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# **THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF KERALA IN THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TRAVANCORE PRINCELY STATE**

## **Introduction**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Kerala was not always what it is today. Kerala society was not based on the principles of social freedom and equality. Kerala witnessed a cultural and ideological struggle against the hegemony of Brahmins. This struggle was due to structural changes in the society and the consequent emergence of a new class, the educated middle class. Although the upper caste Hindus and Christians were mainly affected by this, the new community including the backward communities like *Ezhavas*, was outside the purview of these changes. The attitude of the emerging middle class towards traditional institutions, beliefs and social relations was quite critical. While opposing the feudal values they favored the introduction of western education. The result was the beginning of several reform movements during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Early Medieval history between 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century is known as Dark Age<sup>3</sup>. This period was one of the vibrant social and cultural transformation brought about by the rising trend of Brahmin Settlements. In this period we can see Caste system, *Jenmi kudiyan* system and *Marumakathayam* system.

The reform movement in Kerala were initiated and led by the middle class under the influence of both traditional and western ideas. The reformers of Kerala came mainly from an intermediate and lower caste background. Their caste perspective was clear from the nature of the issues they espoused, mainly the problems of the lower castes casteism, expensive and obscurantist social customs and practices, education, temperance etc. As the position of women in matrilineal castes and backward communities was comparatively better, the women's emancipation was a part of reform only among *Nambutiris* and the Muslims.

## **Religious and Social Practices**

The Kerala society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was steeped in religious superstition and social obscurantism. The religious and social practices in Kerala can be divided into two categories namely, elite culture and popular culture. While the religious practices of elite culture were beset with superstition, rituals, idolatry, polytheism and priesthood the religious beliefs and practices of popular culture were a mixture

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<sup>1</sup> M.G.S. Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Cosmo Books, Thrissur, 2013, p 383

of magic with craft, divination and demonology<sup>2</sup>. The upper caste Hindus, especially the Brahmans, exercised an overwhelming and delusive influence over the lower castes. They possessed the right of consecration and interpretation of rituals. The Brahmans had the exclusive right to reach religious doctrines, to officiate as priests, and to do function as teachers. Other castes were debarred by religious edicts enforced by the Hindu state from taking to all forms of higher education.

Since the backward communities were not allowed to participate in the institutionalized pattern of worship followed by the Brahmans, their religious beliefs revolved around abominable practices like the worship of totems, guardian deities and demons of destruction with delectable rites and abhorrent practices. Offerings of fermented drinks and blood of cocks and goats, singing songs about female sex organs and devil dancing were part of the rituals for the worship of spirits.

Social conditions were equally depressing during this age. The rites and practices observed at the time of marriage, birth, death, poverty and pregnancy were absolutely absurd and irrational. The most distressing factor, however, was caste. The caste system then prevailing in Kerala was much more oppressive than that prevailing in other parts of India. The practices of untouchability and unapproachability and unsuitability militated against human dignity<sup>3</sup>. Government

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<sup>2</sup> P. Chandramohan, *Popular Culture and Socio-Religious Reform: Narayana Guru and the Ezhavas of Travancore*. In *Studies in History*, 1987, pp 54-57

<sup>3</sup> P.J. Cheriyan, *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Kerala Gazetteers, Govt of Kerala, 1999, op cit, P460.

offices, schools and courts were not open to the lower castes. They were prohibited from entering public roads, temples, palaces, etc. Thus the rules and regulations of caste hampered social mobility, fostered social division and sapped individual initiative.

The gap between the lower castes and the upper caste became more and more widened as a result of the rigidity that emerged in the caste system during the medieval Kerala. The lower castes like *Pulayas*, *Parayas* and *Cheramar* were subjected to all kinds of persecutions and were destined to live like slaves of the upper people. The growth of *Jenmi system* was one of the most important aspects of the medieval Kerala society. Another peculiar system in Kerala was *Marumakkathayam* or matrilineal law of inheritance. Although mainly among the *Nairs*, a large number of *Ezhavas*, a few *Nambuthiris* of Payyanur and a few Muslim families in Mayyanad and Paravur areas in South Kerala also followed matrilineal law of inheritance. According to *Marumakkathayam*, a system of inheritance and descend through the female line, a man's legal heirs were his sisters children.

Thus religious and social practices among the Hindus during the 19<sup>th</sup> century were deeply entrenched in superstition and obscurantism. It was this cultural and ideological environment that the movement initiated by different reformers had to do with.

## **The Renaissance**

It was under the British colonial rule that a basic change took place in the life of Kerala. It was a period of break from the continuity of the past. The colonial rule shattered the old stubborn structure of economy. Though the production for local consumption had been gradually giving way to the production for market, it was only during the British rule that Kerala has been integrated to the world market. This change deeply affected the feudal structure and subsequently the social and cultural life.

The economy of colonial exploitation was one that hindered the development of Kerala as a modern society which was lying shackled in the old feudal relations. The colonial economic policy resisted the internal development of productive forces. Actually the colonial rulers were making use of the external forms of the old structure as a less expensive tool for exploitation. They made the kings the chieftains and the landlords their servile mediators. As for the former ruling section they were given back the formal status and privileges and as for the *janmis* they were made owners of the land, in the modern sense, and all of them in return accepted the supremacy of the British ultimately at the loss of the freedom of the people. Thus the colonial rulers retained feudal disposition as a form devoid of content to make the exploitation more smooth. Hence this period of feudal-colonial exploitation in which old customs and faiths were used as ideological state apparatus to exploit the people with their own consent, is the most complex one in the history of Kerala.

The feudal colonial system which could only function by making use of old forms for new purposes was naturally full of contradictions. On the one side the growing market economy was uniting the people of Kerala into a national economy despite their political and social fragmentation. On the other side the feudal-colonial system and its administration were trying to perpetuate the political divisions and social hierarchies. On the one side the process of alienating land as commodity was gaining momentum and on the other side the clutches of feudal forms were being accelerated. Thus the contradictions in this period, brought about by the irresistible formation of new relations and new classes, and the resistance offered by the political system, were complex.

The Kerala scene from the close of the eighteenth to the close of the nineteenth century was that of the co-existence of change and changelessness. In those days Kerala was connected with the modern world as part of the growing world market but at the same time it was being shackled in the world of the past. It was a society in which tribal, slave and feudal forms co-existed under colonial domination. The caste, sub-caste system, untouchability, joint-family, serpent worship, devil worship, witch craft, evil-eye, all these relics from the co-existing phases of history turned Kerala a living museum under the colonial protection.

All the elements of feudalism which had been identified with the custom bound human existence in the past now transformed completely into ideological tools of the new *Janmi-naduvazhi* system, re-organized by the colonial rule. The caste,

sub-caste system became a new oppressive apparatus which has been deprived of its deep relations due to the transformation in the concept of the land ownership. Thus the nineteenth century Kerala, though it had been connected with global system, culturally remained bound up far back for centuries. For the resolution of these extreme contradictions, Kerala had to make a giant leap from the remote past to the modern present. The history of renaissance in Kerala which laid out the background for the setting of modern Kerala is the story of this long leap.

So the cultural renaissance in Kerala was a complex and multifarious process from the close of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. The motive force behind this process was the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles of the people corresponding to the class relations that took shape in different phases.

During the last years of the first World War, the development of the cultural sphere, which was related with the renaissance of Kerala passed over to a new phase. In this phase also social movement was determined and controlled by struggles against the colonial and feudal systems. But certainly in this phase national movement in Kerala was able to acquire a clear political nature apart from the social reform movements.

Both the peasants and the middle class of that time became part of the national political agitation which got momentum in all India level. In Travancore students entered into political scene. Similarly, the political activities which was individually started by Swadeshabhimani K. Ramakrishna Pillai obtained a social character in

Travancore. In Malabar a situation came into being in which Congress Committees and Tenancy Committees tried to work together. Thus the entrance of the middle class into the political life of Kerala enabled the people of Kerala who were leaderless after Velu Tampi and Pazhassi Raja to acquire political leadership through the national movement.

But the political leaders who were expected to give leadership to the anti-feudal agitations of the peasants kept aloof so that the colonial rulers are able to suppress those peasant struggle. This kind of the withdrawal of the leadership strengthened the hands of the British to subdue the peasant uprising branded as Moplah Rebellion which began as an anti-feudal, anti-colonial movement but eventually came in the grip of the religious fundamentalism. This was a set back for the growing democratic movement which had acquired a clearer political identity than that of Travancore and Kochi. Subsequent Vaikom Satyagraha and Guruvayoor Satyagraha helped to revitalize the Kerala politics.

Meanwhile, changes were occurring in the national movement and in the casteist organizations. These changes determined the factors of Kerala politics and its cultural atmosphere. A powerful broad-minded and revolutionary youth wing who were unsubmitive to the conservative leadership emerged inside the Congress. Inside the caste and communal organizations a new force of radical youth who challenged the orthodox hierarchy within their own castes emerged who, began to see social problems from a political angle. United political struggles developed between

different castes, community groups in Travancore. The activities of T.K. Madhavan, C. Kesavan and Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai were the manifestations of new political culture which broke through the boundaries of caste and creed.

In these circumstances, new streams of thought which were free from the clutches of religion were formed. Thus apart from the caste-oriented communal reform movements, there appeared powerful social-reform movements based upon secular perspective and materialist outlook. Men like Sahodaran Ayyappan's activities, which were inspired by the Russian revolution and the socialist ideology, indicate the changes in the intellectual atmosphere of the period.

## Chapter 1

# MELTING JATI FRONTIERS

A study of the social and economic life and institutions of the people form an integral part of the study of our culture. The 20th century witnessed the emergence of a new social order in Kerala under the impact of diverse social, economic and cultural influences by colonial agents<sup>1</sup>. Missionary endeavours, western education, bureaucratic Government, allopathic medicinal practices, printing, etc functioned as the agents of colonial modernity<sup>2</sup>. Before this period, the principles of social freedom and equality as defined by the colonial masters did not form the basis of the society of Kerala. However, the nineteenth century colonial intervention in the princely State of Travancore resulted in the renaissance of the early twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Colonialism was a psychological state. “..... colonialism cannot be identified with only economic gain and political power. .... It represents a certain cultural continuity and carries certain cultural baggage”. (Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy, Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, twelfth Impression, 1998, pp 1&2.)

“India is often imagined to be the land of eternal religion, and Britain the land of modern secularity. In such an imagination India appears to exist outside history, whereas Britain is understood as the agent of history. .... but capitalism in Britain could not develop without India”. (Peter Van Der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2001, pp 4 & 9) Here the term ‘colonial agent’ is used to denote the various institutions such as missionaries, press, education, administrative institutions, architecture, communication, transport, etc that penetrated into the native social life which accelerated the psychological process of transforming the natives as the subjects of the Western modernity.

<sup>2</sup> “Utilitarian’s were trying to define modernity in terms of utility and rationality, while evangelicals were trying to define it in terms of Christian morality.” (Peter Van Der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*, op cit, p 7)

In the societal terrain of the Hindu social order *smriti* laws had imposed several restrictions over non-brahmanical *jatis*. *Jati* (caste) to then Kerala was the totemic representation of the occupation of the *jati* specific. But the lower *jatis* were eliminated from the temple centered Hindu social gatherings until the Renaissance of the twentieth century. Thus the premises of temples were voluntarily opened to all Hindus in the fourth decade of the twentieth century by the Hindu *savarna* (upper caste) psyche. As a result of the labour of renaissance leaders and colonial intervention through Christian missionaries, the restriction imposed over lower *jati* students by the state education department got diluted long before the Temple Entry Proclamation. Temple Entry Proclamation was the windfall of the culmination of such a sweeping social undercurrent. In the early decades of the twentieth century itself subaltern *jati* organizations opened educational institutions. The educational status of the upper castes during early 20<sup>th</sup> century was as follows.

Literates in 1000		
	Males	Females
Namboothiris	695	227
Tamil Brahmins	688	80
Kshathriyas	614	319
Ambalavasis	607	252
Nairs	425	118

(Source: Scale.....)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> C. Achuta Menon, The Cochin State Manuel, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1911, Rpt. 1995, p 383.

## **The Caste and *Varna***

The *varna* system which was prevalent in all other Indian village societies had never been in existence in Kerala in the same pattern. There are no such groups of people in Kerala which include themselves perfectly in the four-fold division of *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra*. If there is any section of people in Kerala which fully satisfies the concepts of *varna* division, it is Brahmins. There is not separate section of people in Kerala which practiced the *varnas* of *Kshatriya* and *Sudras*. The gaps of these two *varnas* came to be filled by the *Nair* castes. A section that functioned as the third caste *Vaisya* is totally absent in Kerala. The absence of a trader caste in the Kerala model *varna* system is highly significant against the background of the minute division of castes and sub-castes for each minor occupation.

The most notable characteristic of the caste system in Kerala is the practice of untouchability which figures even the upper castes as untouchables. Usually the Brahmins elsewhere in India do not observe untouchability except towards castes outside the *varnas*, yet in Kerala the Brahmins observe a form of untouchability towards the caste even inside the *varna* system.

