

**COMMUNITY, IDENTITY AND
COMMUNALISM:
A STUDY ON HINDU SOCIETY IN MALABAR
FROM COLONIAL PERIOD TO THE PRESENT**

**Thesis
submitted to the University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis **COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, COMMUNALISM: A STUDY ON HINDU COMMUNITY IN MALABAR FROM COLONIAL PERIOD TO THE PRESENT**, submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Calicut is a record of bonafide research carried out by **Sri. SHITHOR. P.R** under my supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for the award any degree before.

University of Calicut,
18.12.2015.

Dr. ASOKAN MUNDON

DECLARATION

I, SHITHOR.P.R., hereby declare that the thesis **“COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, COMMUNALISM: A STUDY ON HINDU COMMUNITY IN MALABAR FROM COLONIAL PERIOD TO THE PRESENT”** is a bonafide record of research work done by me and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any other degrees.

C U Campus
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. ABVP : Akhil Bharatheeya Vidhyarthi Parishat.
2. ATM : Automatic Teller Machine.
3. BJP : Bharatheeya Janatha Party.
4. CITU : Center of Indian Trade Union.
5. CPI (M) : Communist Party of India (Marxist)
6. DHRM : Dalit Human Right Movement.
7. DYFI : Democratic Youth Federation of India.
8. IPC : Indian Penal Code.
9. ISS : Islamic Sevak Sangh.
10. IUML : Indian Union Muslim League.
11. KSS : Kshetra Samrakshana Samithi.
12. LDF : Left Democratic Front.
13. MSP : Malabar Special Police.
14. NSS : Nair Service Soceity.
15. NDF : National Democratic Front.
16. OBC : Other Backward Caste.
17. PDP : Peoples Democratic Party.
18. RSS : Rashtreeya Swayam Sevak.
19. SC : Scheduled Caste.
20. SDPI : Social Democratic Party of India.
21. SIMI : Student Islamic Movement of India.
22. SNDPYogam : Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam
23. SSLC : Secondary School Leaving Certificate.
24. UDF : United Democratic Front.
25. VCD : Video Compact Disc.
26. VHP : Vishwa Hindu Parishath.

INTRODUCTION

The present work titled “Community, Identity and Communalism: A Study on Hindu Society of Malabar from Colonial Period to the Present” tries to trace the development of Hindu communal consciousness from Colonial period to the present day. A concern over origin and evaluation of the term ‘Hindu’ constitutes an important theme in Indian social science. Etymologically linked to a Persian root, the term ‘Hindu’ has been in use for many centuries to signify different sets of communities often recognized as the ‘pagan’, the ‘heathen’ and the ‘infidel’ within the narratives of foreigners. It was later taken over, and then, arbitrarily emplotted by the British Colonialism in its attempt to craft a unified and hence easily administrable domain for the communities who happened to live under their rule in the Indian subcontinent. The ‘modern’, as well as the contemporary, definition of Hindutva and deployment of the term ‘Hindu’ enable us to locate certain continuities with this Colonial precedence. These reified redefinitions were instrumental in inserting and securing the socio-cultural dominance of upper-castes over the less-privileged lower castes, which indeed formed the vast majority.

Hindu upper-castes were the key consumers of newly introduced colonial cultural capital. They also attempted to insulate the subalterns from the imagined benefits of the ‘West’. Emancipatory potential of the imported

‘west’ was mainly expressed/ emphasised in their attempt to reform the institutions and allied practices of their own caste.

For *Dalits* and unprivileged subalterns, public spaces of colonialism were strategically crucial and important for their self mobilization/realization. Nationalist reformers frequently intervened to reform caste system, which they believed as ‘unethical’ and ‘superstitious’. But, these interventions were essentially initiated from the overarching rubric of Hinduism and apparently, the upper-caste nationalist reformers were reluctant to negate caste along with its entire dharmic paraphernalia.

Colonialism was successful in ‘integrating’ communities with extremely diverse ritual practices, and incommensurable beliefs. *Dalits* were the most immediately and severely hit in this integration. Upper-caste hegemony (in reform) had curtailed the possibilities of widening/reconfiguring the community-bound identity of *Dalits*. Conversion of shrines or the places of lower caste/*Dalit* worship into structural ‘Hindu’ temples (later being famed as the centres of comparatively more orthodox ‘Hindu’ cannon) could be seen in the context of aforesaid ‘integration’.

Local rituals and customary practices were rooted in feudal values. It is already known that the local shrine festivals have a significant role in metaphysically reimposing social marginality of subalterns on a regular basis. In other words, caste-positions in a shrine- ritual-complex had symbolically reproduced the ‘distances’ (also read as ‘polluting differences’) that a ‘subaltern subject’ was always asked to maintain in more public or ‘extra-

ritual' realms. Quite contrary to the expectations of many, shrine festivals structurally embodied and strategically circulated the values of caste-Hindus.¹

The modern project of reforming 'the social' in Kerala had aggregated the cultural symbols and preferences of Hindu-upper castes' as commonly shared and inherited. This aggregation was later used as a fundamental reference or standard in the attempts to 'form' modern communities. Local tutelary deities and customary beliefs were being disqualified. The much celebrated 'Temple-entry', if one looks beyond the apparent technicalities of achieving a right of public entry for lower-castes, ultimately led to a conceptual agreement, with an irreversible finality, on the decided inclusion of subalterns into a 'Hindu' cluster.

Post-independence has witnessed an attempt to construct 'public' identities from (calculated and embedded) formation of Hindu identity in the colonial period. The populist communal polarization after 1947 was, in fact, predicated upon these undesirable developments.

The strong (and institutionalized) presence of two minority communities—Muslims and Christians—in the modern state of Kerala provided an ideal spring-board for launching episodes of vehement, organized Hinduization. Political presence of the Left and the local-Islam made the situation more complex and interesting although the proselytizing role of Islam still remains underexplored. 'Traditional Hinduism' practised in the

¹ See Dileep. M. Menon, "*Becoming 'Hindu', and 'Muslim'*"; *Identity and Conflict in Malabar*," Working Paper No.255, January, 1994, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram.

southern princelings of Travancore and Cochin was generally considered by many observers as generically different from what was in circulation in British Malabar. There are also investigations, with a 'subaltern' tinge, focusing on the history of contemporary oppositions against 'the (*savarna*) Hinduism' during Mysorean interlude, particularly under the reign of the last Sultan, Tippu. But, the dominant nationalist trend had written off these oppositions as anti- Hindu and evaluated the entrance of Muslims into the arenas defined as putatively 'public' and 'dangerous'. Interestingly, these nationalist conclusions were readily accepted by the *Dalits* and the lower-castes. Spread of the communal tensions owed much to this phenomenon. Lower polluting castes like Tiyyas and Muckkuvvas frequently were pulled into anti-Muslim mobilization and clash with the 'wretched, low-status Mappilas' as their staunch, incommensurable opponents. Elite subjectivities, fashioned as authentic, make these 'lesser-selves' constantly tied in perennial communal hatred.

Organization of the study

The thesis is organized into five chapters apart from the introduction and conclusion. The first chapter titled ‘Nature and Structure of ‘Hindu’ Society in Colonial Malabar’ is an attempt to examine whether ‘Hindu common identity’ existed in colonial period. The chapter begin with an analyses of the portrayals of the different communities of Malabar by foreign travelers, colonial writers and other scholars. Travel accounts, census reports and other documents were verified. Chapter examines divergent factors that led to the creation of the foundations of common Hindu identity despite its historical intra clash structure. There is a description of development of Hindu social structure in Malabar. The caste factor in Hindu society is thoroughly discussed in this chapter.

The second chapter titled ‘Attempts for Consolidation of Hindu Consciousness in Post Independence Malabar’ evaluates the functioning of Hindu ideology in Malabar. Various issues regarding Hindu ideology, practices, traditions and contradictions have been discussed here. It tries to identify problems of outer/inner structure of Hindu society. The roles of Hindu organizations, cult culture, caste relations, and political roots are brought under discussion. There are also references about the matters which intensified Hindu consciousness.

The third chapter ‘The Hindu Community and ‘Others’: Identity and Conflicts’ is an attempt to trace out identity problems of the minorities in the region to understand intra community relations. The socio political

movements of minorities are analysed. It is a fact that growth of communal activities of one community affects other communities and vice versa. Communal violence affected the identity formation of Hindus

Fourth chapter 'Communal Violence and Identity Formation in Malabar' examines how Hindus were affected by communal violence and how such incidents played a role in rising communal consciousness among Hindus. This chapter also highlights some of the riots which took place in the Malabar region. The riots from Tellicherry of 1972 to Marad riot of 2002 are examined. An analysis of the observations made by various commissions on riots has also been attempted.

The fifth chapter titled 'Search for Identity: The Contemporary Hindu Society of Malabar' analyses the present structure of Hindu society in Malabar. In the first part it seeks to understand Hinduisation through cultural icons. It examines the spread of brahmanic traditions and other rituals. The problem of caste in the Hindu society is also discussed. The last part of the chapter examines various issues regarding communal polarization and the role of Hindu political organizations. Some of the cases attached to the 'moral policing' of fundamentalist outfits are also noted.

About the Sources

Several sources have been tapped for dealing with the topic. The colonial accounts, travel narratives, periodicals etc. lit up early community life in Malabar. The major share of the source materials are collected from

Calicut and Madras Archives, Nehru Museum and Library. The periodicals such as newspapers are collected from University of Kerala Library, Thiruvananthapuram and Appan memorial Library Thrissur supplemented them. The sources collected from the Legislative assembly library helped much to trace out communal disturbance examined in the fourth chapter of the study. A large number of secondary sources like books, articles and journals are also used in the present work. The present work follows an accepted historical research methodology such as perusal of archival and textual criticism on secondary works and dissemination of the thesis.

Review of Literature

A number of studies have attempted to examine different phases of Malabar society. The monograph of M. Muraleedharan is an analytical work that traces out basic roots of Hindu identity in Malabar. It covers the trajectory of Hindu forces from colonial to present period. Dileep M Menon's research paper titled '*Becoming Hindu, and Muslim*', *Identity and Conflict in Malabar*' gives details about the Hindu Muslim relation that existed in the North Malabar region. The associations between Thiyya community and Mappilas during the colonial period are thoroughly examined in this paper.

The early British officials who have made contributions in this area are Edgar Thurston, C.A. Innes, Willian Logan, etc. Works of these scholars help to understand nature and relations of Hindu castes during colonial period.

The work of Jayaprasad titled 'R.S.S and Hindu Nationalism' gives wide and through analysis of the History of Hindutva politics in Kerala. It examines various campaigns made by Hindu organizations across the state. However the subjective point of view of author hampers the academic credentials of the work. Saji Jacob, author of 'Communal Road to Secular Kerala' describes story of communal politics in Kerala in the post Independence period. The work of Gyananndra Pandey titled "The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India' focuses historical inquiry of the genesis of communalism in India. The works of Bipan Chandra, K N Panikkar, Asgar Ali give general description of communal ideology and its practices. Narrative nature of works made by writers of Hindutva background gives technical details of incidents and campaigns of their politics.

CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF ‘HINDU’ SOCIETY IN COLONIAL MALABAR

The mapping of Hindu community in both discursive and non-discursive domain is problematic as the structure and nature of Hindu society is very complex and confused. Different schools have drawn their own interpretation regarding the genesis of Hindu community in India. The present chapter goes mainly through the nature of different castes and its mutual relations during colonial period in Malabar.

There are sources from the medieval period which give information on diverse forms of practices prevailed among different communities in Malabar. Different groups of people believed in different Gods of their own. As far as Hindu religion is concerned, there was no common clearcut identity for defining or categorizing them during that period.

Naming ‘Hind’ for the land happened to be the basic reason for the branding ‘Hindu’ for different castes in India.² Initially, naming the land ‘Hind’ had a geographical implication. But later the term “Hind’ has been turned out to be indicative of the people who reside in India. Shaik Sainudheen, the author of “Tuhfathul Mujahedeen” (1583) uses the term ‘Hind’ to denote land natives while narrating the arrival of Portuguese ships

² “It was a name given by the medieval Muslim scholars who believed that the inhabitants of Sindh (Hind) are primitive barbarians and they did not have any socio-spiritual maturity and cohesion.” Kancha Ilaiah, *Post Hindu India; A Discourse on Dalit- Bahujan, Socio-Spiritual and Scientific Revolution*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2009 p. XIII.

in the coastal Kerala.³ The Arab geographers who visited Malabar in early times had also addressed the inhabitants as ‘people of Hind’. For instance Abu Abdullah Muhammad IbnIshaq who was quoted in the writings of IbnRusta says “I found that the merchants of Hind, all of them, do not drink either little or much. They loathe wine; their wine consists of rice water which becomes sour after some days and serves them as wine. The Muslim who is addicted to drink is considered by the people of Hind as vile. They make no account of him and treat him with contempt. They would say: ‘This man has no credit in his country.’”⁴ Thus it is quite obvious that the Arab writers used the term ‘people of Hind’ to denote the people residing in early India. The dominant communities of that period in India were the believers of various faith forms including primitivism or animism. The religious texts of Islam have ample narrations of the idol worshippers of Arabia. The knowledge prevailed in the texts regarding primitive people of Arabia might have reflected in the writings of the Arabian travelers. The travelers who visited India mostly belonged to Semitic religions which oppose idol worship.

Another source of literary work available during the period was the communications of missionaries which had indirectly popularized the term ‘Hindu.’ In all their communication they used the term ‘Hindu’ for different castes. The missionaries propagated their doctrine, believing and articulating their duty to propagate the ‘modern ideology’ with missionary zeal among

³ Shaik Sainudheen Makhdam, *Tuhfat al- Mujahidin*, Islamic Book Trust, Kualalumpur and Other Books, Calicut, 2006, p.51.

⁴ S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, *Arab Geographers’ Knowledge of Southern India*, University of Madras, 1942, p.101.

‘uncivilized’ communities. The campaign got good response from the people especially from the lower caste communities.

Even though the belief was centered on animism, magic etc., almost all communities followed independent and segmented form of practices. The colonial powers tried to locate the communities through their religious angle. The syncretic identities of caste and communities were treated as idol worshippers and foreign writers perceived these idol worshipping communities as a single religious entity called the ‘Hindu’. The representation of various faith forms of Indian people drawn by Arabs and Portuguese had become a frame of reference in defining Hindu religious identity. Later, in the census and other colonial reports the term ‘Hindu’ became a common word to denote the Indian people. The Census Report of 1871 of Madras Presidency under the title ‘Population Under Each Caste’, the Hindus were classified as Brahmana, Kshatriya, Sannan, Pariah etc. The Ezhavas or Tiyya Community included in the category of Shannars and the slave caste like Paraya, Pulaya and Cheruma were represented by the term “Pariah’ Caste.⁵ “The Census, introduced in India by the British in 1871, was instrumental in creating categories and fixing them within such imagining boundaries that people themselves felt real in course of time.”⁶ Likewise the Census Report of 1891 suggests the term ‘animistic’ to denote the religion of tribal people whose identity as Hindu was not aired at that time.⁷ The Census Report of

⁵ See *The Census Report*, Malabar Presidency, 1871.

⁶ P. P. Abdul Razak, *Colonialism and Community Formation In Malabar*, Ph D Thesis, University of Calicut, 2007, pp.62-63.

⁷ *The Census Report*, Malabar Presidency, 1891. P.88.

Punjab in 1881 questions the inclusion of the Hindu religion in the Census. The Report says “every native who was unable to define his creed, or described it by any other name than that of some recognized religion, or the sect of some such religion, was held to be a Hindu.”⁸ The early Census Reports contradict themselves in the creation of ‘Hindu Religion’ or applying ‘Hinduism’ on the different castes of the nation.

The British officials had their own observations regarding the structure of Hindu religion in Malabar. William Logan pointed out “Malayali Hinduism, therefore, in the present day is a strange mixture of all kinds of religious ideas.”⁹ Here the argument of Logan as ‘Hinduism is a mixture of all kinds of religious ideas’ must be read in the context that the Hindu structure in Malabar has been constituted through intermingling of brahmanic, dravidian and indigenous ideas. This is further clarified by another official, C.A Innes. According to him “The religion of the Malayali is a remarkable paramount influence of the Brahmans in religion as in social and legal matters is everywhere evident; and yet Malabar is pre-eminently the home of witch craft and magic and all that is indicated by the term animism.”¹⁰ F.Fawcett writes “It has been noticed already that the Malayali have, practically, no sects that are prevalent in the rest of Southern India. Vishnu, Bhagavati, Rama -all these names of the Hindu theogony are meaningless to them. They do not know how to differentiate one from the other except in name. Their Hinduism

⁸ *Ibid.* p.56.

⁹ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Charithram Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1987, Vol I, p.221.

¹⁰ C.A. Innes, *Malabar Gazettier* (ed.), Gazettier Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p. 150.

is not that of the rest of Southern India.”¹¹ Here the term ‘Their Hinduism’ deserves special attention. ‘Their Hinduism’ signifies that there was no uniformity between them and different castes that keep different kinds of ‘Hinduism’. So the connotation ‘Hinduism’ includes the mixture of local forms of faith and beliefs. Fawcett continues to point out the religion of Nairs by taking examples from Pisharikavu temple. “It seems to express the religion of the Nayers as it is when not tacked on to that of the Brahmans: as they formulate it of themselves entirely in their own way.”¹² He stresses the independent Nair identity which was later synthesized by the brahmanic religion.

K.N. Panikkar says, “The religious bonds during the pre-colonial era were localized and within fragmented communities, with both communication and mobility confined within local limits. The only attempts to transgress the local limits were through pilgrimages to religious centers which being sporadic did not lead to any continuous interaction or connection”.¹³ Non-Vedic or Non- Aryan traditions were prevalent here before the coming of Vedic people. The ‘developed’ forms of Hinduism tolerated and absorbed such practices.

¹¹ F.Fawcett, *Nayars of Malabar*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi,(Reprint), 1985, p. 255.

¹² *Ibid*, p.266.

¹³ K. N. Panikkar, *An Agenda for Cultural Action*, Three Essays Collective, 2006, New Delhi, p.22.

The influence of Budha and Jaina religion upon native people resulted in reshaping existing Hindu sacred geography.¹⁴ There were several examples of conversion of Buddha or Jaina temples into Hindu temple. The live examples for this can be seen in temples like Tirunnelly of Waynad and Koodalmanikyam temple in Thrissur. The relics of Jaina or Buddha traditions could be seen in and around the present temple structures there. The temple and allied institutions deserve special notice as the nuclei of a religion and culture. ‘The temple oriented Hinduism’¹⁵ emerged and in that process certain Dravidian practices were perished or conditioned on the line of Brahmanic religion.¹⁶ The temple becoming the centre of the religion, clearly indicates that people who were not part of the temple culture were out of Hindu religious structure.

We can formulate a structure of Hinduism of early period by appraising different castes of Hinduism. Several colonial and Indian writers have produced valuable studies regarding different communities in India. From these we can comprehend that there existed about four numerically dominant communities in Malabar. Nairs, Thiyya, Mappilas and Slave castes like Paraya, Pulaya etc. The Nairs, Mappilas and Thiyya communities have played an imperative part in influencing the socio cultural history of Malabar during the Colonial era.

¹⁴ “The worship of Gods in temples was unknown to the Vedic religion. The Hindus gradually copied this from the Buddhists who began to build *viharas* and set up images of Budha. But when Budhism was on the wane, the *viharas* were converted into temples.” K.P PadmanabhaMenon, *History of Kerala*, Vol III, Asian Educational Services, (Reprint) New Delhi,1983, p. XXXII.

¹⁵ M.G.S Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Cosmo Books, Thrissure, 2013, p.23.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.24.

Though Nairs were a fragmented groups in terms of occupations and entitlement they were the military force of the region and most influential community. They were said to be very arrogant and ruthless towards the low caste people. Numerous references to this effect are available in written as well as oral traditions of this region. Narrations relating to the customs and traditions as it existed in those times are available in ‘Nairs in Malabar’ written by F. Fawcett. The status of the polluted body and the process of purification are clearly stated in this work. “It is a rule seldom broken that every Nayar goes to the temple twice a day. The mere approach anywhere near his vicinity of a Cheruman, a Polayan or any inferior being, even a Tiyan, as he walks to his house from the temple, cleansed in body and mind, his marks newly set on his forehead with sandalwood paste, is pollution, and he must turn and bath again.”¹⁷ Fawcett further says that after the implementation of certain laws like Arms Act the Nairs were not able to display the intense arrogant acts as before, eventhough such acts were not completely brought to an end.¹⁸ “The Nair, or in the plural the Nainmar, are the pure *sudras* of Malayala.”¹⁹ But their position was far better than the Sudras of other part of India.²⁰ Certain sections of the Nair community played significant tasks such as warriors, taking the role of Kshatriyas in Northern

¹⁷ F.Fawcett, *op.cit.*,p.254.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Vol. II, Madras,1870, Asian Educational Services, (Reprint), New Delhi, p. 408.

²⁰ “The Nairs, says Rev M.A Sherring, were of higher rank in social scale than their Sudra counterpart in Northern India, and a closer intercourse exists between many castes there than is permitted in Benaras and its neighborhood”- Rev M.A Sherring *Hindu Tribes and Castes*Vol II, (Reprint) Cosmo publication, New Delhi, 1974, p. IV.

India. The Nair community gave wholehearted support to the Brahmins in spreading or creating supportive mechanism to the Vedic people in Kerala. The Dravidian culture of the Nair community slowly shifted to the sanskritised hegemonic ways of the Nambuthiri Brahmins. The Brahmin tradition articulates that the Nairs are the result of a union of the Nambuthirs with Deva, Gandharva and Raksasa women.²¹ This is a form of legitimization of Brahmin dominance over Nairs. The Nambuthiri Brahmins who arrived here mostly as ‘purohiths’ must have influenced the local people. “At the time of the religious revival with warmth and devotion, and to day one will find in Malabar no more pious worshippers of the Gods of the Hindu pantheon than the Nayers”.²² So it is evident that Nair community have adapted both Brahmanic and primitive traits of religion in the course of time.²³ They were the chief oracles of the localities. Commenting on *Velichappadu* (oracle), Fawcett says “His (Velichappadu) profession illustrates the very mixed character of the Hinduism of the Nayar, partaking as it does of much of the lower cult,-animism, and deification of ancestors, worship of snakes and kites, ceremonies connected therewith, sacrifice, magic, witchcraft and sorcery-together with the purest form of Vedic Brahmanism known in Southern India, of which there is the highest expression in the temples attached to the wealthy Nambuthiri Illams, to which the Nayar goes daily to pray, to purify his mind

²¹ C.A. Innes, *op.cit.*, p. 115.

²² K.P. PadmanabhaMenon, *History of Kerala*, Vol.3, (Reprint) Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1983, p.XXXIII.

²³ F.Fawcett, *op.cit.*, p. 254.

after having purified his body by bathing.”²⁴ From the comment of Fawcett we can assume that Nairs were mixed community on racial and religious line.

The Nairs who were actually considered to be Sudras in the *varna system* enjoyed some level of upliftment under the Brahmanic control of the society. The famous Malayalam Pandit KunhikkuttanThampuran comments that if the Sudras of Kerala feel any kind of privileges than their fellow communities outside Kerala, it was because of Aryan blood in their body.²⁵ “The belief of the Brahmin tradition that the Nayar caste is the result of union between the Nambudiris with Deva, Gandharva and Rakshasa women introduced by Parasuram, embodies the undoubted fact that the caste by its practice of hypergamy has had a very large infusion of Aryan blood.”²⁶The beliefs legitimized the declared attachment of the Nair community with the Nambuthiri Brahmins of Kerala.

The physical dominance of the Nair community over lower caste people deserves attention. In Malabar there were several practices reflecting Nair domination over other castes. One such practice was noted by Buchanan. He says “A Nair was expected instantly to cut down a Tiar, or Mucua, who presumed to defile him by touching his person; and a similar fate awaited a slave, who did not turn out of road as a Nair passed”.²⁷The fact that mere sight of the slave caste led to capital punishment from Nair community

²⁴ *Ibid*, 273.

²⁵ Kunhikuttan Thampuran, *Ente Keralam* (Mal.), Devi Book Stall,(Reprint), Kondungallur, 2008,p.26.

²⁶ Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol.V, 1909,(Reprint) Cosmo Publications, Delhi, p.284.

²⁷ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit*, p.410.

shows the miserable life of these people. With both the physical and fiscal powers, it was the Nair community who controlled the progress of other Hindu communities. The presence of lower caste invited hatred not only from Nairs but Syrians and Muslims too.²⁸ The loose sexual relations between the women of Nair community and Men of Nambuthiri community were somewhat 'spiritual sexuality' to the Nair folk which might have helped in creating an intense Sanskritisation among the Sudra Nairs. The Nair women folk were forced to practice polyandry as most of the visitors belonged to the so called sacred Brahmins. A description made by Shaik Sainudheen would point out how a Nair woman was signified in the society. He states "Nairs let their women adorn themselves with expensive clothes and ornaments and attend big festivals so that their beauty is seen and enjoyed by men."²⁹

The Nair ladies who were trapped to the custom of Pulappedi, and Mannappedi³⁰ would be excommunicated and sold or forced to embrace Islam or Christianity.³¹ The tradition of Pulappedi might have been the defense mechanism of the Nair men in order to create fear among the Nair ladies to make sure that when the Nair men are out of station for various purposes their women would keep distance from the lower caste people. The relation between different communities during the pre-colonial period was rigid and

²⁸ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance-Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1976, p.20.

²⁹ Shaik Sainudheen Makhdum, *op.cit*, p.41.

³⁰ Mannappedi and Pulappedi which literally means fear of Mannan and Pulaya. It was a strange custom believed to be practiced in Kerala. See *The Land of Malabar, The Book of Duarte Barbosa* Vol.II M. Gangadharan, (ed). , Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, 2000, p.69.

³¹ Shaik Sainudheen Makhdum, *op.cit*, p43.

the majority of the communities failed in getting upward social mobility due to the Brahmanic notions of social dominance. The author of the medieval work, *Unnichiruthevicharitham*, for example, describes how *savarna* communities address slave communities by using abusive languages in a village in Malabar.³² Addressing a Nair fighter with caste name like ‘Cheruma’ in hatred by his rival Nair would tell us how pathetic the conditions of these slave communities were. It was happening in Chokiram Nambuthiri village which was the seat of Azhvancherry Thambakkal, the religious head of Nambuthiri Brahmins of Kerala. While it projects the beauty of a Nair lady, it tries to depict the slave ladies in an ugly way.³³

Still all the Hindu communities in Kerala maintained different identities and the upper caste Hindus tried to Aryanise entire spiritual and philosophical knowledge of the locality. The lower castes were not fully attracted to the brahmanic gods. Innes points out “The lower classes of Sudras and the polluting castes pay less attention to the Puranic gods.”³⁴ Barbosa gives the information that most of the Heathen communities in Malabar had separate idolatry and separate idols.³⁵ Take the example of Nayadi caste. “They worship a female deity, and about the month of March, sacrifice a cock as a means of protecting themselves from all evils.”³⁶ The cock -sacrifice was

³² P. V. Krishnan Nair, *Unnichiruthevicharitham* (Mal.), National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1973, pp.49, 61.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ C.A. Innes, *op.cit.*, p.154.,

³⁵ M. Gangadharan, *op.cit.*, pp. 58-60.

³⁶ T.K. Gopal Panikkar, *Malabar and its Folk*, Asian Educational Services, (Reprint) ,New Delhi, 1983, p.171.

part and parcel of the religion of the lower communities of the region. “The aborigines of Malabar are possibly represented by the Cherumans/Pulayans, the agrestic slaves of the soil, and by the jungle tribes of the Kurmbans, Kurichaians, Paniyans etc.”³⁷ They worshipped several local deities and they were prevented from worshipping the so called Hindu Great Gods. “These beings (local gods) have no proper place assigned to them in the Hindu creed; but are native to Malabar, where they obtained a firm hold upon the popular imagination.”³⁸ The goddess worshiped by the Pulaya community of Malabar is ‘Paradevata’ and is represented by a stone, which is placed, in the open air, on a mound like an altar.”³⁹ This represents animist or primitive form of worship existed during that period. “The priest (pujari) is a Polian, and, at a feast celebrated on the commencement of the new year, offers up sacrifices of fowls, fruits, spirituous liquor”⁴⁰ They never worshipped Brahmin gods. ⁴¹At the same time, Innes, says “The outcastes and hill tribes sometimes make an annual offering to Brahmanic temples as an act of fealty, but their gods are the troublesome spirits of ancestors or demons;..”⁴² Annual offering of these downtrodden communities to the Brahmanic temple is not a sign that they had been part of broad Hinduism but a legitimating factor of the slavery in terms of domination and subordination. The chief deity of Paniya community is said

³⁷ C A Innes, FB Evans ICS (ed), *Malabar Gazetteer*, Govt. of Kerala, 1997, Trivandrum, p.24.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 211.

³⁹ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, p.492.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.493.

⁴² C.A. Innes, *op.cit.*, p.155.

to be Kuttichathan who is considered as a juggler by Nairs and Nambuthiris.⁴³“ The Panian has no visible representation of their god; but makes offerings of rice, coconuts, and spirituous liquors, which they place on the ground, and then call upon Cutichathan to receive their offering.”⁴⁴ The Census Report of 1891 comments that ‘the religion of Cheruma is ‘devil worship’⁴⁵ which proves that they are out of Hindu pantheon.

While describing Pulaya community, Barbosa comments ‘These people (Pulaya) are also great sorcerers and thieves: they are a very evil race.’⁴⁶ The depiction of this community as ‘evil race’ shows how the downtrodden communities were socially treated by other castes and denotes that they were not treated as Hindus. The plight of the lower caste people was clearly acknowledged by the colonial writers. The report of Buchanan on Nayadis is an example of this. “They are reckoned so very impure, that even a slave will not touch them.”⁴⁷ “They have some wretched huts built under trees in remote places; but they generally wander about in companies of ten or twelve persons, keeping at a little distance from the roads; and when they see any passenger, they set up a howl, like so many hungry dogs.”⁴⁸The Nayadis faced extreme discrimination. They were forced to keep themselves away from other communities. “A wretched tribe of this kind, buffeted and abused by everyone, and subsisting on the labour of the industrious, is a disgrace to

⁴³ Francis Buchanan,*op.cit.*,p.496.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ See *Census Report, Malabar Presidency*,1891.

⁴⁶ M.Gangadharan,*op.cit.*,p.69

⁴⁷ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, pp.413-414.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*p.414.

any country; and both compassion and justice seem to require, that they should be compelled to gain a livelihood by honest industry, and be elevated somewhat more nearly to the rank of men”⁴⁹ While describing the lower strata of the society the Census report of 1871 says, “ They are everywhere, the menial servants of the country, and wherever they reside they have allotted to them a separate place on the outskirts of the village, called Pariahcherry or Pariah village, as their near presence would be pollution to the Hindus.” The report hints at the exclusion of Pariahs from the category of ‘Hindu.’

Cow as a sacred symbol

Cow was considered as sacred symbol in Malabar as in the other parts of India.⁵⁰ There were several references regarding the cow worship of early Malabar. “Eating beef was forbidden for all Hindus in Kerala” writes Thurston.⁵¹ Friar Odoric, the Italian traveller who visited Malabar in early 14th century observed that even the urine and dung of the cow was considered very sacred.⁵² Friar Odoric says “Every morning they take two basins of gold or silver, and when the ox is brought from the stall they put these under him and catch his urine in one and his dung in the other. With the former they wash their faces, and with the latter they daub themselves, first on the middle of the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Similar to North India, the animal cow is considered as Holy animal and equal to Brahman in Kerala as well and killing of either cow or Brahman was considered as most heinous sin.” T.K GopalPanikkar, *op.cit.*,p. 210.

⁵¹ Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Sothern India*,Vol VII, (Reprint) Cosmo Publicatios, Delhi,1975,p.98.

⁵² K. A, Nilakanta Sastri, *Foreign Notices of South India- From Megastenes to Mahuan*, (Reprint) University of Madras, Chennai,2001,p.194.

forehead; secondly, on the balls of both cheeks; and, lastly, in the middle of the chest. And when they have thus anointed themselves in four places they consider themselves to be sanctified (for the day). Thus do the common people; and thus do the king and queen likewise.”⁵³ Common people as conceived by Odoric might be the higher castes. The following note is taken from the account of Ma Huan, a Chinese Muslim who visited Malabar coast during 15th century. “The king of the country and the people of the country all refrain from eating the flesh of the ox. The great chiefs are Muslim people; (and) they all refrain from eating the flesh of the pig’: Formerly there was a king who made a sworn compact with the Muslim people,(saying) ‘You do not eat the ox; I do not eat the pig; we will reciprocally respect the taboo’ (and this compact)has been honored right down to the present day.”⁵⁴ The above note shows that the politics on the basis of these sacred and profane animals created a clear cut division in the making of Hindu identity even during the period of Medieval Malabar. “Their oxen are cared for until they are old(and) when they die, they are buried”⁵⁵ The comment of Mahuan that the people of this region do not eat the flesh of oxen was mostly concerned with only the upper caste Hindus. The slave communities of Kerala had never admitted the divinity of cow. Most of the lower communities ate flesh of cow. The Paraya caste was considered by the upper caste Hindus equally impure with Mussulmans or Christians with regard to their practice of eating beef. ⁵⁶

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Ma Huan Ying- Yai- Sheng Lan ‘The overall survey of the ocean’s shores 1433, J.V.G. Mills ,Camrbridge Univerisity Press, Cambridge,1970, p.138.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*,p.144.

⁵⁶ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, p. 493.

Ptolemy gives an account of the importance of cow in early period of Kerala. “Most of them worship an ox, because they say that the ox is an excellent animal. They would not dare eat of ox for anything in the world, nor would they kill one. True it is that there is another race of men among them called Gavi, who have no scruple about eating beef. But even then they dare not slaughter an ox. Only, when an ox dies a natural death or gets killed by accident, these people do eat of it. And I will add that all their houses are smeared with ox-dung.”⁵⁷ So eating of the beef was not a problem to the downtrodden communities and they never had seen cow as a sacred animal. But they were forced to keep certain restriction on beef eating under the pressure of the Brahmanic supremacy.

In the spiritual domain each community kept their own self identity. During this period, each caste was like a religious community. While describing on ‘Nayadis, a lower caste now in Hindu community, M.A. Sherring says “they were not allowed to approach within Ninety-six feet of ‘Hindus.’⁵⁸ The notion here is that the ‘Nayadi’ community was not part of the Hindu structure. It was because of this discrimination towards the lower castes that “many have embraced the irregular Mahomedan faith professed by the Moplahs, and have entered their fraternity”⁵⁹ Each community had their own worshipping system and cultural practices. The Nayadis worship

⁵⁷ L.F. Benedetto (Translator), *The travels of Marco Polo*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1994,p.298.

⁵⁸ Rev. M.A. Sherring, *op.cit.*, p.145.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Maladaiva, a female deity.⁶⁰ The Pulayas were considered as pure animists by anthropologists like L K Anantha Krishna Iyer.⁶¹ Even though the hatred over caste was prevalent among the Malabar people the lower caste people were admitted into Non Brahmanic temples at the time of temple festivals. For example the lower caste people were allowed to approach the temple complex on certain days. “*Pooram* or *Vela*- Kodungallorbharani festival was the festival of lower castes. It is a festival in which the members of all castes below Brahmans take part, and it is held either in Kumbom or in Meenam. The Cherumar of the Northern parts as well as the Pulayans of the Southern parts of the state, attend the festival, and join the procession after a sumptuous meal and toddy drinking according to their custom. But the Brahmins are excluded from the temples for three days during the festival.”⁶² This is to avoid pollution from the lower castes.

The rare opportunity to enter the temple on a particular day might have inculcated a sense of God fearing on wider canvas which might have led to the conditioning of these lower marginalized groups on Hindu spiritual line. “The festival is one of the very few occasions on which Pulayans and other agrestic serfs, who are supposed to impart, so to speak, a long distance atmospheric pollution, and consequently may not approach the habitations of high caste Hindus, are freely allowed to enter villages and worship in the

⁶⁰ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, p.414.

