Kalari) was renamed as Bharat Kalari (meaning Indian/National Kalari) by Sreedhar Nair who was its founder in independent India. The same could be said of the role of Mestre Bimba who is considered as the founder of the Capoeira schools in modern Brazil. Either way, in both cases they served to give visibility to the most marginalized communities of the modern nations, to ease conflicts of class as well as caste and enable decolonization of the oppressed and the oppressor.

After hundreds of years of fighting, it was on May 13, 1888, that Brazil finally abolished slavery which made it the last nation in the Western world to abolish the institution of slavery. Newly emancipated slaves were uneducated and were still not accepted amongst the working classes of Brazilian cities. Capoeira was criminalized in the new nation. Capoeiristas would join gangs or form gangs searching for a means of survival, roaming the streets, keeping themselves busy with Capoeira and often also criminal activity. Because of this, Capoeira was banned once again in Brazil in 1892. Capoeiristas, in order to sustain this art, continued their practice clandestinely. They would also disguise their identities by giving themselves *apiledos* (Capoeria nicknames) so that they would not be easily identified by the police. In 1937, the work of Mestre Bimba and his Capoeira School favourably attracted the attention of the then president of Brazil, Getúlio Vargas. Consequently, the ban on Capoeira was lifted and Capoeira has since been recognized as a national sport in Brazil. Mestre Pastinha also helped to preserve the original forms of Capoeira tremendously by opening his school, the Centro Esportivo de Capoeira Angola in 1942. Mestre Pastinha and Mestre Bimba are seen as the fathers of Capoeira today. Once, the Capoeira was a kind of marginal popular culture, used to invent a shared past in order to form a nation of imagined communities (Schelling 176). Ironically, while the martial forms of the Capoeira survived and surfaced once again, the very social and political ethos of the form had to shift instead to the showcasing of a hybrid Brazil belonging to the spectacle of a global tourism industry. This display is not exploitative, but rather liberating, as it is addressed to new audiences whose gaze is not aggressively colonial. This type of public viewing can also be participative when it allows viewers to exercise their right to choose as they physically navigate their individual experiences through the event, by performing themselves or by feeling a unique pride and empathy with the performance.[14] The body of the Capoeira performer became the image of an idealized Brazilian masculinity, the opposite of the hardened and

[14] For more on this, see Mitra (2016).

rigid body of their former colonial masters.[15] As this iconic Capoeira body was exposed to international gaze, what stood out mostly was the sight of a unique powerful male body which performed a rhythmic dance style with martial moves framed in a sensuous Brazilian blackness. This body was no longer doing resistance, rather it was performing another kind of masculinity to the gallery. The gallery could comprise of nationalists, tourists, liberals, feminists, subalterns, sports fans and so many other kinds of viewership. What was disguise once, was now a display of humanized and therapeutic exercise. The aura of the martial art form was lost. Instead of Walter Benjamin's famous 'mechanical reproduction', we could now contend with touristic reproduction. Thereafter, Capoeira has been performed by people of all origins and of all genders across the globe. The Brazilian black male body became an interesting option of soft and sensuous masculinity to ex-colonizers and all kinds of global citizens.[16]

While the Capoeira went global as a stylishly sensuous and therapeutic performance, the Kalaripayattu had to contend with another kind of identity struggle in neoliberal India. It had to encounter a nationalist backlash trying to appropriate this tradition as a monolithic Hindu practice which compensates for its anxieties of economic and political 'lack' of prominence among the more powerful nations. Kalaripayattu, however, had always been a socio-cultural performance of masculinity, rather than a competitive one. Thus it was very different in its ethos and spirit to the exclusivist and aggressive stance of the Hindutva forces.[17] Moreover, it had always been practiced

[15] Many thinkers have dwelt on hardened masculine bodies of colonizers such as Foucault's disciplined body, Ashis Nandy's hypermasculinity or Anibal Quijano's white supremacy while referring to the colonizer's body as against the colonized feminized one.

[16] For more on this, see Hedgard (2013) and Stephens and Delamont (2015). The point of 'softness' may also be attributed to its inclusive and therapeutic ethos rather than a violent and exclusively competitive one.