Another notable feature of caste system in Kerala is the observance of the forms of untouchability prevalent among all the low castes including the lowest ones. Since the consolidation of the agricultural village system, without any fundamental change except the proliferation of sub-castes caused by the development

of division of labour till the advent of the modern democratic struggle, this caste mechanism functioned as a political structure. This mechanism was able to perform different functions according to the different phases of history and thus could survive the changes in history. If it once functioned as a political structure of an economic base which combined the relations of slavery and feudalism, at another phase it functioned as a clear evidence of the feudal-colonial exploitation.

According to Samuel Mateer “missionaries have done a lot for those who have embraced Christianity in Travancore. They have risen not slowly but with marvelous rapidity, as soon as the unnatural incubus of their superstitions was removed and the light of the so-called intelligence and religion shed upon their hearts and upon their path in life<sup>4</sup>.”

The credit of introducing western education which was deemed to be scientific, secular and rational in Kerala goes to the Christian missionaries. The basic interest of missionaries in establishing and spreading western schooling and education was to spread Christianity and its noble ideals. The exciting socio-political situation enabled them to accomplish their objective.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Mateer, *Native life in Travancore*, J. Jetley Asia Educational Services, New Delhi, 1883, Rpt.1991, p 312.

Ward and corner, *Memories of a Survey of Travancore and Cochin State*, Survey Generals Office, Travancore Sircar, Trivandrum, 1863, p 140

M.S. Jayaprakash, *A Study of the Ezhavas in Kerala*, Gurukripa publications, Kollam, 1999, p 142.

Cover file No., 132 107, Education 1904, English Records, Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.

<sup>5</sup> K.V. Eapen, *Kerala Charithram*, Kollett Publications, Kottayam, 1993, p 250.

P Palpu, *The Thiyas of Travancore*, 1941, *Vivekodayam*, June, July issue 1914, p 3

Proceedings of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1919, Government Secretariat, Trivandrum, p 3

The upper *jati* Hindus denied the rights and privileges of lower *jati* Hindus and the latter got themselves converted to Christianity or Islam until the Hindu Renaissance of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> Arnold Toynbee, in his *Study of History*, had observed “the growing trend for such conversions in the pre-renaissance period in several parts of India where there was a high proportion of lower castes and untouchables.”

V. Nagam Aiya in his *Travancore State Manual* states that “It was during the regency of the Rani Gouri Parvathy Bai that the English missionaries received substantial help. Her Highness Rani permitted a few missionary gentlemen to live permanently in her state and gave them liberal support<sup>7</sup>. In 1817 Gouri Parvathi Bai, with the assistance of Diwan Col Munro, introduced a system of free and compulsory education under state control. Primary schools were set up in all parts of the state and children between the age of 5 and 10 were sent to school. The work of the Christian missionaries and the spread of Western Education helped to bring about radical social changes in Travancore. The special attention bestowed by the missionaries on evangelical work among the backward classes in Hindu society and the large number of conversions that took place to Christianity from among the

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<sup>6</sup> Cover file No. 1627 dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1893, English records, Kerala Government Secretariat, Trivandrum. Proceedings of the Madras Government, Political Department, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1896, Association, *Kerala Charitram*, Government Press, Ernakulam 1973, p 898

Samuel Mateer, *The land of Charity*, J. Jetley Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1870, P 344

<sup>7</sup> V. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual Vol I*, Gazetteers Dept, 1999, p 475.

ranks of lower castes served to highlight the evils in Hindu social organization and to create an atmosphere in favour of radical religious and social reforms. They received royal patronage in their endeavor was the paradox of the state of affair .The threat of conversion of this kind compelled the Government to give some considerations to the *avarna jatis* (lower castes).

Missionaries, especially those of the LMS, helped their converts to bring cases to the court<sup>8</sup>. In 1907 a high caste member of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly insisted that missionaries were using accessibility to courts as well as education and medical relief for the purpose of converting the *Pulayas*<sup>9</sup>. Nagam Aiya in his manual published in 1906 stated that “There is no doubt that, as time goes on these neglected classes will be completely absorbed into the Christian fold<sup>10</sup>”. But when the Temple Entry Proclamation announced in 1936 which characterized as the spiritual Magna Carta of Travancore during the period of Sir C.P., the lower castes were able to gain access to all temples and their conditions improved.

Kumaran Asan, a well-known Malayalam poet and a member of the Travancore Popular Assembly had incessantly demanded in throwing open

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<sup>8</sup> Gladstone has dealt with similar cases. See J.W. Gladstone , Protestant Christianity and Peoples Movement in Kerala, A Study of Christian Mass Movement in Relation to Neo-Hindu Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala 1850-1936, Seminary Publications, Trivandrum, 1984, pp 176-77

Cover File No. 132107, Education, 1904, English Records, Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.

<sup>9</sup> SMPAP 3rd Meeting, 1907, P 111

<sup>10</sup> Nagam Aiya, The Travancore State Manual Vol II, Government Press, Trivandrum, 1906, P 116.  
C.Kesavan, *Jeevitha samaram* , Kaumadi Publications, Trivandrum, 1955, p 110.

Government schools to the children of the lower castes<sup>11</sup>. In 1904 Royal Government of Travancore met the entire cost of primary education of backward communities. Velu Pillai in his Travancore State Manual stated that “It was only in 1912 that the restriction on the admission of Pulaya boys and girls into the Government schools was officially removed<sup>12</sup>”. In 1930 there were about 3628 schools in Travancore in which they admitted all children irrespective of caste and creed. The Government schools and mission schools were filled by the lower castes, and the higher castes were admitted to private schools<sup>13</sup>. The children of Christian Pulayars, Kuravars, Vedars and other castes learnt in the mission schools<sup>14</sup>.

## The Revival of Nairs

Another peculiar system in Kerala, especially amongst Nair Jati was *Marumakkathayam* or the matrilineal law of inheritance. According to *Marumakkathayam*, a system of inheritance and descent through the female line, a man’s legal heirs were his sisters’ children. The State laws did not legitimize the

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<sup>11</sup> Kumaran Asan, the great poet of Modern Kerala belonged to Ezhava Community was subjected to humiliating treatment by some of the members of the high castes. He heralded a new era in the writing of poetry. The writing of *Veena Poovu* in 1907 was the beginning of Renaissance in Malayalam literature. He worked for long as the General Secretary of the SNDP Yogam, (A Sreedhara Menon, Survey of Kerala History, S. Viswanathan Printers and Publishers, Chennai, 1967 Rpt. 1999, P 331.

Ravindran T.K, Dr. Asan and Social Revolution, Kerala Historical Society, 1972, p XVII )

<sup>12</sup> T.K.Velu Pillai, Travancore State Manual Vol III, Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 1969, p 736

<sup>13</sup> L.A. Krishna Iyer, Social History of Kerala Vol II, Book Centre publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1993, p 283.

<sup>14</sup> Samuel Mateer, Native Life in Travancore, op cit, p 312

husband or father as the guardian of wife and children<sup>15</sup>. The Nair Regulation of 1925 gave recognition to the right of the wife and children of the non-nair husband over his private property<sup>16</sup>. The prestige which the caste Hindus enjoyed from the size of their land holdings disappeared consequent to the breaking up of the joint family and the increasing partition of the older *tarawads*.

A claim to the division of the joint family property was unheard of till the passing of *Marumakkathayam* Act in 1939. With the division of property among the *Nambuthiris* and *Nairs*, the individual shares of land became too small for cultivation and were disposed of. It led to the disappearance of the large *tarawads* (houses) and small families grew up. Many young men of the old *tarawads* left their home in the wake of partition and went to urban areas where they came into contact

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<sup>15</sup> The *Mushakavamsham*, a Mahakavya in Sanskrit, composed about AD 1100 by Atula, the court poet of the Mushaka King Srikanta, throws light on the transition from the patrilineal (*Makkathayam*) to the Matrilineal (*Marumakkathayam*) system of inheritance in Kerala. According to Elamkulam Kunjanpillai, *Marumakkathayam* started in Kerala as a part of the Chola-Chera war during the age of Perumals. Patriarchal (patrilineal) System was followed by the Matriarchal (Matrilineal) System in Kerala. The Kshatriyas, the Ambalavasis, the Samanthars, the Nairs, some of the Ezhavas, the Nanjinad Vellalas and some Muslims followed this system. In the *Marumakkathayam* the household or *tharawad* in the Matriarchal society was a joint family consisting of all the descendants of a common ancestor in the female line. The mother and all her children, all grand children by the daughters, all her brothers and sisters and the descendants of the sisters lived together in the same home sharing a common kitchen and enjoying all the property and after her death, they shared her property in common with one another.

Prof. Elamkulam Kunjanpillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, N.B.S., Kottayam, 1970, p 292.

K. Damodaran, *Keralacharithram*, Prabhatham Printing and publishing company pvt. Ltd., Thiruvananthapuram, 1992, p 144

Adoor K.K. Ramachandran Nair, *Kerala State Gazetteer*, Rpt. Vol. 1, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996 p 2

K.Sivasankaran Nair, *Nieuhoff Kanda Keralam*, Kerala Books and Publications Society, Cochin 1996, p 50

<sup>16</sup> G. Krishanan Nadar, *History of Kerala*, Learners' Book House, Kottayam, 1992, p 130.

Prof. K V Krishna Iyer, "New Light on old problems" in the *History on the March*, Kerala History Association, Ernakulam, 1965, pp 31-32

K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol III, Cochin Govt Press, Ernakulam, 1933, p 186

with the new forces at work in society<sup>17</sup>. Later these joint families, under the colonial influence, were turned down as nuclear families<sup>18</sup>.

## **The Joint-Family System**

The joint family with various forms of polygamy and polyandry were prevalent in Kerala till recently. Historians have arrived at different conjectures about the reasons of the continued existence of this institutions till modern epoch in Kerala. But among these it seems that the more scientific is that based on the studies of the evolution of family by social scientists like Morgan and Engels. According to this view the various forms of man-woman relationship in the joint-family systems in Kerala are the different transitional forms from group marriage to pairing marriage.

The family system and succession of the Kerala Brahmans resist this conjecture, according to the traditional beliefs. It is the racial interpretation of history which forcefully identifies blood and culture as an inalienable unity and as a self-evident natural truth contrary to the fact that blood heritage and cultural heritage are of different levels and have got their own specific structures and history. If we consider the structural specificities it becomes clear that all Brahmans in India belong to the Aryan religion and culture, but racially they may not necessarily be so. Like

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<sup>17</sup> L.A. Krishna Iyer, *Social History of Kerala*, op cit, p 162

<sup>18</sup> K.N. Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalagal*, Samskarika Prasadheekarna Vakupu, Kerala Sarkar, Thiruvananthapuram, 1990, p 236

P.J. Cheiran, *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Kerala Gazetteers, Trivandrum, Govt. of Kerala, p 458

any other religion and culture Brahman religion and culture has nothing to do with the blood of those who owe faith to it.

Following the racial interpretation it is believed that all the people belonging to different castes in Kerala, except the primitive dwellers, had physically migrated to Kerala in different times. If it is true the Christians and the Muslims in Kerala also might be the direct descendants of those who came here with these religions.

In the case of Brahmans in Kerala it is indisputable that the bearers of the Brahman religion and culture came into Kerala from outside. But as the racial interpretation of history becomes unscientific the stake of blood heritage itself disappears over which the scholars have hitherto been making disputes. Just as the formation of the Brahman caste in the Kaveri delta, where there was an intellectual group prior to the advent of the Brahman religion who could easily be transformed into Brahmans under the village system, in Kerala from among the most advanced tribal groups who came under the village system and Brahman religion, some adapted themselves as Brahman to meet the needs of religious dispensations. In these days religion was not as spiritualistic in the sense as it is now and it worked as a direct material force to co-ordinate a definite production relation. The section of the people who had to take the role of the Brahmans here also had to study and safeguard the secrecy of the Vedas. So they had to make themselves a group with a difference while they shared the tribal traits of life in common with others who came under the village system. The Kerala Brahmans thus acquired a dual cultural existence.

All the institutions of the *Namboodiri* Brahman culture directly reflect or suppress and ideologically represent this duality. The family system, the concept of man-woman relationship, the forms of worship, the rituals and customs of *Namboodiris* have got two faces: one that of the Brahman religion in general and the other that of the tribal culture shared by all the caste Hindus in Kerala.

Though the *Namboodiris* accepted the concept of chastity and father-right to make themselves as Brahmans in the strict ritualistic sense, they continued the old form of joint family. In order to introduce father-right in family system the man-woman relationship should be modified so as to enable the father to identify his own offsprings from that of others. So the *Namboodiris* introduced strict monogamy for the women. But the men-folk continued polygamy and participation in the remnants of the group marriage system prevalent in the other castes. Thus the tribal group who turned Brahman while living in polygamy and participating in the remnants of group marriage system and continuing the joint-family system as before, they became the priestly class like all other vedic Brahmans. The contradictions that emerged from this duality have been found epitomized in certain institutions that support the *Namboodiri* family system. The most important one is the ritual trial to prove the chastity of *Namboodiri* women - *smarthavicharam*. The existence of this unique institution itself tells much about the functional importance of chastity of the Brahman woman then a moral concept cherished by the society. In a society where polygamy and relics of group marriage system were the order of the day, it

was natural that chastity had become an element to be safeguarded with such tedious and prolonged rituals.