⁶¹ L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*-Vol. I, Higginbotham, London, 1909, p.112.

⁶² William Logan, *op.cit.*, p. XXV.

village temples which generally occupy the central positions in those villages”⁶³ The caste wise procession in the festival of Pisharikavu temple Quilandy, for instance, clearly points out the accommodation of the slave and other backward castes during the time of temple festival. The level of entrance to the inferior castes would be already demarked on the temple complex and persons of inferior were not allowed to cross that limit. As each caste represents particular occupations, the procession was rather a cultural slavery as the condition of god fearing slave castes was cleverly exploited by the upper caste Hindu people. During the time of temple festivals the Nambuthiris would leave the temple as the entrance of the slave communities into the temple would create pollution on the Nambuthiris. Almost all the communities including Thiyya, Mukkuva, Vettuva, Pana etc were the participants of the procession. The *Thalapoli* procession of Thiyya women was another attraction of the festival as described by the F. Fawcett in his book ‘Nayers of Malabar’.⁶⁴ Fawcett gives description of *Kalasam* procession of Thiyya community in the temple during festivals in the year of 1895. “Four men of this (Thiyya) caste, having with them Pukkalasams (flower-kalasams) and five having with them Jannakalasams run along the west, north, and east, sides of the temple (outside the enclosure) shouting and making a noise more like the barking of dogs than anything else. The kalasams contain arrack which is presently given to the temple to be used in the ceremonies.”⁶⁵ The permission of these inferior people into the premises of temple complex on

⁶³ L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *op.cit.*, p.115.

⁶⁴ F. Fawcett, *op.cit.*, p. 260.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.260.

this particular festival season clearly establish the fact that the process of accomadating lower caste people (mainly for want of service) had already started within the traditions itself. In Kottityoor festival also the procession is seemed to be a caste based one. As Fawcett points out “Though it is a festival for high and low they do not mix at Kotior. The Nayars go first, and after Tiyans, and so on”⁶⁶ The nature of worship of Kottiyur is somewhat like the Kodungallur Bharani festival. “A curious feature of it is that people going to attend it are distinctly rowdy, feeling they have a right to abuse in the vilest and filthiest terms everyone they see on the way –perhaps a few days’ march; and not only do they abuse to their hearts’ content in their exuberant excitement, but they use personal violence to person and property all along the road. They return like lambs”⁶⁷The similarity of Kodungallur and Kottiyoor temple traditions in their nature of worship is a signifier to the cause of common cultural synthesis of the Dravidian communities. Even though the Thiyya community was an untouchable community, the Nairs and Nambuthiris were invited to conduct in their respective deities like Mundien and Bhagavathi.⁶⁸

The Thiyyas were unaware of the concept of life after death. “The Tiars seem to be entirely ignorant of a state of existence after death. Some of them burn, and some of them bury the dead.”⁶⁹ About the religion of the Tiyyas the Malabar, Census report says that, “they have hardly any religion at

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.267.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

⁶⁸ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, p.415.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.416.

all beyond the worship of some local deities.”⁷⁰ Sometimes, the Thiyyas of Malabar followed polyandry and their “sexual relations are extremely loose within caste...”⁷¹ The Report mentions the conditions of the Thiyya women and their relation with the European Xians. “The Tiyars especially are a fine, and physically handsome race, and some of their women in sea port towns where they have had intercourse with Europeans, have more European than native blood in them, and are remarkably fair. Women of this class on the western coast are often the concubines of Europeans, and the daughters of such unions are usually brought up to follow the profession of their the mothers”⁷² The above description shares the view that the Thiyyas of the Western Coast didn’t have any kind of religious bondage. The lack of such religious institutions led the Thiyyas to leading a loose social life in some parts of Malabar.

The Hindu identity formation was at an embryonic stage in the time of colonial period. Abundant information regarding caste hatred can be traced from the medieval accounts. Only Brahmin community followed the customs and traditions of an organized religion. The temple was like a semi autonomous administrative unit in which all spiritual and material activities were carried out.⁷³ The temple centered Brahmin religion shaped the existing social traditions. The Thiyya community under the influence of its reformers

⁷⁰ W. R. Cornish, *Report on the Census of the Madras Presidency 1871*, E Keys Govt. Gazette Press, Madras, p.162.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahmin Settlement in Kerala*, Sandhya Publications, Calicut University, 1978, p.6.

started their own temples across the state. “The setting up of Thiyya temples was seen both as a focus of community as well as a strategy towards equality.⁷⁴ At the same time the slave communities like Pulayas were not admitted into their temples. This is a kind of strategy in order to access a high social profile for Thiyyas. They wanted to be more *Nairised* on several manners in order to have upward social mobility.⁷⁵

Inclusion of Thiyyas in Hindu religion has been a source of debate among Thiyya leaders. “The Thiyya leaders consciously defined themselves as non Hindus. They wished to stand apart as a separate community of equals outside of the Hindu religion which they perceived as entrenching caste inequality.”⁷⁶ Even though the Thiyyas considered themselves as non Hindu on several occasions, the Ezhavas, their counterpart in Southern Kerala were becoming more conscious to see them as Hindu. At the time of the transfer of Travancore, Diwan P. Rajagopalachari visited Varkkala Sivagiri Matt in 1914. On that occasion, the Ezhavas of Chirayinkeezh presented a *mangalapathram* which shows the position of Thiyya regarding their concept of being Hindu. The content of *mangalapathram* was mainly regarding permission and support to build a boarding school. It says ‘This institution (Sivagiri matt) is built mainly for creating great and ancient Hindu consciousness and to control the conversion of backward Hindus into other

⁷⁴ Dileep. M. Menon, “*Becoming ‘Hindu’, and ‘Muslim’, Identity and conflict in Malabar,*” Working Paper No.255, January, 1994, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram, p.10.

⁷⁵ See Filippo Osello and Caronline Osella, *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict*, Pluto Press, London, 2000.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.13.

religions so that you may please support us to carrying the mission.”⁷⁷ The Ezhava Memorial has also expressed concern over the conversions of Ezhavas into other religion. The memorial views that it is pity to abandon their religion for getting education and government jobs.⁷⁸ A letter dated 8th October addressed to the editor ‘Social Reform Advocate’ written by AR. Naryanan Iyer, a higher caste person, which was republished in Mithavaadi 1915 October gives ample examples for the issue of conversion and Hindu social reforms.⁷⁹ The main object of the letter is to protest against the authorities who denied admission to the Thiyyans to the Zamori’ns College, Calicut. At the same time Christians were permitted to join there. “Christians who are doing their level best to put down our sacred Hinduism”⁸⁰ was the feeling expressed by the author of the letter. “The poor Tiyyan when refused admission to his own Hindu College goes to the neighbouring Missionary College, and he is not even allowed worshiping his saints and gods on holy days. Moreover, he is compelled to study a book which he reluctantly takes into his hand. The Missionary, by hook or crook, tries to convert him and thus Hinduism is dying everywhere.”⁸¹ The fear on conversion to Christianity can also be seen in these letters. “Calicut, we are afraid, has become the hunting ground of faddists, and sooner the difficulties are removed, the better for the good of Hinduism.”⁸² The notion of this higher caste man is nothing other

⁷⁷ *Mithavadi*, April, 1914, p. 10.

⁷⁸ N.K. Jose, *Ezhava Memorial*, Hobby Publishers, Vaikkam, 1996, p.19.

⁷⁹ *Mitavadi*, October, 1915, p.10.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.34

⁸¹ *Ibid*.

⁸² *Ibid*.

than the fear on the erosion of Hindu population into other religious fold. The comment regarding this letter by the editor of Social Reform Advocate is a very powerful proof for that. “Though we do not share our pious correspondent’s religious dread of the Christians or look upon them as in any way inferior to any class of Hindus, however high or low these may regard themselves, not unfit for these to associate with, we cannot help asking how is the Tiyyan less touchable for holy Brahmanas and holier Nairs than Christians including Tiyya Chrisians? O Inconsistency !thy name is Hindu.”⁸³ So after getting English education, the mindset of several upper castes also under gone a change. The rapid growth of Christianity and Islam created a kind of antagonism which is the major reason for positive thinking among some of the elite classes in Hindu society.

⁸³*Ibid.*

Community consciousness: Thiyya, Mappila clashes in North Malabar

Along the process of identifying the pagan groups as ‘Hindus’, a dual process of Hinduisation started from both *avarna* and *savarna* Hindus in Kerala.⁸⁴ Most of the religious movements in Kerala identified Brahmanic traditions as more pious and the leaders of the backward class tried to absorb and imitate upper caste signs which geared up the process of Sanskritisation. “It is noticeable that when the religious reform movements started editing our practices as barbaric; the first to be axed were those of the lower Jatis.”⁸⁵ So the victims turned out to be Sanskritised and their sacred geography centered around Brahmanic traditions. For example take the incident which occurred at Azhiyoor in the early 20th century. There was a famous Thiyya *tharavadu* named Kunnatheduthil at Azhiyoor near Mayyazhi where primitive deities were worshipped. When SreeNarayana Guru visited here, he advised to abandon primitive worships like animal sacrifices. He also asked the members of the *tharavadu* to install the pictures of Siva and Parvathi and worship it instead of local deities. He removed the primitive symbols of worship like sword, idol and *peetam*, from the temple.⁸⁶ The incident at Azhiyoor was not an isolated one and entire region witnessed a shifting of their traditional practices into Brahmanic way which helped much to the formation of common Hindu identity. “The lower caste gods are identified with derogatory

⁸⁴ Those castes that were positioned outside the brahmanical concept of varna order could be treated as *avarna* and those brahmanic upper castes who were included in the *varnashrama* were treated as *savarna* in the traditional caste- varna order in Kerala.

⁸⁵ M.Muraleedharan, *Hindu Community Formation in Kerala: Process and Structure under Colonial Modernity*, South Indian Studies, July-Deceber,1996,p.18.

⁸⁶ *Mithavadi*, October, 1915, p.13.

and obnoxious practices and were not worthy of being worshipped.”⁸⁷ Vagbhatanada, social reformer, opposed such practices and exhorted people to end such practices at the earliest as it is against the morality of Kerala.⁸⁸ Thus the symbols of community identity were destroyed by the communities themselves and tried to absorb Brahmanic mode of sacred symbols. On the other hand many of the deities of subaltern group had become marginalized and most of their sacred identities and locations were later absorbed by the Brahmanic cultural dominance. “It is notable that these gods, made out of the life world of the indigenous peoples underwent both an eclipse and a take-over with the emergence of an agrarian society under Brahman tutelage.”⁸⁹ This is the part of their pragmatic logic for the dominance over the downtrodden social groups. A point also should be noted in the writing of Innes. “even the lowest castes and the hill tribes are inclined to give their deities puranic names and strive to be incorporated in the Brahmanic system.”⁹⁰ It is true that the traditional belief system of these subaltern groups thus was destroyed and its space was occupied by the elite brahmanic Sanskrit groups. On this process “It is not the gods alone that were segmented, but the forms of worship also.”⁹¹ Thus the local beliefs and traditions began to be reshaped and in its place the ‘foreign’ elements

⁸⁷ Dr. Asokan Mundon, *Renaissance and Social Change in Malabar- A Study with Special Reference to Ananda Samajam, Siddha Samajam and Atmavidya Samgham*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, Department of History, University of Calicut, 2003, p.68.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Muraleedharen, *op.cit.*, p.19.

⁹⁰ C.A.Innes, *Malabar District Gazetteer*, Govt. Press, Madras, 1903, Reprint, Kerala Gazetteer Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p.151.

⁹¹ M. Muralidharan, *op.cit.*, p.18.

encroached. This encroachment on the religious practices and spiritual traditions of the lower castes groups were in tune with upper caste brahmanic ideology.

During the British period there emerged a middle class among Thiyyas which resulted in changing the social and economic life of Malabar. Out of the reform movement and other educational movements several Thiyyas obtained jobs in government services. There was the emergence of business class also among Thiyyas which certainly created a negative feeling among Mappilas who were the business people in this region.⁹² Innes legitimizes this by focusing on racial purity of Europeans. According to his understanding a Thiyya generation has been created out of union of European and local Thiyya community near the coastal region of Kannur.⁹³ He equates this with the Aryan blood transfusion of Nairs by Nambuthiri Brahmin.⁹⁴ However, the Thiyya made a remarkable advancement in their social status by the end of the 18th century. The clashes of Thiyya and Mappila community occurred in the northern part of Malabar which triggered community consciousness among the Thiyya community on the line of a religion. Several incidents happened there at the vicinity of Kannur which resulted in animosity between Muslim and other Hindu communities. Dileep Menon who made deep research on this area gives some examples of Thiyya-Muslim riots in North Malabar. (1) “On the 29th, while a procession of Thiyyas was proceeding towards a shrine in Alvil, a few men broke away and passed drumming in

⁹² Innes, *op.cit.*,p.125.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p.126.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*.

front of the (Pudappara) mosque at the dead of night. Two days later, a group of Nayers and Tiyyas marched from Alavil, deliberately stopped in front of the Pudappara mosque and drummed for a while. This crowd of ‘Hindus’ were organized by four people, two of whom were local Congress men. Reflecting the changed nature of the confrontation, the District Magistrate observed that the entry of the Nairs has complicated the straight Tiyya-Mappila issue.⁹⁵ “At Kakkad, some Mappilas acquired land belonging to a Tiyya, and built a mosque in his compound adjoining the Kottali temple. Fairly soon, the priests at the mosque started complaining about the music coming from the temple. On the 28th of February 1936, a Tiyya procession, in advance of the festival at Cherumba shrine in March, passed in front of the Kappad *srambi*⁹⁶ playing music. According to the Police Inspector K. V. Muhammad, a Mappila himself, the crowd shouted abuse at the *srambi*, calling it a ‘latrine, among other things. A petition from local Mappilas stated that the Tiyya fanatics had looted some shops as well’⁹⁷ Out of these incidents the younger generation of Tiyya community seemed to have met their identity in Hinduism. As pointed out by Dileep Menon “ While a younger generation of Tiyyas rushed to become ‘Hindus’ and join hand with their Nayar brethren, there were other castes which saw such brotherhood as spurious.”⁹⁸ The above incidences were sufficient to form a feeling of an imagined oneness/

⁹⁵ D.M. Malabar to home secretary, Madras, 8 February 1936. Home(c) Dept. G.O. 399 dated 1 May 1936 (KS).

⁹⁶ Local mosque of prayer for local Mappilas.

⁹⁷ Report of K.V. Muhammad, Inspector, 2 March 1936 and petition of Moplals of Edakkad to D. M; Calicut, 29 February 1936. Home(C) Dept. G.O. 393 dated 1 May 1936 (KS).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

commonness among the Thiyya community. This reveals the mindset of the younger generation in the Thiyya community who over the years developed a hatred of the Muslims and adopts a tendency to Hindu symbols in life. The closeness they had shown to Nair community intensified the commonness among them which was a step in forming to be part of a pan Hindu culture in this area in the later period.

‘Mappilaphobia’: As a tool for grouping

The division between Muslims and different communities on several aspects started from the medieval period itself. Ibn Battuta observes about open discrimination by the ‘infidels’ against Muslims. “At each shed (for travellers) there is a well for drinking and an infidel who is in charge of it. If the traveller is an infidel he gives him water in vessels; if he is a Muslim he pours the water into his hands, continuing to do so until he signs him to stop. It is the custom of the infidels in the Mulaybar lands that no Muslim may enter their houses or eat from their vessels; if he does so they break the vessels or give them to the Muslim.”⁹⁹ As Ibn Battuta had travelled mostly through the coastal town, the ‘infidels’ which he refers are mainly the upper caste people, either Nairs or Brahmins. “Most of the inhabitants of Budfattan(Valapattanam?) are Brahmans, who are venerated by the infidels and who hate the Muslims; for this reason there are no Muslims living amongst them.”¹⁰⁰ The note of Battuta is a clear evidence of the

⁹⁹ H.A.R. GIBB, *Ibn Battuta, Travels in Asia and Africa (1325-1354)*,(Reprint), Asian Educational Services, New Dehi,1997, p.231.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*,p .234.

psychological animosity of the Brahmins against the Muslim. Derogatory terms like *mlecha*¹⁰¹ were widely used to address Muslims.

The mobilization on the line of Religion was easy for the Mappilas due to their well organized religious system. In the case of Hindus, the mobilization on the line of religion was not taking place as that of Muslims. As pointed by K N Panikkar “...the form of worship in Hinduism did not create opportunities for common assembly, particularly, for the lower orders who had very few public places of worship in Malabar.”¹⁰² Shaik Sainudheen describes an incident in which how the Mappila community of Malabar could easily manage to unite and fight their enemy. Due to a local issue, Jews killed a Muslim at Kodungallur and the Muslims sent messages to the Malabar Muslims for help. The Mappilas of different part of Malabar gathered at Chaliyam mosque and decided to attack Jews.¹⁰³ They went there and killed several Jews and set ablaze the houses and synagogue. After this they resorted to attack Christians but the Nair community protested against this which caused a clash between Nairs and Muslims. Some of the Nairs were also killed in this clash. ¹⁰⁴This incident shows the active involvement of the Malabar Muslims on the issue of religious brotherhood in the 16th century.

CONVERSION

¹⁰¹ see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mleccha>

¹⁰² KN Panikkar, *Against Lord and State; Religion and Peasant Uprisngis in Malabar, 1836-1921*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1992, pp.194- 195.

¹⁰³ Shaik Sainudheen Makdum, *op.cit.*, p.62.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.63.

As mentioned earlier, the conversion issues sparked another kind of controversy among the Hindu community as the Christian and Muslim groups had succeeded in converting the Hindus especially *avarna* Hindus into their own fold. Even before, when the missionary conversions prevailed, the king of Calicut, Zamorin had encouraged conversions on political ground.¹⁰⁵ As the Hindu norms prevented ship journey, Zamorin promoted conversion of the coastal people into Islam.”¹⁰⁶

Out of discrimination from the higher caste several lower caste people began to embrace Islam in Malabar. “Number of recruits come also from time to time from the ranks of the Tiyans, and from the Cherumans and serf castes to which ‘the honour of Islam’ brings enfranchisement from all the disabilities of an outcaste.”¹⁰⁷ During the earlier period it was the custom that any Hindu woman caught in adultery would be sold to Mappilas.¹⁰⁸ Buchanan writes” A Nambuthiri, who condescended to commit fornication with a Tiati, would formerly have been deprived of his eyes, and the girl and all her relations would either have been put to death, or sold as slaves to the Moplays,..”¹⁰⁹ Selling them into the hands of the Mappila, as a punishment, might have created a deep distance of the Hindus especially upper caste, from the Mappila people. The selling of the native people to the Mappilas has been

¹⁰⁵ M.G.S. Narayanan, *Cultural Sybyosis in Kerala*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum,1972,p.6.

¹⁰⁶ The purpose of such conversion was “to man the Arab ships on which he depended for his aggrandizement; and he is said to have directed that in every family of fishermen in his dominion, one or more of the male members should be brought up as Muhammadans C.A.Innes, *op.cit.*,p,186.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Francis Buchanan , *op.cit.*,p.412.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 416- 417.

recorded in the account of Barbosa. He writes “.....any youth or young men who are vagrant, and have no employ, no father, no mother with whom they dwell, these are forfeit to him, and he sells them as slaves to the Moors ...” Naturally, Nair woman who offends caste norms were also handed over to the Muslims or Christians, says Barbosa.¹¹⁰ Those who are violating caste and traditional norms would be excommunicated and he had only one option; embrace other religions. This shows that selling of native people to the Muslims was frequent from the early period onwards. Likewise, The Nambuthiris who had committed murder or taking forbidden food items would be punished with death and their children would be converted to Islam.¹¹¹ It is believed that wives and children of the Nair militia were sold during the time of Tipu’s invasion.¹¹² Numerous examples from different sources can be quoted about such sellings in the history of Kerala.

Apparently, most of the converts into Islam were from lower castes. On the positive side, they were managed to escape caste oriented discrimination after their conversions into Islam. “The conversion of a Pariah, or low caste Hindu, to Muhammadianism raised him distinctly in the social scale, and he is treated with more respect by Hindus.”¹¹³ So many lower caste people “... rid themselves of so many vexations and degrading restrictions and disabilities by embracing Islam or Christianity.”¹¹⁴ Shaik Sainudheen says

¹¹⁰ M. Gangadharan, *op.cit.*,p.39.

¹¹¹ Francis Buchanan,*op.cit.*,p.426.

¹¹² Innes, *op.cit.*,p.63.

¹¹³ Logan, *op.cit.*, p.232.

¹¹⁴ Innes *op.cit.*, p.104.

about the issue of conversion. “Due to their (Hindus) ignorance and stupidity, they strictly follow these customs believing that it is their moral responsibility to uphold them. It was while they were living in these social conditions that the religion of Islam reached them by the grace of Allah. And this was also the main reason for their being easily attracted to Islam.”¹¹⁵ In case of Hindus embracing Islam, other Hindus do not, as a rule, put any impediments nor do they harm them by any means. On the other hand, they are customarily treated with respect along with the rest of the Muslims, even if they were of the lower caste.”¹¹⁶ The feeling expressed by L. K. Krishna Iyer regarding conversions share the notion existed in certain group of scholars. He says “If attempts are not made for the improvement of their (pulayas) present conditions they will be in course of time lost to the Hindu community, as many of them have and are becoming converts to Mahamodanism and Christianity.”¹¹⁷

Forcible conversion which took place during the Mappila riots deepened the rift in social relations between Hindus and Muslims in Kerala especially in South Malabar. Commenting on the forcible conversions which took place during the 1921 riots K. N. Panikkar says “The local leaders-*tangals* and *musliars*—whose persuasions were more religious than political, interpreted swaraj as Khilafat Kingdom based on Islamic tenets. They looked forward to the establishment of an Islamic state in which they expected their faith to dominate. In certain areas, the Mappilas amusing themselves by

¹¹⁵ Shaik Sainudheen Makdum, *op.cit.*, p.44.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.46.

¹¹⁷ L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes* Vol. I, Higginbotham, London, 1909, p.127.

assigning Mappila names to the women of some prominent Nair families was not pure jest: it represented their anticipation of the future. The forced conversion of Hindus and the murder of those who refused to embrace Islam were mainly the handiwork of this section.”¹¹⁸

Classifying Hindu communities on the basis of “otherness” by the organized religions was another turning point and these issues are rarely discussed in community studies in Kerala. As a people of idol worshippers, the Hindus, were addressed with the term *Kafir*. Shaik Sainudheen in his work classified the population as Muslims and unbelievers. The first chapter of his famous book ‘Tuhfat al Mujahidin’ promotes *jihad* against unbelievers.¹¹⁹ Even though his exhorting is mainly concerned with the Portuguese atrocities, it had created strong brotherhood feeling among Mappilas. The priests of the Mappila community were also the key players in the making of community consciousness and creating ‘otherness. Even though the animosity between Hindus and Muslims was mainly based on the issue of land, the religious or fundamentalist methods had created a division among different communities in Kerala. “The younger Tangal (Sayyid Fazal PookkoyaTangal), also issued some fatwas regulating the social conduct of Mappilas, particularly their intercourse with Hindus. The district collector identified three of them which tended ‘to increase the uneasiness felt by the Hindus’ because of the altered tone assumed by ‘many of the lower classes of Moplahs’. In these injunctions, the Tangal disapproved the use of the

¹¹⁸ K.N. Panikkar, *op.cit.*, pp. 179-180.

¹¹⁹ Shaik Sainudheen Makhdam, *op.cit.*, p.13.

honorific 'you' (in the plural) in addressing Nairs, forbade the poorer Mappilas from eating the remains of 'food prepared at the numerous festivities of the richer Hindus' and desired that no ploughing should be done on Fridays for 'the better observance of Mohammedan Sabbath.'¹²⁰ A note recorded by Thurston gives one of the instances that made the 'othering' process intensified. Kavalappara Nair, a local chief did not allow the Muslims to hold land in his jurisdiction. He exhorted the landlords not to let the land to Mappilas which shows an anti Mappila feeling which existed during that period.¹²¹

Colonial writings have also created an apprehension on Islamic conversion. It is reflected in words such as "Naked Christians and Hindus were dragged to pieces tied to the feet of elephants. All churches and temples were destroyed. Christian and pagan women were forcibly married to Muhammadans."¹²²

The process of Hinduisation further accelerated out of invasions of Tipu and Mappila riots from late 19th century to 1921. From the medieval period itself Christian travellers created a demonizing figure on Muslims. For instance Friar Jordanus who visited India in early 14th century writes "In India the greater part of the people worship idols although a great share of the sovereignty is in the hands of the Turkish Saracens, who came forth from Multan, and conquered and usurped dominion to themselves not long since,

¹²⁰ K.N. Panikkar, *op.cit.*, p.62.

¹²¹ Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India Vol V*, Cosmo Publicatios, (Reprint) Delhi, 1975, p.111.

¹²² William Logan, *op.cit.*, p 523.

and destroyed an infinity of idol temples, and likewise many churches, of which they made mosques for Mahomet, taking possession of their endowments and property.”¹²³ Such descriptions were quite common in the writings of that era. Tippu Sultan the legendary ruler of Mysore invaded Malabar region several times. Numerous stories have transmitted from generation to generation about the actions of Tipu Sultan like temple destruction and forcible conversion. A native scholar comments: “Later and quite recently the forceful career of Tipu striking terror through the length and breadth of the land is still cherished in awful remembrance by the people as if it were a thing of a short yesterday. The numerous Mahomedans now part of our native population and the disturbing element in its political history are mostly the living monuments of the times when the religious purity and simplicity of the Hindu house hold have been forced, at the inexorable point of the sword, to yield to the barefaced corruption and effeminate luxuries of the Mahmmedan harem”¹²⁴On the issue of Tipu’s aggression, colonial administrative scholars like Innes also argues in line with that, Tipu forcefully converted the local people. Innes says “Tipu’s brutal methods of obtaining converts to Islam, which drove the Rajas and thousands of their principal adherents out of their country broke up the social organism, and engendered a fierce and abiding hatred between Hindu and Muhammadan; and in 1792, when the British took over Malabar , this animosity had reached a dangerous height, and the foundations of law and order had been undermined.”¹²⁵About

¹²³ K.A. Nilakanda Sasthri, *op.cit.*, p.204.

¹²⁴ T.K.Gopal Panikkar,*op.cit.*,p.4.

¹²⁵ C.A. Innes, *op.cit.*,p.389.

the nature of the Mappila community Buchanan says that “ those (Mappilas) who were in the interior part of Malabar have become farmers, having been encouraged by Tippoo in a most licentious attack on the lives, persons, and property of the Hindus, are fierce, blood-thirsty, bigoted ruffians.”¹²⁶ The condition of Nambuthiris at the time of Tippu’s aggression was also narrated. “On the accession of Tippoo, the Nambudiris met with much trouble; and many of them were caught and circumcised”¹²⁷

The migrations of the Hindus from the interior parts of Malabar to other region owing to the persecutions of Tipu sultan were also described. The following are the some of the comments made by colonial writers regarding this. “In the interior part of the country, there are large tracts which have been over-run with high grass and trees since they have been deserted by their inhabitants, owing to the persecutions of the Hindus by the late Sultan (Tippu), and the subsequent depredations committed on the Nairs by the Moplays.”¹²⁸ “Tippoo destroyed the town, (Calicut) and removed its inhabitants to Nelluru, the name of which he changed to Furruck-abad; for, like all the Mussulmans of India, he was a mighty changer of old Pagan names.”¹²⁹ “Tippoo, on the contrary, undertook to render Islamism as the sole religion of Malabar.”¹³⁰ “The Hindus were everywhere persecuted, and plundered of their riches, of their women, and of their children.”¹³¹ “During

¹²⁶ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*,p.422.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*,p.426.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p.443.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*,p.474.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*,p,550.

¹³¹ *Ibid*,p.551.

this period of total anarchy the number of Moplays was greatly increased, multitudes of Hindus were circumcised by force, and many of the lower orders were converted.”¹³² It was mainly the British who represented Tipu as Islamist and a ruler of forceful conversion.

From later part of Nineteenth century onwards, many incidents of higher class Hindu homicides took place. Though the basic issue of these riots was the land, a strong religious affinity of the Mappilas had also played a key role. Besides a number of killings executed by the Mappilas, several incidences of defiling and burning of temples were also happened . The colonial accounts narrate each and every attack of the Mappilas and have demonized them by using the terms like ‘Jungle Mappila, fanatic etc’.¹³³ According to Innes, “During the time of Tipu’s invasion, ,“The Kadattanad Raja’s fortified palace at Kuttippuram was surrounded, and two thousand Nairs forced to surrender after a resistance of several days were circumcised and regaled with beef.”¹³⁴The writings draw attention to the forcible conversions of Nairs into Islam. “His (Tipu’s) religious persecutions had engendered a fierce and abiding hatred between Hindu and Muhammadan...”¹³⁵ The issues of conversions and the subsequent communal rift created fear and suspicion among the communities which in turn gave easy way to communal mobilization.

¹³² *Ibid*,p,550.

¹³³ See William Logan, *op.cit.*

¹³⁴ C.A.Innes,*op.cit.*,p.69.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, P.73.

A fear among the upper caste people regarding the numerical decline of Hindu population on account of conversions into Islam and Christianity emerged. The people of subaltern groups threatened to convert into Christianity in southern Kerala. The upper caste Hindu communities thought that the large scale conversion into other religions might lead to erosion in their socio-economic dominance in the society. Under this psychological pressure, they decided to give permission to the backward communities for temple entry. During this period, in South Kerala several families belonging Hindu religion had converted into Christianity thinking that they could get social acceptance.¹³⁶

The stories regarding the temple destruction during the time of Tipu's invasion and Mappila riots were orally transmitted from generation to generation especially among the upper caste Hindus without any scrutiny. Instead of the much traditionally influenced architectural style adapted by the Mosques, there existed a notion that "some of the mosques were built on the sites of temples, and that the temple endowments in land were made over with the temples for the maintenance of the mosques."¹³⁷ Colonial records gave wide publicity on the issue of the destruction of the spiritual centers of the upper caste Hindus. As most of the Mappilas were the converts from lower caste Hindus, a kind of antagonism prevailed against the upper Hindu caste dominium together with the tenancy issue. The temple destruction can also be viewed as a reaction of the caste bounded society. Along with the

¹³⁶ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caste_system_in_Kerala accessed on 21.4.2011.

¹³⁷ William Logan, *op.cit.*, p. 220.

combined actions of different groups of Mappilas against their Janmis, they also burned temples in particular locations. Fawcett has noted the destruction of a sacred stone in 1894 by Mappilas, which is believed to be the *Sivalingam* by Mappilas at Kottiyoor.¹³⁸ But the causes for this act are believed to be rather treasure hunting than religious.¹³⁹

Evidences indicating the killings of higher caste Hindus which occurred frequently during latter half of the 19th century are available. Though the problem of land and caste were the basic reasons, it is said that religiosity under certain fundamentalist feelings out of ignorance nourished their cause. Even though the focal target of the rebels was *janmis*, the other upper castes and lower castes were also killed during this violence. For instance there is a description of the issue of conversion in Malabar Manual. “Two cherumas (the property of Kudilli Kannukutti Nayar, peon, Cherrad Taluk) after embracing Muhammadianism reverted to their original faith after the departure of Sayyid Fazal through whose influence they had become converts. Some Mappilas did not relish this, and consequently determined to murder KannuKuttiNayar and the two Cherumas, and became sahids (martyrs)”.¹⁴⁰ Another incident of killing of a Cheruma man occurred on 9th September, 1880 when Matuminaltodi Ali killed him due to his reconversion from Islam to his earlier fold.¹⁴¹ The conversions of the slave castes like Cherumas into Islam had not created a division in Mappila community as most of the

¹³⁸ F.Fawcett, *op.cit.*, p.220.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ William Logan, *op.cit.*, p. 631.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.651.

converts in rural areas were drawn from the lower caste people. They had completely assimilated into Mappila community whereas the case of Mukkuva community was different. The new converts from the Mukkuva was known as ‘Puslan’ which they considered as derogatory word. “The conversion to Islam is common among this caste. The converts are called ‘Puislan or ‘Puthiya Isalm’ (New Isalm).”¹⁴² E. Thurston notice a discriminatory event by Mappilas against coastal people in Tanur. “Mappilas of this locality sent some Cherumans numbering over sixty, to notify by beat of kerosene tins that any Mukkuva or Puslain who went into the Moplah bazar wearing a shirt or coat or shoes would go in peril of his life.”¹⁴³ A complaint produced before Tirur Magistrate reveals that two women hailing from Mukkuva community were severely beaten up and robbed of their ornaments by the Mappilas for their alleged entry to the bazaar.¹⁴⁴ Beating and robbing of Mukkuva women on the public road signifies the harmful impact of Hindu caste system on them. Even today the Mappilas generally hesitate to have matrimonial ties with the coastal community of the Muslims.

The violent incidents had been narrated in colonial records as a stimulus to create animosity between the two communities. The objection of a *janmi* for giving permission to build a mosque also became an accidental cause for the Kulathur violence. The house of seventy year old Kutathurvariyyar , a higher caste Hindu *janmi*, was surrounded by the

¹⁴² M.G.S. Naryananan, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁴³ E. Thurston, *op.cit.*, Vol V, p.111

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Mappilas calling out “the chief pig is inside”¹⁴⁵ and he had been captured by the agitated group..¹⁴⁶ “The old Variyar was then brought out into the paddy field adjoining his house, to a distance of 60 yards from the gate house, and Puppatta Kuttiathanand, in the sight of all the people assembled, hacked him to pieces, severing his head from his body.”¹⁴⁷The murder of Chattara Nayar, the Velichapadu or oracle of a Hindu temple at Tutakkal in Walluvanad Taluk, on 7th month April 1873 also has been associated with religious causes .. “The Velichppadu in one of his fits of inspiration had given offence to the Mappilas of the mosque opposite.”¹⁴⁸ So the Mappilas considered the killing of Chattara Nayar as their religious duty. “Fanatics (Mappilas) who intend to commit outrages, and those who have committed them do, as a rule even now, proceed to this mosque (Mampuram Mosque) to pray at the Tangal’s shrine” ¹⁴⁹In one of the incidences which was ended with the murder of Shangu Nair in Nenmini, Walluvanad, the participants had conducted a religious programme called *Maulaud* before three days of proposed action. ¹⁵⁰In the year of 1919 there was a small attack in the Malappuram area. It was led by Purapurathu Valiachek Haji, aged 65 who was formerly a police man. Several Hindus were murdered. For this, Innes attributes ‘Moslem fanaticism’ as the reason.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.632.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp.648-649.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 626.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 648.

¹⁵¹ C.A. Innes, *op.cit.*, p.85.

While discussing the result of the Mappila riots which bombarded social space of Malabar, K. N. Panikkar says “The most unfortunate of them was that it contributed in large measure to the process of communalization which the Malabar society witnessed in the 20th century. It created a chasm between the Hindus and the Mappilas which was not easy to bridge. The two communities became suspicious of each other and, consequently, tended to drift apart socially and politically. Above all, the bitter memories of the rebellion exercised a very decisive influence on the course of politics in the district.”¹⁵²

The colonial narration of Mappila riots was enough to ignite communal feeling. Innes writes, “...many Hindu houses were dacoited and their inhabitants ill-treated or murdered, liquor shops were burnt, most of the main roads blocked with trees, and bridges and culverts broken down. The murders of Hindus for refusal to accept Islam were, however, more frequent from September onwards when troops were already on operation against the various gangs into which the rebels broke up.”¹⁵³ He has also mentions genocide of Hindus. “Hindus refusing Islam were butchered wholesale.”¹⁵⁴ Efforts were made to reconvert the Hindus after the rebellion.¹⁵⁵

Thus fanaticism, even though it comes under the ignorant social space, created terror among Hindu upper castes. The narratives on destruction of temples and idols had enough evidences for them to assume that their identity

¹⁵² KN Panikkar, *op.cit.*, p.188.

