

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF DALIT COLONIES IN KERALA

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UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

By

MAYA. K.S

Under the guidance of

Dr. SREEVIDHYA .V



**PG DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND RESEARCH
CHRIST COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS) IRINJALAKUDA,
THRISSUR, KERALA**

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.2024


Maya. K.S

Dr. SREEVIDHYA. V

Head & Assistant Professor

P.G. Department of History & Research,

Christ College (Autonomous)

Irinjalakuda, Thrissur, Kerala.

CERTIFICATE

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Irinjalakuda

.2024



Dr. SREEVIDHYA.V

(Supervising Teacher)

Dr. SREEVIDHYA. V

Head & Assistant Professor

P.G. Department of History & Research,

Christ College (Autonomous)

Irinjalakuda, Thrissur, Kerala.

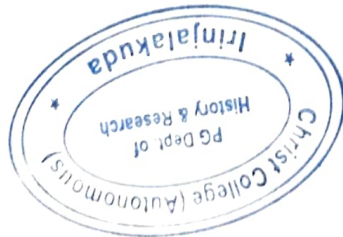
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Dr. SREEVIDHYA.V
(Supervising Teacher)

Irinjalakuda
30/05/2025



Dr. Sreevidhya V
Head & Assistant Professor
PG Department of History & Research
Christ College (Autonomous)
Irinjalakuda, Thrissur - 680 125

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Introduction

This study attempts to deal with Kerala as a developmental state, focusing on its colonial origins, social, economic and cultural relations, and the history of its Dalit population. The development policies toward the Dalits have a long history. The early colonies had many places to migrate and resettle the vagrants, agricultural labourers and plantation labourers, without causing hardship to the general community. However, one of the main policy measures taken during the colonial period was that such colony houses would help to "improve the condition of Dalit communities" and also the term "colony" was referred as a place for Dalits/tribals only. Actually, the term "colony" refers to a region settled by influential groups or communities, often associated with farming or a distinct social class and moreover it was initially denoted as settlements of farmers.¹ In the socio-economic and cultural context of Kerala, early colonies represented places where agricultural labourers were subjected to forced settlement by landlords, resembling forced-labour scenarios. Later, by the 1950s, the idea of colony was established as the ghetto space of a particular caste- group settled in specific areas by the government. Finally, it became a policy-led settlement practice which contributed to the establishment of caste-based colonies. This transition and its socio-economic landscape denote a shift from forced agricultural settlements to government-designated spaces for particular caste-groups, highlighting a change in societal and governmental policies over time.

During the period between 1917 and 1926, the establishment of the first colonies such as Amarapuram Colony, Chalakudy Pulaya Colony and Palakkad Nayadi Colony emerged as a response to the desire for land ownership, wealth, power and elevated social status among individuals like Ayyankali, Poykayil Appachan and Kurumban Daivathan.² These individuals advocated for the creation of such colonies,

¹ Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 2005, p.294.

² Raj Sekhar Basu, 'Presenting the Problems of Writing Dalit History: The Myriad Aspects of the Pulaya Protest Movement in Princely Travancore, <https://www.Academia.edu>, Print, 2024.

recognizing that collective living arrangements were instrumental in securing land rights during that era. Historical records indicate that the establishment of Nayadi colonies in Palakkad during the 1926 was primarily due to the challenges posed by the movement of destitute Nayadi individuals in public spaces, causing disruptions among the populace.³ Consequently, the Palakkad Nayadi Colony was initiated under the guidance of the British administration. The Dalits which predominantly comprised of agricultural labourers were resettled in these colonies.

These practices underscore the significance of collective living arrangements as a means to access land rights and so addressed the motivations behind the establishment of specific colonies during that period. The formation of these colonies aimed to address social and economic challenges faced by marginalized communities, particularly in securing land and alleviating disruptions caused by movements in public spaces. This study focuses on the term "colony" within the context of referring to a ghetto space, specifically examining the caste-based existence of resettled Dalits who have established distinct social, cultural and economic spaces. These colonies represent manifestations of certain isolated development policies, interacting within the unorganized working spaces of Kerala society.