While the eldest son in the *Namboodiri* family was allowed to marry from his own caste the younger ones were prohibited to do so. And according to the custom the younger ones had to receive ascetic life and they had to consider the eldest brother's son as their own in principle to perform their funerary rituals. The *ghosha* system of the *Namboodiri* women towards their husband's brothers had been considered as a very important custom failing which might even lead to a chastity proving trial. This prohibition and understandings that prevailed inside the *Namboodiri* joint family inevitably leads to the consideration of the emergence of the *Namboodiri* family system. It may be suggested that the *Namboodiris* emerged from a group of people who practiced fraternal polyandry which is one form of group marriage system in the tribal society.

Thus the family system of *Namboodiri* being only a modified one among other forms of joint-family system, it does not offer resistance to the conclusion that the joint-family system prevalent in Kerala till recently was nothing but a manifestation of different transitional forms.

### **The Matriarchal Joint-Family System**

The matriarchal joint-family system is another institution peculiar to Kerala which attracted wide attention due to its continuity despite the social changes. Among the *Nairs* and among most of the caste Hindus except *Namboodiris* this system was

prevalent till recently. As mentioned above according to a theory this system was a re-introduction by *Namboodiris* in the medieval period among *Nairs* and other castes supplanting their original patriarchal system. But whatever may be the interpretation this theory of re-introduction or super-imposition cannot stand the widely accepted scientific formulation regarding the evolution of family and society.

If we take all the forms of joint family among all the caste Hindus, altogether it becomes clear that they are nothing but definite articulations of a total system. While comparing the different forms of joint-family system with one another the determining structural factor which unites these forms as a total system gets emerged. It is that of the pre-Aryan tribal group marriage system. Engels when he refers to the marriage system of the *Nairs* in his famous book *Origin of Family* touches upon this basic nature of the matriarchal joint family in Kerala.

But the apparent differences of all these family systems, ranging from that of the Brahmans to the *Nairs*, are basically due to the levels of social stratification in which they have been deployed by the division of labour set by the new mode of production i.e., the plough agricultural economy. This means the difference in the degree of adaptation of the group marriage system according to the difference of the level might be behind the diversity of the joint-family system of the caste Hindus. The Brahmans being at the highest in the hierarchy their family system had to adapt the most and the *Nairs* being at the lowest had to adapt their's the least.

The above mentioned mode of adaptation and preservation which is peculiar to the form of Kerala culture is not confined only to the realm of caste and kinship. But this extends to the complex form of worship, rituals, art forms, superstitions and popular customs. Form of worship in Kerala is an archive in which the combined forms of Aryan and primitive styles are preserved at the various levels of their evolution. Serpent worship and *Kali* cult in Kerala are two significant forms in this respect, since the genealogy of which specifically reflect the evolution of cultural form in Kerala through the process of adaptation, symbiosis and preservation.

## Chapter 2

### ENLIGHTENMENT IN TRAVANCORE

In Kerala the religious awakening was piloted by Sri Chattambi Swamikal (1854-1924), Ayyankali (1863 -1941), Swamy Vagbhadananda (1884 - 1939) and Sri Narayana Guru (1856-1928). Their revolutionary interpretation of the Vedas and the Upanishads caused the basic changes in the outlook of people<sup>1</sup>

Chattambi Swamikal born in a Nair family at Kannanmula, Trivandrum revolted against the existing social order in which the Brahmins enjoyed the monopolistic position. Swamikal undertook a reinterpretation of Hindu beliefs in such a way as to mould a religion which will give salvation to all and destroy the caste system.<sup>2</sup> He was aptly called '*Vidyadhiraja*', and one of his books '*Vedadhikara Nirupanam*' challenged the monopoly of the

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<sup>1</sup> P.V. Velayudan Pillai, Navothana Samskaram Keralathil, International centre for Kerala studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, p 45

<sup>2</sup> Genevieve Lemercinier, Religion and ideology in Kerala (trans), Yolanda Rendal, 1983, pp 279-280.

Brahmins in the study and practice of vedic knowledge and their domination of the cultural and spiritual life of the age<sup>3</sup>. Chattampi Swamikal worked in close co-operation with Sri Narayana Guru in the common cause of Hindu social and religious regeneration.

The resistance against the evils of caste had taken an organized form on a rational foundation under the enlightening leadership of Sri Narayana Guru, ‘the loftiest spiritual leader of Kerala’<sup>4</sup> He was born in an Ezhava family and was highly educated, even taking higher studies in Sanskrit. Through meditation and concentration he developed and directed his intellectual urge and spiritual quest for the alleviation of the sufferings of his fellowmen and to create a new just society in Kerala.

Louise Ouwerkerk in his book *No Elephants for the Maharaja* described that “he became a practical reformer, a great founder of institutions, and a propagandist for a better way of life for the poor. His central inspiration remained religious and was primarily concerned with the purification of Hinduism, the abolition of superstition, evil practices and the abolition of caste”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>. Chattampi Swamikal followed the footsteps of Thunjat Ezhuthachen, famous poet in Malayalam, in claiming for all persons the right to learn the Vedas. He asserted that never prevented the Sudra caste from learning them. There are many instances of Sudras learning Vedas and promoting the study of Hindu Scriptures, G. Krishnan Nadar, *Histry of Kerala* op cit, p 267.

<sup>4</sup> S.N. Sadasivan, *Administration and Social Development in Kerala*, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1988, p 72

<sup>5</sup> Louise Ouwerkerk, *No Elephants for the Maharaja*, Manohar Publisher, New Delhi, 1994, p 54.

Narayana Guru was the reformer who took the battle against Brahmin hegemony to the masses through his consecration of a *Sivalinga* at Aruvippuram in 1888. After Aruvippuram consecration he forbade the worship of evil spirits and consecrated 64 more temples in different parts of Kerala.<sup>6</sup> His simple message of one caste, one religion and one God for man was the result of his reinterpretation of Sankara's *Advaita* (monism). In 1903 Sri Narayana Guru founded an association for the propagation of his philosophy, the '*Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam*' popularly known as the SNDP Yogam. The role played by Guru for the revival of nationalism among the people of Kerala was also noticeable<sup>7</sup>.

Guru's consecration of mirror in the place of idol is the clear indication of the recognition of *Advaitam*. Sri Narayana called upon the weak and the subjugated to gain "strength through organization and freedom through education." He was a tower of strength behind the historic Vaikom Satyagraha<sup>8</sup>. Sree Narayana Guru personally trained and motivated Kumaran

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<sup>6</sup> He wanted to intervene in the institutionalized pattern of upper caste worship, which was denied to the backward communities and the practices like the worship of evil spirits with blood sacrifices of goats and cocks. (P.J. Cherian, perspectives on Kerala History, Kerala gazetteers, Govt of Kerala, 1999, p 460)  
T.K. Gangadharan, Evolution of Kerala History and Culture, Calicut University Central, Calicut, 1998, p 289.

<sup>7</sup> S. Mohandas, *Viswaguru*, S.N. Club, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, p 7.

<sup>8</sup> Vaikom Satyagraha (1924) the biggest ever campaign organized by T.K. Madhavan for realizing the right of the under-privileged to move through the public highways. A Sreedhara Menon, Survey of Kerala History, op cit, p 315.

Nataraja Guru, the word of the Guru, Paico Publishing House, Ernakulam, 1968, p 61.

Asan.<sup>9</sup> Realizing that religious conversion was not a solution to the strengthening of depressed classes, Kumaran Asan took the mission of social liberation.<sup>10</sup> By the time of his death the social revolution started by the Guru had gathered great strength.

Ayyankali, a contemporary of Sri Narayana Guru devoted his life to the encouragement of the most subjugated and depressed section of the society, the *Pulayas* in Kerala. Ayyankali emerged as a saviour of the *Pulayas* and other similar castes.

His main aim was to make his men self-respected and self-confident individuals. In 1893 he challenged the restriction imposed on the *Pulayas* to travel through the public road by travelling in a luxury bullock cart (*villuvandi*) through the public road in Trivandrum.<sup>11</sup> His subsequent endeavor was to get admission for the *Pulayas* in Government schools. He warned “If you do not allow our children to study, weeds will grow in your fields”<sup>12</sup> Ayyankali advocated free and compulsory education. He also demanded facilities for

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<sup>9</sup> Kumaran Asan’s immortal contributions ‘*Chandalabhikshuki*’ (untouchable Nun) and ‘*Duravastha*’ (miserable plight) have epitomized a power philosophy for a major social transformation in Kerala. S.N.Sadasivan, Administration and Social Development in Kerala, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1988, p 74

Sathya Bai Sivasadas and P. Prabhakara Rao, Narayana Guru The Social Philosopher of Kerala, Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan, 2002, p 123

<sup>10</sup> K. Jayaprasad, *Kerathile Hindu Samooam Neridunna velluvilikal* , Ayodhya printers, Kochi, 2004, p 117

<sup>11</sup> Rosamma Mathew, Making of Modern Kerala, Learners Digital Publishers Kottayam, 2010, p 83

<sup>12</sup> *The Hindu*, March 30th, 1930. Mumbai.

peasants and workers.<sup>13</sup> Thanks to his earnest efforts, the Government granted the Pulaya Community free education, employment in Government service, housing facilities etc.<sup>14</sup>

The improvements in education not only influenced the upper caste Hindus or Christians but also the backward communities like *Ilavas* and *Pulayas*. While the percentage of literacy of *Pulayas* and *Ilavas* were 0.09 and 1.57 respectively in 1891, it arose to 17 and 46.5 percent respectively in 1941.<sup>15</sup> These reforms made the *Pulayas* to form a new organization for their boost up.

In 1905 Ayyankali founded an organization called the *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham* in the line of SNDP Yogam for the social emancipation of the *Pulaya* community. The Government appointed him as representative of the lower castes in the Travancore Legislative Assembly in December 1911.

Vagbhadananda was one of the stalwarts of social and religious reform movement in the early decades of 20th century. He was against the social evils prevalent in society and his aim in life was relentless struggle against unrighteousness, ignorance and idolatry. He was a member of the

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<sup>13</sup> T.H.P. Chentharassery, *Ayyankali*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1989, pp 37-44.

<sup>14</sup> P.Govindha Pillai, *Kerala Navodhanam Moonnam Sanchika Yugasanthathikal Yugasilpikal*, Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2009, p 75

<sup>15</sup> Census of Travancore Report, 1941, p 162

Theosophical Society<sup>16</sup>. He founded the *Atma Vidya Sangham* in 1917 with his ideals of mutual understanding, mutual love, peace and co-operation. The teachings of Vagbhadananda helped to strengthen the base of the nationalist movement in Kerala.

Brahmananda Sivayogi was the founder of the Sidhasramam at Alathur in Palaghat district. He condemned caste barriers, penance, pilgrimages, idol worship etc. practised by the Hindus. He laid stress on non-violence, peace, acquisition of knowledge (Jnana), social equality, happiness etc. as being essential for the welfare of mankind.

Vagbhatananda Gurudeva (1885-1939) born at Vayalore village near Koothuparampu in North Malabar, played a decisive role in the social reform movement in modern Kerala. He founded the 'Atma Vidya Sangham' in 1917 in order to propagate his teachings of mutual understanding, mutual love, peace and co-operation. He published a monthly called '*Abhinava Keralam*' to popularize his ideals. In 1920 he published a daily '*Atmavidyakahalam*'. He denounced caste barriers and idol worship and exhorted his followers to adjure such practices.

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<sup>16</sup> The Society was founded by Madame H.P. Blavastky and Colonel M.S. Olcott in the United States in 1875. In 1886 the headquarters of the society was shifted to India at Adyar, an outskirt of Madras. The Society from the very start allied itself to the Hindu revival movement. Swamy Dayananda had united both the leaders to visit India. It was Mrs. Annie Besant an Irish lady who came to India in 1883 became the moving figure behind the society. It was a movement which helped the Indian society to recover their self confidence and get rid of social evils. (R.C. Majumdar, H.C. Ray Chaudhari, Kalikinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India*, Macmillan India Ltd, 1946 Rpt. 2001, p 876).

Vaikunta Swami (also known as Muthukutti Swami) was born at Thoppil in the present Kanyakumari district. A man of progressive social outlook, he founded in 1836 an organisation called "Samatva Samajam" in order to fight for the redressal of the grievances of the Avarnas as well as against the shortcomings and lapses in the state administration. The swamikal severely criticized the Brahmins and the temple maintained by them. He advised the people to give up expensive rituals and ceremonies in temples. He wanted the low caste people to come out of the superstitious practices. He advised them against devil worship and animal sacrifice. Thus swamikal was considered as a saviour by low caste people.

One of the most important of the Muslim social reformers was Vakkam Abdul Khadir Maulavi. He exhorted the Muslims to discard all un-Islamic practices, to get English education in increasing numbers and to play an active part in modern progressive movements. Abdual Khadir Maulavi also popularised Arabic-Malayalam by publishing an Arabic-Malayalam monthly called '*Al Islam*'. The progress of the Muslim community of Kerala in the educational and social fields is largely due to the pioneering work done by the Maulavi Sahib.