¹⁵³ C.A.Innes, *op.cit.*, p.87.

¹⁵⁴ Innes, *ibid*, p89.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*,p 91.

was in danger especially during the period when the society was full of ignorance and superstitions.

The temple entry movement was one of the facts for the Hinduisation process. “The temple entry movement of the twenties had the ironic effect of weakening *Jati* in its old form and of strengthening the community.”¹⁵⁶ The entry into temple signified the subaltern communities’ identity as Hindu. The temple entry movement resulted in destruction of socio- cultural identities of the lower-caste people as their local gods and other symbols began to eclipse. “By exposing temple entry as a political programme, nationalism had managed to create a sense of Hindu identity at least among the upper castes, while projecting Hindu community as an aspiration for Malabar society”.¹⁵⁷ From early 30’s itself periodicals like *Mathrubhumi* gave wide publicity for the temple entry, thus contributing for the unification of Hindu community. It is claimed that large scale conversion into Christianity was one of the reason to accede to the demand for temple entry for the *avanrna* castes in Travancore indirectly.¹⁵⁸ For the secular leaders, the temple entry movement was a secular movement as the getting rid of untouchability was more serious issue than the belief system of Hinduism. But the end result was that a pan Hindu identity concept slowly emerged. .

Hindu social formation in Malabar appears to us more or less incomplete probably due to the internal contradictions and complexities

¹⁵⁶ M.Muraleedharan, *op.cit.*, p.41.

¹⁵⁷ Dileep. M. Menon, *op.cit.*, p.19.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with K.Kochu on 25.12.2013.

within the traditional Hindu-fold. Apart from the Common features of a pan Indian Hindu dispensation, Hinduism as practised in Malabar carries certain particular traits pertaining to the community life and individual behaviour. Evidences of racially- toned abuse on subaltern population are available from the medieval literary genres.¹⁵⁹ This will definitely help an observer to identify the depth and strengths of caste consciousness. They help us to comprehend caste-bound material conditions and the allied cultural worlds in Malabar society. It was through these and many other techniques the feudal political authority was able to maintain a sort of control over their caste ‘inferiors’. It was later on, during the colonial period, was wilfully converted as a Hindu Public Consciousness based on putative caste differences.¹⁶⁰

Feudal centered medieval politics which was imposed upon the spiritual and cultural identity of different sections of population could be clearly visible if we observe festivals and ceremonies in the subaltern shrines. This imposition, in practice, acquires the form of a cultural domination. To put it more specifically, feudal social authority invented its ‘other’ among the polluting caste ‘inferiors’ and while officiating this categorization it was simultaneously keen on dominating them with an equally oppressive political power. Subaltern groups, being tied in this complex milieu of damnation

¹⁵⁹ For example the medieval literary text *Unnuchiruthevicharitham* use abusive language while portraying Cheruma slaves . See P V Krishnannair, *Unnichiruthevicharitham*, National Bookstall, Kottayam, 1973.

¹⁶⁰ See Gyan Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2006. Also Nicholas. B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind Colonialims and the Making of Modern Inda*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2010

became completely marginalized without any perceptible traces of endemic socio-cultural emancipation or resistance.¹⁶¹

Colonial writers, though their official documentation had fundamentally misconceived the operation of caste marginality/privilege as it was practised in Malabar. They even in most enlightened cases, ended up with banal generalizations. Later enthusiasm of caste-reform, especially after the second half of 19th century, in its all emancipatory drives were keen on emulating the very symbols and practices of privileged caste Hindus.

¹⁶¹ See Dileep. M. Menon, “*Becoming ‘Hindu’, and ‘Muslim’, Identity and conflict in Malabar,*” Working Paper No.255, January, 1994, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram.

CHAPTER 2

ATTEMPTS FOR CONSOLIDATION OF HINDU CONSCIOUSNESS IN POST INDEPENDENCE MALABAR

It can be argued that colonial administrative intervention was one of the main causes for the consolidation of Hindu community consciousness. Many colonial policies indirectly aimed at intensification of community/communal consciousness during pre-independence period. These policies in many ways helped the consolidation process to overcome internal problems like caste that prolonged the process. This phenomenon has been continued through the post-independence period and turned the community consciousness into ‘antagonistically communal’. That means the Hindu consciousness that grew as a colonial product and as a counter force to the Muslim ‘other’ seems to be developing later as communalist consciousness. Though the caste structure prolonged the massive Hindu consolidation, it was later on shaped by upper-caste-led Hindu politics. Political developments, campaigns of various caste organizations, involvements of minorities in administrative level were some of the factors that led to the gradual formation of Hindu community/ communal consciousness in Kerala during this period. The present chapter will try to trace the developments which had redefined the contours of the Hindu consciousness in Malabar.

Due to many historical reasons professional caste organizations were not as popular in Malabar as in South Kerala. Events like the invasion of Tippu Sultan, colonial rule and Mappila riots played a major role in transforming this region socially and politically. Members of lower-castes converted to Islam mainly for protection from tortures of caste discrimination. Unlike the Christian converts who were branded as *Avasa Christiani* and experienced a different form of discrimination, newly converted Muslims were merged into the Muslim community without any discrimination.

Several political movements occurred to reshape the social mindset of Kerala between independence and the early sixties. One of them was the Liberation Struggle. It made gaps in the political system and facilitated the entry of various caste and religious organizations into it. They nurtured an atmosphere of insecurity from which they profited.¹⁶² Hindu caste organizations like SNDP Yogam and NSS played significant role in fighting against the first Communist ministry. With the anti-Communist movement, leaders of the caste organizations emerged as the centers of manipulation. Some of them began to involve in the administration through pressure tactics. George Mathew in his book 'Communal Road to Secular Kerala' shows how Mannath Padmanabhan, leader of NSS, manipulated the situation with ulterior political motives. "Mannam skillfully mixed economic issues with communal pride to arouse frenzy among the Nairs. He repeatedly told them that the

¹⁶² ".....the 'liberation struggle', which began in June 1959, was fought on a religious platform invoking religious sentiments and mobilising the people on religious-communal grounds." George Mathew, *Communal road to a secular Kerala*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1989, p.151.

Agrarian Relations Bill was Communist government's move to ruin the community of Nairs. The Nairs in the Communist Party therefore were traitors, he stated.”¹⁶³ Mannath Padhmanabhan's leadership inspired the leaders of other caste organizations to take stance against Communist Party and its rule. So the Liberation struggle became a cause for strengthening various pressure groups based on religion or caste. Ezhava and Nair communities began to form their pressure tactics to intervene in the political arena of Kerala.

Major Hindu caste organizations were not rooted in Malabar except a few like Aryasamaj. Aryasamaj came to prominence only after the Mappila rebellion of 1921. It started several branches at different places in Malabar to re-convert the people who embraced Islam during the riot. So, unlike south Kerala, Caste organizations have little role in the process of Hindu consolidation in Malabar. Influence of Sanskritisation, RSS campaigns, Media, and Spiritual leadership are to be examined in detail to understand the real picture of the process.

2.1 Sanskritising Society: The Case of Malabar

According to M N Srinivas Sanskritisation is a process for attaining higher status in Hindu society.¹⁶⁴ This means an elevation in the caste ladder to the status of Brahmins. Though Brahmins are a minority in Kerala their cultural symbols were rapid in spreading across caste boundaries as ultimate

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ M. N. Srinivas , *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays*, OUP, New Delhi, 1987,p.7.

cultural ideals. At the same time the traditional and Tribal symbols are assimilated into Brahmanic sign system by the main stream Hindutva forces.¹⁶⁵ In several subaltern centers of worship Namboothires were appointed as officiating priests. This phenomenon has social and economic aspects. While the Non Brahmins believed in the improved sanctity of their temple by the holy presence of Namboothiri as Poojari, Namboothiries in their turn were attracted by the wages they were offered. Subaltern centers of worship are thus 'upgraded' into Hindu Temples or spiritual centers. Gradually these temples are known to be Hindu and in a way facilitate the entry of different tribes into organized Hindu religion. Such places are visited by men of all castes under the common name of Hindu. Converting of 'kavus' into 'Kshethra' can be seen in this background.

Festivals like *Rakshabandhan* by the Hindu Right wing forces, helped to weld up cracks in earstwhile Hindu system. The *Rakhsbandhan* is a tradition existed mostly in Northern India among patriarchal Hindus of higher castes.¹⁶⁶ "The RSS has transformed it into a *mahotsva* organized throughout the country as a Hindu religious event..."¹⁶⁷ Now it is celebrated in Kerala by different frontal orgainsations of the RSS. The student wing of RSS, ABVP(Akhil Bharatheeya Vidhyarthi Parishad), celebrates it in different educational Institutions. *Rakshabandhan* is observed as a celebration of youth and vigour with an extreme patriotic fervour. Thus it is successful in

¹⁶⁵ Neeladhiri Bhattacharya, *Khaki Shorts Saffron Flags*. Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993, p.67.

¹⁶⁶ K.N. Panikkar, *An Agenda for Cultural Action and Other Essays*, Three Essays Collective, New Delhi, 2006.p.16

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*,p.17

attracting even the members of supposedly secular organizations. *Rakhi* worn by the participants on their wrist remains a symbolic statement of their Hindu ‘identity’ and generates an emotion of oneness. Unwittingly they become a part of a common sign system. Thus participation in such ceremonies becomes an initiation into the feeling of unity under the name of Hindu.

The Maharashtra tradition of celebrating the festival of Ganesha has recently permeated into Kerala. Panikkar says “It has now become a common religious event enthusiastically celebrated in almost all states, with the dalits and the lower-castes taking perhaps a more active part than others.”¹⁶⁸ This shows how the Brahmanic gods become the Gods of Dalits. Dalits, still under the stigma of social discrimination feel elevated in their status by merging into the Brahmanic Hindu tradition. Cultural demarcations of Dalits are destroyed to adapt them into the Hindu fold. This results in a sort of cultural penetration that replaces Dalit value system with values of Brahmanic traditions. Describing the Ganesh festival and cow protection movements Shabnam Tejani points out that “Ganapat festivals and cow protection were revived regularly throughout the twentieth century as a way to display opposition to the state or to Muslims through a militant upper-caste Hinduism.”¹⁶⁹

As M. N. Srinivas pointed out “Sanskritization is the process by which a ‘low’ Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual,

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Shabnum Tejani, *Indian Secularism A Social and Intellectual History 1890-1950*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2007, p.61.

ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, twice-born” caste.”¹⁷⁰ In Kerala all caste groups including backward castes and Dalits actively participate in celebrations associated with newly arrived cultural practices. The main reason is to get upward social mobility. The space of cultural traditions and practices of lower castes are invaded by Brahmanic traditions. These assimilations do not help the Dalits and backward groups to access the mainstream social milieu. As Pointed out by MN Srinivas “...the mobility associated with Sanskritization results only in positional changes in the system and does not lead to any structural change.”¹⁷¹ The economic, political and social positions of lower castes are still worse compared to the higher caste communities.

Cow-worship¹⁷² has been widely accepted as a Hindu practice in Malabar as elsewhere in India. This is also falsely understood as a medium of upward social mobility by lower castes. This, in general, was readily accepted as call for a neutral/genuine acculturation. In certain pockets in Malabar the campaign led to violent protests like the one took place at Payyoli near Kozhikkode.¹⁷³ In Malabar there were several campaigns on the issue of cow protection after independence. On 26 October 1952 , RSS observed ‘Cow Protection Day’. Several units of RSS followed this call by organizing various

¹⁷⁰ M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2007, p.6.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*,p.6.

¹⁷² “The cow protection movement has been utilized by the RSS and the Jan Sangh to enlist the support of the Hindu community in Hindi speaking areas, where anti- cow slaughter campaigns have symbolized both anti-secular and anti-Muslim activities”,Douglas .C. Smyth, *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol.6.No.3. April,1972,p326.

¹⁷³ *Kesari*, 31st October,1952.

functions at different localities like Palakkad, Chavakkad, Shornnur, and Payyoli.¹⁷⁴ Muslims viewed these ceremonies as a plot against their community and began a counter campaign. In Payyoli, a meeting organized in connection with cow protection campaign was interrupted when a group of Muslims gathered nearby and killed a calf and supplied its meat.¹⁷⁵ The meeting was reportedly vandalized by the local Muslims.¹⁷⁶ The next day a protest meeting was held in which K. Kelappan, the Sarvodaya leader participated. It was presided over by a local PSP (Praja Socialist Party) member named Kannan *gumasthan*. It is been said that even on this occasion, local Muslims gathered near the venue and slaughtered a calf in public.¹⁷⁷ This incident invited protests from various Hindu groups. Later Kannan *gumasthan* was murdered and the culprits arrested by the police turned out to be local Muslims with fanatic affiliations.¹⁷⁸

Malabar cow protection council was formed on November 1st 1953 at Chalappuram in Kozhikode under the leadership of Sri T N Thirumulppadu.¹⁷⁹ On 4th October, 1953 a public meeting was held under the auspices of Aryasamaj in Calicut. The meeting was presided over by Swami Dharmanandji. It demanded ban on cow slaughter across the country by the then central government.¹⁸⁰ On this issue Rashtreeya Swayam Sevak

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Mathrubhumi* daily, 1st November, 1952.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Kesari, ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Kesari*, 11th October 1953.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

(hereafter RSS) conducted a procession and public meeting in Calicut in November 1954.¹⁸¹ The save cow campaign of the Hindutva groups could not make an effect in Kerala as in North India. In North India several farming castes joined Brahmins against cow killing in Colonial period.¹⁸² Unlike the North Indians most of the people in Hindu community in Malabar eat cattle meat. So ultimately the save-cow campaign has yet to make an impact in Kerala as it did in North India.

Another prominent symbol used by the Hindutva groups is the figure of popular god, Lord Krishna. This blue-god of shepherds is very well loved by women and children. He lives in their fancy from childhood onwards. Unlike other seriously ferocious Hindu gods this playful figure has many consorts and very liberal in his blessings. By projecting this figure that lives in the collective unconscious of the people Hindutva forces could easily influence the social consciousness. So campaign for declaration of a birth day of this god- Sree Krishna Jayanthi- is to be viewed from this angle. Several Hindu outfits had started campaigns for declaring *janmashtami* (Sree Krishna Jayanthi) as a public holiday as early as 1950. The director board of N S S on August 10th, 1958 made a submission to the Government for the same.¹⁸³ At that time it had been removed from the list of public holidays by the Government. This provoked certain sections of Hindus. Sri Sathuseelan Parameshwaran Pillai, the convener of Srikrishna Janmashtami Samithi, asked

¹⁸¹ *Mathrubhumi*, 21st January 1954.

¹⁸² Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Oxford, Delhi, 2006, p.200.

¹⁸³ *Kesari*, 24th August, 1958.

the Hindus to observe *Janmashtami* day widely with a view to displaying Hindu unity and dharma.¹⁸⁴ The secretary of Sri Krishana Jayanthi festival committee delivered a statement criticizing government policy of declaring the day as partial holiday despite the Nabi day being a complete holiday.¹⁸⁵ Here the Hindu unity is conceived and propagated in opposition to Muslim unity. This resembles the strategy employed by the colonial writings of creating an 'Other' to affirm one's own identity. So it was imperative for different castes, tribals and dalits to set aside their uniqueness and difference to unite under the banner of Hindu.

2.2 Hindu consolidation through the Pilgrimages

In every religion, pilgrimage is considered to be an act of purification. The trials and tribulations that one experience in the long journey to distant holy land is believed to be capable of purifying one's soul. Symbolically it is the journey of life itself. In spite of its transcendental moorings contemporary pilgrimage often appear as detached from it's metaphysics of self purification and has become much akin to a sort of spiritual tourism. Since believers are away from the prescribed religious discipline such seasonal journeys to holy places have become access points of orchestrated religious unity. In Kerala the pilgrim centers like Sabarimala and Guruvayur have become such places of felt- unity under the name of religion. Sabarimala is a Hindu temple that attracts large section of the people from different part of south India, even though the lord Ayyappa is deity with known Buddhist

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 14th August 1966.

connections.¹⁸⁶ Caste identity is not relevant in the case of Sabarimala pilgrimage. Almost all the castes overcome their exclusivity in Sabarimala pilgrimage. The season *Mandalam*, when the temple opens for the annual mass worship, is considered to be sacred and most of the believers practice an ascetic life in pilgrimage. *Akhanda nama yajnam*-a religious gathering with devotional songs and group dining sessions are usually organized by devotees. Blackdress worn by pilgrims and erasure of individual identity by calling each other as *swamis* contributes to the emotional bonding between people. The common sign system- same cloths, same food, same ornaments and same life-style lead to a mass spiritual mobilization under the Hindu Umbrella. Most of the Sabarimala devotees visit various temples on their way to Sabarimala like Guruvayoor and Ettumanoor. Pilgrimage to the Kondungallur, and Kottiyoor generate similar common religious identity consciousness among different Hindu castes. The disciplined life required of Sabarimala pilgrims is very significant since by everyone facilitate a common emotional bonding among the people.

Kodungallur Bharani festival and Kottiyoor festival attract a large number of people across caste boundaries. Kottiyoor is also an important destination for Hindu devotees. Parassinikkadavu is another emerging centre of mass worship. Visit to the temples in groups increases this group feeling.

The Sabarimala idol destruction in 1951 had provoked many Hindu groups. An appeal published in Kesari weekly in 1953 reveal the attitude of

¹⁸⁶ V.K Rajagopal, *Aithihingalile Ayyappan*, <http://www.mathrubhumi.com/sabarimala/story.php?id=234861> accessed on 12.12.2013.

Hindu leaders towards the issue. P M Nair, the convener of Protest Committee made an appeal to Hindus to conduct various protest demonstrations. They exhorted people to observe protest days between *Medam* six to ten and presented a detailed plan for it. Protestor devotees were to observe prayer-day on 6th *Medam*. Seventh, Eighth and Ninth of the same month were to be dedicated for working for a Hindu organisation and on the 10th protest meeting were to be conducted and pass petitions to government.¹⁸⁷ This incident secured God Ayappa in the Hindu tent and provided an opportunity for the people to be organized under the banner of Hindu outfits.

Hindu *sammelan* (meeting) which was regularly conducted in the temple city of Guruvayur under the auspices of Guruvayur Devaswam was one of the initial steps after independence to discuss common Hindu problems. The fifth Hindu *sammelan* was held at Srikrishna talkies, Guruvayur and conveyed the aim of the meeting as the unity of Hindus.¹⁸⁸ Several dignitaries including Kochi Raja Ramavarma Thamburan, Indian Minister for internal affairs, Dr. Kailasa Nath Katju, Madras High Court judge A S P Aiyar sent their messages to the *Sammelan*.¹⁸⁹ The message of A S P Aiyar says “For Christians and Muslims, they have strong institutions to spread their ideology and to counter arguments. We must also have such kind of organizations. If we want to survive we must co-relate the different caste sects in our society.”¹⁹⁰ It reflects the influence of the structure, movements

¹⁸⁷ *Kesari*, 12th April 1953.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 31st May 1953.

¹⁹⁰ *Kesari*, 31 May 1953.

and campaigns of the Semitic religions on Hindus. The 15th Hindu *Sammelan* was inaugurated by K M Munshi under the presidentialship of the then Zamorin of Calicut.¹⁹¹ The *sammelan* which held in 1964 May was inaugurated by Swami Chinmayanda.¹⁹² He exhorted the Hindus that like other organized religions they must also try to convert people into Hinduism.¹⁹³

The Vishal Hindu Sammelan of 1982 was a major turning point in the process of Hindu consolidation in Kerala. “ More than one hundred Hindu *Sanyasins* from all sects, including *Harijans*, led the procession on 4 April 1982 in which more than five lakhs people participated.¹⁹⁴ “ The slogan of the Sammelan ‘We Hindus are one’ got a wide welcome from all over the State.”¹⁹⁵ The focus of Sammelan was the issue of temple administration. The Vishal Hindu Sammelan sowed the seeds for the formation of an organization, the Hindu Front, which aimed to contest elections to Kerala legislature in the eighties.

The formation of Hindu Front on 26th November 1984 raised several questions regarding Hindu causes in Kerala. The Nilakkal issue, Chala incident and several other political issues have created resentment among Hindus. This was which later led to the formation of Hindu Front. The aim Hindu Front was to create the feeling of common Hindu identity.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 09-June-1963.

¹⁹² *Ibid*.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁴ *Indian Express*, 5th April 1982.

¹⁹⁵ Jayaprasad, *RSS and Hindu Nationalism*, Deep and Deep Publication, Delhi,1991,p. 236.

2.3 Spiritual gurus

During the Eighties the influence of spiritual leaders on public life began to increase. Hindu religion is more affectionate to the concept of *guru*.¹⁹⁶ Several personalities like Saibaba, Matha Amrithanandamayi and Swami Chinmayananda emerged. Swami Chinmayananda was a Hindu Uppercaste who devoted his life for spiritual mobilization of Hindus. He had relationship with VHP (Viswa Hindu Parishad); a Hindu organization active in North India.¹⁹⁷ O. Rajagopal, a prominent leader of Bharatheeya Janatha Parti in his auto biography narrates the discussion between Guruji Golwalkar and Chinmayanand.¹⁹⁸

According to Jaffrelot “Swami Chinmayandnda is representative of many ‘modern gurus’ who were active in the VHP and shared a common set of characteristics: their spiritual practice is based on discourses in English and hence both language and message were adapted to the urban middle class; they often shared the same background as that of the latter’s; the guru-shishya relation is accorded less importance than that of mass contacts, the ‘modern gurus’ do not emphasize their sectarian affiliation but rather their “Hindu allegiance; they have often founded their own *ashram*; and , lastly, they attend conferences all over the world.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ *guru devo bhava, gurave nama* See <http://punnyabhumi.com/category/sanathanam/page/58>

¹⁹⁷ Christopher Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, Penguin Book India ltd 1996, Delhi.p.195.

¹⁹⁸ O. Rajagopal, *Jeevithamritham*(Autobiography), D.C. Books, ,Kottayam, 2009, p.54.

¹⁹⁹ Christopher Jaffrelot, *op.cit.*,pp. 195-196.

Mata Amritanthamayi who was born in a poor Mukkuva family emerged as a spiritual power in Kerala in the eighties. “The high point in her life came at the age of twenty one when she first realized her identity with lord Krishna and subsequently with the goddess Devi.”²⁰⁰ She started Mata Amritanandamayi Mission in 1981 with its headquarters at Kollam. The mission was mainly following Hindu Brahmanic mode of thinking. “Hindu religion is otherwise called *Sanathana Dharma* and it is suitable for each and every part of the world”²⁰¹ is the concept of Amrithanandamayi. The mission started several schools and hospitals across India. It can draw devotees from different parts of the world. Through the schools and hospitals they are able to transmit their message to the public.

In his autobiography former BJP leader O. Rajagopal comments that one of the memorable things in his life was the acceptance of Mata Amrithanandamayi as his spiritual guru.²⁰² He saw Amrithanandamayi like Sriramakrishana Paramahansa. He also reveals that he introduced several national BJP leaders like A.B.Vajpayee, L.K.Advani, Umabharathi Dr.Muralaee Manohar Joshi and Narendra Modi to his guru. On one occasion Dr. Joshi appreciated Mr. Rajagopal for introducing him to Amrithanandamayi and thus communicating the problems of Hindus to her.²⁰³

“The growth in popularity of new sects, of deities and shrines, the growing

²⁰⁰ . Maya Warriar, *The Seva Ethic and the Spirit of Institutions Building in the Mata Amritanandamayi Mission* in Antony Copley (ed) *Hinduism in Public and Private*, Oxford University Press, 2009.p.257

²⁰¹ Matha Amrithananda, *Sathyam Sanathanam* pamphlet, Mata Amritanandamayi Mission Trust, Kollam, 2005, p.5.

²⁰² O. Rajagopal, *op.cit.*, p.149.

²⁰³ *Ibid*,p.150.

importance of gurus and god men and the new practice of public celebrations of Hindu religious festivals on a much wider social and geographical scale, have all shored up the popular- cultural and political aspects of Hinduism. These have considerably weakened the traditional ritual and social organizational aspects of Hinduism”²⁰⁴

Influence of Saibaba is very strong in Kerala. The Sai devotees have established several cultural centers across the state and carry out many charity works. The *Art of Living* course of Sri Sri Ravisanker through Yoga and other exercises attracts thousands of people especially from the middle-class who are in the stress of modern life. Ravishankar has attained the place and influence of a spiritual guru among the people of Kerala.

Educational institutions and hospitals functioning under these gurus spread Hinduism. There are several such institutions in Malabar and most of the students belong to Hindu without caste barrier. These self nominated spiritual gurus enhance Hindu cultural identity among the common people. It could also help for shaping Hindu identities.

2.4 Role of media making ‘Hindu’ more public

Programs in the state run All India Radio for its regular morning broadcast are mostly religious. Devotional songs are aired all days. Spirituality is thus promoted by a government owned media itself. Doordarshan telecasted mega-series like Ramayana and Mahabharatha in the

²⁰⁴ D. L. Sheth, In *Contemporary India Transitions*, (ed.) Peter Ronald de Souza, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2001, p.248.

eighties. Television became a main consumer-artefact among the lower middle class community of Kerala during this period. These serials have become popular among Hindus despite caste barriers. The serials were created in a pan Hindu perspective and facilitated the same feeling among common people. They helped to produce the popular cult of Rama. “The unprecedented event of the broadcast of the Ramayan, a Hindu epic serialized on the state-run television system, and the astuteness of the BJP, which was eventually able to perceive the opportunity presented in the serial’s enormous success, were important here. Drawing on myth and devotionism, the television serial portrayed a Hindu golden age of tradition that was much ahead of the modern era in statecraft and warfare. The show which ran from January 1987 to September 1990 adroitly made appeals to diverse social groups, under a symbolic rubric of a Hindu culture that they could be tied under the banner of Hindu assertion.”²⁰⁵ Thus the cultural games using official media produced negative results. “In this serial the story of Ram is shown to be a unifier of the diverse traditions of the country: even South India-where the Ram legend is hardly popular- is shown to be sharing as passionately in the myth Ram as the north.”²⁰⁶

The serialisation of the epic *Ramayana* has created a mass religious feeling among the Hindu community across the nation. “Desperate sentiments, emancipatory and reactionary, both can be found in popular

²⁰⁵ Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics after Television – Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*, Cambridge University press, Cambridge, 2001, p.15.

²⁰⁶ Nelladhri Bhattacharya, *Khaki and shorts- A critique of Hindu Right*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993, p. 6.

understanding of the *Ramayana* serial. What emerges in political practice is hence contingent on the kinds of mobilization carried out.”²⁰⁷ In the eighties television was very expensive and confined to upper class households. Majority of the upper class of Kerala was constituted by the traditionally wealthy Hindu upper-caste. Common people used to visit their houses for viewing these serials. A group of people used to gather in these houses in front of Television. Caste differences were irrelevant in such gatherings in which everyone becomes a part of a collective emotionality belonging to the hero-worshippers of mainstream Hindu gods of a glorious past. “The serialized epics portrayed on television allow the collective sharing of an idealized past...”²⁰⁸ Such gatherings were initial step towards collective religious affairs. “The serial’s religiosity was in fact an often-cited explanation of its popularity, raising questions of the political import of the broadcast. Airing a religious serial on state- controlled television raised questions about the government’s commitment to secularism.”²⁰⁹

Formation of Hindu Vishal sammelan or Hindu Front is to be analyzed in this background. Now the prime time in television channels is packed with soaps based on supernatural beliefs. Media gives special attention to religious festivals and speech of spiritual leaders. There are TV channels dedicated to particular religion or sects in a religion. Print media publish special editions for different religious events and visitations of popular religious leaders.

²⁰⁷ Aravind Rajagopal, *op.cit.*, p.130.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.25.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*,p.136.

2.5 Sacred geography and identity formation

The temples and Shrines played significant role in formulating culture and identity. There are several temples and shrines in Malabar. “The basic distinction between temples (*kshetram*) and shrines (*kavus*) was that only the Nayar landholders and Nambudiri Brahmins were allowed to pray at the former. *Kavus* were of various kinds, but generally they were the centers of worship of lower and upper-castes -community within a region defined by the sphere of an overlord ship (*melkoyma*) of a dominant family or families managing the shrine.”²¹⁰ Identity of shrines has undergone a change as other symbols of religious worship had turned into the mode of Brahmanic practices. The conversion of the lower caste shrines into Hindu has become a common phenomenon in Malabar. The daily *Kesari* dated 5-1-58 shows a news report of the conversion of a ‘Harijan’ shrine at Thengilakkadavu to Hindu temple. The temple at Thengilakkadavu Kodukkallinkal was originally worshipped by local dalit community. Several such family shrines of lower caste had been converted into Brahmanic mode of temples and appoint Namboothiris as *melsanthys*(*head priests*). The festivals at shrines across Malabar attract all communities. “Profane and sacred, high and low, and superior and subordinate identities were subsumed within the space of these shrine festivals.”²¹¹

²¹⁰ Dilip. M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India Malabar, 1900-1948*, Cambridge,1994.pp.44-45.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 52.

The entry of 'untouchables' into Hindu temples had increased religiosity of backward classes. Earlier their spiritual practice was confined to local community gods. After getting entrance to the Brahmanic temples they lost their community gods and unique systems of worship. Now most of the families of dalits and other backward classes depend upon Brahmanic temple for important functions and rites like marriage.

Procession during festivals has become a stage for religious exhibitionism and show of strength. 'Varavu' is the term used for Hindu temple processions in Kerala. It was the procession of different caste groups and nowadays it is flourishing with symbols of Brahmanic gods. 'Varavu' is a show of religious strength which sometime clash with local Muslims and resulting in communal tensions. Tensions erupted when a procession reached in front of the Muslim Mosques nearby. There were several documented incidents of participants in temple processions clashing with the local Muslims.²¹²

Even before their entry into temples, Dalit groups were appeared as part of festival processions in various temples and shrines. Thus these festivals had turned out to be an opportunity for mobilising Hindu mass consciousness. During fifties and sixties there were several Hindu gatherings attached to the temple festivals in Malabar. In these meetings Hindu leaders used to speak for the cause of Hindu religion and culture. In 1954 March, a Hindu Congress was held at Alungal in Ponnani Taluk and the speakers like

²¹² See Dileep. M. Menon, "*Becoming 'Hindu', and 'Muslim', Identity and Conflict in Malabar,*" Working paper No.255, Vol. 6, January,1994,CDS, Thiruvananthapuram. 1979.

Sri. T. N. Bharathan and V. Krishanasharma pointed out the importance of Hindu unity and conducting regular Hindu Congresses as a part of temple festivals.²¹³

Renovations of temples

NSS started a 'Deaswam Corporation' in 1958 in order to protect ruined temple of Nairs.²¹⁴ The Corporation was also in favour of taking over temples of other Hindu castes.²¹⁵ A meeting of different Hindu leaders who met at Kottayam in November 1966 formed a Temple Protection Council.²¹⁶ One of the earliest attempts to rejuvenate Hindu temples was a fund collection drive carried out by Malabar Temple Protection Council in November 1969. The inauguration of the fund collection was done by Sri O. Koran (the then Minister of Devaswam at Chalappuram school in Calicut.²¹⁷ It was presided over by K. Kelappan, the President of Temple Protection Council. He commented that the temples should not be taken over by the government.²¹⁸ "Destroyed temples show the destructed Hindu community. So the people should take initiative to renovate temples."²¹⁹

Recently some of the temples have started to provide religious education to children. They conduct Veda classes on Sundays and other holidays. These weekly classes were new to Hindu society. Earlier only the

²¹³ *Kesari*, 11th April 1954.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 13th March 1954.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 13th July 1958.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 4th December 1966.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 23rd November 1969

²¹⁸ *Ibid*.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*.

Nambuthiri youths had the opportunity to learn *Vedas*. Weekly Veda classes make children more conscious about their religion. Malabar Temple Protection Council formed in 1969 led by K Kelappan was very vigilant in the issues, thought it as related to Hindus. The meeting under the presidentialship of K. Kelappan convened in Bairagi Temple decided to start Hindu religious education.²²⁰.

This as they claimed was a step to counter organized religious education system of other religions. Malabar Temple Protection Council has later been transformed to Kerala Temple Protection Council (Kerala Kshetra Samrakshana samithi). “Its major goal is to free the temple administration in the State from all political clutches as well as State control and place the administration in the hands of devotees.”²²¹ Today several temples are managed by the Temple Protection Council.

Devaswom Board is the main state organization to govern Hindu temples. Political interference in the board is frequent and several Hindu organizations accused the Board for its miss-governance. The Temple protection Council is making campaign against the government attempt to control temples. They exhorted the Hindu society that all Hindus should unite for the temple protection.²²²

2.6 Role of RSS and other Hindu Organizations

²²⁰ *Kesari* ,15th June 1969.

²²¹ Jayaprasad, *op.cit.*, p.221.

²²² *Mama deeksha kshetra raksha*, pamphlet, kerala Kshetra samrakshana samiti , Kozhikkode, 2006, p .30

Kerala is a crucial state for RSS since the state has a strong presence of two minority religions-Islam and Christianity. RSS started its activities in Kerala in 1942. Most of the leaders of the RSS were from higher castes. “Prior to the emergence of the RSS; there is hardly any history of Hindu Organisation in Kerala. In Malabar, a Hindu conference was organised at Manjery in 1929 mostly by the victims of the 1921 rebellion, but it did not take off. There were no post-partition riots and the late forties were marred only by a stray incident in which a rich Muslim who embraced Hinduism through the Arya Samaj was killed along with his family by paid Muslim goondas.”²²³ The incident took place in Angadippuram. Kiliyamannil Unneen with some of his family members decided to accept Hinduism and later they were converted. Unneen accepted the name Ramsimhan. In 1947 August they were killed by some fundamentalists.²²⁴ “Ram simhan incident created panic among the Hindus of Kerala.”²²⁵ Hindu literature of the Sangh Parivar later used this incident to project Muslim Fundamentalism.

The first agitations of RSS involvement is the liberation struggle of 1959 to oust the democratically elected Communist government .²²⁶ They started their campaigns with the opening *sakas* across Kerala adjacent to temples. They could attract even the members of non RSS families. There were several other organizations affiliated to RSS. Bharathiya Vichar Kendra

²²³ *Ibid*, p.30

²²⁴ P. Narayanan, *Bhaskar Rao; Samarppitha Jeevitham*(Mal.), Kurukshthraprakashan, Kochi,2008, p. 30.

²²⁵ *Ibid*.

²²⁶ Jayaprasad, *op.cit.*, p. 182.

is dealing with its ideological positions. The VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishat) was started at Calicut in 1969.²²⁷ The presence of its student's wing is largely felt in NSS colleges and Devaswam board colleges. *Sobhayathra* (grand processions) conducted by Balgokulam—the children's wing of RSS—as part of Sree Krishna Jayanthi is a massive programme in Malabar region. The children of all castes of the Hindu community participate in the processions. Bharathiya Vidya Niketan functions like the educational wing of RSS. It has several educational institutions in Malabar. RSS works among tribes under the name of Vanavikas Kendra/Adivasi Sangh. They are very vigilant to keep tribals in the Hindu fold and resist conversion to any other religion. “This outer ring of organs carried out a hegemonic struggle that may not have won organisational victories for the R.S.S., but it has created a new cultural climate in which the notion of the Hindu community could be re-negotiated into the benefit of its Politics.”²²⁸

From the fifties the RSS involved in many issues like Manathala near Chavakkad in Thrissure district. In 1958 a tensed situation arose at Manathala, Chavakkad when local Muslim community tried to prevent temple procession passing in front of Manathala Juma Masjid. The Hindu religious procession in front of the mosque is a regular cause for communal disturbance in North India. Even though those kinds of issues were not so common in Kerala, it could create communal tensions at certain regions of Malabar. The

²²⁷ *Kesari*, 27th April, 1969.