The origin of the early colonies can be traced back to the pioneering efforts of figures like Ayyankali and Appachan. A significant milestone in this trajectory was Ayyankali's advocacy on February 27, 1912, within the Prajasabha, emphasizing the necessity of allocating lands as exclusive residential areas for Dalits.⁴ These spaces also serve as a lens to understand the workings of the capital formation system essential for societal development.⁵ Before this, farmers constructed their dwellings on agricultural land belonging to landlords.⁶ Ayyankali and Appachan were

³ Settlement Register, Calicut Depressed Class Nayadi Colony, Calicut Regional Archives, B.No.296, S.No.2, 40 Vo.II& II, 1926.

⁴ Sree Moolam Assembly of Travancore, Proceedings of the 12th Session, Government Press, Trivandrum, 1924, p.37.

⁵ R. K. Bijuraj, 'Dalit Colonial Nooravarshathinte Charithravum Varthamanavum', *Madhyamam Weekly*, June 2020, pp.17-21.

⁶ Cherai Ramdas, Ayyenkalikku *Adharevode*, (Mal.), Uparotham Books, Ernakulam, 2006, p.48.

instrumental in conceptualizing and implementing the idea of uniting Dalits in one central location, primarily driven by the stark social disparities inherent in the prevailing feudal and caste-based system. Untouchability was a pervasive issue during that era. The consolidation of Dalits in these colonies aimed to afford them collective ownership of the land, as well as the wealth and influence associated with it. The early colonies were established with this very objective in mind.

However, as Kerala transitioned into a democratic framework, state-provided colonies gradually transformed into isolated enclaves and became part of state-sanctioned development policies. These colonies had diverse origins, with some initiated during the British colonial period and operating within the feudal system. Colonies started in this way later became caste-colonies and became ghettoized socially, economically, culturally and politically. This social ghettoization began to determine the way of life for the general public who argue that colonies serve as an index of substandard status. An exploration of the Land Reforms Act underscores the significance of land ownership as a form of power. Rather than empowering Dalits, this has contributed to their ghettoization, resulting in their marginalized political status. Discrimination persists, pushing them to the fringes while exploiting their labour for overall societal development. This discrimination can manifest in various forms, as the space they occupy becomes marked as colonies.

The aim of the study is to problematize the concept of "colony" by scrutinizing its implications. It selects early colonies and those established after Kerala transitioned into a democratic state, aiming to delve into the lives of its inhabitants and the societal changes. It is of utmost significance to delve into the multifaceted aspects of social, economic and cultural transformations within Dalit caste colonies, which have played a pivotal role in changing Dalit life and society. Consequently, the residents of Dalit colonies faced impediments to achieving social development. Economic progress hinged on capital accumulation, which, in turn, was contingent on social development. The ownership of land was considered a fundamental catalyst for Dalit empowerment. The Land Reforms Act and educational

reforms enacted after 1956 played a vital role in the establishment of these colonies.⁷ However, the Dalit community was initially excluded from the educational advancements of the period. The 1960s saw a transformation in the mindset of Dalits, leading to the emergence of a group of Dalit students from these colonies who actively engaged in education. Their actions brought about a new perspective within the Dalit colonies, instigating change and aligning with the principles of Ambedkar. This study is pertinent in its multidisciplinary examination of the history of colonies and their inhabitants. While there are limited studies in this domain, it is important to emphasize that the formation of colonies and their associated social issues cannot be solely understood from a historical perspective. Therefore, this study adopts a multidisciplinary approach, analyzing the intricate interplay of factors.