### **Birth of *Jati* Organizations**

The dawn of the modernizing spirit brought about perceivable changes in all sections and communities of Kerala society. The rise of caste

organizations in Kerala during the dawn of twentieth century was the centre of the social reform movements. The most important of these organizations were the ‘*Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam*’ (SNDP) and the ‘*Nair Service Society*’ (NSS). The *Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham* started by Ayyankali later transformed into a caste organisation called *Pulayar Maha Sabha*.

In 1908 the *Yogakshema movement* was started by V.T. Bhattathirippad for the modernization of the native Brahmins called *Namboothiris*. Though the *Namboothiris* occupied an indisputable position in the social hierarchy of Kerala they were also desired for a social change. The leaders of the movement turned their attention to English education and emphasized the need for the progressive marriage regulations and emancipation of *namboothiri* women. The slogan of the *Yogakshema Sabha* in those days was “*Make Namboothiri a human being.*”<sup>17</sup>

The *Nairs* were of course the most numerous and also most influential of the caste Hindu groups. The *Malayali sabha* was founded in about 1884 with a view to encourage education, reform the matrilineal joint family system

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<sup>17</sup> In 1929 the social drama *Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku* (from the kitchen to public life) was staged depicting the life of young *namboodiri* widow who cannot remarry and the younger son who do not marry *namboodiri* women of the head of a family. (A Balakrishnan Nair, *The Government and Politics of Kerala*, Indira Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1994, p 10.)

P. Govindha Pillai, *Kerala Navodhanam Munnam Sanchika Yuga Santhathiakl Yugasilpikal*, op cit 211. V.J. Varghese, Dr. N Vijaya Mohanan Pillai , Dr. Scaria Zacharia, *Anjuru Varshathae Keralam Chila Arivatayalanganal*, Current Books, Kottayam 1999, p 101.

and to introduce land reforms. They also founded the *Nair Service Society* in 1914.<sup>18</sup> It was a young *nair* school teacher, actor and play writer, Mannath Padmanabha Pillai formed the *Nair Service Society*, pledged to serve the community as a whole and *nair* in particular. Achutha Warrior, in *Kerala Samskaram* stated that the society played a large part in improving the education of *nairs* by founding many schools and colleges.<sup>19</sup>

The *Nair Service Society* also brought a change in the laws regarding marriage and inheritance. A prolonged agitation brought about the passing of the Nair regulation Act of 1925 which permitted the break-up of the old joint matriarchal family properties and deprived nephews of any claim to the property of their uncles. It also made polygamy illegal. In addition, the Muslims in Travancore also became considerably assertive. In 1915 a Muslim association ‘*Lejnathul Mohamadiya Sabha*’ was formed in Alleppey. Vakkom Abdul Qadir Maulavi was a great social and religious reformer. Moulavi founded the ‘*Muslim Mahajana Sabha*’ in 1920, devoted itself for the emancipation of the Muslim community. The Muslims were educationally a backward class and naturally the Maulavi exhorted his Muslim brethren to study English and play their legitimate role in the society.

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<sup>18</sup> Robbin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance, Society and Politics in Travancore*, op cit, pp 166-169

<sup>19</sup> S. Achutha Warrior, *Kerala Samskaram*, Kerala State Institutes of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, p 204.

Dr. Samuel Nellimukal, *Keralathile Samuhyka Parivarthanam*, A study of Social History , K S Books, Kottayam, 2003, p 434

Thus the socio-religious reformers in Kerala realized the fact that religious reform was an instrument through which changes could be introduced in society, as religious beliefs and social practices were closely interlinked. According to the Director, Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR), P.J. Cherian the backwardness of society was due to the general ignorance of the people. So the propagation of knowledge became a vital point in their programme of reform.<sup>20</sup> In Kerala, social reform movement was started by castes, sub castes or religious groups. These caste organizations tried to secure and establish their separate identity in the social structure. These communal organizations reformed all the communities with regard to their age old customs and conventions and their keen competition brought good results.<sup>21</sup>

### **Struggle for Equality**

The isolated and unorganized upheavals of the untouchables during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, turned into a massive struggle for social justice. With the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century an able and educated leadership arose; popular support from the *savarnas* increased, and effective action that rocked the fortifications of the caste hierarchy were planned and executed. The apex court of the princely state of Travancore in the early twentieth

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<sup>20</sup> P.J. Cherian, Perspectives on Kerala History, op cit, p 460.

<sup>21</sup> Kurushethra Prakashan, *Keralathinte Marunna Mughachaya*, op cit, p 165.

century issued a ruling that reads:”The right to enter a temple for purpose of worship is a civil right”<sup>22</sup>. It denotes that the state as a whole is prepared for thorough change. The state of affair was that no body from the lower castes raised the question before the court.

### **Vaikom Satyagraha**

Vaikom Satyagraha was recognized as the preliminary step towards the events of opening the temples to the untouchables.<sup>23</sup> A movement had set on foot to demand admission of the certain sections of the people, the so called “unapproachable” banned from approach into the public roads adjacent to the famous temple at Vaikom. Conservative opposition was trotted out with obstinate determination. The feeding of Brahmins inside the temple was regarded as an important offering to the deity, and uninterrupted custom was pleaded by those who opposed the movement. It was contended that if the *Avarnas* were allowed to come into the approach roads the temple priests would be polluted and the temple consequently defiled. The forward section resolved to try the methods of ‘*Satyagraha*’ and several individuals, a large number of whom being Nairs and other caste Hindus, organized a “Jatha” to

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<sup>22</sup> P.P.John , A digest of Travancore Law Cases 1090 – 1095 ME, Subobhini Press , Trivandrum, 1919, p 432

<sup>23</sup> The Ezhavas and the Pulayas could not approach the higher castes nearer than sixteen and seventy two feets respectively . The lower case people were not permitted to travel by the surrounding roads of the famous Vikom temple. The Vaikom struggle of 1924 was conducted for the permission to all irespectives of their castes. (T.K. Gangadharan, Evolution of Kerala History and Culture, op cit. p 301. Louise Ouwerkerk, No elephants for the Maharaja, op cit, p 58.)

lay their grievance before Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai, the Regent of Travancore.<sup>24</sup>

The immediate purpose of the Satyagraha was the opening of the roads near the Vaikom temple in North Travancore to all *avarnas* of Hindu society.<sup>25</sup> Vaikom Satyagraha was the realization of the revolution against social disabilities, inequalities, etc. ushered in by enlightened Persons like Sree Narayana Guru and it began to bear fruit thereupon.<sup>26</sup>

Several *jati* organizations in Kerala lent support to the *Satyagraha* campaign and conducted intensive propaganda to awaken to *savarna* psyche.<sup>27</sup> Mannath Padmanabhan of the *Nair Service Society* collected 25000 signatures and led a *Savarna Jatha* from Vaikom to Trivandrum on foot.<sup>28</sup> Dr. M.E Naidu organized another Jatha simultaneously from Nagarcoil to Trivandrum for the same cause<sup>29</sup>. Mahatma Gandhiji said: "The anti-untouchability campaign at Vaikom is providing an interesting study in

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<sup>24</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, Political History of Modern Kerala, S Viswanathan, Chennai, 1987, p 12

<sup>25</sup> Koji Kawashima, Missionaries and a Hindu State Travancore 1858-1936, Oxford University press, New Delhi, 1998, Rpt 2000, p176.

Sri Mulam Popular Assembly Report 16th session, p 107.

<sup>26</sup> P.K.K. Menon, History of Freedom Movement in Kerala Vol II., 1885 – 1938. Regional Records, op cit, p 141.

<sup>27</sup> Organisations like the Kerala Hindu Sabha, the Nair Service Society and the kshathriya Maha Sabha favoured the satyagraha. The Nair Samajams did a remarkable job in propagating the objectives of the satyagraha. It was a matter of happy surprise that the Yogakshema Sabha, the leading organisation of the nambuthiris, passed resolutions, at their annual conferences, in favour of the opening of temples to the *avarnas*. (The Epic of Travancore, Mahadeva Desai, Ahmedabad, 1937, p 11)

<sup>28</sup> A.K. Gopalan, Kerala past and present, Lawrence and wishart, London, 1959, p 40.

<sup>29</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, Political History of Modern Kerala, s Viswanathan, Chennai, 1987, p 12.

Satyagraha and as it is being conducted in a calm spirit, it must prove of great use for future workers along similar lines<sup>30</sup>....” “If you have faith in the cause and the means and in God, the hot sun will be cool for you. Not a minute not a grain of rice, not a scrap of paper, was to be wasted as they belong to the nation<sup>31</sup>” Later Gandhiji met the Maharani, the regent and came in to an agreement. According to the agreement the roads used by non-Hindus around the temple were to be opened to the *avarnas* but those in the *Sanketham* of the temple would continue to remain closed. Gandhiji called the settlement ‘a bedrock of freedom’. The course of events in Vaikom led to similar attempts in Suchindram and Thiruvappu

### **Guruvayur Satyagraha**

The famous Guruvayur Satyagraha is a memorable episode in the history of the national movement. With the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee decided to begin Satyagraha before the famous temple at Guruvayur from 1st November, 1931. It was a movement for temple entry and abolition of *untouchability*. The Satyagraha began accordingly under the leadership of Sri. K. Kelappan. The leaders other than Kelappan were Mannath Padmanabhan, A.K. Gopalan and N.P. Damodaran.

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<sup>30</sup> N.K. Gandhi, Satyagraha (Non violent Resistance) p 77

<sup>31</sup> Young India dated 19 March, 1925 Gandhiji’s speech at perunchilampu field at Vaikom (Correspondence relating to Vikom Satyagraha, Vol VI, Egng Records, Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram)

Guruvayur began to attract the attention of all India. There were certain untoward incidents during the early period of the Satyagraha. They served to heighten the tension in the minds of the people who were in sympathy with the movement. After the movement had run its course for about ten months, Kelappan entered on a fast before the temple on September, 21, 1932. The fast electrified the atmosphere. On October 2, 1932 Kelappan broke his fast in response to Gandhiji's wishes.<sup>32</sup> There after a referendum was held among the Hindus to find out their views on the question of temple entry. More than 77 percent of the Hindus expressed themselves in favour of temple entry. The Guruvayur temple was thrown open to *Harijans* only in 1946. Though the Satyagraha did not immediately result in the opening of the Guruvayur temple to all Hindus, the movement helped to create a strong public opinion in the country in favour of temple entry and abolition of *untouchability*.

After the Satyagraha, demands for the abolition of *theendal* continued. In 1927 T.K. Madhavan<sup>33</sup> became General Secretary of the SNDP Yogam and promoted Vaikom style Satyagrahas in other towns in Travancore. The Guruvayur Satyagraha started from Nov.1931 K. Kelappan brought before the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly a representation for the removal of

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<sup>32</sup> Prof. PC Menon and Adv. PK Harikumar, Vaikom Sathyagraha Rekhakal, Dept. of Printing and Publishing, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, 2009, p 27.

<sup>33</sup>. T.K. Madhavan was a prominent leader of the Ezhava Community and then editor of a Malayalam weekly 'Deshabhimani'.

*untouchability* and for the admission of all *avarnas* to temples. The Satyagraha was started under the auspices of Kerala provincial congress in order “to get the Guruvayur temple opened to all Hindus”.<sup>34</sup> One of the major incidents connected with the Satyagraha was the assault of A.K. Gopalan on December 26 by the opponents of the Satyagraha movement.<sup>35</sup>

The temple entry Satyagraha took a new turn on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 1932 when Gandhiji announced his decision to fast unto death in the context of the decision of the Government to have separate electorates for the scheduled castes in India. Mr. Kelappan, the Director of the Satyagraha at Guruvaur Temple had impressed on the satyagrahis the importance of their mission<sup>36</sup>. The high caste Hindus except the orthodox among them became favorable in giving access to temples to all the low caste Hindus. On the advice of Gandhiji the Satyagraha was withdrawn after ten months of struggle in 1932. Though both the Satyagraha had its ultimate object of temple entry, it was realized only partially. The satyagrahys surrendered unconditionally, attempts were made to get temples opened for the *avarnas*.

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<sup>34</sup>. P. Govindapilla, *Kerala Navodhanam oru Marxist Veekshanam*, Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum, 2003, p 121

<sup>35</sup>. A. K. Gopalan Nambir, Captain of the Volunteers was surrounded near the temple by the reactioaris and was beaten. This unwarranted action was much resented and the enraged members of the public removed the fences put by the temple authorities. (A Sreedhara Menon , A Survey of Kerala History, op cit. p 316 S. Achutha Warrior, Kerala Samskaram, op cit. p 187)

<sup>36</sup> P.K.K. Menon , The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala Vol II , op cit, p 296

Thus the Guruvayur Satyagraha marked the beginning of new epoch in the realm of the Temple entry movement in Kerala. The hunger strike of Kelappan opened the eyes of orthodox Hindus. Further Mannath Padmanabhan, the *Nair* leader undertook a vigorous campaign in favour of Temple entry and the abolition of *untouchability* in Travancore. He wondered why the Government was against the reform though the *Nambuthiri Brahmins* were in favour of it.

The most important fact that contributed to the great change in the mentality of large number of *savarnas* was the impact of western ideas and education. The educated people of India who demanded political equality with their imperialist masters could not shut their eyes to the problem of social inequality in their own land. One progressive step taken to solve the problem of social inequality was to secure elementary civil right for the depressed classes.<sup>37</sup> These temple entry Satyagraha had its culmination in the famous Temple entry proclamation of 1936 during the period of Sri Chitra Thirunals.