²²⁸ M.Muraleedharan, *op.cit.*, p.50.

issue ended with a court judgment in 1961 against any type of interruption for the procession.²²⁹

The Hindu organizations always tried to maintain good relationship with professional caste organizations like NSS and SNDP. In 1967 Janasangh organized its all India conference at Calicut. They named the place of conference as Sree Narayana Nagar as a tactic to attract the dominant Thiyya community of the region.²³⁰ On the occasion of the centenary celebrations of Aruvippuram consecration, in 1988, the organizers invited L K Advani; the firebrand BJP leader to attend the inaugural function.²³¹ “The RSS *Prajarakas* in Kerala came either from the disposed feudal classes or from the Konkan Brahmans”²³² The relation between RSS and NSS was strong. Several leaders of NSS participated in the programmes of the RSS. In 1952 a meeting was held at Kidangaparmbu in Alappuzha against cow killing where the NSS leader Mannathu Padmanabhan delivered a speech.²³³ The former NSS presidents like Sri N Govindamenon and Sri Vaikkam Velappan were keen to maintain close relationship with RSS.²³⁴

The first major religious agitation led by RSS was in relation with the Tali temple issue in Malapuram district. The agitation started on 17th November 1968. An ancient temple named Thali was situated in the

²²⁹ P. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, p.70.

²³⁰ O. Rajagopal, *Jeevithamritham*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2009, p.177.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² M. Muraleedharan, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

²³³ *Kesari*, Annul issue 1987, p.95.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

government land in Malappuram District. There was no idol worship for a long time. It was believed that Tipu had destroyed the temple during his invasion of Malabar.²³⁵ “The RSS was able to put K. Kelappan, a much respected and veteran Sarvodaya leader at the head of the movement. Public support was unprecedented much bigger than what the RSS had bargained for, and they learned their lesson that temples could be focal points of mobilization. A temple protection committee under RSS control was started and this continues to function today.”²³⁶ Meanwhile, the Malabar temple protection council took up reconstruction of ancient temples in the Malabar region, including the Thali Temple. RSS volunteers gave all support to the move. They also started *bhajana* in the temple compound. Arumukan, an RSS worker who participated in the *bhjaana* was later killed by some local Muslims.²³⁷ The state government issued prohibitory orders in that region. Defying the government orders, Hindu devotees with RSS volunteers entered the temple and cleaned it. It is said that some local Muslims voiced their objection against the temple worship.²³⁸ The District collector issued a ban order on 16th November 1968, preventing people from assembling in the temple premises to prevent the outbreak of a communal violence. Hindus alleged this order as an insult to Hindu religious sentiments by the Government to favour the Muslims in the locality, because the Muslim League was a partner of the ruling coalition government in the state.²³⁹

²³⁵ Jayaprasad, *op.cit.*, p.187

²³⁶ M. Muraleedharan, *op.cit.*, P. 49.

²³⁷ P. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

²³⁸ Jayaprasad, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

²³⁹ P. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, p.96.

Kerala Government decided to hand over the temple to the state archaeology department. As a first step the Government started to construct a compound wall around the temple which was prevented by RSS. The police resorted to *lathi* charge thrice to disperse the angry mob.²⁴⁰ At this time, the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee alleged that the takeover of the temple was part of Marxist programme to destroy religion and the KPCC would oppose it at any cost.²⁴¹ While the temple *satyagraha* was going on, the Perinthalmanna Munsiff Court issued a stay on the ban order of the District Collector. Immediately, K. Kelappan and other volunteers entered the temple and offered prayers. Thus the agitation came to an end. Later the renovation work was started on 24th March 1974. Swami Chinmayananda a Hindutva sympathizer inaugurated the present temple in Angadipuram.²⁴²

With the issue of Tali temple, RSS got an opportunity to spread religious sentiments in Malabar. The ruling party, ignoring the sentiments of Hindu common folk could not tackle the issue diplomatically. So the sentiments of the Hindus were used for political mobilisation. Due to the intervention of the Sarvodaya leader K. Kelappan the issue had become more serious among the common Hindu people.

On the year of 1979 the RSS got another chance for a Hindu mobilisation in the Palukachi Mala temple issue. It started with the destruction of the idols of the temple by some miscreants in October 1978

²⁴⁰ *Mathrubhumi*, 25th November, 1968.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Jayaprasad, *op.cit.*,p,189.

which shocked the believers of the locality. The RSS organized a protest march with the destroyed idols from Tellichery to Kanyakumari and protest meetings were conducted by RSS and Temple Protection Committee at different places.²⁴³ The RSS volunteers got support from different caste organizations like SNDP and NSS.²⁴⁴ After the long march, the destroyed idols were thrown to the sea in Kanyakumari. On 24 March 1979 another procession was started from Thiruvananthapuram with new idols to install in the Palukachi Mala temple. The procession got reception from Hindus in all parts of the state. Later on 30th March 1979 the new idols were installed in the Temple.²⁴⁵

The Nilakkal issue in 1983 was one of the major agitations of Hindu outfits in Kerala. RSS actively participated in the agitation. It was started on 23th March 1983 after discovering a Cross in the premises of state owned Farming Corporation near the Mahadeva temple at Nilakkal. The next day a Christian Vicar erected a cross at the spot and offered prayers.²⁴⁶ After some days the cross disappeared from the spot. They formed Nilakkal Church Action Council to protest against the vanishing of Cross. Christian dominated Kerala Congress parties had tried to politicise the issue. On the other side a Hindu consolidation was also taking place under the initiative of Vishal Hindu Sammelan.²⁴⁷ They formed Nilakkal Action Council with the

²⁴³ *Ibid*,p.50.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*,p.194.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

representation of around twenty three Hindu organisations. After recovering the Cross, the Christian group had asked the government permission to build a Church. To counter this move the Hindu groups including Hindu Sanyasins started various agitations. “Meanwhile, as a part of agitation, to accomplish Hindu consolidation under the initiative of the Action Council, the Sanyasins gave leadership to a torch-light procession from Kottiyoor in Cannannore to Kanyakumari, voicing objections to the construction of the Church at Nilakkal. This was effective in creating a religious consciousness among the Hindus of the state.’’²⁴⁸ While the agitation was going on the government decided to grant two acres of land owned by State Farming Corporation to build a Church. This was strongly opposed by the Hindu groups. “On 4th June, a batch of Hindu Sanyasins organised a ‘Thapas’ at Nilakkal and the Action Council volunteers were lathi-charged by the police on the same day.’’²⁴⁹ The agitation came to an end after the decision of Ecclesiastical heads of Christian denominations not to proceed with the construction of the church in the proposed site. ²⁵⁰The implication of the Nilakkal issue is that it created an agitation mood among all the Hindu outfits.

2.7 Revival of Traditional Rituals

The Ganapati festival and related processions gradually gain mass participation in Kerala. Most of the participants are women and children as in the case of Sreekrishna jayanthi festival. Processions end with drowning

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.195.

²⁴⁹ Indian Express,5th June 1983.

²⁵⁰ Jayaprasad, *op.cit.*, p. 196.

(*Nimanjan*) the Ganapathi idol in a water body like a river. RSS organize a routemarch of its volunteers on Vijayadasami day exhibiting the militant nature of their organization. Bharatheeya Vichara kendram director, P. Parameswaran exhorted to observe the Malayalam month Karkkidakam as month of Ramayana and to read Ramayana in houses and temples in a speech delivered in the *Vishala Hindu sammelanam* on April 14th 1982 which had the participation of personalities like Chinmayanandswami, a Raja from former Kashmir, Dr. Karansigh.²⁵¹ Wide observance of 'Ramayana month' in the month of Karkitaka started in Kerala after this. All India Radio has begun to broadcast special programmes to popularize the myth of Ramayana during the month of Karkkidakam.²⁵² 'Ramayana Month' is now observed popularly by the people of every caste. This is well supported by commercial/market interests in the state and by the popular visual and print media. Unified feeling of being a Hindu is brought about by the wearing common symbols during such celebrations and festivals. Commercial firms encourage this since it is an opportunity for them to increase their profit by selling well in film industry.

2.8 Caste and religiosity

In 1982 April 4, a Hindu Congress was convened at Ernakulam and stressed the need of Hindu unity across caste differences. The pledge of the Congress reveals intention of its organizers. "We believe that Hindu community is badly affected by the centuries old systems like caste, colour

²⁵¹ P. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, p.60.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

and other unjustifiable omnipresence. We think that the present age is badly in need of eradicating this system from all the areas of life. We swear on God that we will do all the possible things for it in our public and private life, that we won't undertake any rituals which would affect the creation of a unified Hindu community, that we will work to protect the Hindu culture and Hindu *dharma*.”²⁵³ Establishing Hindu dharma above all caste feelings was once a progressive step against extreme forms of caste discrimination prevalent in Kerala. In the beginning such ventures were led by reformers.

Caste organizations like SNDP Yogam and NSS have made inroads into Malabar. Recently, NSS and SNDP Yogam have formed branches (*karayoga*) in different parts of Malabar. But influence of *karayogas* upon people is not as powerful as in the case of South Kerala. In South Kerala an approval certificate of *karayogam* is necessary for important functions like marriage.

Some recent incidents reported from Malabar indicate that a process of Hindu consolidation is not successful in erasing the age old traditions of caste discrimination from the mind of the upper castes. The border district Palakkad registers several cases of caste discrimination. Separate vessels for dalits in teashops are still practised in the district.²⁵⁴ Another case was reported in Guruvayur. In 1983 February a protest-march started under the leadership of Kallara Sukumaran towards Guruvayur temple.²⁵⁵ The march

²⁵³ P. Parameswaran, *Keralam brhmathalayathilninnu therralayathilekku*, Kurukshthra-prakasan, Kochi, 1982, p. 67.

²⁵⁴ Interview with Chami, KPMS Palakkad District President on 23rd April 2012.

²⁵⁵ P. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, p. 139.

was against discrimination in the Oottupura of Guruvayarur temple where admission was restricted to high caste Brahmins.²⁵⁶ Feeding Brahmins was a tradition in Malabar as elsewhere in India. It was once considered as the traditional right based on caste.²⁵⁷ The protest-march was thus an outcome of existing discrimination in Hindu society. The issue of employing *poojaris* (*temple priests*) is a highly debated issue in Kerala. Caste organisations like SNDP Yogam argued that those learned *pooja* irrespective of their caste may be appointed as *poojaris* in temples which is opposed by upper caste organizations.

Tribal population in Malabar is losing their distinctive identity and becoming Hinduised. Wayanad district has a high density of tribal population. RSS started its activities in Wayanad in 1950s. Establishment of Vivekananda Medical Mission at Muttill in Wayanad in 1972 was part of a larger agenda. RSS volunteers built houses for tribals in 1991 in Ganapathi Vattam Taluk.²⁵⁸ House-warming ceremony of these houses was carried out under the leadership of one Chidanandapuri Swami of Kulattur Ashrama. RSS Sarsanghachalak, Mr. Sudarsanan participated in the large tribal gathering at Valliyoorkkavu on January 14th 2013.²⁵⁹ Vanvasi Vikas Manj or Adivasi sena of R.S.S. works among tribals to Hinduise them and to ‘protect’ them from the ‘threat’ of religious conversion. After

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*,p.139.

²⁵⁸ M. Radhakrishnan, *Adivasikalude Samuhya parivarthanavum R S Ssum*, in *1970kalile Adivasi Samarangal*, Palliyara Raman, Kerala vanavasi vikaasa kendram, Kozhikkode, 2007.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*,p.71.

Meenakshipuram incident in Tamil Nadu the process of Hinduisation of out-castes and tribes has geared up.²⁶⁰ In 1980s out of discrimination from higher castes, certain dalit families converted to Islam at Meenakshipuram.²⁶¹ This has led to wide protests from Hindutva corner and they tried to propagate this incident at national level.

The Ayodhya issue had its reverberations in Malabar too. Individual religious identities began to have expressions through the different symbols like ornaments, markings on the body and colour and style of dress as community consciousness rapidly grew during this time. Several communal organizations and unorganized groups were also formed during this period. After the fall of Babari mosque in Ayodhya, an Islamic Sevak Sangh was created to counter the agenda of RSS.²⁶²

This chapter has dealt with the process and context of emerging discreet Hindu consciousness in the Post –Colonial times. Community/caste organizations, especially those gained a wide acceptance and following during the *Vimochana Samaram*, had actually initiated the drive towards an emergent exclusive Hindu consciousness. *Vimochana Samaram*, through which these communal organizations entered into the direct politics and to governmental power, had provided them a crucial social legitimacy. RSS, with many of its frontal organizations had initiated several campaigns to invoke coordinated Hindu public Consciousness. Cow-protection campaign was one such incident

²⁶⁰ Neeladhri Bhattacharya, *op.cit.*, p.66.

²⁶¹ George Mathew, *Politicisation of Religion- Conversions to Islam in Tamil Nadu*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XVII No. 26, June 19, 1982.

²⁶² Jacob George, *A dangerous divide* in India Today, 28th December, 2012.

with everlasting reactionary repercussions. Sri Krishna Jayanthi is a newly introduced religious occasion for ceremonial pomp. Organized pilgrimages to the erstwhile exclusive and less-known shrine/temple centers like Kottiyur, Nilakkal, Tali are notably new. Intervention of Hindu syndicated organizations in various inter-belief disputes (including places like Nilakkal and Nedumpuram Tali) were so 'effective' that they were 'successful' to a certain extent in determining the counters of public religious consciousness.

Apart from the political initiatives mentioned before, Hindu consciousness was also crafted through cultural and social interventions. Hindu Samsakarika Sammelanam (Hindu Cultural Conference) being organized at the temple city of Guruvayoor was one of the early attempts in this direction. Grand ceremonial events being organized for receiving supposedly spiritual personalities like Amrithantha Mayi had invited many communities into a gradually unfolding Hindutva umbrella. Caste associations' like NSS and SNDP Yogam played their own, undisputable, roles in the offing Hindu formation. Traditional shrine centres, which are, in general, owned by specific caste patrons and known for their unconventional, inclusive character, were systematically converted in to corporately managed *Puranic* temples with ancient architecture. With this alteration, their traditional ritual-complex was, often persuasively converted as abodes of classical 'high Hinduism'. Consciously severing all local heterodox linkages, Hindu-right made them as their ideal springboards.

CHAPTER 3

THE HINDU COMMUNITY AND ‘OTHERS’: IDENTITY AND CONFLICTS

Malabar has a strong presence of the minority religious groups especially of Muslims. No communal clashes were reported before the arrival of the Portuguese in Malabar. The arrival of Portuguese into Malabar Coast had redrawn the existing socio political relations of Malabar. They engaged in trade treaties with Zamorin which caused frustration to the Arabs. The age long relation with Zamorins became tensed due to the conflicts between Arabs and Portuguese. During the rule of Zamorins the Arabs were the main traders who brought prosperity to the Malabar region.²⁶³ Zamorin was ready to provide all sorts of help to the Arabs. We have inscriptional evidences that the Zamorin patronized Islam in Kerala.²⁶⁴

The settlements of Arabs began to develop in major coastal towns of Malabar. Besides the trading activities the Arabs started involving with the socio- cultural realm of Malabar. They even married women from local communities. The Zamorin of Calicut showed much respect to the Arab traders mainly because of the economic growth it brought in. The Mappilas were the chief naval force for the Zamorin as the higher caste Hindus were not permitted to the voyages as per their religious laws. So the Zamorin recruited Mappilas in his naval force. The Kunjalis were the chiefs of the

²⁶³ M.G.S. Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, Kerala Historical Society, 1972,p.6.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid* ,p.38.

naval powers. It is believed that according to the order of Zamorin the children born to the Mukkuva on Fridays would convert to the Mappilas in order to strengthen the naval force.²⁶⁵ This was not surprising because conversion of the untouchable Mukkuvas who were not included in the Vedic structure was not a loss to the religion of Zamorin.

There are several factors which determined the relations of Hindus and the Minorities. The Mysore invasions, the colonial rules, the issues relating to conversion, Semitic identity, economic disparity etc are some of the factors determining the relations between communities in Malabar. The politics of the minorities in addition to the religious structure helped them to strengthen community formation rapidly during post- independence period. The Muslim League and Kerala Congress are the two influential political parties of Muslims and Christians respectively.

Unlike in North India the establishment of Islam in the Malabar Coast was without any bloodshed.²⁶⁶ “Kerala is so distant from the centers of Muslim power in northern and central India and its Arabic, Islamic cultures so distinct from the Persianized society of the Mughal Empire and the Deccan Sultanates that is rarely considered relevant to discussions of Indo- Muslim history.’’²⁶⁷ In the liberal stream of Islam, ‘Sufism’ had a strong presence in Malabar. The Bhakthi cult of Hinduism is said to have a close relations with

²⁶⁵ See Edgar Thurston, *The castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. V. Madras, 1993, p.110.

²⁶⁶ J.B.P. More, *Religion and Soceity in South India: Hindus, Muslims and Christians*, IRISH, Kannur,2006, p.107.

²⁶⁷ Stephen Frederic Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922*, Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier, Orient Longman, NewYork,1998, P.5.

Sufism in its nature. “They gave birth to a new culture of religious synthesis and tolerance. Both of them were against caste, creed and communal tensions.”²⁶⁸ Such harmonious relations changed in the later period.

Several indigenous festivals and traditions had been adapted by the local Mappila community. They even believed in black magic of local Hindu backward communities. The concept of ‘*odiyān*’ was seen in the *Malappattu* of Mappilas of Ponnani.²⁶⁹ A booklet printed at Ponnani in 1891 by Mr. Konganam Veetil Bava Musliar exhort the Muslims to believe in *lakshanasāstra* even if it was widely acceptable to *Kafirs*.²⁷⁰ The “Mappilas in the interior worshipped at local mosques, shrines to Muslim holy men as well as a variety of shrines devoted to snakes, tribal deities and local divinities loosely within a ‘Hindu’ pantheon. Attitudes with regard to the other religious communities were characterized by obliviousness rather than knowledge.”²⁷¹ The *Nercha* is an example. “The ceremonial pattern of the *Nercha* reveals the fact that, it represents the Mappila adaptation of indigenous religious traditions.”²⁷² The religious revivalism basing texts reduced its scope in contemporary history. The fundamentalist elements in minorities are now trying to keep their separate identities by exhibiting religious symbols. The syncretic nature of cultural identity began to reshape. “It was against this

²⁶⁸ Dr.K.K.N. Kurup, *The legacy of Islam (Kerala) A study of the Mappilas of Kerala*,Samayam Publications, Kannur,2006, p.50.

²⁶⁹ See ‘Salamathu maala’ published in Dr. Hussain Randathani, *Makhdumum Ponnaniyum* (Mal) Ponnani Jumat Paripalana committee, Ponani,2010,p.304.

²⁷⁰ See ‘Lakshana sastra’ published in Dr. Hussain Randathani,*op.cit.*,p.275.

²⁷¹ Dileep Menon, *Becoming ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ Identity and Conflict in Malabar 1900-1936*, Working paper, No 255, January 1994,CDS Thiruvananthapuram, p.7.

²⁷² P. P. Abdul Razak, *Colonialism and Community Formation in Malabar: A Study of Muslims of Malabar*. Unpublished Ph D thesis, University of Calicut, 2007,p30.

syncretism of Mappilas that the reformists in 20th century started a crusade by which they tried to shake off most of the factors in social and religious life, which they had in common with their Hindu brethren but which went against the spirit of their religion.”²⁷³ It shows the role of fundamentalism creating separate identity of a community. Making a separate identity by ignoring socio- cultural tradition would naturally invite doubts and hatred from other communities. The fundamental elements tried to stop the Nercha of Battam near Tirur. The traditions like Nercha could stand against the vision of Islam as a monolithic community. Asghar Ali Engineer had knocked down the myth that the Muslims in India is a monolithic community by citing various example in his edited work ‘Kerala Muslims in Historical Perspective- An Introduction.’²⁷⁴ V.C. Harris in his Essay titled ‘*From Structure to Communitas and Back*’ comments that “The cultural identity of Islam in Kerala offers a peculiar mix of the indigenous and the exotic, and the patterns of feeling determined to a large extent by this dyad structure are also indicative of the unique historical situation of the community.”²⁷⁵ He concludes the Essay by saying “ The noticeable drop in the popularity of , and participation in, the *nercha* and the rise of purist/classicist movements that shun the folk elements of culture are pointers to a cultural- not to say religious- Polarisation that is fast moving toward a point to no return.”²⁷⁶

²⁷³ *Ibid.*,pp.60-61.

²⁷⁴ Asghar Ali Engineer(Ed), *Kerala Muslims a Historical Perspective*, Ajantha Publications, Delhi,1995 p. 1.

²⁷⁵ V. C. Harris, *From structure to communitas and Back: Notes on the Arts and Festivals of the Muslims of Kerala*, in Asghar Ali Engineer, *op.cit.*,p.200.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.205.

Anyway the conditioning of the religion on textual line becomes a part of fundamentalist elements which in practice make necessary conflicts in the society.

It is said that the tolerant Hindu kings were kind enough to receive foreign people and ideologies. The evidences establish the fact that the rulers favored them for the prosperity of their country. The economic growth of Malabar was mainly due to the business transactions with the Arabian traders. According to the Hindu theology the journey through the sea was prohibited. So the upper caste Hindus were abstaining from the sea journey. This led Zamorin of Calicut forming naval groups under the Kunjalis to fight against Portuguese. It is said that the conversion of the Hindu fisher folk to Islam intensified during this period.²⁷⁷

Besides fisher folk several subaltern caste groups were also converted to the Islam. “The great majority of conversions must have come from the lower castes, those who most strongly felt the “inconvenience” of their subordinate, degraded status.”²⁷⁸ As most of the converted people belonged to the lower strata of the society who faced discrimination from the Hindu Upper caste society, they could stand against the Hindu upper caste after joining the Islam. “Lower castes such as the Ilavas and Cherumans had a tremendous amount to gain from conversion to and membership in a relatively prosperous and powerful community which was exempted from such oppressive social

²⁷⁷ M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*,p.40.

²⁷⁸ trade, Convesions and the Growth of the Islamic commuinity of Kerala, South India, Studia Islamica Nos 1-104/105.p.162.

disabilities as distance pollution.”²⁷⁹ Selling women to the Mappilas were prevalent in Malabar. “Women of the region mainly of Tiya community who violated rigid sexual taboos were sold to the Mappilas, who also added their numbers.”²⁸⁰ The traditional law considered selling women to the Mappilas a rigorous punishment. The reason for the growth of population of the minority communities mainly attributes to the conversions from the native Hindus.²⁸¹ Besides there was an argument that several Nairs were converted to the Islam in North Malabar during the period of Mysoriean conquest.²⁸² The matrilineal system which was existed in North Malabar is being cited as the reasons for this.

From Portugese to British the Muslims in Malabar faced lots of problems when it comes to religion. The Colonial rulers have played a significant role in shaping Muslim community in Malabar. The observation made by Stephen Frederic clarifies this. He says “That is, first the Portuguese and later other Europeans helped to shape an Islamic community which would eventually seek a political solution for its problems; Malayali Muslims first attempted such a solution in the Mappila Rebellion and then finally succeeded when the Kerala Muslim League used its political leverage to win the Muslim majority district of Malappuram in 1969.”²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Stephen. F. Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922, Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier*, Oxford, Newyork,1980, p.78

²⁸⁰ V.V. Kunhikrishnan, *Matriliney Among the Mappilas of Malabar*, in Asgar Ali Engineer,*op.cit.*,p.56.

²⁸¹ M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*,p.6.

²⁸² V. V. Kunhikrishnan, *op.cit.*,p.57.

²⁸³ Stephen. F. Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar*, Oxford, , Newyork, 1980, p. 220.

Because of multiple reasons, various changes came into being in the socio-economic life of minorities. In Malappuram which is a Muslim majority district, the majority of the people were backward due to historical reasons. The community did not give much attention to education. On the other hand they concentrated much on religious education. The Gulf migration in addition to the reform initiatives helped the Muslims to bring out a positive change in their socio-economic life.

The mobility of the Muslims in Malabar comes across through the Party of Muslim League. After the partition the voice of the Muslim league had been silenced. But starting from the early sixties it again got strengthened due to the political game of the mainstream political parties. The Congress and C P I (M) engaged in political understanding with Muslim League diplomatically.²⁸⁴ It helped the Muslim League to increase their political power.

The Muslims are the most powerful minorities in Malabar. The Hindu social structure has also influenced the Muslim community. There are different divisions among the Muslims too. “The lowest ebb of society though a part of Malabar who were excluded by Sayyids from the jurisdiction of Malabar, the Osaan (Barber) groups and Puisalans (fishermen group), possessed an inferior status mainly because the Sayyids excluded them from matrimonial relations with them.”²⁸⁵ The Sayyids were the most influential in

²⁸⁴ Ronald E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1976, p.169

²⁸⁵ Abdurahaman K.P. Mappila Heritage, *A study in their social and cultural Life*, Ph. D thesis, University of Calicut, 2004.

religious affairs especially in South Malabar. The impact of the Gulf countries on their socio cultural status has strengthened the social mobility of the Muslims. The Christians on the other hand became economically powerful by cultivation near the forest land. According to colonial writers, the Mysore invasion of Malabar was the reason for the conflict between Muslims and other communities in Malabar. “.....there is no doubt that both Hayder Ali and Tipu Sultan greatly exacerbated the tensions and fuelled the hostilities between Muslims and Hindus.”²⁸⁶ Such kind of narrations raised further confusions among local scholars and several Historians argue that this kind of narrations helped in making soft ‘Hindutva’ consciousness. Though the invasions and subsequent rule of the Mysore rulers in Malabar resulted in societal differences, in the later period the Hindutva elements projected in regime of Haider and Tippu as anti- Hindu.²⁸⁷ There is a popular belief among the common Hindu that most of the temples in Malabar had been attacked by Tippu which gives a religious colour to these incidents.²⁸⁸ The interesting thing is that the majority of the Hindus was not permitted to worship in temples due to the rigid caste system and was not part of the mainstream Hindu rituals. The temples in medieval period were like a ‘mini secretariat’ and treasure house.²⁸⁹ The same pattern continued during the period and the motivation of the attack might have the above things.

²⁸⁶ Stephen. F. Dale, *op.cit.*, P.79.

²⁸⁷ M.Muraleedharan, ‘*Hindu community Formation in Kerala: Process and Colonial Modernity*, South Indian Studies, 2 July December, 1996, p.51.

²⁸⁸ T.K. GopalPanikkar, *Malabar and its folk*, Asian Educational Services, (Reprint) New Delhi, 1983, p.4.

²⁸⁹ See Rajan Gurikkal, *The Kerala Temple and The Early Medieval Agrarian System*, Vallathol Vidyapeetham, Sukapuram, 1992.

The Colonial accounts on Mappilas as a turning point in creating animosity against Muslims in the region. Addressing Muslims as ‘jungle Mappila’, Mappila rascals, fanatics etc could be seen in almost all colonial records. The area which Muslim agrarian riots took place was addressed as the ‘Fanatic Zone.’²⁹⁰ “The Mappila has been almost universally reported to be religiously fanatic, antisocial, and unprogressive in character.”²⁹¹ This notion of the British is being transmitted to generation. This has resulted in creating the attitude of the common Hindu, which was in fact constructed on the basis of colonial literature, as apprehensive towards the Muslims especially in South Malabar. In a poem of Kumaranasan, he has portrayed a picture of Muslim as a ‘Cruel Muhammadan who seeks the blood of Hindus.’²⁹² The derogative remarks against Mappilas are still a matter of discussion among the ordinary Hindu society.²⁹³ The silent anger against the Mappila folk could not be materialized to form a Hindu platform as the feeling of castes was more active. Some of the Malayalam movies could also be projected as carriers of this message.²⁹⁴ The films which released in late eighties and early nineties prove this fact. Several films like ‘Abimanyu’ which released in eighties the villain is Muslim with his all religious symbols.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁰ See Innes & Evans, *op.cit.*,P.84.

²⁹¹ Ronald Miller, *op.cit.*,p.225.

²⁹² N.Kurmaranasan, *Duravastha*,Sarada Book Depot, Trivandrum,1971,p.5.

²⁹³ K.P. Aravindakshan, *Kerala padanam*, Kerala Sasthra Sahitya parishad, Kozhikkode, 2009, P.181.

²⁹⁴ K.K. Baburaj, *Mattoru Jeevitham Saadyamaanu* (Mal.), Subject and Language Press, Kottayam, 2008, p.175.

²⁹⁵ *Abimanyu*, Malayalam film directed by Priyadarshan in 1991.

Semitic identity

The Semitic identity of the Christianity and Islam could help them to strengthen the community mobilization. The weekly gathering of these communities is a routine affair and the folk of each community get an occasion to meet every week. The church and its activities under the chief priest and Mahallu committee of the Muslims contribute to intensification of the feeling of community consciousness among these communities. The Mosque is the central point to the Muslims. “Formal religious life is centered on the mosque and its activities.”²⁹⁶ The Mahallu committee is very powerful organization among the Muslim community and it played a significant role in the family affairs like marriage, death etc. *Uruvilakku* was one of the methods used by the Mahallu committee to apply the religious order strictly on its people. At the same time in the Hindu community such gathering is not mandatory. “The religious atmosphere in Mappila home life is nourished by the practice of house visits by *Mullas*. Each *Mulla* has a certain number of homes which he regularly visits for Quran reading. Such visits may be daily or periodic, depending on the financial ability of the home.”²⁹⁷ “The orthodox and prejudiced *Mullas* (the Muslim religious teachers in *Madrassas*) were themselves responsible for their educational backwardness.”²⁹⁸ in the functions of Semetic religions, the religious leaders of the locality play an active role. In the functions like marriage, funerals etc the presence of religious groups is

²⁹⁶ Ronald Miller, *op.cit.*, p.232.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.241.

²⁹⁸ P. Chandramohan, ‘Growth of Social Reform Movements in Kerala’ in *Perspective on Kerala history*, Kerala State Gazetteer Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999,p.457.

indispensable. The religious education is compulsory and acts like not sending their children into religious schools like *madrassa* or Sunday schools would invite protest from local *mahallu* or church. One of the important aspects of the religious education in Semetic religions is that the chances to think on religious line are more compared to Hindu children. On the other hand certain Hindu groups have started *geetha* classes for children on Sundays but the strength of the children who attend the classes is poor. So the advantage of community grouping in the early childhood on religious line could play a role in later stages as well. The *Madrassa* education is one of the important features of the Islam. The religion mandates all Muslim children to attend *Madrassa*. *Madrassa* or *othupalli* has a great impact upon the Muslims in Kerala. “The *Madrassa* is the wonder and strength of Mappila Islam.”²⁹⁹ The teaching in *Madrassas* is very strict when compared to public schools. During the colonial period the Muslims were reluctant to join the western education system due to religious matters. So naturally children gave priority to learning through *Madrassas*. The colonial writings have provided an awful picture of the *Madrassa* education. A colonial account comments “ The Koran schools are bad enough, and it is melancholy to think that how much time is wasted by Mappila children in learning, to repeat in language in which they do not understand, passages from the Koran, of the meaning of which they have not the fairest idea.”³⁰⁰ They perceive religious education as one of the reasons for the Mappila outbreak. A critical observation of the new converts

²⁹⁹ Ronald Miller,*op.cit.*,p.234.

³⁰⁰ *Confidential Judicil Report 2399 M/ 31*,Mappila out break in Malabar p.36.

has also been specified this point. On the issue of new converts the Report says “...Alavi and Kuhnji Musliar who bear the marks of their Cheruma origin plain upon their faces, drawn from the dregs of the population, and all of them dependent for their food on local charity...”³⁰¹ This attributes them as the trouble makers for the British administrators.

The ‘Dars’ which is attached to the Masjid in several places are residential teaching centre of Islam. The local village communities provide basic needs to the children who stay in ‘Dars’. “Food was given by the villagers. Each family adopted a student. Poor families offered either breakfast, dinner or supper.”³⁰² It mainly attracts the children from low income group among the Muslims. Both othupalli and Darsa are said to be an adaptation from the Hindu traditional educational system.³⁰³ For the religious teaching the Muslims of Malabar developed ‘Arabi- Malayalam script.’³⁰⁴ “During British period religious instruction was given in government and aided schools. After independence the practice of offering religious instruction in public schools was stopped. This made the Muslim community alert. They started making arrangements for religious education. So thousands of *Madrassas* were started by different religious groups in different parts of the country.”³⁰⁵ Besides the *Madrassas* there were numerous Arabic Colleges in the Malabar region. Samastha Kerala Jamiyat Islami al Ulama, Kerala

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² Kamal Pasha, *Muslim Religious Education* in Asgar Ali Engineer(Ed.) Kerala Muslims a Historical Perspective, Ajatha, Delhi, 1995, p.134.

³⁰³ *Ibid*, pp.134-136.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.138.

Jam'iyat at Ulama and Jama'at Islami were the Muslim organization which contributed to the Muslim religious Education in Malabar.³⁰⁶ Thus the religious teachings through the particular system helped to develop community formation among the Mappilas of Malabar. Compared to other communities the Muslims seem to be more vigilant in providing religious education to the young generations.

Local religious groups in Christianity and Islam collect compulsory donation from the members for the development of their respective religions. Giving compulsory religious education to children, weekly gathering for prayers, donating money for religious purposes etc are the some of the signs of the collective grouping of the minorities in Malabar. The construction of the mosques in large numbers is another contemporary phenomenon in Kerala. The financial support from Gulf countries contributed for such practices on a large scale. On the other side, during the nineties the Hindu groups started various renovation programs in temples but the work was not as speedy as the Islamite groups.

The Christians got upward financial mobility through the plantations and jobs outside India. The migration of the Travancore Christians into Malabar region resulted in socio cultural changes of the locality. Forest areas were transformed to land for plantations in many places. For these purpose several lands of the tribals were converted. The tribal and other backward sections of these regions depended on the plantation owners for livelihood. The Land Reforms untouched the plantation areas. The migration of the

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*,p.165.

Christians into the forest areas led protests from the local people. At the same time most of the forest land was under the ownership of Devaswom. The encroachment into these lands created tensions in these areas.

The migration to the Malabar region started in the Forties and large forest areas were encroached for plantation. Most of the migrants were Christians with the support of church. The forest land under the ownership of different temples had also become controversial as some of the temple forest land had also been converted to plantations.³⁰⁷ The Land Reforms in Kerala untouched the large estates where the income was higher than that of paddy fields.³⁰⁸ Most of the sufferers of land reforms were the upper caste Hindus and temple under which there were acres of land.³⁰⁹ “The implementation of Land Reforms resulted in the destruction of paddy fields. At the same time it has not created any harm to the rubber estates mostly owned by the Christians.”³¹⁰ Most of the paddy fields belonged to the upper caste Hindus. Migration of the Christians into the Malabar region resulted in social changes as well. Part of many forest areas were converted into estates and ruling governments made legislations and migration policies favouring the estate owners. Various Hindu organisations like Kerala Pradesh Vishwa Hindu Parisad, Ayyappa Seva Sangam etc asked the government to evacuate the migrants who illegally entered the Devaswom lands. Kottiyur in Kannur district and Pulppally in Wayanad district were the hot point in the

³⁰⁷ P. T. Sebastian, *Christian Migration to Malabar, 1930-1980*, Unpublished Ph.D, University of Calicut, 2002, pp.79-89.

³⁰⁸ O Rajagopal, *Jeevithamritham*, D.C Books, Kottayam, 2009, p.43.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ O. Rajagopal, *op.cit.*, p.43.

Dewaswom issues. Under the demands from the various Hindu organizations The Revenue Board has decided to hand over around 30,000 acres of land of Kottiyoor *Devaswam* to the NSS for 90 years lease.³¹¹ The temple trustees under monetary interests tried to lease out the *Devaswam* land. The Vellattu *Devaswam* land consisting of 1000 acres was leased to Christians for 99 years.³¹² The migrants mostly Christians from Travancore region began to cultivate in the vast areas of *Devaswam* lands. This with their readiness to work hard has contributed to the financial upliftment of Christians in the later period.