This research delves into the re-research of social history, inequality and social norms governing the resource mobilization of Dalit colonies through welfare schemes. It unravels the deep-rooted connection between Dalits and agricultural land, which has undergone significant changes in terms of authority rights over time. The development of people's lives can be analysed at the regional level and it becomes evident that colonies serve as the epicenters of their existence, labour, and activities. The transformation in land ownership has imposed restrictions on land resources, reshaping the social power dynamics for those previously engaged in agricultural work. The post-British colonial era ushered in precise definitions of land-authority rights, ultimately designating Dalits as a distinct social class. Government-driven development policies during the democratic process instituted separate settlements for Dalits, further deepening their marginalized status.

The Research Problem

Land, as a resource, embodies the essence of power in society and its historical ties to caste illuminate the underlying historical foundations. Each colony's empirical area in Kerala is intrinsically linked to the land, with historical roots

⁷ Sunny. M. Kappikkad, *Janathayum Janathipathyavum Dalit Vijnanathinte Rashtriya Paadangal*, (Mal.), Vidyarthi Publications, Kozhikode, 2017, pp.26-27.

extending back to tribal communities. This relationship between land, resources, power and identity is profoundly intricate. The transition from land-labourers to labourers in the agricultural sector brought about a reconfiguration of social status and reinforced the caste hierarchy. The land-reform measures favoured tenants, thereby diminishing Dalit agricultural workers' land rights and consigning them to meagre plots or colonies.

In the context of discussions on Kerala's development model, issues related to caste have been largely overlooked. Notably, the socio-economic problems faced by Dalits can be largely attributed to their land rights. Consequently, the transition to a production-based economic structure remains a formidable challenge within India and Kerala's current social landscape. The possession of land serves as a locus of power, intimately intertwined with resource rights, control and capital accumulation. As a result, the formation of a working class within the Dalit community remains a complex endeavour, given the absence of substantial resources. The influence of caste is deeply ingrained in the economic realm, with strong correlations between caste and social relations. These factors have propelled marginalized Dalits into segregated settlements, exacerbating their marginalization. This study, therefore, examines the socio-economic dimensions of Kerala, focusing on the historical context of Dalit colonies as a critical resource for capital formation. It sheds light on the inequalities that have arisen within the social fabric of Kerala's Dalits, scrutinizing the historical background of the land, the diverse types of colonies and the functioning of government welfare programs from both social and economic perspectives.

Land and caste are inherent facets of human life, with Dalit tribal communities unable to escape the caste system's encroachment due to societal integration. Caste practices are consciously acknowledged and accepted as integral. Changes in land ownership significantly impact societal structures, emphasizing the crucial role of resources in social formations. Land ownership bestows authority, production and power, fortifying cultural dominance. This correlation between resources, especially land and societal power is a consistent historical pattern across societies.

Social changes in society, including education, political power, economic and culture, originate within homes, the fundamental units of society. The transformation of land in Kerala led to the Dalits settling in colonies. Colonial modernity triggered substantial shifts in Kerala's social structure. Initially, colonies were settlements on estates established by royal and landed elites. Western education, the influence of Christian missionaries, social reform movements, lower-caste movements, legal changes, and the dissolution of joint families catalyzed societal transformations. However, unlike the earlier settlements, these changes confined a specific class to limited spaces. The transition to colonies holds distinct contextual and historical perspectives.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to historicize the formation of colonies and discern the factors contributing to their establishment. It delves into the origins of colonies and the social elements that favoured their creation. Analyzing land and caste-based colonies holds significance for local history, offering insights to historians about societal transformations. The relevance lies in understanding the various colonies, the families inhabiting them and their caste affiliations, contributing significantly to comprehending the evolution of society within the realm of historical study.

This study aims to broaden the exploration of social conditions that shaped specific colonies, serving as pivotal resources for colony history. In local history research, limited source materials have posed challenges, but the narratives within colonies themselves offer opportunities for historical reconstruction. By scrutinizing the origins and social structures of these colonies, the study investigates the lives and social dynamics of their inhabitants. It enables the tracing of social histories within the confined spaces of these specific settlements, contributing to understanding regional social histories. These localized histories facilitate the creation of comprehensive local historical records.