## **Nivarthana Movement**

The agitation known as *Nivarthana* (Abstention) Movement was started

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<sup>37</sup> P. Govindapillai , *Kerala Navodhanam Oru Marxist Veekshanam* , Deshabhimani Book House , Chintha Publications, Trivandrum , 2003 , p136

as a protest against the constitutional reforms of 1932.<sup>38</sup> The *Ezhavas*, the Muslims and a section of Christian community demanded that they should be given representation in the Legislative of the state in proportion to their numerical strength. The movement was bound to catch the interest of the masses when public meetings were held in different parts of Travancore.

The Government tried to create a split within the united party consisting of the *Ezhavas*, Christians and Muslims who called themselves abstentionists and later on adopted a policy of repression.<sup>39</sup> From the time of abstention movement there has been retardation in the political modernization of Kerala. With the passing of time, the caste political activities grew and seriously affected the democratic development. Caste associations have now become a way of public life. The Government resorted to repression to destroy the movement. The leader of the movement, C.Keshavan was arrested on the charge of treason and sentenced for two years imprisonment.

When the Government found it difficult to suppress the Abstention movement it constituted a public service commission (PSC) to make sure that backward communities are given reasonable representation in Government

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<sup>38</sup> Under the new scheme the seats in the State Legislature were entitled on population basis. The *Ezhavas*, the Muslims and a section of Christian community would get only a lesser number of seats, in the State Legislature, while the Nairs being the largest body of tax payers would get more seats than what they really deserved on the basis of their voting strength, (P. Govindapilla, *Kerala Navodhanam oru Marxist Veeekshanam*, Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum, 2003, p 136. A Sreedhara Menon , A Survey of Kerala History , op cit , p 292)

<sup>39</sup> P.K.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala* , op cit , p441

services. The voting right was extended by relaxing the limit of the landed property. Kesari Balakrishana Pillai characterized this movement as ‘struggle for civil equality’

A resolution was moved in the Legislative Council demanding the opening of the temple roads to the *Avarna* Hindus. But it was thrown out by a majority of twenty-two against twenty-one votes. A little after this Mahatma Gandhi visited Vaikom in *Meenam* 1100(Ch.era-1924), interviewed several orthodox Brahmins and others, and explained the movement as one which was calculated to remove social injustice and to advance the cause of humanity.<sup>40</sup> Public opinion in the state was so favorable that the government threw open the approach roads to the *Avarnas*. “I call it a bed-rock of freedom”, said Mahatma Gandhi, “because the settlement is a document between the people and the state constituting a big step in the direction of liberty in one respect at least”.

### **Temple Entry Proclamation**

The promulgation of the Temple Entry Proclamation was a reform of far-reaching importance, not only to the teeming millions of Travancore but a momentous act of emancipation and hope to the whole of India. The Proclamation runs as follows:-”Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity

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<sup>40</sup> T.K Gangadharan, Evolution Of Kerala History and Culture,op cit. p301

of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on all-comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has throughout the centuries, adapted itself to the needs of changing times, solicitous that none of our Hindu subjects should, by reason of birth or caste of community, be denied the consolations and the solace of the Hindu faith.”<sup>41</sup>

His Highness the Maharaja had earlier in his reign commanded the appointment of a committee to examine the question of Temple Entry for the *Avarnas*, to find out the extent of the demand for reforms, to ascertain the attitude of the Savarna castes, to examine the question in the light of the Hindu scriptures and formulate proposals as to the lines on which the reform might be effected. The committee expressed their considered opinion that a Parishad of learned persons, well versed in the theory and practice of Hinduism, should be summoned, and that the reform might be effected by the ruler with their approval. They also suggested certain methods by which the rigour of the custom excluding the *Avarnas* from the temple might be softened. But the Maharaja did not believe in half measures. It was on the eve of the Maharaja Sri Chitra Thirunals birth day in 1112(1936 A.D.) that the edict was promulgated. The Proclamation was received throughout India

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<sup>41</sup> Krishna Chithanya , India the Land and the People , National Book Trust , New – Delhi 1972 , Rpt 1979 , p 57

with delight and admiration. It was welcomed by the whole civilized world. To the Hindus it was matter of pride and fresh hope. The repercussions of the Proclamation were so great that the Christians and Muslims were equally warm in giving it a hearty reception. The Proclamation was a unique occasion in the history of India and especially of Hinduism. Gandhiji expressed the hope that “all other Hindu Princes will follow the noble example set by this far-off ancient Hindu State.” The Prime Minister of Madras described the Proclamation as the “greatest religious reform in India after the time of Asoka”. The Maharaja gave the biggest charity that any ruler could give to his subjects in opening the doors to every class and creed.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Mahadeva Desai, *Epic of Travancore Navajivan Karyalaya*, Ahmedabad, 1937, p 128

### Chapter 3

## **EMERGENCE OF VERNACULAR PRESS; A MOTIVE FORCE TO SOCIAL CHANGES**

The newspapers and periodicals of Kerala had played an equally important role in serving the cause of social transformation. In the field of publication, particularly of newspapers, the church has played a constructive role.<sup>1</sup> Apart from formal English education, the press functioned as another media of popular education and influenced in bringing social changes. Through these, the ideas of democracy and freedom began to permeate among the members of the middle class and gradually among the masses. In fact to a very large extent the press had contributed a great stir in the social, political and economic life of Travancore. The leaders of the popular movement in the early days belonged to the devoted press; they could not have easily swayed the masses or imparted political education to them. Malayalam Journalism had reached a high standard in Travancore in the 19th century.<sup>2</sup> At that time

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<sup>1</sup> Kurushethra Prakashan, Keralathinite Marunna Mughachaya, op cit, p 165

the newspapers did not deal with problems of political interest so much as those of social and literary interest.

The press which has played a major role in the modernization of Kerala, was a strong device of information, instruction and propaganda. It mobilises public opinion on problems of varied nature. It was the Portuguese who introduced the first printing press in vernacular languages at Quilon and Vaipinkotta, a suburb of Kochi. In the early stages the press was concerned with propaganda of Christianity among the illiterate and downtrodden people of the country. The first newspaper in Malayalam, 'Rajyasamaharam' was published in 1847 from Thellicherry by the Basel Mission under Dr. Herman Gundert. It gave emphasis to religion. In October 1847 Gundert started another publication called *Paschimodayam*. Like its predecessor *The Paschimodayam*, too was cyclostyled but it carried articles on geography, history, natural science and astrology and it had a formal editor, Rev Fr. Muller.

Journals and periodicals in Malayalam were first started by missionaries; for propagating religion. Their contribution to the development of Malayalam prose and journalism, however, has been considerable. The first printed magazine in the Malayalam language - the *Jnananikshepam* was

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Gundert started the *Rajya Samaharam* and *Paschimodayam* in 1847. They are the earliest of the periodicals and newspapers to be published in Kerala. (A Sreedhara Menon, Cultural Heritage of Kerala, D.C. Books, Kottayam 1978, rpt 2008, P-184.

A Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithrashilpikal*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 1988, Rpt. 2007, p 220).

printed at the C.M.S. Press from Kottayam in 1821. Arch Deacon Koshy and the Rev George Mathen were behind this new publication which served alike the cause of propagation of religion and the dissemination of knowledge. Another periodical was the *Vidyasamgraham* brought out under the auspices of the Kottayam College.

### **Beginning of Newspapers**

The first newspaper to be published from Kerala was in the English language entitled the *Western Star*. Charles Lawson, who had left England after completing his studies, took over as the Paper's editor. Four years later in 1864 a Malayalam edition of the *Western Star* started publication from Cochin under the banner *Paschimataraka*. Yet another paper, the *Keralapataka*, made its appearance from Cochin in 1870. In course of time these two publications merged to form the *Paschimataraka-Keralapataka*.

In 1867 two papers were started from Kottayam. One was in Malayalam titled *Santishtavadi*; the other the *Travancore Herald*, was in English. Both were printed from the C.M.S. Press. The *Santishtavadi* was against the Travancore Government which ordered its closure. Thus, quite unwittingly, the *Santishtavadi* created history in Malayalam journalism by becoming the first martyr to the cause of freedom of the press.

The next in the line of Malayalam papers was the *Satyanadakahalam* which started publication modestly as a fortnightly in 1876. An Italian Carmelite Rev.Fr.Candidus designated as its first editor. This fortnightly featured a wide range of topics from international affairs to local news. Later its name was changed to *Satyanadam*. From 1900 it was issued thrice a month. In 1926 the *Satyanadom* joined the early ranks of ‘illustrated weeklies’. Later it merged with the *Kerala Times*.

### **Keralamithram**

The *Keralamitram* can be hailed as the first “newspaper” in the Malayalam language. In the initial stages, the paper was issued thrice a month; later on it was published as a weekly. Due weight was also given for language and literature, criticism and articles on general topics of public welfare. The *Keralamitram* was fortunate in that it had as its first editor was none other than Kandathil Varghese Mappilai who, later founded the *Malayala Manorama*.

### **Growth of Journalism in Malabar**

The development and growth of journalism in the Malabar area was more or less similar in nature. A English weekly entitled the *West Coast Spectator* started publication in 1879 from Kozhikode. It was edited by an

Englishman, Dr. Keys. In later years the weekly was renamed as the *Malabar Spectator* and was quite popular. Another significant development was the publication of the *Keralapatrika* weekly from Kozhikode. The idea of a weekly was conceived by Chengulathu Kunhirama Menon, possibly after attending a conference of the Indian National Association held at Calcutta in 1884. The *Keralapatrika* was essentially a pace-setter in Malayalam journalism. To him freedom of speech and expression was a sacrosanct article of faith. It is recorded that the Maharaja of Travancore was so impressed by the crusading spirit of the *Keralapatrika* that he subscribed for 200 copies for distribution among the officials of his administration. Chengulathu Kunhirama Menon is sometimes called the, “father of Malayalam Journalism”.

The Spectator Press of Kozhikode came out in 1886 with a Malayalam periodical entitled the “Kerala Sanchari”. It was edited by Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, otherwise well-known by his pen-name “*Kesari*”. The sharp humour and witticism characteristics of the new periodical mark a turning point in journalism. The *Kerala Sanchari* later on merged with his *Mitavadi* .

### **Journalism in Travancore**

The year 1886 stands out in the history of Malayalam journalism, with the publication of the *Malayali* from Thiruvananthapuram. This new

periodicals was the official organ of the Malayalee Social Reforms League. Raman Pillai Asan was the able editor of the new magazine. In due course his mantle fell on C.V.Raman Pillai, yet another literary giant. Though the sheet anchor of the “Malayali” was social reforms, it spear-headed the crusade for political and civil rights with equal zest. For a short period in 1911 the “Malayali” came out as a daily newspaper. The onslaught against the government was escalated through its columns. A stage came when the government threw caution and prohibited publication of the paper. The press and offices were locked and sealed. The *Malayali* was re-started publication from Thiruvananthapuram as a daily. Proprietary control of the paper then passed on to the Nair Service Society and the centre of publication was moved to Changanacherry. The *Malayali* ceased publication about a decade ago.

The second oldest newspaper in Malayalam, the *Deepika*—was launched from Kottayam in 1887 under the banner of *Nasrani Deepika*. Its periodicity underwent a number of changes over the years to emerge finally in 1938 as a full-fledged daily. This change in periodicity also coincided with an abbreviation of its name to the present *Deepika*.

### **Malayala Manorama**

The *Malayala Manorama* started publication from Kottayam in 1890, initially as a weekly. Its first editor was Kandathil Varghese Mappilai who

brought with him the rich experience of his previous association with the *Keralamitram* of Cochin. The weekly was transited to a newspaper quickly and the paper was converted into a daily in 1928. In many instances the *Malayala Manorama* actually gave the lead to mass movements of the period. The authorities were feared of the growing influence of the *Malayala Manorama*. In a dramatic move the Government confiscated the paper in September 1938 and the editor was sent to jail. Later it was restarted in 1940.<sup>3</sup>

In 1892 *Sujanandini* was started from Kollam. Kandathil Varghese Mappilai and others joined hands to launch the *Bhashaposhini* in 1897 as the official organ of the Bhashaposhini Sabha. In the same year the publication of *Saraswathi* from Tellicherry was started under the able editorship of Moorkoth Kumaran.

## **Swadeshabhimani**

Perhaps the one event of the pre 1914 period that deeply stirred the feelings of the people of Kerala and roused their political consciousness

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<sup>3</sup> In 1888 the News paper *Malayala Manorama* was started at Kottayam by Mammen Mappilai. The social renaissance of Kerala in the first half of the 20th century was characterised by the presence of K.C. Mammen Mappilai, whose editorials generated a social ferment in Kerala for the well being of man(.P.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala Vol II., 1885-1938.* op cit , p 582.