Christianity reached Malabar mainly through the migration from the Travancore region. The hilly regions of all districts in Malabar were occupied by the Christians by clearing vast areas of forest lands. These lands were mostly under the ownership of Hindu *Janmis* and *Devaswam*. Large scale tribal lands were also transformed into plantations. They established churches schools and hospitals etc. Due to the geographical peculiarity, there were no threats to their life except from the wild animals. The tribals were the inhabitants of these regions but they were not in a position to resist the migrants.

The foreign missionaries, as they did in other parts of the world, engaged in the conversion of the local people into Christianity. As the Hindu structure was more inhuman based on feudal- caste system, many converts were from backward castes. Before the 16th century the Christians followed

³¹¹ *Kesari*, 10th September, 1961.

³¹² *Ibid.*

the local tradition. After the Synod of Diamper the Christianity in Kerala came under an organized structure.³¹³

The political history of Kerala shows that the Christian under the banner of Congress and Kerala Congress have gained benefits for their respective communities. Most of the Christian dominated regions in Malabar are UDF centers.³¹⁴ It is alleged that the department of revenue was used for the legitimization of the encroachment of the forest land.³¹⁵ The clashes occurred between Christians and Hindus were numerically very low. One such incidence occurred at Karuvanchal, Alakkode in Kannur district when the Hindu organizations tried to build a *bhajanamandapam*.³¹⁶ The Christians in the locality objected it, which led to tensions between two communities. Another prominent feature was the minority religion's growing involvement in private schools. They have established several educational institutions in Malabar.³¹⁷

Conversions

The issue of conversions resulted in creating rift between different communities. The colonial writers argue that Mysore invasions and Malabar riots were the two major events in Kerala history which have prompted

³¹³ K.N. Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalekal*, Department of Cultural Publications, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p.245.

³¹⁴ Dr. K.P.Arivindan (ed.) *Keralapadanam Keralam Engine Jeevikkunnu, Keralam Engine Chinthikkunnu*, Kerala Sasthra sahitya Parishat, Thrissure, 2006, p.163.

³¹⁵ Palliyath Raman, *1970 kalile Aadivaasi Samarangal*, Kerala vanavaasi vikaasa kendram, Kozhikkode, 2007, p.32.

³¹⁶ P. T. Sebastian , *op.cit.*, p. 298

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

forcible conversions. There was statistical evidence for the conversions of the lower caste people into Islam.³¹⁸ The conversion of a lower caste man into Islam would increase his social position. Kumaranasan, the noted poet of Malayalam who lived in early 20th century writes;

*“Ethrayo dhooram vazhi thetti nilkkendo-
rezha cheruman poyi toppi ittal
Chithramvanethi charathirunniidaam
Ottum pedikkanda namboorare”*³¹⁹

The above lines describes that if a Cheruma convert into Islam he could achieve higher social status and he no more has to feel apprehensive for higher caste Hindus. A large section of the lower caste people converted to the Islam owing to the horrible caste restrictions in Hindu society. The typical narration of Colonial records goes like this “In Tippu’s time thousands of Hindus in Malabar and Canara were forcibly circumcised, and compelled to confess the Mahamedan faith.”³²⁰

As narrated in the first chapter the conversion issues resulted in emergence of conflicts in the society. Many of the slave castes opted Islam due to apartheid of caste. According to the Records of Census Report of 1871 most of the Mahomedans of South India are aboriginal people. ‘During Mohammedan rule forcible conversion was not uncommon, and to this day

³¹⁸ J.Reghu, *Desaraashtravum Hindu Colonialisavum* (Mal), Pratheeksha Books, Kozhikkode, 2012, p.95.

³¹⁹ N.Kumaranasaan, *Duravastha*, Sarada Book Depot, 1974, Trivandrum, p.26.

³²⁰ W. R. Cornish, *Report on the Census of the Madras Presidency*, Gazette Press, Madras, 1873, p.71.

proselytism is going on among the lower orders of society.” Records Census Report of 1871.³²¹

Thus a large section of the lower castes people began to convert into Islam in Malabar. One of the reasons for the Mappila outbreaks in Malabar were the caste rivalry existed in the Hindu social strata. The new converts who had been facing extreme discrimination from the Hindu Upper caste used the religion of Islam as a weapon. Some of the Mappila riots in 19th century were also due to this social discrimination. “The converts, therefore, amongst the agricultural labourers are practically martyrs, especially if they turn Mohammedans, and this was the cause of the Mappila insurrection in Malabar which ended with the murder of the Col Cannolly”.³²²

Ponnani Mounathul Islam Sabha has played leading role to Islamize those who have converted to Islam. It was registered in 1908 according to Indian companies Act 1882.³²³ It is a residential institution which offers religious education for new converts with free food and accommodation. The usage in Kerala for conversion to Islam “*Ponnaniyil poyi toppi iduka*’ was popularized due to the impact of Sabha.³²⁴ Muslim leader Moulana Shoukkathali had visited Ponnani in 1934 April 28th and 29th to address the 33th general body of Mounathul Islam Sabha.³²⁵ He exhorted the people to

³²¹ *Census Report*, 1871 p.109.

³²² *Specimen of Southern India Dialects*, by A C Burnell, Madras Civil Services, Census Report, p.53.

³²³ Dr. Hussain Randathani, *op.cit.*,p.399.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, p.400.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 438

oppose western culture. He also told the gathered to wear beard as symbol of Islamic identity.³²⁶

Due to miserable conditions of the Caste based feudal system, several lower caste people opted Islam as a defense mechanism in Malabar. The Conversion into Islam resulted in ejection from the lands where these poor people worked for their livelihood.³²⁷ Thus the Nair dominated social geography which began to be shaken by the protests from the converts which in turn resulted in a series of violences in Malabar during the British period. Practically it was a fight between lower and upper hands of the society though the lower caste people who used religion as a powerful means to meet their ends.

A report published in *Kesari* in 1952 records the conversion of Hindu ladies into Islam. The incidents occurred in Mathilakam, Payyannur and Calicut highlights conversion issues.³²⁸ In Mathilakam a Hindu lady was abducted by the Muslims and after the compliant by her parents the police enquired it. The lady told the police that she was forcefully taken by the Muslims.³²⁹ Similar cases were reported from Payannur and Calicut. "It is understood that some of the agents in Malabar are trying to take Hindu ladies for forcible marriages and forcible conversions. They are exploiting the silent and other conditions of Hindus for conversions."³³⁰ A letter addressed to the

³²⁶ *Ibid*, p.439.

³²⁷ Census 1871, *op.cit.*,p.172.

³²⁸ *Kesari*, 14th June 1952.

³²⁹ *Ibid*.

³³⁰ *Ibid*

Arysamaj, Kozhikkode in 1957 reports the conversion of the two Nair ladies from Vengara into Islam.³³¹ *Kesari* reports say that three persons were sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment for forcefully converting a Hindu lady into Islam at Kalladikkode.³³² So it is quite apparent that the contemporary controversies like ‘Love Jihad’ were largely propagated through the Hindu political literature in early fifties itself. The above incidents are example of hate campaigns of forced conversions carried out through news papers like *Kesari*. The Hindus are thus forced to form an anti- Muslim consciousness.

The news of the 1921 riots could create a feeling that the Mappilas were forcing the Hindu for conversions. While tracing the events which led to the Mappila out breaks in 1919, the confidential report under the title ‘Criminal Aspect of the Outbreak’ says “The Mappila with his many wives is everywhere prolific and in addition to steady supply of children they ever add to their numbers from other castes; Cherumans have always furnished recruits for the faith and recently a fresh source of supply has sprung up. The Rubber estates in the neighbourhood employ many poor Hindus, the majority of whom before long join in Islam. There is thus a large and difficult population unchecked by any show of power and with natural tendencies to crime.”³³³ Thus official records of the British period were very much conscious about the increasing population of the Mappilas in the Malabar region. Even though

³³¹ *Ibid*, December 1957

³³² *Ibid*, 26 December 1954.

³³³ Criminal Aspect of the outbreak No 2080, Judicial, 3 Sept 1915.

the inflow into the Islam was mainly owing to the rigorous caste system in the Hindu society the Colonial masters were not serious in dealing the anti-human practices of their time. The observations made in the Report on Census Report 1871 legitimize this fact. “Ordinarily speaking, a man owns or tills land on his own account, but in Malabar the Nairs mostly hold the land, and employ slaves to do the drudgery of the farm work. Slavery no longer exists in the eye of the law; but practically the inferior tribes of Malabar are in bondage to their masters.”³³⁴ The reason for the increase in the population of Muslims in Kerala has been attributed mainly to the forcible conversion. This notion was questioned. The main reason for the increase in the population presently is believed to be the high birth rate among the Muslim community.³³⁵ This is evident while verifying the data regarding the birth rate of Malappuram district, a Muslim majority district, with other districts.

Certain religious group’s focus on unaided education sector was another characteristic feature. There were several examples about the Christian missionary activities in schools in sixties in Kerala.³³⁶ Children of other communities will not be able to cop up with the religious atmosphere of such schools. Thus the marking of the children on religious line starts from their school period itself and they will not be able to adjust with the cultural and social diversities in their later life either. The management of most of the unaided schools is in the hands of the caste or religious groups. The ‘Mappila School’ which started during the period of the British is still active in the

³³⁴ W. R. Cornish, *op.cit.*, p.352.

³³⁵ Ronalds Miller, *op.cit.*, p.35.

³³⁶ *Kersari*, 7th February, 1960.

Malabar region. The schools follow separate academic calendar. The processions before the mosque are frequent reasons for the outbreak of the several communal riots in North India. Such incidents have also occurred in Malabar though their numbers were very few. Under the title of “Hindutva on threat’ published in 1958 *kesari* described the story of Chavakkad Manathala Viswanatha temple festival.³³⁷ The clash between local Muslims and Hindus occurred at Manathala due to the processions in front of the mosque. The then government banned the processions in front of the temple.

The Malappuram Nercha was a burning issue during this time as certain fundamentalist groups protested against conducting Nercha as they believe it as Unislamic. Malappuram Nercha is said to be a festival to remember the Mappila martyrs who were murdered by the Nair soldiers of Para Nambi who was the governor of Zamorin. The Nercha became controversial during late forties. “Because of the explosive nature of the gathering, frequently erupting into violence, and in the light of tensions related to partition and the Rama Simhan case, the Madras government placed a ban on the conduct of the festival in 1947. In 1957 it was allowed by the Communist government of Kerala as a favour to Muslim voters, but after violent incidents recurred it was banned again in 1960. In 1967 and 1972 permission was granted to conduct the Nercha under the supervision of large numbers of special police.”³³⁸ The government support for conducting *Nercha* created frustrations among Hindutva minded people in Malabar.³³⁹

³³⁷ *Ibid*,13th April 1958.

³³⁸ Ronald Miller, *op.cit.*,p.245.

³³⁹ Kesari, 13th April, 1958.

The Tanur region was under tensions due to the clashes of the fisherman folk of the Hindu and Muslim community. The Hindu Mukkava representation in the Tanur region was numerically very weak. After the rift the Hindu Mukkuva family left Tanur and migrated to Calicut.³⁴⁰ An editorial was published in *Kesari* weekly charging Tanur Muslims as ‘Pak Muslims.’³⁴¹ Addressing Indian Muslims as “Pak Muslims’ was a propaganda carried by the Hindutva Politics.³⁴² The Cricket play was another occasion for inflaming communal feelings. The India Pakistan Cricket became a matter of predicament in some parts of Malabar.³⁴³

In the late sixties several places in South Malabar witnessed minor clashes between Hindus and Muslims on the issue of Tali temple. In Ponnani there was a riot in which several shops of Hindus were burned.³⁴⁴ Several business establishments of Hindus were burned out. Famous Gandhian Kelappaji exhorted the people of Malabar to observe ‘Ponnani Day’ on 27th July 1969 in protest against the violence.³⁴⁵ The incident in Ponnani occurred on 17th July 1969 when a group of Janasangha people observed a demonstration against Malappuram District formation. When the demonstration reached in front of a mosque, local Muslim objected to

³⁴⁰ *Ibid*,30th August, 1964.

³⁴¹ *Ibid*.

³⁴² Gynendra Panday,*Routine Violence; Nations, Fragments, Histories*, Permanent Black Delhi 2006,p.34.

³⁴³ S.C.Mathur ‘*Communal Problem in Our Country*’ in Ravindrakumar, *Problem of Communalism in India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1990,p.78.

³⁴⁴ *Kesari*, 27 July 1969.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

shouting slogans in front of the mosque.³⁴⁶ Refusing the objection made by the Muslims, the Sanghparivar groups proceeded with the demonstration. This said to be the reason for the starting of the disturbance. A clash occurred at Chandapady between the demonstrators and the Muslims in which some of the Muslims got injuries.³⁴⁷ Hearing the incidence Muslims began grouping and started retaliation. Irrespective of political affiliations several business establishments of the Hindus were destroyed. Most of the participants in this riot were from the coastal region.³⁴⁸ The trading community “angadikkar’(traders) did not actively participate in violence directly. The buses of one Ravunni Nair were destroyed.³⁴⁹ The left forces in this area could not actively get involved in preventing spreading the violence. The violence at Naduvattom in Beypore was erupted due to a procession in front of a mosque. A Hindu marriage procession with drums was attacked in front of the Naduvattom mosque.³⁵⁰

Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism, which is a core factor in making religious community more textual and religious, has played vital role in the social sphere of Kerala also. In Malabar region, glimpses of fundamental activism were there. The organization like Jamait Islami has a dominant role in this. Print media is widely used for this purpose. The posters of this organization can be seen in

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 30th May,1954.

almost all the streets. This was widespread in the nineties. The wide presence of these posters has appeared only from nineties. In Malabar we can see number of such posters in every street.

The murder of the Chekannur Moulavi is one of the renowned fundamentalist actions in the history of contemporary Malabar. It created wide range of discussion through the Medias as well as among political parties. Issues regarding the *purdah* etc. have also become the attention of public with the fundamentalists groups playing a major role in it. The murder of Thami, a Hindutva sympathizer, was carried by a Muslim fundamentalist organization. The incident occurred in 1996 at Valanchery in Malappuram district.³⁵¹ The *nombu* season is also sometime tensed in the some part of Malabar. The opening of the hotels during day time has caused conflicts in certain areas.³⁵²

The former National Development Front is the most powerful organisation in the sense that it could create fear and insecurity among the people. The chopping of the hand of a college professor at Thodupuzha on the issue of blasphemy could spread the message of fear and insecurity. Through these cruel methods the fundamentalists tried to silence the liberal majority. “wide spread police raids in PFI offices across the state allegedly produced a huge cache of arms and country made bombs, VCD’s containing images of Taliban methods of punishment, anti national literature and clues about large

³⁵¹ Crime No.152/96 Valanchery, Police Station Malappuram.

³⁵² See M.G.Radhakrishan, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/with-fatwas-and-punishments-radical-muslim-leaders-holds-entire-community-to-ransom/1/253168.html>

scale illegal financial transaction.’’³⁵³ Thus a small group who are working for a suicidal mission for the religion could create an impression among the public that the community as a whole violent, intolerant. Lack of active and direct interventions of the mainstream political parties in such incidents resulted in diminishing the confidence of the liberal minded people. The burning of cinema talkies should be seen in that direction. Most of the burned up talkies were in Malappuram district.³⁵⁴ The investigative agency could not identify the culprits and this has resulted in further deterioration of people’s confidence. People also started imagining that such incidents were caused by extremists.

The migration to the Gulf countries not only brought its wealth but also the religious elements. Like Sankritisation, the process of semitization can be easily communicated as large number of people working in Gulf countries belonged to the Mappila Muslims. As most of the Arabian countries are Islamic states, the workers among Muslim communities get more access to these countries. Thus the privileges enjoyed by the fellow Muslims could arouse a sense of disappointment among the other communities. This disappointment or frustration creates silent communal polarization.

For construction of mosques and other Muslim institutions, a Lion share has been the remittance from gulf countries.³⁵⁵ The gulf money has also been channelized as lands, large scale purchase of plantations, construction of

³⁵³ Nandagopal. R. Menon, *Imagined Kerala*, EPW, Aug21, Vol XLV No34, 2010.

³⁵⁴ Crime No. 121/91 Perumpadappu Police station. Also see www.haindavakeralam.com

³⁵⁵ Interview with Hamid Chennamangaloor on 21. 4. 2012

huge buildings, houses etc. Apart from this, gulf money has also been converted as buildings for institutions, religious establishments etc.³⁵⁶

The rapid growth of unaided institutions with religious background resulted in blocking the chance of social mingling of the different communities. Normally the most of the students of the unaided schools belonged to same religious group. Besides these managements exhort students to obey religious rules inside the campus as well.³⁵⁷ The true secular education is not possible in these institutions. The government gives sanction to more unaided schools for the minority communities when comparing with the majority Hindus.³⁵⁸ The thing is that almost in all social spheres, be it education or health, the minorities have acquired major portions of institutions. The teachers of the most Muslim aided schools used to be Hindus and Christians from southern part of Kerala. But that ratio has now reduced as the educated generation has grown up in the Muslim community.

The issue of Triple Talaque and polygamy in the Muslim community had become serious issue of debate. The Uniform Civil Code is an issue of conflict. The Sangh Parivar used these issues for making an impression that the Muslim as a whole is anti-progressive and anti-women etc. The remark of E.M.S. Namboothirippad on Polygamy invited protests from Muslim groups. The Muslim League vehemently attacked E.M.S on this issue. The League propagated that it was an insult to Islam.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ M.V. Raghavan, *Oru Janmam*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2012, p.285.

Minorities as pressure groups

Among the communities the minorities are far ahead in securing their interests. The starting of unaided schools, self financing colleges etc under the banner of minority rights have created a kind of frustration among the majority community. The organized attempt of the communities to influence government policies resulted in divisions in the public sphere. On the other hand the Hindu community has no unanimity in its demands due to its internal conflicts. The issue of reservation is a sensitive issue in which the N.S.S led forward Hindu communities and S.N.D.P. led backward communities contradicting themselves over it.

The rise of Muslim political identity in Malabar resulted socio political changes in the area. “The background of Mappila history, the new awareness by Mappilas of their relationship with Muslims in India, and the leaning of the majority to political action through an exclusively Muslim party inevitably fuelled tension between Hindus and Mappilas in Kerala.”³⁶⁰ The formation of identity consciousness among Malabar Muslims was the outcome of the political activities in modern period.³⁶¹ The rise of Muslim League especially in South Malabar accelerated the intensity of the community formation. Even if the Muslim league is a religious political party it worked with the mainstream secular parties. As the Nationalist and leftist forces could not garner the support of the Majority of the Mappilas, the

³⁶⁰ Roland Millar, *op.cit.*, p.176

³⁶¹ M. Gangadharan, in Asgar Ali Engineer (Ed.) *Kerala Muslims a Historical Perspective*, Ajatha, 1995, p.214.

Muslim League became the political party of Islam in Kerala.³⁶² Both Left and Right forces allied with Muslim League for political gains. The Malappuram district formation was one of the political gains of Muslim League. The argument that the district formation did not create any serious tension between communities in Kerala³⁶³ is not fully correct. The national dailies carried sensitive reporting on this issue which created an impression that the Muslim League is misusing the state machinery in favour of their religion. Thus the formation of Malappuram district became a communal issue. It attracted national level attention. The Indian Express wrote editorial titled 'Moplastan' criticizing the formation.³⁶⁴ The Janasangh actively participated in the agitation. "This was a major agitation led by RSS against the Muslim League and its increasing dominance in State politics."³⁶⁵ The District formation "resulted in the arousal of Hindu feelings, which included both fear and aggressiveness".³⁶⁶ The Hindu right wing parties widely carried this issue across the country.

The election history shows that the majority of the Muslim dominated constituencies are dominated by the Muslim League. The fact that the presences of secular parties in these areas are very weak shows the increased community consciousness of people in such areas. Even though outwardly Kerala is exhibiting a kind of secular nature, its election history illustrates

³⁶² K. N. Ganesh, *op.cit.*, p.254.

³⁶³ M. Gangadharan, *op.cit.*, p.212.

³⁶⁴ *Indian Express*, 28th February, 1968.

³⁶⁵ Jayaprasad, *RSS and Hindu Nationalism*, Deep and Deep Publication, Delhi, 1991, p.188.

³⁶⁶ Roland Millar, *op cit.*, p. 184.

influence of caste and religious elements. Kerala Congress, Muslim League, S N D P Yogam, N S S etc were the prominent political players in the election history of Kerala. “The Mappila drive for community recognition and power, expressed primarily through a Muslim political organization, gave the impression to Hindus that Mappilas were maintaining attitudes of the past in a new form.”³⁶⁷ Thus the attitudes of the minorities for their own upliftment created doubts among the Hindu Majority.

The question of representation is also a fact for mobilization on the line of community. The representation in Government jobs are also an indicator of the development of different communities. The budget tabled in 1983-84 before the state assembly clearly reveals the proportional difference of various communities in Government jobs.³⁶⁸ It says that, in 1983 the Muslims population is 21.5% against 24.59 of Ezhavas, 17.86% of Christians and 17.75% of Nairs. But in the Government jobs, the representation of the Muslims is very low. Among them 5.35% are working in Gazetted posts and 5.23% belong to Non Gazetted posts. The above statistics shows the difference of representation in Govt. jobs. Citing such reports several Muslim organizations had started agitations. The NDF had led series of agitation against this injustice. As the Muslim community gives more stress on religious education, the negligent attitude towards general education has created backwardness among the Muslim community.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.177.

³⁶⁸ Prof. K.M.Bahavudheen, *Keralamuslingal Cheruthunilppinte Charithram*, Islamic Publishing House, Kozhikkode, 2004 , p.237

³⁶⁹ C.R Parameswaran, *Asahishtathude aavasyam*, D. C. Books, Kottayam, 1999,p.41.

The remark of former Chief Minister A. K. Antony on minorities invited controversy in socio political circles. “The minorities in Kerala are organized. These organized sectors, using their organized power are securing more benefits from the government.... Along with that, more benefits from the migration to the Gulf countries, America and Europe have gone to the Minority communities. The economic imbalance created by it is in the rural areas of Kerala. The leaders of minority communities should be prepared to see all these factors. They should show more restraint. Kerala is not north India. The minorities in Kerala have more influence in politics, administration and society. I am one who sees that truth. That is why I want the minorities to remain restraint. The leaders of the minorities should be more realistic.”³⁷⁰

The leaders of minorities vehemently opposed the view of Antony. The problem is still continuing on several issues such as self financing medical colleges. The stubborn attitude of the Christian managements on genuine issues makes the majority communities annoyed towards the minorities. “Mappila revival and Hindu revival within Kerala coincided and were in an interacting relationship. Moderates in both communities were struggling for a new unity based on national identity and mutual concern. Hindu and Mappila communalist expressions, however, stimulated further communalism and increased suspicion.”³⁷¹

The shift in the Muslim fundamentalism and communalism occurred after Babari Masjid demolition and Gujarat riots. Even though any large scale

³⁷⁰ M. K. Das, *Kerala: Politics of Pressure groups*, Economic and Political weekly, Vol.38 August 02-08 , 2003,pp.3234-5.

³⁷¹ Ronald Miller, *op.cit.*, p.191.

communal violence had not occurred after the demolition of Babari Masjid the consequence was far dangerous as far as the secular history of Kerala is concerned. The Visual Media played a vital role in shaping the communal construction during this period. The telecasting of demolitions and after consequence with sensationalism resulted in extreme polarization in the Muslim community. The community consciousness grew rapidly after these issues. The formation of I.S.S and N.D.F. should be seen in this context. The extreme level of speeches of its leaders could contribute the rising of identity consciousness rapidly. Through the public speeches and Medias they spread their messages. The ignorant and nominally educated were more prone to these speeches. The dress code, attachment to the prayer, group religious gathering etc were mainly the post Babri Masjid phenomenon.

The Islamic Sevak Sangh, the forerunner of the People's Democratic Party mobilized the Muslims over the issue of Babri Masjid. The Muslim youths who were members of secular parties and Muslim League began to join the Islamic Sevak Sangh. Under the leadership of Abdul Nassar Madani the organization tried to act as a protector of Indian Muslim. The provocative speeches of Madani attracted thousands of Muslim youths. On the other hand the Sangh Privar Hindus felt hatred against Madani and his group. The Muslim League a partner of then Congress led U D F ministry kept studied distance over the issue of demolition of the Masjid.

Adding to this, certain international event too contributed community/communal consciousness among the Muslims. The Gulf wars,

assassinations of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, the U.S Policy etc. were some of the reasons which created anger among the Muslim communities. As most of the Non Resident Indians of Malabar are staying in Gulf, the impact seriously affected the minds of people in Malabar.³⁷² The issue of Saddam Hussain was politically used in the general elections. The name of the certain Muslim pockets was changed to ‘Saddam Nagar’, Saddam Beach etc as an after effect of the incident.³⁷³ The political parties raised various flex board of Saddam Hussain and Palastain leader Yasser Arafat in order to garner votes from the Muslims. The Hindutva forces used the unrest in Islamic pockets to garner political mobilization among the Hindu community.³⁷⁴

From the late nineties onwards, the question of identity politics has gathered momentum. The Gujarat riots intensified the feeling of ‘otherness’ among the Muslims. The Gujarat riots created sense of fear and anger against Hindus.³⁷⁵ After the visit to Post violence Gujarat, the CPI (M) intellectual K.E.N Kunhahammad has spared most of his time to a critique of *savarna* ideology.³⁷⁶

The comment of V. S Achuthananthan on the high ranking of the Muslim students in Medical entrance became controversial. As the most of

³⁷² The living in Arabian countries resulted in change of costume and food habits of Muslims.

³⁷³ See ‘saddam beach’ en. Wikipedia.

³⁷⁴ C.R. Parameswaran, *op.cit.*, p.41.

³⁷⁵ See the versions of the victims in Gopal Menon, *Hey Ram: Genocide in the Land of Gandhi*, documentary on the 2002 Gujarat riots.

³⁷⁶ He has made several controversial comments regarding Hindu beliefs and festivals like Onam. He viewed Onam as a Brahmanical festival. The comment against the popular festival like Onam invited protest from the both intellectual and common circle

the members of CPI (M) belonged to Hindus, there was an argument that he commented it for the appeasement of Hindu majority in CPI (M).³⁷⁷ Even though he later withdrew his comment the implication was that it damaged a clear secular version.

Sometimes, the identity of the Muslim is equalized with the ideology of backward classes of Hindus. On the question of Reservation Policy many Muslim organizations came forward with Hindu Backward communities. The weekly of the Jama at Islami called *Madhyamam* have published number of articles regarding Dalit issues. There are several periodical publishing by various Muslim organization. The major periodicals of Jama at Islami in Kerala are *Madyamam* weekly and daily, *Prabhodhanam*, etc. *Madhyamam* daily has secured 4th place in the circulation in Kerala.³⁷⁸ The Mujahid group publishing a daily named *Varthamanam* and Sunni group, 'Siraj', with limited circulation. Through these medias they exhorted the people of 'do's, and 'do not's to the public. The advertisement on *Madhyamam* daily inviting 'Muslim Kidney' for a Muslim patient caused sharp criticism from intellectuals from the Muslim community.³⁷⁹ Thus some Medias have a specific role in spreading soft hatred in society.

Subsidy for the Hajj pilgrims has also caused controversy among the communal circle. Different Hindutva organizations criticized this as deviation from the secular ideas. They also demanded concession to the Sabarimala

³⁷⁷ *The Hindu*, 27th April 2005, Thirunvananthapuram.

³⁷⁸ Indian Readership Survey, 2011 in [www. Bestmediainfo.com/2011/10](http://www.Bestmediainfo.com/2011/10)

³⁷⁹ Interview with Hamid Chennamangalore. Dt. 20 April,2014.

pilgrims. The Hindutva groups campaigned that the income from the temples like Sabarimala, and Guruvayur go to the Government treasury.

A study conducted by the Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad reveals sociological aspects of Kerala. A table titled 'Some index for Communal and Caste feeling' portrays religion wise intensity of the problem.³⁸⁰ 5.5% Muslims supporting the religion based politics and Hindus and Christians supports are 3.5% and 2.1% each. The variation widened when questions regarding interreligious marriages of their children was asked. 72% Muslims oppose it and the percentage of Hindu and Christian opposers were 31.3% and 37.5% respectively. The survey reveals the religiosity is more active in Muslims compared to Hindus. The lack of strong religious sentiments in the Hindu society is mainly due to the extreme caste oriented system.

Thus the relations of the Hindus with their Muslim and Christian neighbors are a focal point for strengthening its identity which was fractured due to its internal conflicts like casteism. The semitic religions showed the role model for constructing a religious community. The tendency to keep distance from local beliefs and traditions created compartmentalized units of identity on the basis of religion. Shaping that identity to more fundamental frame has made split in socio cultural framework of Kerala. Gyan Pandey says "the notion of the community is crucially linked to the concept of communalism".³⁸¹ Both Hindu and Muslim communities articulated signs of identity through different means in Malabar. Making of identity by tracing

³⁸⁰ Dr. K.P.Arivindan(ed.)*Keralapadanam Keralam Engine Jeevikkunnu, Keralam Engine Chinthikkunnu*, Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishat, Thrissure,2006, p.147.

texts and exhibiting visual symbols have taken place and its remote result was the extremism, violence and hatred.

The construction of 'other' sharpened the community consciousness. Gyan Pandey observes "Community identities are built upon identification and exclusions by differentiating between us and them, the self and the other."³⁸² In order to differentiate from other religions, one may break up from traditions or make textual reification. Deviating the traditions which had inter-religious syncretism, purification of identity etc. are contributing to the acceleration of the communal consciousness. The 'Ghettoisation' is also a result of the emerging Hindu and Muslim divide and searching of safe space. Most of the recent land transactions in coastal areas point this angle. This is mainly because of the 'imagined fear' and 'suspicion' on other communities. Several such 'religious villages' or colonies are being formed in some parts of Malabar.³⁸³

In short, the aforesaid analysis points at the fact that, in Malabar socio-political reflections of (Muslim- Mappila) minority, influences the formation of Hindus as a defined community very seriously. Social and cultural reception and exchanges, characterize the traditional Mappila Muslim life in the region. Shared social life of many community rituals (for instance Nerchas

³⁸¹ Gyan Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Delhi, OUP 2006, p.269.

³⁸² Gyan Pandey, *Routine Violence; Nations, Fragments, Histories*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2006, p.144.

³⁸³ Usha Zacharias, *Intelligible violence: Media Scripts, Hindu/Muslim Woman and Battle for citizen in Kerala*, *Cultural Dynamics* 2004; Vol.16.n0.2-3- 169-192. Also Mukundan C. Menon, Marad, Untold Story of an RSS Liberal Area in *Menon papers*, www.nchro.org, accessed on 12.2.2013.

or annual martyr commemorations) is explicitly pointing towards this. Inter-community relations are later discouraged and the practice of an inter-religious corporate life has become a pale memory. After professional organizations appeared as the encompassing representatives of the community and hence as the sole custodians of the religions cannon and practice, which they professed, the authentic syncretism in belief was systematically discouraged. Issues like religious conversion, minority's political intervention and migration were readily taken up by the Hindu organizations and these were soon put into a series of venomous campaigns resulting, quite expectedly, in unbridgeable communal divide. Debates on the formation of Malappuram as a separate Muslim majority district was a classical example. This decision was quickly made into an issue of Hindu-Muslim cleavage rather than a governmental measure to settle an old administrative inconvenience. National and international events/issues of early nineties were also dragged into the formation of separate Muslim Identity. This was also resulting in creating permanent wedges between different, but traditionally cohabiting, communities. Communal clashes though appear as spontaneous or sudden are, in fact, grafted upon these permanent divisions created among the population who have lived together for many generations.

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNAL VIOLENCE AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN MALABAR

In the Indian context the term 'Communalism' is mainly used to denote the rivalry between different religious groups of diverse interests ,especially Hindus and Muslims The formation of different religious identities later becomes significant factor behind the emergence of Communalism which takes the paths of violence in due course. A general definition on communalism given by Bipan Chandra goes like this: "Communalism was a modern ideology that used the popular traditional consciousness of Hindus and Muslims forming separate groups for religious, marriage and interdining purposes in its effort to base modern politics of popular sovereignty on a religious identity."³⁸⁴ The causes of many communal issues were more political than religious. The political parties exploited the religious affinity of Indian masses and sow the seeds of separatism, division etc. for their political mobilization. On the issue of communal violence Asgar Ali Engineer comments "Communal tension arises as a result of the skilful manipulation of the religious sentiments and cultural ethos of a people by its elite which aim to realize its political, economic and cultural aspirations by identifying these aspirations as those of the entire community."³⁸⁵ Roland E Millar who carried detailed study on the social aspects of Malabar says

³⁸⁴ Bipan Chandra , *Communalism in Modern India*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd; New Delhi, 1989.p.8.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

“Communalism was a term that had taken on a technical use in India far beyond its original meaning. It referred to a mental attitude and a practical programme geared to the chauvinistic defense and aggressive aggrandizement of a particular religious community, involving competitions and struggle with other communities, to the disadvantage of the others and disharmony in the nation.”³⁸⁶ The noted Social Scientist Gyanendra Pandey adds “In its common Indian usage the word ‘Communalism’ refers to a condition of suspicious fear and hostility between members of different religious communities.”³⁸⁷ So it is mainly a political project coming out of frustration, identity consciousness, touching memories of the past etc. with an intention to occupy the space of others for the domination of all walks of life.

The violence or riots is the manifestation of communalized anger developed in the society. In India it developed from the Nineteen sixties onwards. “Communal violence since the early sixties and caste violence since the late sixties have become, it seems, a part of our life in India.”³⁸⁸ Asgar Ali Engineer says “the individuals belonging to various communities could not live to evolve into a composite whole; they were often over cautious, too jealous and too isolated in their inter-communal relations. The individuals belonging to various communities even fought on the basis of certain false notions, stereotyping and a few mental complexes, they entertained of each other. Such a state of affairs which lacked the spirit of understanding and

³⁸⁶ Roland Miller , *Mappila Muslims of Kerala, A Study in Islamic Trends*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1976, p.177.

³⁸⁷ Gyan Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, OUP, Delhi, p.11.

³⁸⁸ Asgar Ali Engineer, *op.cit.*, p.1.

tolerance was sure ground where communalism as creed of social tension could thrive in its most acute form.”³⁸⁹ Thus the multi level complex characters of Indian society is a source of communal rivalries. In this background, the present chapter tries to examine the factors leading to clashes between Hindus and Muslims in Malabar during the 2nd half of 20th century.

The violence attached to the communal rivalry was widely known as a North Indian phenomenon. The issue like partition flamed chain of violence in northern India. The sixties witnessed large scale communal violence in India. In the Nineties it was politics which played a major role in igniting communalism and communal violence. The riots’ related to the Babri Masjid demolition, Gujarat riots etc are the examples. These two incidents are supposed to be the major reasons in communalizing present Indian society. There is a strong notion that Kerala has a long tradition of religious unity.

We could see many incidents of communal clashes like Tellicherry(1971) Poonthura(1992) Marad(2003), that had happened in Kerala. A common trait which could be pointed out is that most of the riots or disturbances occurred in coastal regions of Kerala.

The previous chapters discussed the formation of communal consciousness among both Hindu and Muslim communities in different parts of Malabar. The reform efforts among different castes within Hindu

³⁸⁹ Sathish. C. Seth, *Communalism: A Socio-Political Study*, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi,2000, p. 201.

community finally ended up in the formation of a mega Hindu identity in Kerala. The present chapter discusses some of the infamous communal clashes that took place in the Malabar region and its implication on the wider Hindu community from 1972 to 2002.