[17] Hindutva is a transformation of multicultural Hinduism into a monolithic one by V. D. Savarkar, who proposed the concept of a Hindu

by Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Christians alike. Women also perform and practice this martial art form (McDonald 1573-1574). Post-colonial and post-globalization epochs would have marginalized them even more as they would have been subsumed to a pan-Indian, Hindutva discourse unleashed from outside, mainly Nagpur in North India. This political rivalry only ensured that social multiculturalism and secularism were reinstated with determination, as the Kalaripayattu masters refused to submit to any monolithic Hindutva claims by the nationalists. Thus, like the Capoeira which celebrated hybridity and performance of differently embodied masculinity, the Kalaripayattu community continued to stick to its secularist nostalgia of a Malayali identity as its idealized embodied masculinity. This has had greater success as the Hindutva nationalists have failed to make serious political impact in Kerala. The Kalaripayattu is playing to the gallery a unique Malayali masculinity, and like the African-Brazilian example, is humane, inclusive and therapeutic. Tourism has thus far neutralized and prevented the appropriation of this martial art into the Hindutva nationalist agenda as it has come to be appreciated by all kinds of peoples of all religious, linguistic and ethnic groups, castes and genders. It has also internationalised Indian multiculturalism in all its manifestations, thus also highlighting its secular and democratic traditions (local histories) prevailing amidst global designs.

Both Afro-Brazilian and the Malayali masculinities have intertwined patriotism and a process of unique bodily movements to choreograph an identarian memory overloaded with eventful decolonization as they convert from being mere objects of colonial gaze and disciplining into agency-laden subjects of wilful defiance. It is interesting that, while the Capoeira flaunted a Brazilian blackness to the world as an alternative flexible inclusive masculinity, the Kalaripayattu also had to flaunt its Malayali identity directly to the

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Nation. This was institutionalized in Nagpur as an organization called the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak (RSS). For more, see K.N. Panikkar.

world in order to bypass the stiff-bodied, nationalist discourse of Hindutva fundamentalists. Both rejected the aggressive and competitive ethos of Western White or Hindutva mind-sets. They challenge aggressive, monolithic hyper-masculinity which they see as rigid, dogmatic and regressive. Instead, while endorsing a global ethics of peaceful and dignified co-participation, both artistic forms foreground multicultural, hybrid and secular masculinities framed in a humane and inclusive national narrative. Representations of the colonizer and the colonized are thus transformed by the ethics of a new discourse of coloured, 'softened' bodies.

Significantly, before the Capoeira was exported to the United States and Europe, the Kalaripayattu had been carried over to Indo-China and elsewhere by Buddhist monks, centuries ago, and translated itself into Kung Fu. However, both Capoeira and Kung Fu, in their respective versions of exported matter to the West, have also had to reckon with real and serious issues appertaining to their marginal identities (Latino and Chinese, respectively), such as being exoticised as objects by a very patronizing and condescending kind of a neoliberal gaze. Capoeira and Kung Fu have borrowed from each other in recent times and have had to resist such gaze, while playing on its fixation over hybrid masculinity. In Kerala, Kalaripayattu has become an item of spectacle in 'God's Own Country', a caption which packages Kerala for tourism as it sells its ancient knowledge of naturopathy and body pleasures. In Brazil, the Capoeira also struggles within a discourse made of health and leisure concerns.

Conclusion

A martial art body as knowledge-potential is performative by virtue of its sheer skill in slithering disguise, secrecy of strength as of its intelligent manoeuvrings or its flaunting of grace and violence. It can be liberating, empowering and highly sensitive to identarian issues of longing and belonging to produce another kind of embodied knowledge. It can therefore render irrelevant any prescriptive grammaticality of dominant and hegemonic normativity, and be

irreverent of such ethics of monolithic exclusivity which might sustain them. These bodies work in unique rhythmic moves of humane steps which produce both individual and collective knowledge, and a unique kind of community energy emerging thereof which bonds hybrid identities, cutting across class, caste, race, gender, nationalisms and religions. The artistes reject the monolithic rigidity of white bodies to propose, instead, another kind of maleness around black/coloured soft sensuous bodies. Such masculinity, therefore, is not merely about male bodies, rather about contesting and conflicting ways of embodied counter-narratives to hegemony, humiliation and conflicts. Such bodies perform another kind of masculinity which decolonizes democratizes, secularizes and decriminalizes scripted and prohibited ways of embodied masculinity.

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