Polson Alengadan, *Kandathil Varghese Mappila Biographical Studies*, Kerala History Association, Cochin 1989, p 120.

was the deportation of K.Ramakrishna Pillai, editor of the *Swadeshabhimani* published from Thiruvananthapuram in 1905.<sup>4</sup> He drew his powerful pen to expose the true nature of the palace politics and the corruption and favouritism rampant in the corridors of power. The Dewan, P.Rajagopalachari, issued a royal proclamation on September 26, 1910, deporting Ramakrishna Pillai from Travancore and confiscating his press. The educated and politically conscious section of the people were against this high-handed and undemocratic measure. Ramakrishna Pillai was thenceforth known and revered by the alias “*Swadeshabhimani*”. Ramakrishna Pillai was the author of a biography on Karl Marx, the first one to appear in any Indian language, and was hence a pioneer Indian to be inspired by socialist consciousness. The “*Swadeshabhimani*” Ramakrishna Pillai died in exile at Kannur in 1928.

The appearance of the *Mitavadi* from Tellicherry in 1907 marks the next important milestone in the history of the press in Kerala. Moorkoth Kumran, who had already tried his hand successfully at other journalistic ventures, was its editor. Mahakavi Kumaran Asan’s famous poem, *Veena Poovu* was first published in the *Mitavadi*. In 1913, C.K.Krishnan acquired ownership of the paper and started publishing it as a magazine from

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<sup>4</sup> Kerala Charithram Vol. II, Kerala History Association, Ernakulam, 1974, p 791

Kozhikode. The *Mitavadi* was in the fore-front of the movement for social reforms and the uplift of the weaker sections of society.

### **Kerala Kaumudi**

The origins of the *Kerala Kaumudi*, one among the leading newspapers of present day Kerala, can be traced back to 1911. Its founder C.V. Kunhuraman was a multi-faceted personality—a poet, a brilliant prose writer, historian, journalist, and politician, all combined together. The paper initially started publication from Mayyanad. Later, it was shifted to Kollam and then to Thiruvananthapuram. It was converted into a full-fledged daily in 1940. T.K. Madhavan who rose to prominence as general secretary of the S.N.D.P. yogam started publication of the *Desabhimani* in 1915. The *Desabhimani* pacified the grievances, of the Ezhava community. Through the columns of the *Desabhimani* he waged a relentless war against injustice, inequality and untouchability and for the cause of independence.<sup>5</sup> The *Desabhimani*'s contributions to the agitation for temple entry and to the non-co operation movement were considerable.

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<sup>5</sup> C.V. Kunhiraman was the editor of the *Kerala kaumudi* and *Malayalarajyam*, was a man of deep enlightenment and forceful logic was noted for his vigor of writing. He was also a poet, literary critic and prose writer. (P.K. Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala Vol II., 1885-1938*. Dept. of Cultural Publication Govt of Kerala, Trivandrum, 2001, p 582.

K.Ayyappan was yet another social reformer who wielded a powerful pen and commanded a powerful vehicle of expression. He published *Sahodaran* from Cherayi in 1917. In the movement for responsible government, for temple entry and for inter-caste marriage the *Sahodaran* was always in the fore-front. This periodical, which made substantial contribution to the renaissance of Kerala, ceased publication in 1956. He was also associated with two other publications-the *Yuktivadi* and the *Stree*. As a regular columnist of the *Mitavadi* and the *Kerala Kaumudi* his writings helped to create and mould enlightened public opinion.

The *Samadarshi* which commenced publication from Thiruvananthapuram in 1918 was a powerful and popular vehicle of public opinion. A.Balakrishna Pillai joined the paper in 1923 as editor. He paved his attention on the corrupt and high-handed bureaucracy of Travancore. The authorities were displeased and the owner of the paper was faced with difficulties. The management of the paper was not prepared to invite official displeasure and Balakrishna Pillai had to resign in 1926.

A.Balakrishana Pillai, who had earlier been eased out of editorial responsibility of the *Samadarshi*, had in the meanwhile launched a new periodical entitled *Prabhodakan*. Within six month of its appearance, this periodical was banned by the government of Travancore. Balakrishna Pillai now started the *Kesari*, later to become famous in the annuals of Malayalam

journalism. The *Kesari* was shortlived. But its impact on public opinion and on the development of Malayalam journalism was tremendous, and out of proportion to its longevity. To Balakrishna Pillai the press was not only a vehicle to project news; it was also a forum for educating the public by disseminating knowledge and encouraging free thought and open discussion. In keeping with this view the *Kesari* gave equal prominence to news and to novels, short stories, book reviews and science notes in its columns. With the “Kesari” banned, Balakrishna Pillai bid good-bye to his chosen profession.

The *Malayalarajyam* made a triumphant entry into Malayalam journalism in 1929. In fact it was the first Malayalam daily to go in for a rotary press. The daily was edited by K.G. Sankar and a number of leading writers of the day were persuaded to contribute regular columns. In a short span of time, the *Malayalarajyam* became well-known as Kerala’s leading nationalist daily.

### **Mathrubhumi**

Kozhikode was then the publishing base of four Malayalam and three English periodicals. The *Mathrubhumi* started in 1923, with K.P.Kesava Menon as its editor. At the peak of the civil disobedience movement, in April

1930, the *Mathrubhumi* started issuing as a daily. As practically it was the only source of information for the people of Malabar about the developments in the national movement and its circulation was gradually extended to the remote villages. An article written by Sanjayan, the well-known humourist, criticized the high-handedness of British army provoked the Madras government and banned the daily altogether. A state-wide agitation ensued, demanding withdrawal of the ban order. The government had no choice but to withdraw the order. Nine years later in 1947 the *Mathrubhumi* had made a triumphant re-entry .

Another significant Kozhikode-based paper of this period was the *Al-ameen* which first started publication in 1924 and began issuing as a daily in 1930. The paper was started by Mohammed Abdul Rahiman Sahib, the Congress leader. The pro-nationalist stand of the paper infuriated the authorities. On more than one occasions the *Al-ameen* was discontinued as a result of action by the authorities.

The *Prabhatham* started publication from Shoranur with E.M.S. Namboodiripad as its editor, was the organ of the newly-formed Congress Socialist Party. Its license was suspended following, refusal to furnish security to government consequent, on the publication of a poem on Bhagat Singh's martyrdom. The license was restored later. The paper was shifted to Kozhikode in 1938, but did not survive for long.

The *Deenabandu* was yet another paper which owed its origin to the national struggle. It commenced publication as a weekly in 1941 from Thrissur. The weekly was edited by V.R.Krishnan Ezhuthachan. It was one of the first periodicals published from Cochin State which supported the national movement. The *Deenabandu* had also to face stiff opposition at the hands of the royal regime in Travancore. After a splendid innings spread over 21 years the *Deenabandu* finally succumbed to financial difficulties and ceased publication in 1962.

The decade preceding independence was a period of consolidation and growth for the press in Kerala. Journalism was becoming increasingly politically-oriented. The *Chandrika*, which started out in 1934 from Thalassery was a weekly. This organ of the Muslim League blossomed into a daily in 1939 and was shifted to Kozhikode. The *Desabhimani*, currently the organ of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), began publication on a modest scale from Kozhikode in 1942 as a weekly. It was converted into a daily in 1946. The government of Madras banned the paper in 1948; publication was resumed in 1951. Other publications are the *Desabhimani* Weekly and the *Chintha*, a political weekly.

In the Travancore area the Communist Party started its own publication, the *Janayugam*. From modest beginnings this party organ made rapid strides. The *Janayugam* Weekly, the *Cinerama* fortnightly and the

*Balayugam* monthly are other creditable sister publications. All these publications terminated publication due to many reasons. Yet another organ, the *Navajeevan*, was launched into existence from Thrissur, with Joseph Mundassery as its editor. In the later sixties, the paper was shifted to Kozhikode but did not survive for long.

The *Powradhwani* was yet another Kottayam-based paper started in 1939 by K.M. Chacko. This daily was always in the struggle for responsible government but later it stopped its publication in 1955. The *Keralabhushanam* was launched from Kottayam in 1944 by K.K.Kuruvilla. The *Prabhatam* started out as a weekly from Kollam in 1944, was soon converted into a daily. The same year saw the birth of the *Express* from Thrissur. The paper was edited by K.Krishnan and with its pronounced nationalist and socialist views, gained extensive circulation in Cochin State.

The Namboodiri Yogakshema Sabha sponsored two notable publications, the *Yogakshemam* and the *Unni Namboodiri*. V.T.Bhatadiripad, wielded his powerful pen to the cause of social reform. The *Vivekodayam* was the official organ of the SNDP and was edited by Mahakavi Kumaran Asan. The *Atmavidyakahalam* edited by Vagbhadananda Guru from Kozhikode in the late thirties was yet another weekly noted for its sharp

attacks against superstitions and conventions. It was also a powerful organ of nationalist sentiment.

The following table is according to the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) 2010 Quarter 1

Rank	Name of the daily	Readership (in lakh)
1	Malaya Manorama	124
2	Mathrubhumi	90.94
3	Deshabhimani	33.06
4	Kerala Kaumudi	13.04

The leaders of the popular movement in the early days belonged to the devoted press; they could not have easily swayed the masses or imparted political education to them. Malayalam Journalism had reached a high standard in Travancore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time the newspapers did not deal with problems of political interest so much as those of social and literary interest.

Political journalism however began from the days of such intellectuals as Swadeshabhimani K. Ramakrishna Pillai, Kesari A Balakrishnapillai, C.V.Kunjiraman and Mammen Mappilai of Travancore.<sup>6</sup> In fact the part played by newspapers and periodicals in the education of the masses is a major one.

Thus the newspaper and periodicals of Kerala had played an equally important role in serving the cause of social transformation. In the field of publication, particularly of newspapers, the church has played a constructive role. Apart from formal English education, the press functioned as another media of popular education and influenced in bringing social changes. Through these, the ideas of democracy and freedom began to permeate among the members of the middle class and gradually among the masses. In fact to a very large extent the press had contributed a great stir in the social, political and economic life of Travancore.

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<sup>6</sup> A Sreedhara Menon , Cultural Heritage of Kerala , D.C. Books , Kottayam 1978, rpt 2008, p 184

## Chapter 4

# ROLE OF MISSIONARIES AND THE GROWTH OF WESTERN EDUCATION

Kerala stands first among the Indian states in the matter of literacy and education. This is because of the enlightenment policy followed by the Christian Missionaries and rulers. The growth of Western Education was associated with the work of Christian Missionaries in Kerala. It was the Protestant missionaries who took the initiative in this regard. Their aim was to give western education to all the people irrespective of their caste.

A Prussian missionary namely Ringle Taube started several schools in Nagarcoil and Trivandrum. In these schools free education was given to lower caste and poor people. London Mission Society (LMS) and Church Mission Society (CMS) were the two protestant missionary groups who started western education in the beginning of nineteenth century in Travancore. Rev. Mead of the LMS devoted his whole energy for educational work. He established several schools including industrial schools and encouraged female

education. The C.M.S. missionaries started a grammar school in 1817 (later become C.M.S. College) and a Seminary (now Pazhaya Seminary) at Kottayam. The first girls school was started at Kottayam in 1821. It was started by Mrs. Baily, Baker, and Fenn deserves a special mention in this regard.

In the Cochin area the first school was started at Mattancherry by an English Missionary Rev. J. Dawson in 1818 with the aid of a grant received from the Government. In Malabar area the Basel Evangelical Mission established a school at Kallayi in Calicut in 1848 and at Tellicherry in 1856.

After getting inspiration from Christian Missionaries the state government also entered into the field of education. In 1817, Rani Gouri Parvati Bai, with the help of her Diwan Col. Munro, started free and compulsory education under state control. Primary Schools were set up in all parts of the state and men with educational qualification were appointed as teachers and paid salaries from state treasury.

It was Swati Tirunal who started the first English school at Trivandrum in 1834 with Mr. J. Roberts of the CMS Mission, Nagercoil as Head Master. It was known by the name "His Highness the Maharaja's Free School". In 1866 it was raised to the status of a college. The Trivandrum Maharaja's College and the Ernakulam Maharaja's college were started in the year 1866 and 1875 respectively.

Dr. Herman Gundert, the founder of the Basel Evangelical Mission in Malabar was the government inspector of schools for Malabar. He compiled the Malayalam dictionary. The Basel Mission started the 'Brennen School' at Tellicherry in 1862. This school was later taken over by the government and it was developed into the present 'Brennen College' of Tellicherry.

By the second half of the Nineteenth Century Western education got widespread all over Kerala. Some of the important colleges are the Law College Trivandrum (1874), the Ayurveda College, Trivandrum (1889), the Sanskrit College, Trivandrum (1889), the Engineering College, Trivandrum (1939), the Swati Tirunal Academy,( now college of music) (1939), the Medical College Trivandrum (1951), the Agricultural College, Trivandrum (1955) and the Veterinary College, Trichur (1955).

In 1937, the first university was set up at Travancore with its head quarters at Trivandrum. After the birth of Kerala State in November 1, 1956, the Travancore University was reorganised as the Kerala University with jurisdiction all over the state. Then the University of Calicut, the Cochin University of Science and Technology, the Kerala Agricultural University, Trichur, the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, the Sree Sankaracharya Sanskrit University, Kaladi and the Kannur University were established.

The Kerala Government under E.M.S.Namboothiripad introduced the new education bill. The state government also encouraged professional and

technical education in the state to make education more people friendly, and to save the field from malpractices. . The Christian Churches, the Nair Service Society, the Sri Narayana Trust and Muslim Educational Society have a chain of colleges and schools in the state.