There were several incidents which created communal consciousness. Organizations like RSS and NDF promoted martial spirit among its adherents through gymnasium. Recently Muslim youth have taken special interest in learning such arts. The NDF is conducting an annual road show named freedom parade in connection with Independence Day which showcases its members in uniform which is similar to that of armed force. Communal educational institutions on the basis of religious affinity are also a cause of communal polarization.³⁹⁰ The communally sensitive areas have more educational institutions run by respective religious groups which permit the people of the locality to admit their children to such schools which in turn hinder the children from intermingling with children of other religions. These schools prevent them from secondary socialization.

The mass religious get-together at regular intervals is another means for religious polarization. The religious gathering creates an apprehension among other religious communities that these gathering would ignite communal sentiments. Very often, the speakers in these gathering create a sense of 'us' & 'them' among the its members.

³⁹⁰ Interview Hamid Chennamangalore on 24th April, 2002.

The communal elements utilized modern technologies for promoting their ideology. The local cable Television is also a powerful tool for communal mobilization.³⁹¹ The broadcasting of sensitive reports on caste/communal issues in local medias results in igniting communal sentiments among the common people. The communal forces widely use social networks, flex boards, documentaries etc to propagate its ideology. Though the social net works is an illustration of freedom of expression, it is being misused by the extremist forces to create hatred among other communities. Comments and posts that aim to wound religious faith are common in many social media networks. Such hostile posts influence the people and encourage communalist thinking. The starting of publications by the Jama-at-e-Islami was a turning point in mobilizing or creating identity consciousness among Muslims. Though most of the Muslim organizations do not accept the ideology of the Jama-at-e-Islami, they could get large number of readers from the Muslim communities.

As mentioned earlier several international events were brought into the notice of the Muslims of Kerala by the media. The Bosnian and Palestine issues were highlighted as Muslim issue rather than human right violations and the local Muslim saw these issues as issues of community. The U S war against Iraq rose into prominence in public debate in Kerala. Even though Saddam Hussain was not a strict follower of textual Islam he could garner sympathizers from the Muslim community in Kerala. The left parties also gave anti US campaign in the context of Iraqi war.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Before 1972 there were localized minor communal clashes across the state. The coastal regions witnessed minor clashes on communal line. The Chalai riots in Trivandrum which occurred in 1982 threatened the normal life of the people. Prior to 1992 there were minor clashes and disturbances in Poonthura. One such instance is the 1982 riot which broke out as a reaction to the Chalai riots. Chalai riot was broken out on 31st December 1982 which resulted in the destruction of properties worth crores of rupees and the murder of one individual.³⁹² The very same day certain communal disturbances took place at Poonthura. Ten cases were filed by the police in connection with the incident out of which seven cases were against Muslims and one case against police.³⁹³ The national campaign named “*Rathayatra*”³⁹⁴ in connection with Ramjanmabhumi campaign intensified the communal feeling through the video cassettes, screening of films on streets, distribution of pamphlets and posters etc. The emergence of Islamic Sevak Sang in 1989 under the leadership of Abudl Nazar Madani was the result of Ayodhya Campagin of Sangh Parivaar.

The demolition of the Babari Masjid concluded this series of provocative incidents among Muslim communities. The speeches of Madani attracted several Muslim youths and they began to engage in violent activities against the imagined threat from the R S S. Thus the early 90’s was the period of both Hindu and Muslim mobilization. The mass wearing of *pardah* was also

³⁹² *Kerala Kaumudi*, 31st December, 1982 and 1st January, 1983.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ *Rathayathra* was a campaign for demanding construction of Ayodhya temple in place of Babari Masjid. It was started in september 1990 under the leadership of Sri L K Advani, the then president of B.J.P.

part of projecting the identity.³⁹⁵ There were several communal disturbances in Malabar as well. The most notorious was Marad riots in which around fourteen people were killed. The Tellichery riot was the first of its kind which resulted large scale communal mobilisation in Malabar.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ Hamid Chennamangalore, *op.cit.*

³⁹⁶ M.V. Raghavan, *Oru Janmam* (Mal). D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2012, p.162.

Tellichery riots

The Mappilas and Thiyyas were the dominant communities in the Tellicherry region. The Thiyyas were prospered under the Colonial state and engaged in various professions including trade. The Muslims who were the traditional merchants of the locality felt that the entering of Thiyyas into the business field would throw them out from their domination and power.

It is assumed that there were deep rooted rivalries in the minds of the two groups. This was considered as a threat by the Muslims who monopolised trading sector traditionally. The Mappilas retaliated by trying to monopolise the Liquor business.³⁹⁷ This competition among them triggered and strengthened the rivalry between these two communities from colonial period itself.³⁹⁸

The processional troubles were other issues in the Tellichery area. This was entirely a new introduction from North India. By 1920's this kind of clash between Hindus and Muslims on the question of music before mosque began to emerge in Malabar, where such issues were totally absent. By 30's the call for the unity of Hindus was articulated more vehemently in the wake of clash between Thiyyas and Muslims in connection with procession before mosque at several places in Kannur.³⁹⁹ The issues related with processions began to take place in other parts of Malabar also. The processions before the

³⁹⁷ Dileep. M. Menon, "*Becoming 'Hindu', and 'Muslim', Identity and Conflict in Malabar,*" Working Paper No.255, January, 1994, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram, p.9.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ Dileep. M. Menon, *op., cit.* pp. 20-21.

mosques invited conflicts between Hindus and Muslims of the locality.⁴⁰⁰ The temple processions became a fact of showing physical power and some members articulated it by showing their symbols of religious identity.

The Vithayathil Commission observed several undercurrents in 1971 Tellichery riots. The Commission set up for inquiring the riot says that “...in Tellichery Hindus and Muslims were living as brothers for centuries...It was only after RSS and the Jana Sangh set up their units and began activities in Tellicherry that there came a change in situation.”⁴⁰¹ It is not completely true that the relations of Tellichery Hindus and Muslims were so cordial as several issues ruined the relations. Several political issues contributed to boost Hindu feeling at that time. The Muslim League when it was in power played significant role in promoting the Muslims under state machinery.⁴⁰² The Jana Sangh propagated that the police under the Muslim League rule would not give justice.⁴⁰³ The Malappuram district formation and Tali temple issues had whipped up communal passion among Hindus. The Malappuram district formation, according to Jana Sangh leaders, the realization of the dream ‘Moplistan’ which the Muslim League had raised even before the formation of Pakistan.⁴⁰⁴ The Policy of the Education minister C H Mohammed Koya regarding appointment of the fulltime Arabic teachers without sufficient

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ Joseph Vithayathil, *Report of Commission of Enquiry, Tellichery Disturbances, 1971*, Government of Kerala.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*,p.69.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid*,p. 70.

qualification created some protests from Hindu outfits.⁴⁰⁵ The appointment of Arabic teachers who possess only certificates of their religious heads was chiefly campaigned by the Hindu right wing group.⁴⁰⁶

The Muslim League was in power and as pointed out by Vithaythil commission “there was a general feeling among the Hindus in Tellicherry that the Muslim League which was in power then was taking undue advantage of its political position by interfering in the police administration.”⁴⁰⁷ The administrative powers employed by the Muslim League at government level invited protests and frustration among other communities. The argument that “Education became more or less a private property of the Muslim League”⁴⁰⁸ influenced common Hindu people irrespective of their political affiliations. They also highlighted the involvement of Muslim League on the administration illegally.⁴⁰⁹

There were several minor incidents of communal disturbances that occurred in Tellicherry prior to the massive riot in December 1971. In June 1971 there was acid attack on a Muslim lady at Chettankunnu near Tellicherry. A Muslim married woman eloped with a Hindu and after mediation she returned to her husband’s home where she was thrown acid by husbands

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*,p. 71.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.69.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.6.

⁴⁰⁹ “Under the protection of the political power enjoyed by the League some members of the League amassed wealthy struggling and other illegal activities.” - opinion of Bharateeya Jana Sang in Joseph Vithaythil *op.cit.*,p.7.

relatives. She was severely burned.⁴¹⁰ Though the incident has not resulted in any direct communal clash, the Hindu elements used it to brand Muslims as religious fundamentalists. Another incident was the quarrel between a Muslim with an owner of a brandy shop on 27th March 1971.⁴¹¹

The commission finds another communal disturbance before the actual outbreak of Tellicherry riot. One Gangadharan was stabbed by Arabi Mammu on 24th December 1971. A protest meeting was held in the next day for not taking action against the culprit. The Commission critically comments on the role of Police “Apart from the suspicion created in one’s mind by the manner in which Arabi Mammu was released on bail by the police, the commission thinks that the evidence in this enquiry would justify a finding that there was undue delay on the part of the police in arresting him.”⁴¹²

The Tellicherry Congress Committee observed that all sections of Hindus irrespective of their political affiliation, participated in the riot.⁴¹³ The CPI (M) pockets were also hot spot of the riots.⁴¹⁴

The Tellicherry riots started on 29th December 1971. Though the riots did not lead to killing, hundreds were wounded and several buildings

⁴¹⁰ JoshephVithayathil,*op.cit.*, p. 72.

⁴¹¹ “On 27March, 1971 a Muslim clerk in the LIC office at Tellicherry quarreled with the owner of a brandy shop near Tellicherry bus stand,who is a Hindu. The clerk did not pay the money for the liquor he consumed and this resulted in wordy quarrel and beating. The clerk beat also a Hindu constable who tried to take him into custody. The night the shop was destroyed by gang of Muslims. An arrack shop was attacked on 27.3.1971.” – Joseph Vithayathil Report, *op.cit.*,p.72

⁴¹² *Ibid*,p. 75.

⁴¹³ *Ibid*,p. 72.

⁴¹⁴ “ in some places where Marxists are strong Marxist sympathizers seem to have taken part in comparatively large numbers in the disturbances.”- Joseph Vithayathil, *opcit.* p. 92.

including schools were set ablaze. The immediate reason for the riots was attributed to the throwing of a chappal to a temple procession of Muthappankavu at Tellichery on the night of 28th December 1971. The chappal is said to be thrown from a hotel named Noorjahan owned by a Muslim.⁴¹⁵ Some of the members of the processions got into hotel and caused damage to it.⁴¹⁶

The throwing of chappal to the processions was the immediate cause for the riots. The procession which resulted in the outbreak of the riots had many implications. In the year 1971 the procession went through a different route and no women or small children were allowed to participate.⁴¹⁷ In the words of the Commission, “Another unusual feature of the procession was that no women or small children participated in it. As usual most of the participants were drunk. The participants began to throw stones against vehicles⁴¹⁸ The commission thinks “These incidents only show that the members of the procession were in a fighting mood.⁴¹⁹

The first pre- planned act of aggression by the parties in the procession appears to be the attack of a hotel named Noorjahan.⁴²⁰ According to some, the attack on Noorjahan hotel was not pre-planned but was spontaneous and was caused by the throwing of a chappal from the hotel to the procession.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁵ *Indian Express*, 30th December,1971.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid*,p. 85.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid*,p. 85.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ *Ibid*

⁴²¹ *Indian Express*, 30th December 1971.

The commission does not think that it was so. “If the Muslims had planned to throw a chappal on the processions for the purpose of provoking a communal disturbance they would naturally have taken some precautions to meet the reaction. Nothing of this kind was done by the Muslims and the attack on the hotel was not resisted by anyone. Again, if anyone had thrown the chappal from the *veranda* (corridor) of the upstairs of the hotel it would not have been difficult to seize the miscreant if an attempt was made for the purpose. No such attempt was made by anyone.”⁴²²

On 28th night and on the 29th morning attacks on Muslims continued. They attacked Narangappuram mosque and *Madrassa*, Ayyalat mosque all near Tellicherry and on some of the Muslims who were either going along the road or travelling by buses.⁴²³ The second phase of the disturbances consists of acts of violence committed by Muslims.⁴²⁴ The news that the Muslim mosques and hotels in the town were attacked by Hindus in the night was sufficient provocation for them to retaliate by looting.⁴²⁵ The third phase of the disturbances in which numerous Muslim houses were looted and burnt and mosques were destroyed was the direct result of the large scale looting of Hindu shops at the main Bazaar in the town coupled with the false and alarming rumours calculated to inflame the minds of the Hindus spread in the suburbs.⁴²⁶ When the looting of the Hindu shops under the very nose of the

⁴²² Joseph Vithayithil, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

⁴²³ *Indian Express*, 30th December 1971.

⁴²⁴ Joseph Vithayithil, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*,p.90.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid*,p. 91

police took place the police simply stood by.⁴²⁷ There has already been the impression among the Hindus that the police was under the thumb of the League and that Hindus would not get justice at the hands of the police.⁴²⁸ The inaction of the police when the Muslims indulged in looting Hindu shops in front of the police station in the broad day light strengthened this impression.”⁴²⁹ “By the time the looting of Hindu shops began , all buses to and from Tellichery were stopped and the town was cut off from the outside world. People in the village could not know what actually was taking place in the town. This gave an opportunity to those who had started the trouble the previous night to spread false and alarming rumors in the suburbs with a view to incite the Hindus there to retaliate. They spread the rumours that Hindu college girls were made to walk naked through the streets of Tellichery, that Thiruvangad and Jagannath temples were set fire to and that the temples were burning.”⁴³⁰ Rumors intensified the riots. “...in places where the rumors were spread, a group of young men began to attack Muslims houses and mosques.”⁴³¹ As is usual on such occasions anti social elements came to the scene and made best use of the situation.⁴³² In some places the miscreants came from outside and committed the mischief; while in other places the local people themselves did the game.⁴³³ In other areas the local people with the

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁸ *Indian Express*, 1st January, 1972.

⁴²⁹ Joseph Vithayithil, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴³¹ *Ibid*, p. 93.

⁴³² *Ibid*, p. 91.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

outsiders joined together and committed havoc. These incidents took place in different villages where Hindus and Muslims lived intermingled. During these disturbances there was no open fight or clash between the members of the two communities as well. The mischief was done by a few members of both the communities.

After the communal riot a meeting was held on the 30th December 1971.⁴³⁴ The representatives of all political parties including Jansangh, Muslim League, CPI (M) and Congress took part in it. It was decided that there should be a joint appeal for peace by all the political parties. The appeal got signed on the 30th evening and distributed on the 31st. By that time large number of policemen and officers had arrived in Tellichery from different places and had been deployed in the affected areas with the result that the disturbance subsided in most places.⁴³⁵ The commission observes, “If the representatives of all the political parties had gone to the affected areas on the 29th itself and made a joint appeal for peace, perhaps the tension would have been eased earlier. To some extent the conduct of the Collector was responsible for the delay.”⁴³⁶ The Jana Sangh on the other hand viewed the riot as Marxist conspiracy against the Muslim League.⁴³⁷ The Vithayathil commission observes that people took part in the riot on the basis of religion without considering their political affiliation. Any way the CPI (M) leadership played a significant role to prevent the violence. While Hindu outfits like

⁴³⁴ *Indian Express*, 31st December, 1971.

⁴³⁵ *Mathrubhumi* 1-1-72

⁴³⁶ Joseph Vithaythil, *op.cit.*, 108.

⁴³⁷ O. Rajagopal, *Jeevithamritham*, D.C. Books, 2009, p. 109.

Jana Sangh carried widescale riots across Tellichery against Muslims, it was CPI (M) which led active involvement for the protection of minorities.⁴³⁸

The Tellichery riots marked the beginning of visible, aggressive side of communalism in Malabar. The R.S.S got an opportunity to strengthen its base in North Kerala.

Violence on Babari Masjid issue

After Babari Masjid demolition many incidents of violence were reported from several places across Malabar. The reports during the period reveal the intensity of violence involved in the incidents. The Mepparamba (Palakkad district) and Tanur (Malappuram district) incidents were some of the incidents related to the Ayodhya campaign of the Hindutva forces. The communal riot erupted in Mepparamba (1971) had taken away the lives of six persons.⁴³⁹ Yohannan Commission which enquired the police firing and communal riot in Palakkad in 1991 says “ It is seen that the police officials were taking adequate precautionary measures from 1971 onwards to avert any calamity on account of any communal riot or ill- feeling.⁴⁴⁰ The violent attack of the Muslims against the B.J.P. procession was the cause of the communal riot in Palakkad on 14th and 15th December.⁴⁴¹ Unfortunately a Muslim girl was killed in Police firing. According to the Commission, the Police firing was necessary to disperse the violent mob and the firing on that

⁴³⁸ M V Raghavan, *Oru Janman; MVR-inte Aathmakatha*, D C Books, Kottayam, 2012,p.166.

⁴³⁹ G. K. Sureshababu, *Malayalam Vaarika*, February 11, 2000,p.3.

⁴⁴⁰ Yohannan Commission Report on Palakkad riots, Legislative Assembly Library , Thiruvananthapuram. 1991, p.7.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.2.

girl was not intentional but accidental.⁴⁴² The killing of a girl at Palakkad by police firing resulted in communal mobilization.

⁴⁴² *Ibid*, p.5.

Tanur incidences

The Tanur violence occurred after the demolition of Babari Masjid. Several houses of Hindus were burned out. Most of the people whose properties were destroyed were the Hindu *Dalits*. The miscreants were the Muslim fisherman community. Tanur historically was also a communally sensitive area. There were several minor incidents of communal clashes in Tanur. The representation of the Hindus was very microscopic and the disputes between Hindus and Muslims led to exodus of Hindu groups. In 1964 there was a communal rift between Hindu fishermen and Muslim fishermen at Tanur on the issue of catching fish on Fridays the holy day of the Muslims⁴⁴³ As a result, many people(Hindus) were manhandled and some of them have migrated to Kozhikkode Vellayil and Puthiyappa areas.⁴⁴⁴ Out of fear around 120 Hindu fishermen left Tanur and settled at Marad and Vellayil at Calicut.⁴⁴⁵ This incident was highlighted in the Hindutva literature which tried to create anti Muslim feeling among the Hindus in Malabar.

In 1971 a number of huts of the lower caste Hindus were destroyed. Women were also attacked. In a related incident, a woman named Unnayi choyi was killed. The riot forced Hindus to sell their land for cheap prices and most of them shifted to other regions for safety.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ *Mathrubhumi*, August 8 1964.

⁴⁴⁴ P. Narayanan Rao, *K.Bhaskar Rao-Samarppitha Jeevitham* (Mal). Kurukshetra-prakasan, Kochi,2008, p.77.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ T Suresh, *Maradu Parayunnathu'* pamphlet, Hindu Aikya Vedi, Thiruvananthapuram (Year not mentioned),p.46.

Comparing with other parts of the Malappuram district the RSS was well organized here. The demolition of the Babari Masjid became more powerful weapon for both Hindu and Muslim communal grouping. “Once the news of the demolition spread across Tanur, all shops were closed and an undeclared *bandh* was observed. No vehicles dared to venture onto the roads. This situation continued for the next two days, and on the third day, the RSS took out a victory procession throughout Tanur town shouting provocative slogans and celebrating the demolition of the Masjid.”⁴⁴⁷ As a result, two shops belonged to Hindus were attacked on the same day. “On 9th December at around 11 a. m. a mob comprising of 100 to 150 Muslims armed with sickles, Knives and clubs organized from the southern part of Ottumpuram attacked Hindu houses. More than 20 houses were burnt. Though nobody was injured in the violence, considerable destruction of property took place. All the Hindus living in that area ran towards the eastern side and crossed over the canal and escaped.”⁴⁴⁸ Most of the culprits were from the coastal side of Tanur. Several houses were burned out. Ottumbram Chakkilody bagavathi temple and Karad Temple were partially damaged. ‘Tara’ of the local Cheruma (*Dalit*) community was damaged.⁴⁴⁹ These incidents show that the the lower strata of the Hindu society is most vulnerable to the riots of this area.

⁴⁴⁷ R. Santhosh, *The Process of Religious Identity Formation: A Sociological Study of Religious Organization in Kerala, South India*, working paper, Religious violence an Islam; interrogating Hindu Muslim conflict in Kerala, South India. Unpublished Phd Thesis, University of Chennai.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ T Suresh, *op.cit.*, p.44.

The Marad riots

Marad is a coastal region of Kozhikkode district and the latest place in the series of the communal riots in Kerala. Hindu and Muslim fisherman communities are the residents of this coastal region. The socio economic index is not better comparing other areas. “Only few have higher education (beyond 10th standard). The average education is less than S.S.L.C. Nobody is employed in the Government or Private institutions.”⁴⁵⁰ So the residents were not accustomed to interaction with people of mainstream social strata. This is a major problem in almost all the coastal areas in Kerala. There were minor communal clashes in the Kozhikkode region. In 1962 October 2 there arose a problem in Vellayil Kadappuram. ‘The Hindus were largely attacked and a person called Rajan was killed. 27 people were admitted to the hospitals out of injury. The death toll rose to three and the violence ended after the coming of MSP.’⁴⁵¹

In a single incident nine persons were killed and around fifteen were seriously injured in the Marad II riot. This is the first communal riot which resulted in a large number of killings in a single incident. The secretary of Arayasamajam, T. Suresh attributes that the incident was to annihilate Hindus from Marad where the Hindus are more in number concentrated compared to other coastal regions in South Malabar.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Thomas P. Joseph Commission of Inquiry, Marad. acced by [www. http://archive.org/stream/ThomasPJosephCommissionOfInquiry-maradCommunalDisturbances/marad_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/ThomasPJosephCommissionOfInquiry-maradCommunalDisturbances/marad_djvu.txt) on 31/07/2014, p.28.

⁴⁵¹ M. Balakrishanan, *Maradu Parayunnathu*’ pamphlet, in T Suresh, *op.cit.*, p.43.

⁴⁵² T Suresh *op.cit.*, p.12.

The Judicial Inquiry Commission also got information that there was physical training classes conducted by certain organizations at Marad and those classes were taken by persons from outside.⁴⁵³

The history of communal disturbance in Marad started from the year 1974. The rivalry between fishermen communities led to minor clashes in the area. In 1984 there was an issue between these communities over the issue of a cemetery. These issues were amicably solved under the leaders of these groups and government officials. The events which happened in 2002 have been described in the Joseph commission Report. It started with the New Year program and one Sakeer and Sujith had a worldly altercation on stepping on the foot. When it was repeated the families of two settled this. "At about 7 pm on 3-1-2002 Sujith was allegedly assaulted by Sakeer. At about 7.15 PM some Hindu men, knowing about that incident obstructed Sakeer and questioned him. Learning that, the friends and relatives of Sakeer came to the spot and there was some tussle. In the meantime, some vested interests had spread the canard that in the dance programme on 31- 12- 2001, a Hindu boy had insulted a Muslim girl. Rumor spread that a communal clash occurred at Marad Beach. At about 7.20 P.M. on 3-1-2002, each side attacked the other using deadly weapon like swords, chopper, stick etc. At about 7.45. P.M. Thekkethode Suresan with some other people attacked and killed Kunhikoya. At about 8.10. P.M., Prabhu with some other men attacked and killed Yunus. At about 8.10.P.M., Latheef with other companions attacked the house of Pushparajan, an R.S.S worker, in their attempt to kill Pushparajan and killed

⁴⁵³ Thomas. P. Joseph, *op.cit.*, para.p.36.

his nephew, Shinjith. It is said that Pushaparajan was available in that house at the time of attack, saved himself by hiding in the water tank. The District Collector, Kozhikkode issued prohibitory orders within Beypore Police station limits u/s 144 Cr. P.C. for two days from 12. A.M. on 4-1-2002. At about 8 P.M. on 4-1- 2002, allegedly in the presence of Police, Thekkethodi Suresan and others killed Aboobacker who is said to have been very popular among the Muslim community. In the meantime, several houses were attacked and several fell injured.”⁴⁵⁴ Thus the altercation between the two teenage led to the communal killings in the Marad. Any way silly issues such as touching one’s feet on other person’s feet will not be a real reason for the outbreak. There were certain under current behind the surface of Marad incident. On the findings on the riots of Marad the commission describes, “A minor, insignificant incident that occurred at Marad Beach, a communally divided and most sensitive area, during the New year celebrations in the evening of 31-12-2001 and which was almost settled by the elders of the locality, transformed into a major communal riot at Marad Beach on 3/4-1-2002 due to the intervention of the C.P.L(M), I.U.M.L. and B.J.P./R.S.S. activists for their gains and that resulted in the death of five persons, injuries to several others and damage to property. It is quite unlikely that those activists indulged in that act were without the blessings of their respective leaderships, at least at the local level.”⁴⁵⁵ Thus the minor issues turning to be problems of great prominence in the sensitive areas.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp.24-25.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*, Chapter X,para 1.

The after effects of Marad incidents created frustration, fear of insecurity etc among this group. “If Hindu is not united, as happened in Kashmir we have to forcefully ouster from Kerala.”⁴⁵⁶ The Hindutva forces successfully carried the campaign to show ‘the plight of Hindus’ in Kerala. They also propagated that the coastal regions in Kerala was under the control of Islamist terrorists and the international Muslim terrorists had a strong role in the incidents that happened in Marad.⁴⁵⁷

The findings of the Inquiry Commission has critically viewed the role of Police machinery in tackling the situation after the massacre started much before the riot of 19 March 2003.⁴⁵⁸ The commission says “One must bear in mind that the area was communally torn and divided right from 1954 and saw a fierce riot just few months back.”⁴⁵⁹ The commission was very critical about the steps which were taken followed by the district administration after the first Massacre. “Their only claim is about conducting few camps, peace rally or even ‘*snehasangamam*’ (which itself did not yield result) or opening few water taps. The commission’s comment on the lapses from the part of police is very significant. The commission says that “there was only a symbolic presence of the police at Marad Beach on 2-5-2003 and even on several days before that. The Civil Administration by initiating some relief measures immediately after 3/4 -1-2002, indicate symbolic presence of the State

⁴⁵⁶ Pattathuvila Damodaran, in *Maradu Parayunnathu*’ pamphlet, T. Suresh, *op.cit.*, p.20.

⁴⁵⁷ T. Suresh, *op.cit*, p.12.

⁴⁵⁸ Thomas. P. Joseph, *Commission of Inquiry Marad, Para 37.*

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, para 20, p.51.

machinery. There were lapses on the part of the police and Civil Administration, Kozhikkode in taking timely, preventive remedial action in preventing the massacre at Marad Beach on 2-5-2003. But, the local Police acted effectively under the then Commissioner, Sri T.K. Vinod Kumar in preventing the spreading of violence following that massacre though , it was unfortunate that household articles were damaged at Marad Beach in the presence of the police after the massacre on 2-5-2003.”⁴⁶⁰ Thus the weakened police system further intensified in the already sensitive spots for communal clashes. Another important defect from the part of the government machinery which resulted in creating chain of violence is the delay in judicial and administrative process. “The unjustified delay in the State Government granting sanction for prosecution of the accused involved in the crime cases relating to the incidents on 3/4-1-2002, the consequent delay in prosecuting them and their getting enlarged on bail enabled the fundamentalist elements to Ignite, the fire of revenge in the mind of the close relatives of the Muslims killed on 3/4-1-2002 which also contributed to the massacre on 2-5-2003.”⁴⁶¹ Thus Judicial delay will lead to the culprits for igniting sentiments among the communities and accelerate further tensions.

In the later development the police doubts that the two leaders of the Muslim League who were assumed to be participated in the conspiracy of Marad Second riot has been charged.⁴⁶².

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid*, Para 42, p. 78.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid*, op.cit, Chapter X para 3.

⁴⁶² Accessed from <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/marad-report-slams-muslim-league/13497/> on 31/07/2014.

Kasarkode and Nadapuram, a different story of polarization

Kasargode is a known communally sensitive region. There were several communal tensions in the district which bordering Manglore district of Karnataka state. “Identifying Kasaragod, the northernmost district of Kerala, as a communal cauldron where 1,113 cases of communal conflict have been occurred in the past 10 years, the Kerala Police has recommended constitution of a specially trained force to be stationed permanently for ensuring peace and social harmony.”⁴⁶³ “As per 2005 statistics, Kasaragod had a Muslim population of over four lakh while Hindus numbered about seven lakh. The district’s Christian population was then close to 85,000. Muslims constitute 24.7 per cent of the total Kerala population while Hindus form 56.20 per cent and Christians 19 per cent”.⁴⁶⁴ Cases of violence were happening in Kasaragod between Hindu and Muslims frequently causing wide drift between them. One such recent incident is the placing of a head of a buffalo on a Nilavilakku in Meeppugiri Durgga temple.⁴⁶⁵ The delay in detecting the culprits would again create clashes. The placing of the head of buffalo is a deliberate attempt to widen the gap between two communities. Any way the violence after this incident disturbed the normal life of the people.

The *Nabidinerali* (Nabi day procession) is becoming an occasion for demonstrating the strength of the Muslim community. The processions during

⁴⁶³ *The pioneer*, 30th October 2011.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁶⁵ *Kesari*, 19February,2012, p.6.

Nabi day are becoming more sensitive in the area.⁴⁶⁶ The attacks against non Muslims who are mingled with or speak to Muslim women were other recurrent issue in the region. Several Hindu youths were targeted and they were injured by the group attack of the Muslim youths. The targeting was not based on their political affiliation. A DYFI member recently was attacked for the same case.⁴⁶⁷

The majority of the Muslims in North Malabar are allied to Muslim League and the Hindus are mostly followers of CPI (M). Clash between political parties in Kerala is quite common. But in certain parts of Malabar these political clashes always had a communal dimension. This is one of the grassroots level reasons for the communal polarization here.⁴⁶⁸ “Moral policing is a reality in Kasaragod town. People are cautious while talking to opposite sex from another community. Armed gangs stalk places of public gathering.”⁴⁶⁹ A detailed report on ‘the actions need to be taken’ has been submitted to the government by DGP Sreejith recently. It says that “conflicts occurring per year in Kasaragod have been increasing since 2006. If the total recorded number of conflicts between 2001 and 2006 were 172, this grew to 1,113 by 2011. More than 10,000 persons had been named as accused in these cases but not even a single accused has been punished so far and this is acting

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.15, 19th February,2012.

⁴⁶⁸ “Periodic violence of a communal nature occurs at least once in every quarter, annually, in Kasaragod district. Several people have been killed in the district during the last few years and hundreds have been injured. Attacks on property and vehicles are no news in the coastal belt, stretching from Kanhangad to Kasaragod town”- *Deccan Herald*, 22nd February,2012, Thiruvananthapuram.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

as an encouragement to trouble-makers.”⁴⁷⁰ “The DIG noted that the entire coastal belt of Kasaragod district was vulnerable to communal riots. He proposed setting up special control room and patrol units in Kasaragod to gather intelligence and prevent communal riots.”⁴⁷¹ As both political parties with exclusive Muslim or Hindu membership the members of these parties seldom get a chance to intermingle with people representing other religious groups.

Pioneer daily reports “A now-disbanded judicial commission had received police reports that activists of the Muslim League, second largest constituent of the Congress-led ruling UDF coalition, had deliberately indulged in violence on November 15, 2009, by attacking the police and a temple, a colony and commercial establishments owned by Hindus. As per the police report, the Muslim League workers, who had assembled in Kasaragod town on that day to give a reception to their senior leaders, had unleashed the violence as part of a suspected plan to sow seeds of communal conflict across Northern Kerala. Two persons were killed – one in police firing – on that day.”⁴⁷² Though the Muslim League is sharing power with Congress on several localities it plays like a religious outfit. The attack on temple and colony clearly reveals the fact that provocation is also their planned agenda. The disbanding of Nissar commission on Kasaragod firings was a biased step to appease Muslim League. Under the pressure from the Muslim League, the government dissolved the Nissar commission. Thus the pressure politics of

⁴⁷⁰ *Pioneer*, 29th October, 2011.

⁴⁷¹ *Deccan Herald*, 15th February 2012..

⁴⁷² *Pioneer*, 29th October 2011.

Muslim League naturally provoke the anti Muslim feeling among the Hindus cutting across the boundaries of political parties. The police had taken necessary steps to control the vulnerable situation in Kasaragod areas.⁴⁷³ But the intervention of the political parties diluted the efforts of the Police.

Nadapuram issues

The Nadapuram region of the Kozhikkode district was very sensitive because of the rift between Muslims and Hindus. The majority of the Muslims in this area are the supporters of the Muslim League and the Hindus are sympathizers of CPI (M) and BJP. The locality has good number of Thiyya population, majority of whom were workers in coconut plantations..The sudden economic upliftment of Muslims due to gulf migration has caused frustration among the non Muslim communities.⁴⁷⁴ Further, naming Thiyyas as ‘Chekkan’ by Muslim land lords also caused rift between these groups. Addressing Thiyya laborers as ‘Chekkan’, was an insult for the labourers. Even the young Mappila boys used to address the aged Thiyya labourer with the term ‘Chekkan’.⁴⁷⁵ Under the leadership of Sri A. Kanaran an agitation was started against this attitude of the Muslim land owners.

“Even minor incidents of violence involving the Indian Union Muslim League and the CPI (M) are getting a communal twist, widening the polarization already existing in the area.”⁴⁷⁶The representation of the Muslims

⁴⁷³ *Hindu*, 12th February, 2012.

⁴⁷⁴ <http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/15022001/Art10.htm>

⁴⁷⁵ www.cpimkerala.org/eng/kozhikkode-94.php?n=1.

⁴⁷⁶ *Deccan Chronicle*, 5th May 2011.

in CPI (M) is very few and this could be the reason for categorizing such clashes as communal. Besides, the Muslim League argues that the clashes between Muslim League and CPI (M) Hindus were intended to target the minorities. After each violent event, there was an intervention from the political circle to protect the culprits. This further motivates the culprits to engage in anti social activities. Even if the police bring criminals to book they are acquitted of the charges once the political leadership exerts pressure on the police.

Rumours also ignited the communal violence across the State. In Nadapuram one such rumor was that a Muslim lady was raped by a CPI (M) activist. One Eenthullathil Binu was accused in the rape case. The Muslim League utilized this so called incident to ignite anti- CPI (M) feeling among the Muslim folk. Apparently, human right activists like Mukundan.C. Menon used this incident as an anti Muslim agenda of the CPI (M).⁴⁷⁷ But later the victim herself confessed that she was not raped.⁴⁷⁸

A short film ‘Nadapuram: *Oru desam neru parayunnu* is throwing some light on some facts regarding Nadapuram disturbances. The basic issues regarding this area are between Thiyya and Muslim communities, the people who come under the neo economic geography. The short film also highlights that the Muslims in the locality who were rich out of traditions and gulf migration have Thiyya employees in their coconut plantations.

⁴⁷⁷ <http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/15022001/Art10.htm>.

⁴⁷⁸ <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/gangrape-case-all-accused-acquitted/article3161273.ece>.

Caste in violence

Most of the Hindu culprits or victims who were the direct participants of communal clashes were *Dalits* and O B C's. In the case of Muslims it was mostly from backward fishermen community. Though the caste based violence is not a common issue in the state, the castesism is articulated in different forms. The lower strata of Hindus and Muslims are more prone to communal violence. One such incident is the Tanur riot where the Muslim fisherman community attacked a *Dalit* colony at Tanur.

The victims of the post Babari demolition violence at Tanur in Malappuram district were *Dalits*. The small houses of the dalit communities were set ablaze. "The increased communal polarization and intercommunity tensions between Hindus and Muslims in Tanur assumed a serious dimension with an attack on Hindu houses by Muslims in December 1992. This incident seriously affected Hindu-Muslim relation in Tanur and is most often cited by the Hindus as an example of Muslim aggression."⁴⁷⁹ The coastal area is fully occupied by the Muslim fishing community. Normally the coastal and non coastal Muslim keep certain distance and they would not engage with the marital relations. The human development index is very meager in these areas. The tribal characteristics of the coastal community often clash with the interests of other communities.

The communally sensitive hotspots of Malabar like Nadapuram, Kasarkode, Marad etc were the strongholds of Tiyya or Mukkuva castes of

⁴⁷⁹ R.Santhosh, *op.cit.*, p.174.

Hindu. Most of the participants in direct communal clashes in these areas were Thiyyas. In Nadapuram most of the Thiyya families were the daily labourers and most of them were the sympathizers of left politics. Most of the Muslims are the members of the League. The attitude of the Mappila landlords towards the Thiyyas was identical as the Hindu upper caste landlords towards the low castes.