Objectives of the Study

The thesis attempts to explain the specific situation of post-independent era that negotiated traditional social structures and focuses on the social transformation in the larger context of caste and caste-colonies and the lives of people in it. For centuries, Dalits were denied basic civil rights. They were excluded from accessing socio-economic resources, faced poverty, lacked educational facilities, and were discriminated on the lines of caste, due to all of which their inability to enter government services and other jobs contributed cumulatively to their backwardness. An oppressed community needs resources to overcome its situation.

Dalit emancipation is possible only through acquiring capital, power, and unity. As mentioned earlier, if any one of these capitals, namely economic, cultural and social, is acquired, it can be transformed into other capitals under some social controls, but the harsh truth is that no capital is available in these colonies. And, there is a lack of resources due to which they face several difficulties. So, the first attempt should be made to bring them out of their problems related to capital.

The objectives of this study summarize in points

- To analyze the perceptions of Caste in India, specifically in Kerala
- To analyze the geographical situation of Dalit colony formation in Kerala
- The study aims to focus on selected colonies, such as the first Scheduled caste settlement colony in history in Kerala.
- The study attempts to find out the historical sketch of the Dalit Colonies in Kerala after the first ministry.
- To understand the dynamics of life in colonies by examining the power relations between land and caste that are prevalent in Kerala.

Methodology

Colonies represent vast and intricate environments inhabited by marginalized individuals often confined to ghetto spaces. Therefore, the study of colonies necessitates

a multidisciplinary approach, given their multifaceted nature. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding that cannot be confined to a singular framework. Historical formations occur within every region and society, encompassing the emergence, progression, diffusion, and eventual decline of distinct social structures across interconnected levels. Comprehending the formation process of a society's history is aided by various sources such as artefacts, inscriptions, literary works, oral traditions, colonial-era official records, and collective memories. Analyzing these diverse historical sources using sound methodological concepts enables a comprehensive understanding of societal development and evolution. Social and ideological structures affect the evolution of caste and land inheritance. Evidence from literary texts is used to chronicle the colonies. The general patterns of caste and land have not undergone any change in any social period. Employing a multidisciplinary approach extends beyond the historical scope, allowing us to trace the intersection of caste and land within the context of Dalit society and their settlement colonies. The primary focus in the historicizing process is on the socio-economic and political character of the colony. An interdisciplinary methodology has been adopted for data collection, encompassing sources from ancient times, oral histories, and various other resources. This approach aids in reconstructing history, essentially creating a historical map that illuminates the diverse facets of human lives embedded within these contexts.

This study is very complex. It is not just a historical problem but a space of many problems. It is the ultimate problem of a person's life and cannot be understood in a particular way in a single theoretical framework. An interdisciplinary method was followed to collect data from fieldwork. Early history helps to understand the history of the colonies and its evolution. This study transcends mere historical analysis; it embraces a multidisciplinary approach to evidence collection and analysis. Biographies, personal narratives, historical ethnography, and local history serve as primary methods for historical inquiry in this context. Oral history is an essential part of this study, and together with the history of memories, a geographical and sociological analytical approach is applied. The collected data undergoes analysis

through three distinct aspects: land, caste, and capital formation. Each element is scrutinized through historical and sociological theoretical methodologies, keeping the colony itself as the central unifying factor throughout this comprehensive examination.

A Brief Review of Some of the Existing Literature on Caste and Society

Castes in India is a work by B. R Ambedkar. In it Ambedkar argues that society is a collection of classes.⁸ The basis of these classes may be social, economic or intellectual, but in any case, every person in this society is a member of some class. According to Ambedkar, these classes are the castes of Indian society and that each caste acts like a watertight chamber. Therefore, the castes had no mutual aid, spiritual or material exchange. As such, all these studies are providing an outspread range of possibilities for re-examining the social science of the caste system and ethnographic ethics and its geology. The interminable endogamy that existed in the caste-ruled society over centuries has endeavored to consolidate them as Indian civilians; concurrently on the denomination of an incorporated culture which forged India into a distinctive nation.⁹ Consequently, Ambedkar states in his paper both hypothetically and practically, Casteism is the principal cause of all disputes and diverged the unification of Indian communities. A more profound cultural unity has been confused in the form of many castes.