Though the Christian Missionaries were partly motivated by religious propagation, under government supervision education in Kerala has become thoroughly secularized and also been modernized and diversified in recent times and this also accelerated the pace of socio-economic change.

Thus the Colonial Missionary interventions played a crucial role in the making of modern Kerala. Colonial interventions along with Evangelical activities facilitated the transformation of feudal Kerala into a Modern state. It facilitated the birth of socio - political consciousness among the people.

The role of the Christian missionaries in the spread of western education and liberal ideas in Kerala occupies an important place in its history. Under the liberal patronage of the local rulers Travancore and Cochin, several Protestant Missions started work in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though the basic objective of the western schools was religious propaganda, it had its impact on the social, economic, religious, political and cultural life of Kerala. The western education transformed the perspectives of the people. Western education gave a new status and resource to the lower and neglected caste in Kerala for the first time. The missionary attempt to educate the lower

caste induced the government to take necessary steps in this regard. The native attempt to neutralize missionary activity and influence resulted in the establishment of indigenously managed schools.

The Christian missionaries interventions in the field of education facilitated the growth of a new social consciousness among the people of Kerala. Women gradually came to the forefront. The most striking aspect was the awakening of the lower caste people and their struggles against the evils of the Hindu Society. Social reformers like Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Chattambi Swamikal etc. brought about revolutionary changes in the social life of the people. The lower classes were liberated from slavery and they got freedom in the matters of dress. Even the upper castes like the Brahamins and the Kshatriyas came within the fold of social reform and advocated radical changes. Thus the western education acted as a powerful catalyst for social change and helped in reducing the rigidity of caste system.

The colonialists introduced a series of reforms in administration and society with a view to modernizing Kerala. From the very beginning the CMS and LMS missionaries advocated the cause of the slaves and tried to create public opinion in favour of their emancipation. Slavery in two native states, Cochin and Travancore was abolished through the efforts of missionaries. The missionaries took care to establish separate schools for the education of slave children. The missionary activities forced the government to open

schools for Harijan children. Thus the missionaries played a vital role in awakening the marginalized sections of the society.

Due to missionary and colonial interventions significant changes marked the system of inheritance and marriage. Owing to education and social progress the joint family system, polygamy, *Marumakkathayam* and *Sambandam* alliance etc. became outdated and the age old social systems underwent radical changes.

The western education accelerated the intellectual growth and cultural development of Kerala. Interestingly Malayalam language and literature made remarkable progress during this period.

Another area that newly evolved under the missionary impact was transport network system. It was mainly for commercial, religious and military motives that a new road and rail transport system evolved during the period. However, it served as a positive element in the making of modern Kerala

As the colonialists had to interact with the common man of Kerala, it was essential for the foreigners to study about the life style and traditions of Keralites. *Hortus Malabaricus* was a result of such a pioneering endeavor. The Christian missionaries established medical missionary organizations and played a vital role in the medical field.

In food, dress, habits, rationality, games, furniture, nature of dwelling

and other major as well as minor aspects of general life, the natives began to mimic the westerners. The missionary and colonial interventions facilitated a cultural shift which served as a driving force in the making of modern Kerala.

### **Role of women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century women played a prominent part in public life. The position of women in Travancore may be best described in the authoritative words of Her Highness Maharani Sethu Parvati Bai in her presidential address to the tenth session of All India Women's Conference held at Trivandrum. "The woman is here recognized as the head of the family, and succession is traced through her. No restriction on the holding and disposition of property and no inequalities regarding education, social life and cultural growth have hampered our sex. The equality of women with men in the matter of political as well as property rights is today an established fact. Female literacy in Travancore has attained a high standard."<sup>1</sup> That standard continues to rise. In 1874-75 the total number of girls under instruction in the schools was 1,019. In 1934-35 it was 269,444.<sup>2</sup> The emergence of political consciousness among women in Kerala from the late 19th century up to the 1940's is linked with the process of social reform, nationalism and

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<sup>1</sup> Her Highness Maharani Sethu Parvathi Bai's presidential Address to the All India Women's Conference.

<sup>2</sup> While in the State of Mysore which spends nearly seven lakhs of rupees annually on female education the number of females attending schools and colleges is only 66, 948.

class struggle. It was with Vaikom Satyagraha that social reform movement and the national movement entered a new phase in women's participation in struggles. Thus according to T.K. Velu Pillai "the women of Travancore enjoy rights and privileges."<sup>3</sup>

### **Economic Conditions**

Kerala is a unique region compared to the rest of the country. In education, health services, power resources, banking facilities and road mileage, Kerala stands head and shoulders above the rest of the states in the country.

Kerala is the most densely populated state in India and its rural territories are perhaps the most thickly populated rural areas of the world. The growth of population had its effect on the size of land-holding, choice of food habits and employment opportunities. The problem of fragmentation of land was aggravated by its uneven distribution among the various classes of the society. This problem is more acute in Travancore-Cochin area than in the Malabar region. The superior castes dominated in ownership of land. The *Ezhavas* cultivated more land than they owned and this fact explained their support to any land reform proposing to determine ownership of land on the basis of actual cultivator.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> T.K. Velu Pillai, Travancore State Manual Vol I, Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1996, p 43

<sup>4</sup> A Balakrishna Nair, The Government and Politics of Kerala, op cit, p16

A good deal of business is transacted in the numerous markets distributed throughout the state. Except rubber, tea and cardamom most of the articles for export and for local consumption are brought to the markets to be sold. The work of distribution is in the hands of middle men.<sup>5</sup>

The important factor that has contributed to the evolution of a new society in Kerala in recent decades is the emergence of the new economic and professional classes and the increasing part they have come to play in public life. The revolutionary economic and social changes that have taken place in quick succession in recent decades have brought the new economic and professional classes.

The disruption of the old joint family and *Marumakkathayam* of inheritance, the eradication of untouchability, the spread of western education and liberal ideas, the increasing entry of the lower classes into the public services, the introduction of adult franchise, the progress of industrialization, the decline in the power of the land owning classes, the rise of the new peasant class with rights in the soil and above all, the disappearance of loyalty have dealt a fatal blow to the old social order.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time the industrial workers, the business men, the Government officials, the teachers, the lawyers, the doctors, the engineers and journalists have taken the place of the members of the old caste ridden and landed

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<sup>5</sup> T.K. Velu Pillai, Travancore State Manual Vol I, op cit, p 62

<sup>6</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, Cultural Heritage of Kerala, op cit, p 291

aristocracy in Kerala.<sup>7</sup> Thus a new and dynamic society is taking its place in the 20th century Kerala. The historic Kerala Land Reform Act of 1969 abolished the *Janmi* system in Kerala. The land reforms also introduced major changes in Travancore, Kochi and Malabar in the sense that they conferred fixity of tenure, ensured permanent occupancy rights and reduced the power of *Janmis* over their tenants. Majority of the tenants got permanent occupancy. “Land reforms to a certain extent relieved the peasantry of their sufferings from exploitation and helped to create an economy of small peasant proprietors and tenants with substantial economic independence.”<sup>8</sup>

Missionary and colonial interventions also resulted in changes in Kerala economy. The colonial interventions in the Kerala economy are generally perceived as negative to the Malayalees. The main aim of these changes was the economic exploitation of Kerala. The British destroyed the handicrafts of Kerala and showed no interest in introducing modern technology in agriculture. The British concentrated on spices and cash crops especially on tea and rubber estates.

No doubt, western education enhanced the political consciousness of all classes of people. The Colonial phase witnessed intellectually and ideologically external interventions in the minds of Keralites. A civil society was born and its ideological impulses had greatly contributed to the nationalist movement in Kerala where the Gandhian influence was meager.

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<sup>7</sup> A Sreedhara Menon, A Survey of Kerala History, op cit, p 414

<sup>8</sup> T.C. Varghese, Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences, Bombay, 1970, p 116

## Chapter 5

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE KERALA IN THE 19th CENTURY WITH THE PRESENT SCENERIO

The early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century exhibited the beginning of powerful social reform movements in Kerala. These movements had its impact on the socio-religious status of the lower and upper strata. They started radical social reform movements and social legislations in the Kerala society. The Hindu reform movements under the leadership of *Aryasamaj* and *Ramakrishna Mission* helped to create in the minds of the people an awareness about the social evils like caste system, untouchability and unapprochability.

As a part of the socio-economic movement, an agitation for the reform of the laws of inheritance and marriage was started. The Kerala society consisted of several castes like *Nairs*, *Ezhavas*, *Mappilas*, *Vellalas*, etc. They followed the *Marumakkathayam* system of succession and inheritance<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Rosamma Mathew & Sumi Roshia, Making of Modern kerala, learners Book House, Kottayam, 2010, P124-128,

A movement against this law of inheritance was started by the junior members of the *Marumakathayam* families. They revolted against the autocratic powers exercised by the *Karnavar* in the *Taravad*. This movement was started in Travancore under the Nair Service Society. They got the support of all the higher section of the community. In 1907, the Government of Travancore appointed a committee to study the matters. A Bill was introduced in the legislation by the Government and passed it into a law as the Nair Act of 1912. This was also known as the First Nair Act. The law granted permission half of the self-acquired property of a male to his sons and other half to his nephews. The second Nair Act was passed in 1925 and provided for the individual partition of the Nair *Taravads* to the sons and deprived the claims to the nephews on properties of their uncles. The Act also prohibited the practice of polygamy. By these act, *Marumakkathayam* system came to an end among the Hindu community.

In Kochi, legislation was passed to amend the law of inheritance and marriage. The Kochi Nair Regulation of 1919-1920 imposed restrictions on the powers of *Karnavar* and facilitated the partition of joint families. It legalized customary marriages and it was declared that the wife and children as being entitled to be looked after by the husband or the father. The Cochin Nair Act of 1937 -1938 abolished the institution of joint families and *Marumakkathayam*. The Act provided that every members of *Taravadu*

could claim his share of properties of the *Taravadu* by demanding individual partition. This Act prohibited the marriage of a female less than 16 years of age and male less than 21 years of the age. It also prohibited the practice of polygamy.

In Malabar area, the Madras *Marumakkathayam* Act of 1933 allowed the partition of *Tarawadu* property and legalized inheritance from father to son without the consent of the *Karnavar*, if the majority of the members wanted partition. The Act was applicable to all the Hindus of Malabar, including the Namboothiris of Payyannur Gramam. This Act was amended in 1933 with a slight change in the *Marumakkathayam* system. By the Mappila *Marumakkathayam* Act of 1933 right claimed for the partition of *Taravadu* were conferred<sup>2</sup>. The repartitioned property acquired was governed by the ‘Shariat Law’. The shariat law was passed by the Central Legislative in 1937 and made applicable in 1949. By this the Muslims in Malabar who followed *Marumakkathayam* came to be governed by the Patrilineal law of inheritance.

The Madras *Nambuthiri* Act of 1930 brought about changes in the Law of Inheritance in Malabar. It provided that every member of an *illam*, whether a male or a female had an equal share in the family property. The junior members of the Nambuthiri families also got the right to marry within the caste and thus the children of all junior members of an *illam* became the legal

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<sup>2</sup> Census of Travancore Report, p 162, 1941

heirs to the property. The Hindu succession Act of 1956 provided a uniform system of succession for all Hindus. This Act gives equal rights to men and women with regard to inheritance of property. In 1975, the Kerala Joint Hindu Family system Act was passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly. It has ensured the disintegration of the *Marumakkathayam* System in the society.

In the field of labour legislation and welfare, the Government of India passed several acts. It included the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947, the Minimum Wages Act of 1948, the Employees State Insurance Act of 1948 and the Employees Provident Fund Act of 1952. The State government of Kerala passed several acts, mainly Kerala Maternity Benefit Act of 1957 and the Kerala Industrial Establishment Act of 1957. The industrial labourers of Kerala are the beneficiaries of these new schemes. All the people were benefited by some progressive measures which included the Old Age Pension Scheme, Pension for destitute widow, physically handicapped persons etc. As a part of the social economy and educational legislation, the state has made the primary education completely free and compulsory to achieve the ideal of total literacy to the Keralites.

In 1812, Slavery was abolished in Travancore by a royal proclamation issued by Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai. Some progressive social reform like the abolition of the Devadasi System in the temples of South Travancore and the primitive custom of ending animal sacrifices in temples were introduced by Rani Setu Lakshmi Bai.

The 'Channar' Rebellion was started by the Channar Nadar Community of South Travancore for getting permission for the women of that community to cover the upper part of their body like that of a higher caste women. But no response was being received from the concerned authority in time. In 1859 Col.Munroe, the Diwan issued orders allowing the Channar women to wear jacket .It was a revolutionary achievement in the social life of the people. By social legislation, a new page of progressive reforms were started in the history of Kerala.