Later the gulf impact boosted the economy of the Mappilas and the real estate business was centered on the Mappilas. The big houses, luxury cars and other symbols of prosperity created frustration among other communities and paved way for developing hostile attitude in the latter.

The communal incidents in Nadapuram were mainly centered on Muslims and Thiyya communities. Though the Muslims were financially sound it is said that they were not socially empowered. The neo rich culture of the Muslims attracted jealousy in the common Hindu folk. The real estate boom has made the Muslims wealthy as the business is mostly engrossed by them. In addition to this the gulf migration has also contributed to improved financial status of the Muslims and they are now capable of purchasing the lands which were once under the ownership of Hindus. The once backward Muslims thus enjoy a better status compared to the backward Thiyyas who are still in the deprived position which in turn becomes a reason for jealousy among the latter.

Various Inquiry commissions put forwarded different measures to curtail the communal riots. Yohannan commission advices some suggestions

for curbing off communalism. (a) Deploy full time police force to take sudden actions to counter communal violence. (b) The need to educate and enlighten the public regarding the far reaching consequences of communal riots. The commission finally argues that the practice of withdrawal of cases registered against persons involved in communal riots from court of law should be discouraged and strict action has to be taken against fanatics involving in anti-social activities.⁴⁸⁰

Most of the places where riots occurred were communally sensitive areas. So the permanent police aide post would tackle repeated crimes there. A special wing under the Coastal Police station should handle the communal issues even if it is minor which would reduce the risk of communal riots in the region. The coalition politics sometime adjust with communal politics. The making of such politics could be rightly attributed to the Liberation struggle of 1959. Almost all caste and religious parties joined hand during the Liberation struggle led by Congress party against Communist Government.

The short term and long term measures are to be taken for the tackling of communal polarization. As we noted the coastal zone is more prone to the communal skirmish. The educational backwardness of the area should be cared and the concept of fisheries school should be banned as it alleviate the chances of children of fishermen to interrelate with other communities. Instead the government should initiate to train the children with modern education. Normally the children prefer to complete the 10th standard and after

⁴⁸⁰ See Yohannan, *op.cit.*

that they prefer to pursue fishing as their means of livelihood. The lack of proper schooling results in creation of children without having any social fondness. The present monthly stipend of the fishermen children is inadequate. The Hindu fishermen children get Hostel mess fees in Government and Aided educational institutions. This facility should also be extended to the children from the Muslim fisher folk. This will help them to study in distant area and get a chance to mingle with mainstream community.

One must bear in mind that most of the culprits of the coastal riots are not coming from well educated background. The religious based institutions, especially which of Muslims, also have a strong hold in these areas. A student who has been studying in a school which is affiliated to his own religion will definitely develop a mindset accordingly. At the level of secondary socialization also due to these denominational schools, religious exclusiveness came to play among among Muslims.⁴⁸¹

The Marad commission has proposed certain suggestions regarding some of the measures to be adopted for preventing future riots. “The Government should, with consensus among the religious groups and without of course, violating the fundamental rights if any in this regard, ensure that religious instruction is not imparted and religious symbols are not exhibited in educational institutions and at any rate, ensure that the religious instruction (where, it is permissible under law) is imparted beyond the school hours and appropriate changes in that regard is made in the Kerala Education Act and

⁴⁸¹ P. P. Abdul Razak, *Colonialism & Community Formation in Malabar* , Unpublished Ph. D thesis, Department of History, University of Calicut, 2007, p.97.

the Rules”.⁴⁸² In several aided schools, mainly Christian schools several religious activities are being conducted. Most of them belonged to particular religious or caste community and most of the employees are from their religious group. Thus, the institutions where teachers and non teaching staff belong to same community, there is hardly any scope for social integration. The appointment of certain seats of these institutions should be handed over to the Public Service Commission, so that the candidates from other communities could also get a chance to be part of such institutions .

The formation of people’s squad at the initiative of secular minded people from all political parties in all sensitive areas with the help of local administration would help to nurture an ambiance which would promote social as well as religious integrity of the area. The committee should get proper training from government agencies, social scientist etc. Another important suggestion by Thomas commission is that “The Government, should ensure by consensus among various religious groups that persons engaged in giving religious instruction are equipped with modern education so that, they could give instruction regarding public order, morality, religious tolerance and secularism which in turn, would prevent the growth of religious fanaticism, fundamentalism and terrorism.”⁴⁸³ The *madrassa* reforms started by the central state governments are the part of that programme. A minimum academic qualification should be fixed to those engaged in educating the children. At present , religious coaching received from non qualified teachers

⁴⁸² Thomas Joseph, *op.cit.*,Chapter XI para,V /A

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*, Chapter IX para 4.

are affecting the social consciousness of children badly. The starting of classes on secular subjects in *madrassas* would enhance the capacity of the children.

The processions are becoming a sign of showing its strength to other communities. The neo rich in both Hindu and Muslim communities are supporting the procession. Recently in a Nabi Day some youths in Kasaragod rallied by wearing Military uniform.⁴⁸⁴ Such processions in communally sensitive areas like Kasaragod would result in creating polarization. The Commission Report says “There should be reasonable restrictions without affecting fundamental rights if any, in the matter of taking out processions on the basis of caste, religion etc., along public place/road. There must be a code of conduct evolved among the religious/caste leaders in this regard; bearing in mind that any fundamental right to propagate religion is subject to, public safety and order. Sufficient security deposits should be taken from the organizers of the religious festivals and processions along public places /roads.”⁴⁸⁵ It is very surprising that honorable courts are imposing ban on political parties and keep mum on the religious procession which sometimes ignites communal feelings among the common people. So the laws should be stipulated to regulate the processions. The high court issued a ban on loud speakers but it is still used in religious centers. The government or police do not dare to take action fearing further disturbance.

⁴⁸⁴ <http://www.mathrubhumi.com/english/news/kerala/volunteers-wear-military-uniform-and-hold-rally-case-booked-119855.html>

⁴⁸⁵ Thomas Joseph ,*op.cit.*, Chapter IX para 7.

Vithaythil commission suggests providing proper education for the followers of the political parties.⁴⁸⁶ It may possibly curb participation of at least the workers of political parties in the violence.

The commission recommended the setting up of special wing in Police department. “Special cells at the State and lower levels must be formed under Senior Police officers of proven integrity and ability, to collect information and detect communal, fundamentalist and terrorist activities in the State. Those Units should monitor potentially riot prone areas and take immediate action. Under such Units, there should be special operation wings with officers having secular, impartial credentials and they should be given special training to deal with communal violence.”⁴⁸⁷ It is very important that the officers assigned to the task of communal cases should be free from any of the religious organizations and their background should be thoroughly verified. The attitude of the certain Hindu policemen towards the Muslims was critically commented in the report. The Deputy Superintendent of Police testifies that how some Policemen could not restrain themselves when they met Muslims on the road.⁴⁸⁸ The Commission notes, “Some witnesses say that while chasing away the Muslims found on the way some of the policemen cried out to them to go to Pakistan.”⁴⁸⁹ So the commission

⁴⁸⁶ Joseph Vithayathil, *op.cit.*, p.38.

⁴⁸⁷ Thomas Joseph, *op.cit.*, Chapter IX para 9.

⁴⁸⁸ Joseph Vithayathil, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p.106.

recommends dismissal of Policemen who found guilty of communal hatred or prejudices.⁴⁹⁰

The establishment of Coastal Police station is a positive development from the part of government. Through this the illegal activities through the sea can be prevented to a certain extent. They should also give power to interfere in the cases from the coastal region. As the coastal region of Kerala is more prone to communalism the role of Coastal Police station deserves much attention. The recommendation of Vithayathil Commission regarding establishing of a special branch of Police exclusively for collecting information on communal disturbance is a practical suggestion.⁴⁹¹ The Yohannan Commission Report says that the deployment of a well equipped and well trained Rapid Action Force should be deployed in communally sensitive areas.⁴⁹²

As backwardness and communal violence is correlated in the coastal regions, the modernization of fishing industry which is the main source of the income of coastal community is very necessary. Most of the labourers depend upon the day to day income and this will lead to the insecurity feeling on economic matters. A minimum monthly salary through the society and public – private participation would enhance the standard of living of the fisherman community. The living conditions of the several fisherman localities need to be modernized. Normally the fishing is carried by the traditional fishing

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.116.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*,p.117.

⁴⁹² Yohannan, *op.cit.*,p.249.

communities. The promotion of non-traditional fishing communities in this field would give them chance to mingle with other communities. It is true that the youngsters of the fishing communities are searching for other jobs. In this situation, the training centers for fishing activities will be a boom to the fishing industries.

The Govinda Menon Commission observed molestation as immediate provocation for the outbreak of violence.⁴⁹³ One such issue resulted in Police firing at Poonthura in 1978. Some Christians threw sand at the Hindu Araya women who were seated in a temple festival.⁴⁹⁴ The same reason is repeating in many communal riots. The rumour of molestation intensified the communal violence at Tellichery.⁴⁹⁵ In the year 1992, the riot in Poonthura has started with the pelting of stone on R. S. S. workers by neighboring Muslim ladies who were disturbed by the dress pattern of the RSS men.⁴⁹⁶

We can conclude that the role of social pressures which were historically and politically evolved in bringing out episodes of social antagonism as follows. Communal riot in Thalassery (1971) was laying a solid foundation for the later spread of communally informed hatred and conflict in entire Malabar. Interestingly, structural causes of Thalassery were received and repeated in almost all the later conflict sites. Intercommunity disparities (in sharing political power), often being emerged in the context of

⁴⁹³ Justice P. Govinda Menon (Rtd) ,*Report of the Commission of Inquiry regarding the Police firing at Poonthura on 7.2.1978.* p.7.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁵ Joseph Vithaythil, *op.cit.*,p.91.

⁴⁹⁶ Aravindakshan Commission Report on Poonthura riots,1991 .p.5.

an extremely competitive party politics frequently lead to the creation of communities into militantly organized pressure-groups. It could be seen that the social /political pressures, inserted by these groups, in majority of the reported cases, result in full-fledged communal conflict and violence. The destruction of Babari Masjid was another recent event which intensified violence in Malabar on clear communal lines. With the demolition of Babari Masjid, an age-old, monumental prayer site of Indian Muslims, Hindu-Muslim relations in Malabar were strained almost irrecoverably. Incidents of violence were reported even from the places like Tanur (Malappuram district) and Palakkad. Communally organized violence at Nadapuram (Kozhikode district), Kasargod (Kasargod district) were symptoms of influence imparted to Kerala from the whole Babari episode. If we look closely at these incidents, both the attackers and the victims belong to the most backward sections of the contemporary Society. This is particularly true if we examine the tensions taken place in low-brow fishing hamlets. These tensions can only be resolved by removing social backwardness of various participant communities living in these marginal localities. Socio-economic development of the coastal belt, traditionally inhabited by working-poor and needy fishers of both Hindu and Muslim fold, requires an immediate attention. Gender insensitive gestures, most often appear as being directed against women (in the form of minor eve-teasing, stalking and physical abuse) are often reported as allegedly causing tensions in localities which already stay divided on communal lines. A special attention, if we take these allegations at their face value, should be given to re-design gender relations towards a more democratically civilized

and secular living. In short, communal formation in Malabar cannot be concluded as the handwork of a particular community or the other, rather it is conjured up by a special social situation, characterised by politico- economic competition for securing culturally secured niches of power.

CHAPTER 5

SEARCH FOR IDENTITY: THE CONTEMPORARY HINDU SOCIETY OF MALABAR

The change and continuity of caste and religious communities during contemporary period has been studied seriously in academic circles. This chapter is an attempt to trace out the certain factors affected on Hindu society and its structure in the contemporary Malabar region. Casteism, Revivalism and Communalism are the prominent factors which had its impact on Hindu society in Malabar.

The revivalist tendency in Hindu society in Malabar can be attributed to the outcome of the various issues began to appear by the 2nd half of 20th century. In the case of Muslim community, several national and international issues were responsible for forming Muslim community consciousness during the same period. The gulf war, Palestine issues, Kashmir problem, Babari Masjid, Twin Tower attack and other issues were widely used for moulding consciousness among Muslim community. The campaign of the Muslim outfits and other mainstream political parties on these issues resulted in the boosting of identity issues. The systematic planning of the Muslim outfits changed the costume, architecture, etc which we may call as 'Arabianisation'.⁴⁹⁷ Several Muslim mosques which were built in the

⁴⁹⁷ Interview with Hamid Chennamangalore, held on 4th April, 2013.

traditional local style were turned into west Asian architecture during this period. It is said that the wide use of burqa is part of getting separate identity.⁴⁹⁸ The proximity to Mangalore, a region of Karnataka which is communally more sensitive, intensified the communal feelings in Northern part of the Malabar region. Several instances of religious fundamentalism from both sides, Hindus and Muslims, were reported. Even conversation between a boy and a girl of two different communities is prohibited in certain areas. Numerous incidents reveal that the religious fundamentalism is the underlying factor for this. Several people were manhandled by the 'moral police'. The political parties have not raised any serious attempts to counter these practices. This drags us towards the more thought provoking problem of relation between modernity and religious fundamentalism. Thus the religious fundamentalism gives way to the communal identity and as a result inter religious rivalry is gearing up.

The symbols of Hindu revivalism are growing fast among Hindu middleclass. Temple renovation is largely progressing which was not a common sight before Nineteen nineties. Flex boards requesting people to donate for the temple renovation could be seen in every nook and corner. This kind of campaign of Hindu forces started from the early nineties onwards. The involvement of the Hindu outfits in the annual religious festivals is largely seen in the region. The *swarnaprasnam* is another programme that is

⁴⁹⁸ Terry Murray, <http://rationalist.org.uk/articles/4199/why-feminists-should-oppose-the-burqa> accessed on 4.8.2014.

conducted carried now in temples.⁴⁹⁹ The Hindu families irrespective of castes began to show keen interest in various kinds of revival rituals. *Choroonu, talikettu, ganapatihoma* etc are regularly conducted. Building their own shrine has become a status symbol. The festivals like Vinayakachathurthi, which was never heard in Kerala have begun to be celebrated in Kerala. The Hindutva organizations like Sivasena and Bajrangdal are more active in propagating these festivals.

The tying of sacred *charadu* in the wrist is another innovative practice. The wide acceptance of *charadu* tying is a recent phenomenon and the young generation is more attracted to it. Contemporary spiritual sphere itself is shaping human body to symbolize religious identity. External appearances of the youths began to be reshaped according to religious symbols. The intensity of wearing this kind of symbols are seen especially in the Northern side of Malabar.

The observance of the month of Ramayana is widely prevalent among Hindus. The news papers and other media carry daily comments on Ramayana and the temples across the state conduct special programmes during this month. The reading of Ramayana in household or temples is an emerging trend in several Hindu houses. The starting of Ayyappa *bhajana* matam (A specially arranged space to worship and chant the *manthras* of Lord Ayyappa) is another change in the spiritual circle during this period.

⁴⁹⁹ This is a group of gathering of priests and other elite caste people in Hindu community predicting the future of a particular temple and remedies to tackle the problems of the temples

Bhajana matam contributed to foster a sense of spiritual unity among ordinary Hindus.

The god men are very active in the day to day lives of many Hindus. The most popular cult figure in Kerala is Amritanandamayi. There are several other cult figures in Malabar. Financial crisis or feeling of insecurity, a byproduct of globalization and the impact of visual Media created the supporting environment for popularity of these cult figures. Even the supporters of the political left prone to these cult figures.

The appropriation of Hindu Brahmanic signs is common among backward castes, dalits and tribals. They long to adopt the upper caste food system and dress code too. The vegetarian *sadya* has become the symbol of Hindu food. Most of the backward caste people now prefer vegetarian *sadya* during their important functions like marriages. *Mundu* and *saree*, traditionally worn by upper castes symbolizes Hindu common identity in various functions like marriage.

The dependence upon astrologers is also increasing day by day. The sudden importance gained by the Alathiyur Hanuman temple near Tirur reflects the power of astrologer in the contemporary life. It was only after the astrological intervention of Parappanagadi Unnikrishna Panikkar (a noted astrologer who was close to many political leaders) the temple came into prominence in the area. The visit of prominent political figures like Tamilnadu Chief minister Kum. Jayalalitha indicates influence of astrologers in the society. Likewise the fund collection in the name of temple festivals

are carried out by Hindu organizations which sometime become a campaign for their ideology. During the temple processions the images of all deities of Hinduism are exhibited. It is clearly a shift from traditional way of observing temple processions. In a recent incident some of the DYFI member exhibited the photo of Bhagat Sing in a temple procession at Kandakurumbakavu in Ponnani and that procession were attacked by the RSS people.⁵⁰⁰ Thus the processions are coming as more Hindutva oriented in the temples.

The festivals like Onam celebrated in South Kerala by upper caste Hindus, have now treated to be a festival of Hindus all over Kerala. The festival Onam traditionally celebrated by Savarna Hindus is a remembrance of old feudal system.⁵⁰¹ The comment of K E N Kunhahammad over onam as a *savarna* festival invited controversy. The *talppoli* is another *savarna* procession which carry the memory of old feudal system in Kerala. It symbolizes exhibition of body by upper caste ladies for upper caste men.⁵⁰² Thus there is a deliberate attempt to appropriate or impose the symbols & signs of hindu *savarna* castes among common people. It also marginalizes the traditional culture of the subaltern caste groups.

House building is another domain where Hindu identity is imposed. A special room for *pooja*, *tulasithara* etc are the common features which are taken into consideration while constructing homes. The constructions for temples of the family or *Taravadu* are common practices among Hindus. The

⁵⁰⁰ *Mathrubhumi*, 28th March 2013.

⁵⁰¹ G.P. Ramachandran, accessed from [www. Ulkzhcha.blogspot.in/2008/09/blog-post.html](http://www.Ulkazhcha.blogspot.in/2008/09/blog-post.html) on June 8, 2013.

⁵⁰² G.P Ramachandran, *op.cit.*

making of *Tharavadu* temples or renovation of sacred space attached to the Hindu family contribute for the growth of a Hindu identity. The lighting of lamp (*deepam Koluthal*) at dusk is becoming common in most of the Hindu families.

The Hindu organizations like VHP and Kshetra Samrakshana Samiti (KSS) are campaigning for the cause of temple and temple festivals. They are projecting temple as the centre of Hindu social life.⁵⁰³ The social worship in the temple is also promoted and for this purpose they are also planing squad work.⁵⁰⁴ The *Satsanga* is a KSS programme to form discussion group among Hindus. It aims to discuss issues regarding the problems faced by Hindus to promote Hindu rituals like reading of Geetha, conducting meditation etc.⁵⁰⁵ The starting of *mathapaada shaala*(school of teaching religion) is another effort of KSS. Mostly these *shalais* are maintained by the mercy of various other Hindu organizations. The KSS was formed under the leadership of K. Kelappan in 1975 at Manjeri in Malappuram district. Before the formation of KSS there was Malabar Predesh Kshetra Samrakshana Samithi which was formed in 1966. On the issue of Angadippuram Tali Temple an agitation was started under the leadership of K. Kelappan. Thus the general atmosphere was tapped and on that background the Kshetra Samrakshana Samiti was formed.

⁵⁰³ “Hindu unity and Hindu renaissance will materialise only through the temple” N.M. kadambarn Nambuthirppad, President, Khsethra Samrakshana samithi, *Mathrubhumi*, 5th February,2012.

⁵⁰⁴ “The core of the programme of K S S is to promote social worship in temple- P. Sadanandtan, *Report of working camp of K S S of Thodupuzha* ,17th September2011.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The procession on the occasion of Ganesha Chaturthi is held at almost all the places of Malabar. The use of public arenas for these festivals often lead to violent situation in the coastal areas of Ponnani in 2010. The district Collector banned the proposed procession in Ponnani because of the violent resistance of coastal Muslims.⁵⁰⁶ The Hindu Aikya Vedi leaders objected and threatened to conduct the procession.⁵⁰⁷ Later the district administration permitted to *ninamnjana* on certain conditions. This kind of communal clash in public arena always resulted in communal polarization.

Casteism

Caste is a factor which sometimes blocks the consolidation of Hindu Community in Kerala. There are several castes in Malabar like Nair, Thiyya, Pulaya, Mukkuva, Mannan, Vaniya etc. Though the reform movements tried to remove casteism, its presence can be seen in every walks of life. Though the caste is basically a Hindu phenomenon both Christian and Muslim communities had also practiced rudimentary form of caste distinction. The debate over caste is still going on in public sphere in Kerala. “The caste oppression in Kerala is not in the form of physical attack but by the means of boycott.”⁵⁰⁸ Dalit and other subaltern caste group are taking vigil on the issues pertain to their community. The social exclusion is seen in every walk of life.⁵⁰⁹ The situation of caste in Kerala is different from the other parts of

⁵⁰⁶ Varthamanam ,14th september 2011.

⁵⁰⁷ Mathrubhumi, 18,septmber,2012.

⁵⁰⁸ Sunny kapikkad, *India Untouched-stories of a people Apart* Documentary, directed by Stalin K. accessed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgDGmYdhZvU>

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

India.⁵¹⁰ The discrimination on the basis of caste, as some Dalit and other thinkers argue still exists in Kerala in a different form.⁵¹¹ Castiesm here might not lead to violent clashes but caste is a determining factor in the social life.

Caste is a prominent factor in Hindu society. Since caste organizations were weak in Malabar compared to the southern part of Kerala lower castes like Dalits tried to organize themselves on the basis of the issue of common exclusion. This kind of mobilisation was more visible in southern part of Kerala. The structural difference of the castes in Malabar is same as in the case of South. The Nairs kept most of the lands and government jobs. Thiyyas were also fast in acquiring upward social mobility. The Dalits and other most backward communities were not having adequate lands and jobs. The land reforms of the various governments could benefit peasants or Pattakkars, mostly Nairs Thiyyas and Muslims. On the other hand tillers like Pulaya, Paraya or Kanakka never got the land for cultivation instead they got only pieces of land to build huts for living. This feature in land reforms kept the Dalits still a marginalised group and their condition was not properly addressed by the Hindu religious groups

The question of Malayaali identity is also an issue of debate. The concepts, culture and history of the Nair community have influenced the common symbols of Malayali identity.⁵¹² The influence of Nair community

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹² Pradeepan Pampirikunnu, in *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writings From South India*, edited by Satyanarayana & Susie Tharu,; Penquin Books, New Delhi, 2011,p.565.

bypassing the cultural identity of other backward castes among Hindus, is evident from the Malayalam films, literature, T.V. serials, and literature. Though the Nairs were represented as *sudra* in Brahmanical thinking, the history tells that they were very proud to become the servants of the Brahmins. The close relations with the Namboothiris led the Nair community to get the status of *savarna* among other communities. The mainstream Malayalam literature projected Nair *Taravadu* as a epicenter of Malayali culture and identity.⁵¹³ “The language of nairs was accepted as secular.”⁵¹⁴ The young generation, especially girls from different parts of the state are imitating that language for a better mobility in imagined cultural space.⁵¹⁵ At the same time the language used by other communities are vanishing and considered as “naadan” (colloquial). Likewise the symbols of *savarna* trademarks is another way of popularizing *savarna* identity. Hotel Arya Bhavan, Brahmin Hotel, Brahmins *puttupodi*, Nambuthiri *choorna* etc are addressing the notion of the society.⁵¹⁶ “The absence of such a market possible for other communities is also a consequence of the *savarna* constructions of ‘lower’-caste identities.⁵¹⁷ The lower caste trademarks like Thiyya pappadam or Pulayas Hotel is not acceptable to the society.⁵¹⁸ This reflects the ‘purity’ concept of Aryan texts.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.565.

⁵¹⁵ Malayalam language emerged as a hegemonic entity not by situating itself in continuity with oral, tribal and community traditions. It achieved its stature through systematic translation of brahmin/English/regional *savarna* literature- K.K. Baburaj in *No Alphabet in Sight New Dalit Writings From South India*, edited by Satyanarayana & Susie Tharu p.376.

⁵¹⁶ Pradeepan Pambirikkunnu, *ibid.*, p.564.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ Interview with K.K.Kochu, on 23rd April 2013.

Caste identities have been trying to capture social attention in several ways. The caste based rituals still play significant role. The shift of caste identities made several changes including making new shrines attached to respective *taravadu* of the lower castes. The *mannu* festival is an example. It is the sacred space of Kanakka groups in Palakkad district. It's an exclusive worshipping centre of their community. Likewise several castes have their own worshipping system. The making of shrines attached to each taravadu of lower castes signifies the reflection of their identity. The employees of most of the temples are from upper castes. This is still a question in Hindu community. The attempt to appoint non – Nambuthiri priests for *pooja* in temples is foiled by the elite castes including Nair. The chief priests of Muthappan Kavu temples are Thiyyas and the temples like Parassinikkadavu attracts thousands including *savarnas*. The rich Ezhava families have constructed several family temples.⁵¹⁹ Thus the construction of family or tharavadu temple ignites community sentiments and pride

Social exclusion' of Dalits could be seen in almost all sacred spaces of Malabar. The earlier caste based rituals are still being practiced in different parts of the region. The Kaliyaattakkavu festival near Munniyoor in Malappuram district, where dalits of the nearby areas largely participate is an example. It is believed that the Kunjacheeru, the name called by dalits for Ammancheri Bagavati, the deity of shrine, is very much fond of dalits. On the

⁵¹⁹ Economically scure Izhava families also have enough resourcers to take proper care of family deties and ancestors.(*pithrukkal*) in this way they neutralize the reist of dosham arising from neglect while enjoying the status borught by running a family temple- a practice associate with Nayers.” - Filippo Osello, *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict*, Plutto Press, London,2000, p. 170.

festival day the dalits would rotate the temple and hail the goodness of Kunchacheeru.⁵²⁰ But on that day as a custom the chief priest would not attend the ceremony as he would be polluted by the entry of dalits. This is not an isolated case. There are several such discriminatory customs which are practised in several temples in Malabar. On the festival season of Pisharikkavu in Koyilandi, the Nambuthiri chief priest would hand over the pooja functions to the other groups. This is to avoid pollution. The caste wise processions were the peculiarity of the festival. Lower castes including dalits are largely participating in the caste wise procession.⁵²¹ In Kodungallur where thousands of dalits and other backward people from Malabar crowd on Bharani festival, the chief priest vacate temple in order to avoid pollution.⁵²² In Mookkuthala temple near Changaramkulam, Malappuram district there are several *taras* of different castes. The processions of the temple is also caste wise where the processions end near the respected caste *taras*.⁵²³ Before the temple festival at Kulangara temple near Edapal there are several ritual processions of Tara and Poothan visiting several houses.⁵²⁴ Though these rituals are conducted by the Mannan caste, a backward caste, they do not visit the dalit houses during the procession. Only the Mookkan chathan, performed by Paraya family, visits dalit families. The attending of marriage functions of

⁵²⁰ Shithor.P.R *Kunnjamcheeru, dalit/sthree* in *Keli*, Kerala Folklore Acydimi academi Journal, Thrissure September, 2010, p.56.

⁵²¹ F.Fawcett, *Nayars of Malabar*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi,(Reprint) 1985, p. 255.

⁵²² See V.T. Induchudan, *The Secret Chamber*, Cochin Devaswam Board, Thrissure, 1969; pp.239-264.

⁵²³ Janu Mookkuthala, *Nizhal marathinte pookkal*, Ezhuthola Publications, Koottanad, 2012.

⁵²⁴ Interview with Krishnan Thira artist, Sukapuram, Edappal on 23rd May 2012.

savarna castes is another visible example of modernized untouchability. In most of the villages in Palakkad district, most of the savarana castes do not take food on the day of marriage of Dalits. Instead they attend the 'Tea Party' which is held on the day before.⁵²⁵ Thus the tradition of caste discrimination which started from the feudal structure in Kerala is still continuing in a different way.

Several caste related remarks are prevalent in the Malabar villages. *Cherumanu adhikaarippani kittiyaal, Mannaan majiistrat ayaal* etc (If a Cheruma becomes of village officer, if a Mannan becomes Magistrate, etc.) are discriminatory proverbs uttered in order to tease the dalit groups who are entering government jobs. This is a kind of frustration of the upper caste people against lower caste groups being empowered through government jobs. "Government servants (dalits) also lack in social acceptance by the mainstream society and hence face acute problems of identity."⁵²⁶ Several newly appointed new generation employees face this kind of discrimination in their work field.⁵²⁷

The Communists who directly oppose caste based identities prevent the Dalit groups from forming their respective identity. On the other hand the *savarna* symbols of elite caste continued. The leaders of Communist parties

⁵²⁵ Interview with Chami, President K.P.M.S. Palakkad District President, on 24th April 2012.

⁵²⁶ J. Prabhash, *Affirmative Action and Social Change: Social Mobility of Dalits*, Anmol Publications Private Ltd, NewDelhi, 2001, p.187.

⁵²⁷ Interview with K.K.Koch, held on 24.4.2011.

used their caste name and other visible symbols and this help the *savarna* communities to be alive in the society.⁵²⁸ .

The incident in which a chair was purified with cow dung water after the retirement of a Dalit employee got wide criticism. It occurred in Pathanamthitta in southern Kerala.⁵²⁹

The upper castes of Palakkad region engaging in conflicts with neo rich Ezhavas in certain parts of the district. One such incident is narrated in the work of Abhraham Vijayan⁵³⁰. “The scheduled castes who are the former untouchables are still discriminated in various socio- economic and cultural dealings. For example the forward castes still do not serve food to the laborers due to their caste positions.”⁵³¹ The incident of serving tea in separate plastic cups to the Dalits in the same area invited criticism.⁵³²

Several individual instances regarding caste discrimination have been reported which point out that the caste conciusness is still prevalent in Hindu society in Malabar. The attack on Chithralekha, a Dalit woman Autoriskha

⁵²⁸ “ Kerala’s political and cultural agenda and public sensibility has been under the control of the Congress and the Communists. For the Congress the nationalist *savarna* modern man was the model, while the communists considered only a working-class *savarna* man as their own.”- Pradeepan Pamirikkunnu, in *No Alphabet in Sight*, Satyanarayana& Susie Tharu, *op.ci.*, p.563.

⁵²⁹ www.ndtv.com/topic/kerala-dalit-officer

⁵³⁰ “The major source of caste conflict in Elappully (Palakkad district) are the conflict between the higher caste and lower caste. The members of the higher caste land owners are oftern envious to the neo-rich backward castes like Ezhavas. Even though they have some class interests, they are conflicting with each other in the name of caste ideology- Abraham Vijayan Caste, Class and Agrarian Relations in Kerala, Relialnce Publishing House, NewDelh,1997 p.105.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

⁵³² “Somebody questioned this practice and an issue started from this incident which led to the death of a ‘Harijan’ recently.” - Abraham Vijayan Caste,*op.cit.*, p.106.

driver, in Payyannur symbolizes one of the examples of atrocities against lower caste woman. Feminist Kerala Network, an organization working for the cause of woman-Dalit and Sexual minorities enquired the Chitralkha issue⁵³³ which happened on 20th January 2010. The members included Gail Omvedt, V.Geetha, Adv. Preetha and Nivedita Menon. The local CITU (Labour organization of CPI.M) who were male dominated and Caste based Hindus, could not recognize Chithralekha as an auto driver.⁵³⁴ She was attacked several times and her riskha was burned. It is said that it was an attack against dalit woman.⁵³⁵ The culprits mostly belonged to the backward Thiyya caste. The Ezhava or Thiyya as narrated by Osallo appeal their own problems of discriminations. “As is common among ex- untouchable but mobile castes, the Guru’s fundamental teaching, ‘one caste, one religion, one god for all humanity, was (and still is) commonly appealed to in argument against anti Izhava discrimination but ignored when Izhavas look towards scheduled castes.”⁵³⁶ Thus the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru was cleverly used for their own community mobilization but a distance was kept from other lower caste in order to get higher status.

Several cases of addressing one by caste names to harass lower caste were reported from several parts of Malabar. The cases related to calling caste name points that the feudal socio-cultural traditions are still practised in a

⁵³³ The incident even imotionally picturised in the Malayalam feature film ‘ Paplio Budha’ Malayalam feature film, directed by Jayan Cheriyan.

⁵³⁴ Carmel Christi-Jeni Roveena Pamphlet, *trakkinu veliyilyile jeevitham*, Subject and Language Press, Changanassery, p.5.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid*, p.7.

⁵³⁶ Filippo Osello and Caroline Osella, *op.cit.*, p.196.

different way. Numerous cases on caste related incidents have been reported from various police stations. The accused include people from other backward castes and Muslims. In Perunghottukurrissi, a case was registered in which one Mayandi, the Secretary of Perungottukurrussi Gramapanchayath, was harassed by being called caste name by one CPI M panchayath member, Anithanadan.⁵³⁷

The dalits who were the actual tillers, were not benefited from the Land Reforms.⁵³⁸ Instead the benefits went mainly to other backward communities. . It is believed that the much acclaimed land reforms did not support the dalit communities financially.⁵³⁹

Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella who toured different places of Kerala especially Malabar give the contemporary micro observation of the working of caste in society. The emergence of Ezhavas or Thiyyas as middle class in major parts of Malabar resulted in neo caste relations. Imitating the socio cultural values of other upper castes like Nairs resulted in the change of caste relations. “While the wealthy and status- conscious section of the Izhava community finds a greater affinity to religious practices and specialist associated with Nayars and tries as much possible to distance itself from lower castes, most would not hesitate if a need arose to visit a Pulaya temple

⁵³⁷ *Madhyamam* 23rd September, 2011.

⁵³⁸ “.. when in 1970 Kerala became the first state in India to abolish landlordism, those who benefited were neither unambiguously tillers or even primarily engaged in agriculture.”Dileep M. Menon , *Caste, nationalism,Communalism in South India Malabar 1900-1948*,Foundation Books, NewDelhi,1994,p.1.

⁵³⁹ The land reformations which carried according to the caste rule gave only land for stay. Those who are not getting were transported into exclusive colonies- K.M. Saleemkumar *creativityyi illatha pongachangal* (mal) Mathrubhumi weekly June 24-30, p.59.

or a powerful low- caste *manthradhi*.”⁵⁴⁰ The community like Ezhava rose in the social scale while development of groups like dalits was limited to the reservation of government jobs like clerks, teachers etc

The formation of a middle class was very slow in the case of Dalits. The analysis of two social surveys conducted in 1961 and 1998 at Naduvannoor village in Kozhikkode district is an example of the middle class formation among different castes. ⁵⁴¹ The survey revealed that the progress of Dalit families was nominal.

There were several newspaper reports regarding caste related incidents in Kerala. The following is a report published in Indian Express daily. “The Kerala Human Rights Commission has registered a case and sought an explanation from the secretary, taxes department, after the office and car used by a Scheduled Caste state government officer was allegedly cleansed with cowdung after his retirement from service. Former Inspector General of Registration A K Ramakrishnan, who retired on March 31, petitioned the rights panel, saying the “inhumane behaviour” had insulted him and all backward communities. The panel has sought a report by May 7.⁵⁴² In a similar incident in November 2010, the chamber of the panchayat president at Elanthur had been found cleansed with cowdung-water after the president belonging to the SC community demitted office.” ⁵⁴³ The life of Dalit students

⁵⁴⁰ Filippo Osello and Caroline Osella, *op.cit.*, p.170.

⁵⁴¹ See Sanal Mohan, *Social Change in Kerala in Insights from Micro Level Study*, ed. K.N. Nair, Vineetha Menon, Dannish Books, 2007.

⁵⁴² *The New Indian Express*, 9th April, 2011.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid*, 8th April,2011.

in the campus also should be noted as most of the students face discrimination. A study conducted by Dr.Sanal Mohan reveals that most of the Dalit students were isolated in the class room and they were neglected by both teaching and student community.⁵⁴⁴ The discrimination faced by the Dalits would reflect throughout in his life. The emergence of Dalit Student Movement is the result of such neglect in mainstream student political parties.⁵⁴⁵ Thus the concept of pan-Hinduism is not a matter for educated Dalit people. Their major concern is their community.

The fisher folk also face similar kind of discrimination from the other Hindu communities. It is a common discussion that communal threats are always with coastal people and they are ignorant or uncivilized. The various studies of communalism ignore the role of middle caste communities in igniting communalism.

The matrimonial advertisements in newspapers or websites reveal the fact that the caste or religion has deep roots in the society. An advertisement which was published in Malayalamanorama for an Ezhava girl in Kannur district invites proposal from all castes except Sheduled Caste and Sheduled Tribes.⁵⁴⁶ Similar kind of advertisement in the dailies indicates the noval forms of discrimination.

⁵⁴⁴ Sanal Mohan, *Kalaalayangalile Dalithar* in K.T. Rammohan (Ed).Kerala Padanangal Vol.3 ,Chithira Printers and Publishers, Kochi, October-December,1993, pp.295-297.

⁵⁴⁵ See *SFI vidhyarthikale bhayakkunnathenthinu*, Madhyamam weekly, August 2003.

⁵⁴⁶ *Malayalamanorama*, 30th September 2012.

About the formation of a new Hindu political party Vellappalli Natesan says “it will unite all castes and sections of the Hindu community, from Namoodiris to Adivasis, and act as a political platform of Hindus.”⁵⁴⁷ He continues “The party we are talking of will have a Hindu agenda, but not a Hindutva agenda as that of the BJP.” The aim of making a Hindu alternative is to act like a pressure group in order to counter power politics of minorities.

The caste organizations, due to certain historical reasons, were not powerful in Malabar as in the southern region of Kerala. Presently N.S.S and S.N.D.P are active organizations in the Malabar. An organization, Thiyya Maha Sabha was formed recently citing difference between Thiyya and Ezhava. In the case of Dalits they are more attached to the C.P.I. (M). The attempt of Dalit Human Rights Movement (DHRM) to form local units in Dalit colonies were prevented by the leftist forces. The leftists think that the erosion of Dalit groups into identity politics would weaken their party’s electoral strength. The various educational institutions of the caste organizations and other forms of representation are a reason for forming units of NSS and SNDP Yogam in some areas of Malabar.⁵⁴⁸ Most of the important temples are governed by the Dewasom Board, a governmental body. The elected body is coming recruited from mainstream political parties. The Hindutva parties have no role in these bodies as elected governments are

⁵⁴⁷ *The Hindu*, 06th July 2012.

⁵⁴⁸ In southern Kerala it is mandatory to get caste approval for conducting important functions like marriage. Other wise the marriage will be no validity as per the norms of caste organisations.

represented by UDF under the leadership of Indian National Congress and LDF under CPI (M). There was criticism from the B.J.P that the Communists who are Non-Believers hold the temple administration. The soft Hindu style of left politics in North Kerala prevented the boosting of hardcore Hindutva politics to a certain extent. The CPI (M) has a major role in the day to day life of Hindu families in North Kerala. The party has role even in matters related to marriage.

In southern region of Kerala there is a practice that people should get approval certificate from caste organizations for important functions like marriage. At the same time in certain areas in North Malabar it is said that the Hindus who are affiliated to CPI (M) would consult their respective branches for the approval. The marriages are normally taking place between families of same political backgrounds. In ‘party marriages’ the local branch secretary of CPI (M) acts like an event manager. Thus the political organizations do the duty of the caste organizations among Hindus in these areas. The media have voiced the concept of ‘party villages’ in several parts of Kannur district. The CPI (M), RSS and Muslim League etc are said to have their own party villages where rival political parties are banned or silenced.⁵⁴⁹ In the northern part of Malabar CPI (M) is mainly representing the Hindu community.⁵⁵⁰

Moral policing

⁵⁴⁹ Shahina.K.K. <http://www.openthemagazine.com/article/nation/dread-and-belonging-in-kerala-s-party-villages>

⁵⁵⁰ Raveendran Ravanawaram, *Madhyamam weekly*, 30th July 2012.

The moral policing in northern districts of Malabar is a threat to secular democratic life. The culprits take religion as a mask for their goonda activities. Lot of innocent people became the targets of the fundamentalist groups. Several incidents of atrocities of ‘moral policing’ occurred recently. Mere conversation between two people belonging to different religions invited attacks from youths belonging to fundamentalist backgrounds. The incidents which took place in different parts of Kannur and Kasarkode districts generate communal feelings. Such incidents were common in Mangalore region of Karnataka. The Hindu youths under Sree ram sena carried several such activities. Gradually such activities spread to Kasarkode also. The New Indian Express reports one such incident that occurred at Govt. College Kasarkode in which one Kadeejat Suhaila was attacked by some Muslim youth.⁵⁵¹ The only mistake she did was she was elected as union member under Students Federation of India which is secular organization.

The Muslim religious heads call for peace during perunnal festivals is quite common in North Kerala as the carnival ends in communal clashes in certain areas. The attack against a Hindu youth at Thalassery fish market by a group of Muslim youth is an example.⁵⁵² In Kasarkode another Hindu boy was beaten up as he spoke to a Muslim girl during Kasarkode *Mahotsava* on 17th January 2012. I P C 341 was framed against the youth, who was remanded in judicial custody by the court.”⁵⁵³ It indicates the tensed atmosphere that

⁵⁵¹ *New Indian Express* 5th July,2012.

⁵⁵² Raveendran Ravaneshwaram, *Madhyamam weekly*,30st July,2012, p10.

⁵⁵³ *The Hindu*, Kasarkode, 22nd June2012.

prevails in the area. There were several such incidents that occurred in these region. The incident which tookplace at Thalassery fish market involves incidents of the same nature. Asianet News reports “Yesterday, a four-member gang attacked a Prajeesh (31), an auto driver of Chirakuni, in a fish market along with a 35-year-old woman from another community and her 15-year-old daughter of Chirakuni at late evening. The family was on their way back from the Malabar Cancer centre, where the woman’s daughter is undergoing treatment for blood cancer. The family regularly used the autorickshaw of Prajeesh to visit hospital, and also Prajeesh had earlier given blood to the girl. Police said the so-called moral police took this relationship in a negative way, which led to the attack. Since nobody prevented the attack in the market, the woman and her daughter themselves went to the police following which they registered a case.”⁵⁵⁴ In another incident reported in *Times of India*, a Muslim man was attacked by the Muslim group. He was with his pregnant wife and the mob suspected that he was a Non Muslim. The Times of India report says “In yet another incident of 'moral policing' in the district, a couple was attacked by group of people at Mayyil in the district on Monday. The attack took place when E. P. Naushad, a resident of Onchiyam in Kozhikode, took his pregnant wife K. P. Hafsath, a native of Kandikai near Mayyil, to a hospital in Kambil in the district. According to Naushad, on the way back from the hospital, he went to an ATM counter, while Hafsath sat in a bus shelter, as she was unable to walk. But, since the ATM was not functional, he called his wife on her cellphone to ask if there was any other

⁵⁵⁴ <http://asianetindia.com/one-held-for-moral-policing>

ATM nearby. As she was talking to him over mobile phone, a group of people came there and asked her with whom she was talking. Though she said it was her husband, the gang refused to believe her words and later, when Naushad reached there they also abused and attacked him saying that he did not look like a Muslim.”⁵⁵⁵ It also reports a Hindu boy was beaten up by a dozen of Muslim youths for talking to a Muslim lady. “.....couple of months back, in Manna near Thaliparamba, a youth was attacked by a group of people for talking to a woman from another community. The victim, P V Anishkumar, a worker in Kinfra Textile Park near Thaliparamba, had to be hospitalized following the attack. In another incident, a young woman in Nedumpoyil was 'interrogated' and physically assaulted by a gang of nearly a dozen people, who accused her of immoral activities.”⁵⁵⁶ “Moral policing is a reality in Kasaragod town. People are cautious while talking to opposite sex from another community.”⁵⁵⁷ This is a deliberate attempt of the communal forces to keep distance from other communities. The incidents of moral policing by criminals were not limited to North Malabar only. In a similar attack at Pathirippala a Hindu boy named Arun was attacked by SDPI gang for talking to a Muslim girl.⁵⁵⁸ Unfortunately the Muslim League which is the only influential political party among Muslims in the North Malabar region could not act to prevent such incidents. Home minister Thiruvanchoor

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http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-06-06/kozhikode/32078239_1_kannur-pregnant-woman-mattannur

556 (http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-06-06/kozhikode/32078239_1_kannur-pregnant-woman-mattannur

557 *Deccan Herald*, 15th February, 2012, Thiruvananthapuram.

558 *Indian Express*, Palakkad, 19th July 2012.

Radhakrishnan told that the persons who are included in moral policing be considered as criminals.⁵⁵⁹ Thus the moral policing by the criminals with religious background creates communal consciousness among Hindus and Muslims in the region. This is clearly a communal attack. The recent remark of State Home minister shows how deep the problem is. He accused earlier SIMI activists for these attacks.⁵⁶⁰ The mainstream political parties have not made creative campaigns against the moral policing carried by goondas. These acts of fundamentalist criminals definitely increase the chances of communal polarization. The moral police attacks have also sharpened the communal consciousness.

The polarization on the basis of religion is growing. The North Malabar regions witnessed it first. Though the mainstream party reiterates that Kerala is free from communal riots and thinking, several factors suggest that the region is a hotbed of communal tensions. The competition of different communities in politics often leads to communal polarization. The question of identity politics is also a concern regarding communal polarization. One of the allegations raised in certain pockets of Malabar, where the Muslims are socially and economically well off, is that their demands are not justifiable. The Muslim League, N.S.S and Kerala Congress articulate the demands of the powerful communities. On the other hand the Dalits and Tribal communities are still far behind on the social scale. The recent statement of Vellappally Nateshan reveals the fact that the communities in Hindu fold are preparing for

⁵⁵⁹ http://zeenews.india.com/news/kerala/those-accused-of-moral-policing-to-be-treated-as-criminals_790290.html

⁵⁶⁰ <http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/article391237.ece?service>

alternative. “About forming of a new Hindu political party he says “it will unite all castes and sections of the Hindu community, from Namoodiris to Adivasis, and act as a political platform of Hindus.”⁵⁶¹ He continues “ The party we are talking of will have a Hindu agenda, but not a Hindutva agenda as that of the BJP.”⁵⁶²The aim of making a Hindu alternative seems to be an act to form pressure group in order to counter powerful minorities.⁵⁶³

There are several facts regarding the contemporary Malabar communal mobilisation. The ‘imagined threat’ is one of the reasons for this polarisation. Each communities see ‘other’ as their enemy and they are more vigilant upon strengthening of self defense. Even in real estate business, this communal sentiments does work. Recent land purchases show this fact. This is a type of self made ghettoisation for protection from imagined threat from other communities. The coastal regions are more vulnerable on these issues. Thus imaging other communities as violent and aggressive is current in the several parts of Malabar. The Hindus in strong Muslim coastal belts prefer to sell their lands and purchase in further eastern parts. Likewise in Marad after the Marad riot people are trying to sell their land for same reason. The strong presence of religion based political parties in UDF like Muslim League and Kerala Congress and their influence on public administration invited criticism from the other political parties, Media and other community leaders.

⁵⁶¹ *The Hindu*, 06th July 2012.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*

The division of Hindus was one of the major reasons for preventing the Hindus mobilizing communally *en masse*.⁵⁶⁴ The deep rooted caste identity was one of the reasons for this.⁵⁶⁵ The majority of Hindus are not aware of Hindu ideology but identify themselves with their caste and other identities.⁵⁶⁶ The cow politics has not worked well in Kerala as majority of Hindu caste in Kerala eat beef. So the campaign of Hindutva forces did not work. It shows the mobilization on the line of North Indian methodology was a failure. The strong presence of the minority communities influenced the food culture of Hindu community. Traditionally only Brahmin caste are the vegetarians. Thus the politics of food is not familiar here in Malabar. Dalits of Hindu fold in Malabar traditionally eat beef as in other states of India. In modern period there was no such protest against beef eating from the Hindu upper castes.

During the period of Ramzan there were reports of minor skirmishes between Muslims and other communities in several places in Malabar. The hotels which opened during Ramzan peirod were attacked at several places. The fundamental elements play a major role in shutting down the hotel

⁵⁶⁴ “ The high level of caste consciousness is also one of the contributing factors in the shaping of political behaviour. The Hindus are divided on caste basis and hence cannot take a united stand in the electoral game. This is in contrast to the Muslims and the Christians who are more organised and show more solidarity in the electoral exercises.”- John Ommen *Politics of Communalism in Kerala*,(EPW March 1995).

⁵⁶⁵ “it is important to remember that Hindu communalism began first within the Hindu fold, against the lower castes, the untouchables and the like. Upper caste Hindus are far more prejudicial and contemptuous of the lower castes than they are of other communities. That is now being extended to other communities with whom the elites had shared power earlier without much of a problem. Therefore what we have is a chauvinism that is limited to the upper 15% of the population- the upper crust of Hindu society. It is directed simultaneously against the dalits, the tribals, the lower caste Hindus, the backward and ‘other’ backward classes (identified by the Mandal Commission) as well as the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Christians.”-,*Class and Communalism in India*, 2592 EPW December,3.1988.

⁵⁶⁶ Rajani Kothari ,*Class and Communalism in India*, 2592 EPW DEC.3.1988.

compulsorily. The issues invite criticism from Hindu circles against Muslims. At the same time various secular parties and other organizations have conducted common *iftar* (breaking the fast) which is a gathering of people irrespective of religion. Taking fast (*nombu*) works as a method of strengthening brotherhood among the Muslim community.⁵⁶⁷

The administrative measures are one of the major issues igniting communal feelings. The Hindus believe that under the UDF ministry the minorities take extra benefits by using public money. The issue of portfolio of fifth minister in UDF ministry became a serious issue with communal colour. Thus “the growth of the Muslim League became a source of inspiration to other communal and casteist groups.”⁵⁶⁸

The recent statement of Prime Minister is an indicator about the emerging trends in communalism in Kerala. He included Kerala along with Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka and also pointed the new Media like social networks and group SMSs (Short Messaging Services) are new threats to secularism.⁵⁶⁹

The growing communal polarization which challenges the secular democratic system of the state is to be studied and analyzed. Though the state constitutionally is secular, its feudal, religious system is deeply rooted in the

⁵⁶⁷ <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/ramadan-and-its-importance-for-muslim-fraternity/1/292188.html>

⁵⁶⁸ Saji Jacob, *Secularization and Communalization in Kerala, Challenges for Civil Society*: VDM Verlag Dr Muller GmbH & Co. K.G., Saarbrücken, Germany, 2011. p.75.

⁵⁶⁹ *The Hindu* 9th September 2012.

minds of the people.⁵⁷⁰ Thus peripheral campaigning for secularism did not work here. The parliamentary politics compromises castiest and religious sentiments for the temporary electoral gains. But it takes negative impact in long run. The inequality, poverty and unemployment are some of the reasons mobilizing people on communal lines. Several unemployed, partially educated youth are easily attracted to the communal organizations.

The religious conversion is another issue of concern. The majority of the conversions, it is argued that, are taking place from Hindu to other religion.⁵⁷¹ Its is the economic and social barriers that provoke the backward Hindu people to get converted to other religion rather than ideological embarrassment. The B.J.P leaders stood against giving Scheduled Caste status to Christian *Dalit* converts fearing the erosions from Hindu Dalits to Christianity. They also opposed the Commission which argues reservation status to converted Hindus. Interestingly some Christian leaders supported the argument of the Commission. It indirectly indicates that even after the conversion the discrimination still exists in Christian communities. Most of the converts who belong to Dalit communities are still yet to reach mainstream social level.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷⁰ “ in other words, the ideology of secularism in West was accompanied by a variety of other socio-cultural ideas, which has always served to qualify secularism as a rational and modern concept. The large scale transformations in science and technology, changing value system, process of modernization and the introduction of the institutions of modernity like the media, clubs and industries all of which together resulted in the establishment of new public sphere etc. have led to the adoption of secularism as a viable philosophical position.” Saji Jacob, *op.cit.*, p.93.

⁵⁷¹ Interview with K.K. Kochu.

⁵⁷² The Dalit converts ito Christianity faced same kind of discrimination within the Christian society. see Dr.Sanal Mohan, in *No Alphabet in Sight* (eds) K. Satynarayana& Susie Tharu, Penquin Books, New Delhi,2011.

The political decision of state government is also a source of encouragement in promoting inter religious rivalry. The welfare measures adopted by the governments have been questioned. The recent development on fifth minister of Muslim League became a reason for the silent mobilization. The media took leading role in fuelling the feeling of discrimination regarding this. The import departments like Education are always handled by Muslim League under UDF ministry. Many of the decisions of the League ministers invited criticism. The NSS and other outfits see it as the agenda of the Muslim League against Hindu majorities.⁵⁷³ Thus the political activities of a particular community ignite communalist sentiments among other communities. Though the issues were related to social justice, they could not convince the other communities.

The activities of ruling governments aroused the sentiments of Hindus. The report of Paloli committee of LDF Government and the measures taken by the UDF Government for minorities were viewed with suspicion by ordinary Hindu man. Though the recommendations of Paloli Committee are a follow up of Sachar Committee, the recommendations brought frustration and anger among other communities. The BJP started campaigns against these recommendations in Kerala. Another example is 'aided schools' issue. The decision of UDF government to sanction 'aided' status to around 35 schools run by Muslims has attracted sharp criticism from other communities like NSS and SNDP. The CPI (M) who is considered as the strong apostle of

⁵⁷³ Recent controversy over fifth minister invited sharp criticism from other parties and groups. They consider inclusion of fifth minister of the Muslim League as an over representation of the Muslims in the ministry.

secular ideas made electoral alignments with Muslim outfits like PDP (which was formally known as Islamik Sevak Sangh) during Lok Sabha election in Ponnani constituency. This attracted wide criticism against CPI (M) from the public. Thus the engaging with opportunistic alliance with communal forces by mainstream political parties, indirectly or directly could buttress the communal feelings.

The representation of the Congress party is mainly from upper caste Hindus and settled Upper caste Christians.⁵⁷⁴ The representation of BJP includes almost all castes in Hinduism. It is mainly a Hindu upper caste organization. But the emerging Hindu Muslim conflicts resulted different caste groups joining with BJP.

The murder with fundamentalist intentions is also taking place. One example is the murder of Yassir of Tirur. He was killed because he was converted from Hinduism to Islam. This incident was planned by the local Hindu outfits. They are saying that yassir is spreading the message for conversion to Islam near the locality.

The recent statements of Vellappalli Nateshan and Sukumaran Nair reflect the sentiment of middle class groups; Ezhavas and Nairs. They are commenting that appeasement policies of the respective governments towards minorities led them to take such a position. The proposed move to form Hindu League is seemed to be seen on this direction.

⁵⁷⁴ K.P.Aravindan, *Kerala padanam, Keralam Engine Jeevikkunnu, Keralam Engine Chinthikkunnu*, Kerala Sasthrasahitya Parishat, Kozhikkode,2006.

The temple oriented violent films was a case for community grouping as its cosmetics, symbols represents a revivalist Hindu religious identity. The films in nineties were the real representation of this type. The films like, *Devasuram*, *Aaraam Tampuran* etc. idealised a violent temple oriented cultural context. The recent films in Malayalam portraits the Brahmanic Nair symbols as the identity of Common Malayali Hindu. The architectural symbols like *Tulasithara* and cosmetics are clearly represented in the films and serials. Thus the Brahmanised Nair identity was represented as total Hindu identity in Kerala. These male centered films place mainly a Nair figure as Hero. The hero of this category must have the knowledge of classical music, *kalari*, philosophy etc. The villain of the most of the films these days bear the Muslim names. So an upper caste born Hindu versus criminal Muslim is the theme of the certain Malaylam movies. Several print media had discussion on this problem.

Most of the backward castes had appointed their elder family member to preside over in family functions like marriage. But now a day's inviting Brahmin priest in their functions became a symbol of status. So the communities itself playing indirect Sanskritisation process.

At every nook and corner of Malabar the flex boards of various temples can be seen for renovation. The intensive religiosity is one of the reasons for the spreading of temple consciousness among the common people. The large scale renovations of the mosques after the gulf boom were forerunner to the present day temple renovation effort.

Using traditional symbols in different life situation have become the part of the Hindu society. The processions carrying Ganapat idol is one of the recent phenomenons in Malabar. This is part of Hindu revivalism which flows from North India, the epicenter of such movement. Using Ganapat as a symbol of mobilisation Tilak had brought low and high caste Marathas into Maratha Hindu fold.⁵⁷⁵ In 2010 August a clash occurred in Ponnani where the people belongs to Sivasena and other groups tried to pass through a Muslim coastal community area with Ganapat idols to throw off it to the sea as part of the ritual. Never before this, had no such procession been held at this area. Without understanding the sociology of the locality, the local police had given permission to the Sivasena group.

Thus the factors which were instrumental in nurturing of Hindutva were strengthened through the process before mentioned. Reception of Savarna- Hindu symbols became intensive all through this period. It percolated in all regular ceremonial realms including elementary rites of initiation and passage. Rituals connected with house construction, birth, marriage and death were wilfully deployed in bringing different communities into a single-coloured garb. These attempts and their results are good examples of the way in which historically and culturally diverse communities became remade as self aware Hindus. Interestingly, the common pool of Hindu symbols was completed while keeping the internal social differences of caste alive and very much intact among different participant communities. In

⁵⁷⁵ Shabnum Tejani, *Indian Secularism A Social and Intellectual History 1890-1950*, Permament Black,Ranikhet,2007,p.54.

spite of all these subtle levelling mechanisms, the resilience of caste based antagonism and its coded hierarchies inadvertently points to an ever-active, and hence internalised, cultural contradiction within the grand Hindu fold.

It could be seen that this extremely discriminatory and conflict-ridden situation can be resolved only by posting or constructing a near-permanent Muslim Other. The intensity of this 'other'ing was meticulously effective in imparting a public Hindu consciousness among different disqualified/subaltern communities. Tiyya, one of the lower-end 'polluting' castes of Kerala, attempt to emulate the cultural routines and traits of their more Hinduised, but often neighbouring, caste superiors; Nayars, could be well understood in this context. Mainstream media reception and sponsoring of these tendencies, over and above the petty concerns of market, perhaps reflect a radical change in the general mentality of different communities regarding their socio-cultural identity. Working style of mainstream political parties, who share themselves in this changing scenario, also contribute to the process of making communities more Hindu. Quite expectedly, neo-liberal avatars of community-based pressure-politics, if we look at a contemporary situation like Kerala, facilitate a volatile political situation with offering communal conflicts which could easily be turned in the favour of an adamant, exclusive Hindutva partisan.

CONCLUSION

In Malabar the *Hindu Society* was formed through a systematic and well-articulated process, though the trajectories of which were ridden with acute contradictions and ambiguous agreements. There were attempts, during British colonial rule, to unify various social-groups living under an assumed 'Hindu cluster' as 'communities' of a *broad* Hindu Religion. These attempts were not completely unprecedented. There is a medieval (travel) tradition of conceiving non-Semitic populations as a single pagan stock. Several rulers in medieval period tried to implement Brahmanic traditions like projection of Cow as a sacred animal. Many travelers have accounted that even lower caste people used to forbade killing cow in Malabar.

Though Medieval and colonial writings call the people living in Malabar as Hindu, they clearly acknowledge the difference of caste and communities. Such narratives on lower castes strongly suggest that they were forced to espouse Hindu stream. While the Hindu Public Consciousness continued as a desirable external flavor, the internal structure within the same Hindu conclave remained as inherently complex and fundamentally divided. *Jathi* factor (both as in its institutional and ideological manifestations) could be seen, at this juncture, as embattling against the ongoing homogenizing tendencies initiated overtly by the Hindu Right. Though *Jathi* affects and determines crucial social institutions like marriage, it is socially instrumental as a self-control unit in deterring modern Hindu-

Right backlash. The artful invention of a 'Muslim Other' was in fact an attempt to form a syndicated Hindu consciousness beyond the socio-cultural problematic of the *Jathi*. Political issues around the social practice of *jathi* discrimination was overlooked or remained unaddressed by invoking certain proverbial templates of 'otherness' like 'Tippu's Invasion', 'Mappila Rebellion' and 'Minority Appeasement' etc. The idea of a unified, casteless Hindu-Right has evolved and been augmented through anti-Muslim campaigns and minor communal riots. As we have seen in our chapters, this version of Hindutva has crossed all boundaries and begun to make its pervasive presence in all supposedly secular avenues like media, political parties and community associations. All these enterprises were successful in creating an external uniformity among the population who by the beginning of the 20th century started asserting a modern Hindu belongingness. This phenomenon is particularly visible from the histories of *avarna* 'religious reform movements'.

Cultural practices of each caste were different. They had independent systems of worship. Such differences are more visible than their so called unity. Historical records suggest that the lower castes have adapted brahmanic traditions into their systems only in the modern period. The temple (*kavu*) and festivals (*Pooram* or *Vela*) were the creation of feudal system for alleviating huge pressure for slave-labour of lower caste people. Caste wise processions organized in these festivals were indirectly trying to admit 'Hindu' belief system.

Reform movements forced the lower castes to abandon several of their customs. For instance Ezhava reform movement led by Sree Naraayana Guru adopted brahmanic symbols into their tradition. He replaced the traditional symbols with symbols of worship by *savarna* castes which indirectly helped the process of 'hinduising' Ezhava community, though his intention was to raise protest against the domination of Hindu upper castes.

'Mappila' Rebellion of 1921 had an underlying structure of caste conflicts between 'lower' and 'upper' castes. During the turmoil, comparatively recent converts to Islam from 'lower' and '*Dalit*' social origin were in the forefront of 'the Khilafat war' against their erstwhile Hindu Upper Caste superiors. Moreover, the narrative accounts of conversion underline an interesting clue that the majority among those who had opted Islam belonged to Hindu lower-castes and conceived their act as a political answer to social discrimination. Public Hindu Consciousness considers the issue of conversion as a demographic phenomenon and portrays it as a 'danger' to the numerical majority of Hindu population often on the basis of fabricated statistical figures. Mainstream Media plays an important role in this propaganda for sustaining a 'Public Hindu Consciousness' intact. For instance, popular commercial film industry ghettoizes their 'villains' in a putative Muslim cultural world and makes an effective attempt to unfasten the existing social contradictions of caste. In other words, through culturally producing a 'Muslim Other', the Hindu-Right attempt dispense with its own endemic and historic contradictions. Muslim life-style is often met with

suspicion and cultural disqualification. Debates on Madrassa Education and Muslim Personal Law often formatted in an antagonistic tone that believes in eternal incommensurability between the Hindu and the Muslim.

In the modern Malabar the hate campaign of 'Hindu verses Mappila' reduced social distance between Thiyyas and Nairs to a certain extent. The clashes of Thiyyas and Mappilas in North Malabar resulted in an understanding with Nair community. Rumors of Mappila atrocities and old stories of Mappila brutality in colonial records were also instrumental in bringing Thiyyas and Nairs together. Colonial narratives of forcible conversions and destruction of temple by Tippu sultan and Mappilas further cemented this unity.

The temple entry movement, Guruvayur *satyagraha* and other reform movements led external unification of Hindu society in Malabar. Despite having differences in the internal structure these movements brought all the castes under a brahmanical Hindu structure. Entry of untouchables in Hindu temples increased Hindu religiosity of backward castes. It also led to partial destruction of subaltern belief system.

Several socio political developments together reshaped Hindu society during post independence period. Brahmanic Hindu belief system began to dominate and over shadow subaltern belief systems. Kavus belief system was converted into organized temple system. Religious unification in the form of Pilgrimage to the holy places like Sabarimala brought spiritual mobilisation under Hindu umbrella. Cult figures were also influential factors behind the

rising Hindu consciousness and philosophy among different castes. Persons like Satya Sayibaba, Amrithanathamayi and Pandit Sri Sri Ravisankar helped in shaping the spiritual practices of Hindu middleclass people to a certain extent. Visual media through serialization of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat* in the national channel influenced the Hinduism of middle class and prepared the ground for Right wing Hindu cultural gathering.

A particular liberal variety of Hindu Public Consciousness was simultaneously created with the political practices intending an upward social mobility. Internal divergences within social segments increasingly began to be recognized as 'the Hindu', over cultural symbols of public status and rights, were often surfaced in direct opposition with this Hindu Public Consciousness. Early decades after 1947, on the other hand, witnessed concentrated efforts to hinduise the liberal Public Hindu Consciousness. This moment, in Malabar, was initiated under the aegis of ultra-nationalist organizations like the Rashtreeya Swayam Sevak Sangh which from its very beginning in 1924 stood for a exclusive Hindu State as its ultimate political ideal.

On the political field Hindu organizations like RSS brought many campaigns for Hindu revival. One such campaign was the cow protection movement organized mainly in Malabar resulting in minor clashes with Muslims. RSS entered politics by participating in the Liberation struggle of 1959 which gave them a space in post independent Kerala. RSS along with other religious and caste organizations played vital role in bringing

democratically elected first government to step down. The most important agitation of RSS was Tali temple agitation. They got an opportunity to get K. Kelappan as the leader of the strike which popularized the movement.

The prominent role played by minorities in politics was a source of frustration in Hindu circles. Various Hindu organizations like BJP and Hindu caste organizations like NSS and SNDP Yogam campaigned against the undue involvement of minorities in government and politics. Though Malappuram district formation was necessary on the demographic sense, a wide campaign against this was carried out with communal tone. Many Hindu organizations felt that it was an attempt to create Mapplisthan and they started agitations against the formation under the leadership of Janasangh.

Intense religiosity of the Muslims in this region was affected after the demolition of Babari Masjid. This incident affected Hindu-Muslim relations in all walks of life. Exclusive religious dress code, religious gathering etc. were the phenomenon of post Babari Masjid demolition. Fast growth of the communal organizations like ISS deserves attention in this background. Provocative speeches of Madani attracted thousands of Muslim youth and from the late nineties onwards, the issue of identity politics gathered momentum. Gujarat riots intensified the feeling of alienation among the Muslim community which also affected Hindu consciousness. Such organized protest of minority communities also helped the making of Hindu communal consciousness.

The economic development of the minorities as a part of the gulf boom resulted in dissatisfaction among Hindus of the region. Minorities started several educational institutions and showed larger upward social mobility. It is a great concern for Hindu organizations. Starting of several unaided and self financing institutions by minority organizations invited sharp criticism from Hindu circles.

Communal riots were also a factor in rising communal consciousness. Though minor clashes between Hindus and Muslims occurred earlier, it was in 1972 the major riot took place in Tellicherry. Communal disturbance which occurred in different parts of Malabar strained Hindu Muslim relations. Personal issues of Hindus and Muslims began to turn communal. In Tellicherry Riot several people were wounded and business establishments were burned. Suppressed emotional turbulence in the mass/community psyche is often surfaced in/ as public communal tensions. 1971 Tallasserry riot was in fact a corporal manifestation of a very old, contained tension between two dominant local communities. Widespread and spontaneous-like physical destruction of Muslim property and life at the riot site (which was theatrically performed as if with a well-coordinated prior planning and organization) has to be seen in this context. Examples and experiences from Nadapuram; another locale with a history of protracted communal tension, also follow this pattern. Though the main-stream Left political parties mounted certain efforts (especially at their organizational level) in countering the dominant Hindu Public Consciousness at its civic and rhetorical expressions, their defenses

against the Hindu Symbolism in its internal domains such as family and local community were too ineffective. Political clashes between the supporters of CPI (M) and Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) frequently acquired communal character, particularly in the those volatile regions which had some varieties of polarized past. The emergence of an upwardly mobile Muslim 'new-rich' after the inflow of 'Gulf- Money' (or immigrant's net factor payments to Kerala from the Arab Middle-East) was immediately translated into a communal code. Many were ready to subscribe it without trying to analyze new economic hierarchies created in the Gulf-Boom.

Demolition of Babari Masjid intensified communal violence in these regions. Marad riot led killings of several people creating hatred between two communities. The Hindutva forces organized a campaign to show 'plight of the Hindus'. They also propagated that the coastal regions in Kerala is under the control of 'Islamic terrorists' and international Muslim organizations have a role in the riots happening in coastal region. Hindu- Muslim conflicts in coastal fishing hamlets have a different character. They, as mentioned earlier, are structurally more akin to the tribal conflicts. Interventions of non-locals or outsiders frequently intensify inter-community tension in Malabar coastal zone. Outside intervention quickly intensifies minor inter-personal issues into full-fledged conflicts. Members of concerned communities were dragged into this clash, sometimes without their knowledge or consent.

Political interest, social backwardness and economic disparity are some of the root causes for each riot. One common feature of these riots is that most

of the culprits or victims are from backward communities. Most of the Hindus engaged in the riots were OBCs and in the case of Muslims they were from backward fishermen community. Religious sensitive areas of Malabar like Marad, Nadapuram and Kasargod are the strongholds of backward Thiyyas or Mukkuvas. The suggestions made by various judicial commissions on communal violence for improving socio- economic conditions of the people of their sensitive areas to tackle riots deserve special mention here. Though these conflicts are locally based in their inception Hindu-right consciously convert them into a more familiar model of broader Hindu-Muslim hatred. The notional fixity of the idea; 'the Muslim other' could be seen as intensifying these conflicts wherever they had initially taken place.

In short, communal elements evolved within the Hindu community in the backdrop of the above said socio-cultural and political developments. The Hindu 'body' constructed during the colonial period got embedded through political and cultural mediations. A dichotomy developed between casteism and communalism among Hindus during the Post Colonial phase. A condition of conflict blended with caste and communal consciousness is seen existing among different sections of Hindus.

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5. Raveendran Raveneswaram, Madhymam reporter, Kasargod.

GLOSSARY

1. *Ashram.* : Hermitage.
2. *Bhajana.* : The singing of devotional song.
3. *Charadu.* : Charms
4. *Choroonu.* : Ritual feeding of children usuall in a temple.
5. *Janmashtami.* : Celebration of birth of Srikrishna, Hindu god.
6. *Janmi.* : The holder of janmam; landlord.
7. *Jathi.* : Caste.
8. *Kafir* : Unbeliever.
9. *Karayogam.* : Village level assembly/unit of Nair Service Society.
10. *Kavu.* : Hindu shrine.
11. *Kshetram* : Temple.
12. *Madrassa.* : Islamic religious school for younger children.
13. *Mahallu.* : Unit of Muslim families centered on local mosque.
14. *Mahotsava.* : Great Festival.
15. *Mandalam.* : Name of a Malayalam month.
16. *Manthravaadhi.* : Sorcery
17. *Medam.* : A Malayalam month.

18. *Melkoyma.* : Overlordship.
19. *Melsanthi.* : High priest.
20. *Mulla.* : Mosque functionary.
21. *Nercha.* : Festival in honour of saint.
22. *Nilavilakku.* : A traditional lamp commonly used in Hindu families.
23. *Nombu.* : Religious fast.
24. *Odiyan* : A person who performs black magic.
25. *Othupalli.* : Primary school religious education.
26. *Pattakkaran* : Person in charge of collecting rent.
27. *Poojari.* : Temple priest.
28. *Rakhi.* : A cotton bracelet.
29. *Sadya* : Feast.
30. *Sahids.* : Martyr.
31. *Sammelan.* : Congress.
32. *Sanathana Dharma* : Orthodox Hindu dharma.
33. *Savarna.* : Hindu higher caste/ brahmanical upper castes.
34. *Sobhayaythra.* : Procession conducted in connection with Janmashtami/ Sreekrishna Jayanthi.
35. *Srambi.* : Small Muslim prayer house.
36. *Sudra* : Those who belong to the lowerst Varna order
37. *Swami.* : Hindu saint

38. *Talaque.* : Traditional system of divorce among Muslim community.
39. *Thalappoli.* : Procession of women with a platter in which a lamp lit
40. *Tharavadu.* : Matrilineal household.
41. *Uruvilakku.* : Ostracism.
42. *Varavu.* : Procession.
43. *Veranda.* : Corridor.
44. *Vimochana samaram.* : Liberation Struggle.