## **EDUCATION**

Kerala had the privilege of being the most literate province in the country and experienced a continuous process of educational expansion. As mentioned earlier, the Christian missionaries did the spade work in the field of education. They were the pioneers of English and female education in Kerala. The rulers of Kochi and Travancore also encouraged education. The Governments of Travancore and Kochi started vernacular schools in their respective states in 1817 and 1818. The motive behind the encouragement of Malayalam education was the creation of a trade of clerk and accountants in the various Government departments. The grant-in-aid scheme was introduced by the Travancore Governments in 1868 – 1869 for encouraging private school. In Kochi, the liberalised grant – in – aid scheme was introduced in 1890<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> L.A. Krishna Iyer, Social History of Kerala Vol.II,Book Centre Publications,TVM,1993, p 312

The Basel missionaries started educational activities in Malabar from 1848 onwards. The Brennan school at Talassery Victoria College at Palakkad and the Zamorins college at Kozhikode began as schools in 1862, 1866 and 1877 respectively. However compared to Kochi and Travancore in the latter educational history was relatively uneventful. In Malabar, property relations, internal, political and economic conditions and educational policy appeared to be more hospitable to educational developments than other parts of Kerala. In the field of education Kerala went ahead of all other provinces in the country. However educational facilities were mainly restricted to the privileged *Savarnas* of Hindus and Christians. As mentioned earlier, caste prejudices kept backward communities away from Government schools. The orthodox and prejudiced *Mullas* were themselves responsible for their educational backwardness. Though Islam made education obligatory on every Muslim both male and female, the *Mullas* held it as a sin to send their children, particularly girls, to the school. Thus literacy was limited to the upper castes. In 1891, the literacy rate of *Ezhavas* and *Pulayas* in Travancore were 1.5% and 0.09% respectively. At the same time the literacy of Brahmins, *Ambalavasis* and *Nairs* were respectively 27.13%, 16.35% and 11.12%. The reformers who represented the backward communities such as Sree Narayana Guru, Kumaran Asan, Ayyankali, Vakkom Abdul Khaddar Moulavi and many of their followers opposed the practice of limiting the knowledge only to the upper strata of the society. They were the privileged few of the middle class

who were the main beneficiaries of modern education. According to them the backwardness of the Indian Society, including religious superstitions and social obscurantism was due to general ignorance of the people. So the dissemination of knowledge became a vital point in their programme of reformation. Sree Narayana Guru and Vakkom Abdul Khaddar Moulavi held the view that education is a must to enlighten and awaken the masses against oppression and exploitation. The newly emerged educated middle class among the lower castes realized that the spread of education was essential for overcoming their economic and social backwardness. They knew that those who controlled educational opportunities also controlled the avenues of economic and bureaucratic spheres. Thus education became the symbol of power and privilege. Therefore their attempt was to ensure better facilities for education. They petitioned the Government to open all public schools to every caste and community and demanded better grants in aid schemes. Ayyankali advocated free and compulsory education. He also demanded educational facilities for peasants and workers.

Owing to such persistent pressure, the Governments of Travancore and Kochi started separate schools for backward communities. In 1904 Travancore Governments took up the entire cost of primary education of backward communities. In 1911 restrictions on the admission of the *Pulaya* children to departmental schools were removed. In 1928-29 all the special schools for

backward communities were included in the general category. In 1945 Travancore government decided to make primary education compulsory. In Kochi, the indigenous school systems functioned very well. Thus in 1921 there were two schools for every village in Kochi and Malabar which witnessed considerable development, especially in the fields of higher education. SNDP, *Sadhuparipalana Sangha*, *Yogakshema Sabha* and various Christian organisations started educational institutions of their own. So education was comparatively more widespread in Kerala than other States.

### **The Growth of Political Consciousness Among Women in Modern Kerala**

The emergence of political consciousness among women in Kerala from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the 1940 is inextricably linked with the process of social reformation, nationalism and class struggles. However, its roots are to be found in the structural changes in the economy due to colonialism and land relations. The structural changes and political struggles were historically interlinked, acting each upon the other, and these provide the contexts for women in rising political consciousness and organised participation in struggles.

### **Contemporary Kerala**

Kerala is well known for its excellence in the fields of universal literacy, gender equality, population control, social justice, economic equality, technical

opportunities and so on. Its natural beauty and peaceful co-existence of various religious groups separate us from other land. That is why Kerala is known to the world as 'God's own country'. Our land has many specialties and significances due to the introduction of many social, economic and cultural reforms. In the religious field, there existed mutual understanding and co-operation between various caste, creed and community. This in-turn led to the origin of broad, mindedness, happiness and unbiased capabilities.

Kerala as the land of art, architecture, music, painting, and sculpture, was attracted by many foreigners and they studied our culture. They studied about our Ayurvedic Medicine and is practicing it today. From the very beginning the history of Kerala is the combination of ahimsa oriented activities, principles of dharma, brotherhood and the dignity of labour. Now a day's life has become a struggle of man against man and man against circumstances. Today human society of any kind is heading towards self-destruction. Selfish motives of man individually and collectively erode the human values in the society

In the contemporary Kerala society, education provides highest opportunities and makes man more pragmatic and selfless in improved through education. It gave them equal rights in the economic, social, political and educational fields. The All India women's Conferences of 1926 condemned the infanticide, *Purdha system*, Child marriage, Temple prostitution, Women

illiteracy etc. The widow remarriage was legally permitted from 1856 onwards. At present as part of the elimination of poverty upliftment of the position of women, *Kudumbashree* stand as the beacon of light. It is treated as a part of women empowerment. Through successive self-employment programmes, people live below poverty line can overcome the problem of poverty, improve standard of living, meet the education of children and increase their social status. Several self-employment programmes were introduced by the Government from time to time. These opportunities in education and employment develop social status, economic life style and generate national consciousness among people.

Kerala had developed several religious and semi-religious art forms. They all grow in the atmosphere of temples and later it becomes great centers of cultural activities. Several forms of temple art and dances have its influence on the cultural and social aspects of Keralites. One of the chief characteristic features of Kerala culture is its advancement through artistic developments.

Arts like Mohiniyattam, Kathakali,(the world famous dance drama of Kerala), Ottam Tullal,(a typical temple art of Kerala which was developed by the great poet Kunjan Nambiar),the Theyyam, (a unique ritual dances of south India) and likewise has its influence on aspects of life of Keralites.

‘Athidhi Devo Bhava, the dictum inspires us to be graceful hosts for the visitors. From time immemorial our majestic tradition, cultural heritage and

geographical position provide a fascinating backup to the tourism. In the modern Kerala promotion of tourism is vital. Our media provide a substantial boost to the tourism. It has currently emerged as the backbone of the Indian economy. Our government and other cultural organizations have been formulated policies and strategize for the materialization of the Gods own land. All the Keralites must be aware about our land and be able to protect the beauty of forest, the rhythmic flow of rivers and various forms of our heritage to make the state a paradise on earth.

## **PRESENT OUTLOOK**

For more than a decade, the situation of Kerala has been gradually and steadily deteriorating due to many political and economic factors. The political aspect is the birth of vote banks. The communist in the early 1950s started vote banks. This was later copied by the congress and all other major and minor political parties. Now it has become a watch word of political culture in Kerala. Another aspect was the coalition among high different parties. More over communalism acquired legitimization in our state. The flow of foreign remittances strengthened the economic position of the Keralites Communities. They trained their young ones to acquire a well placed job in outside India<sup>4</sup>. The importance of overseas employment changed the outlook of the younger generations. They also lose their social commitments and

broad visions. Any slight changes in the outlook of the international communities can be reflected in the lifestyle of the people of Kerala. Thus the phenomenon of globalization firstly reflected in Kerala, more than any other places in India. In Kerala urbanization, introduction of luxuries of life, Nuclear family set up etc became popular. Now our state has emerged as a single big metro in the high speed globalization process. Gender paradox has become the over whelming context for imaging women in Kerala today. The Kerala model of development, complete literacy and tourism are the epoch making events in the history of contemporary Kerala.

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<sup>4</sup> Rosamma Mathew, Making of Modern Kerala, Learners Publications, Kottayam, 2010 Pp<sup>130-131</sup>.,,

## CONCLUSION

The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the emergence of a new social order in India due to the influence of social, economic and cultural influences. From the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century itself notable changes took place in the socio economic order in Kerala. The Western education spread during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century inspired social consciousness among the people against the evil practices in the society. The most important aspect of social reform movements in Kerala was the awakening of the lower caste people against the upper class Hindu society. It also made revolutionary changes in the life of the people. The contribution of Kerala in the field of education is substantial in every sense.

A revolution in education was started and becomes a powerful instrument of social change. The lower castes were completely liberated and the society became democratised. The Western education caused the decline of the Joint family system, *Marumakkathayam*, Polyandry, *Devadasi system* etc. The status of women rose in society.

Travancore never witnessed such an enormous industrial and social

progress in its history. The State of Kerala which was criticized as a lunatic asylum by Swami Vivekananda was transformed into a sacred place.

This Research project studies the socio economic conditions of the Travancore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It helps to understand the major evils that existed in the society like Caste system, Untouchability, Joint family system etc in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Socio economic changes brought about under colonial missionary interaction resulted in the birth of a middle class among all communities. The middle class consisted of the lower strata of the upper caste Hindus and the upper strata of the lower caste Hindus along with the Christian and Muslim communities. The newly emerged educated middle class among the lower castes realized that the spread of education was essential for overcoming their economic and social backwardness. They knew that those who controlled educational opportunities also controlled the avenues of economic and bureaucratic spheres. Thus education became the symbol of power and privileges. It also stresses the progressive changes that occurred in the society which transformed Kerala into a modern State. The development of democratization, the denial of the social inequalities based on birth, the decline of the *Janmi system*, the fall of the joint family and *Marumakkathayam system*(matrilienial succession) the growth of the new classes etc prepared the Kerala society fit to the realization of modernity. However the social and economic reforms led to the conditions favourable for a period of transition from the age old feudal system to an industrial one.

Travancore witnessed the emergence of many social revolutions against caste system and untouchability. It was the suppression of the lower caste people that compelled many to convert to Christianity, and the Temple Entry Proclamation changed the conditions of the society. The Temple entry proclamation of 1936 which Mahatma Gandhi called as the 'Magna Carta of Travancore' was the result of the sincere effort H.H Maharaja Sri Chitra Thirunal Balarama Varma. The famous Temple Entry Proclamation opened all public roads, wells, schools etc to all people irrespective of caste and creed. It was for the first time that such a valiant decision was taken by the ruling elite to abolish untouchability. It helped all people to attain the right to walk through the roads and to enter the temples and worship their Gods. These made the social reformer Sri Narayana Guru's message of one Caste, one God one Religion for man in ushering an egalitarian social order in Kerala. Thus the Temple entry Proclamation brought the feeling of oneness among the people.

Education had received a great impetus during this period and the important step taken to make free and compulsory primary education introduced many people to the realm of knowledge. The report of the Travancore census 1941 revealed that the percentage of literacy of lower castes was 1.57 in 1891, it arose to 46.5% in 1941. The Vanchi poor fund, Beggary upliftment, Sree Chithira Dharmalayam etc were some of the social

contributions to the modernization of Kerala. The social reform movements which had gathered momentum in Kerala by the modernization of the economy of Kerala in the agricultural and industrial sectors has received top priority in modern times. The people of Kerala accustomed to the traditional socio economic conditions have been awakened from age long slumber and initiated to a new era of economic development. The agricultural economy of Kerala has also been modernized and diversified in recent times and this also accelerated the pace of socio economic change.

There existed many social revolutions and caste organizations with the objective to attain equality and freedom among the people. There was a vigorous programme of industrialization which eventually brought into an industrial and progressive economy. Travancore was modernized through the communication network of the State and was transformed into an industrial State and saved it from the bondages of feudalism.

I propose to reinterpret the significance of the socio religious reform during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Kerala. The coming generation will get a new perspective and an unbiased view of this important period in the history of Kerala through this study.

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**INTERVIEW**

K. M. Cheriyan, Son of K. C. Mammen Mappilai. Editor of Malayala Manorama.

## **GLOSSARY**

1. Avarnas - Low caste Hindus.
2. Brahmaswam - Property owned by Brahmins.
3. Diwan - The Prime Minister to the Maharaja.
4. Ezhava - An untouchable caste by the old social hierarchical rules.
5. Janmi - The land owning caste or class, the Brahmins who were supposed to have right of ownership on land by birth right.
6. Jathi - The Malayalam word for caste; the division of society according to the old conception of respectability.
7. Makkathayam - System of inheritance and descent through the male line.
8. Maruakkathayam - System of inheritance and descent through the female line, a man's legal heirs being the children of his sisters.

9. Nair/Nayar - Savarna Hindus who constituted the warriors, landed gentry.
10. Namboodiri, Nambutiri- The higher caste in Kerala, especially priests, advisors of Kings and owners of land.
11. Paraya - An untouchable class, though slaves but not land bound like Pulayas.
12. Pulaya - An untouchable caste according to the old hierarchy. They had no right on land and worked in the field like slaves for the upper castes.
13. Sambandham - Literally “connection”. The simple Nair marriage ceremony involving the presentation of a cloth by a man to a woman.
14. Sanketam - Temple Sanctuary.
15. Satyagraha - Non violent struggle, literally means hold firmly to *satyam* or truth.
16. Savarnas - High Caste Hindus.
17. Sirkar - Government.
18. Sudra - The fourth of the traditional castes.
19. Theendal - Pollute by touch or proximity.
20. Yogam - Organization /meeting.