Furthermore, he points out that caste didn't have a religious or an eternal origin. More over there existed a single caste upon which later on by emulation and marginalization, others were formed. The Hindu reformers had only codified the existing practices. Even the purchase of land by an untouchable was tantamount to death for upper castes. Therefore, a Dalit could not buy land no matter how well he was financially. Legislation validating this was also made in India during the British period. The Province of Punjab "Land Alienation Act, of 1900" was one such act.¹⁰

⁸ B. R. Ambedkar 'Caste in India: Their Mechanism Genesis and Development', *Indian Antiquary*, Vol.XLI, Columbia University, USA, 1917, p.15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.9.

¹⁰ Awanish Kumar, 'B.R. Ambedkar on Caste and Land Relations in India', *Review of Agrarian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January –June 2020.

The Act held that Scheduled Castes were not agricultural castes and had no right to purchase land. Caste hierarchy and caste land division perpetuated Indian upper-class culture with various such appointments. In conflict and opposition to this, significant agitations, notable interventions, and struggles took place all over India. Babasaheb Ambedkar himself made the most critical interventions in it.

William K Tabb's book *The Political Economy of the Black Ghetto* discusses the most comprehensive study yet to appear on the economic aspects of the black ghetto. The book focuses on a colonial relationship between the ghetto and the larger society.¹¹ The author discusses on why blacks don't own the economic resources of the ghetto and weighs the potential gains from various black capitalism proposals, including plans for the community-owned corporations and incentives to private industry to locate in the ghetto. Tabb analyses how vested interests use economic power to resist ghetto reform and sets forth proposals on how to do away with the restrictions that hedge in ghetto occupants and prevent them from achieving a fair share of American prosperity.

Henri Lefebvre's book *The Production of Space* discusses how the space is shaped by the production and reproduction processes, crafting distinct locations and spatial configurations—characteristics unique to each social structure. Spatial practice ensures the continuity and coherence of social formations, providing individuals with a level of competency and agency as actors. According to Lefebvre, spatial practice embodies an employee's practical accumulation of knowledge, involving processes of signification. In emphasizing the significance of 'lived' experiences and perceptions of geographical space, Lefebvre contends that these experiences are inherently social.¹² The creation of space can manifest in various manners. An analysis of the social production of space, exemplified by Dalit/tribal colonies, reveals that these colonies

¹¹ William. K. Tabb, *The Political Economy of the Black Ghetto; Why the Mass of Black Americans has been Forced to accept Economic Deprivation in an Age of Prosperity*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1970, pp.21-35.

¹² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (Trans.) Donald Nicholson Smith, Blackwell Publications, Oxford, 1991, pp. 101 -166.

initially stemmed from Dalit spaces. This was attributed to the cultural growth and development of those inhabiting these isolated spaces in huts. However, with the advent of democracy, the state assumed ownership of this process, leading to the social, cultural, and economic isolation of these spaces, altering their jurisdiction.

Untouchable Citizens by Hugo Gorringe discusses the rise of Dalits as a major force in Indian democracy throughout the country in recent decades. He analyses the Dalit movements' impact on Tamil Nadu's political configurations, the present condition of Dalits in Tamil Nadu, the reasons for their protests, and the forms they take. Overall, the book argues that it is at the local level that relations of power are challenged and negotiated, and it is through these processes that the Dalit movement rises.¹³ Indian urbanization is of a subsistence nature. It implies that migrants from rural areas are attracted to the urban center not for the urban environment but for employment. They may eat worse food or tolerate bad housing conditions but stick to the cities for jobs. This badly affects the quality of life in urban places. The Indian urban system is not integrated both functionally and spatially. Its particular focus is the spatial organization of urban-based societies, looking at both the pattern of settlement and the internal organization of urban areas. City and society provide the outline for the theoretical framework. It concentrates on understanding the city and how urban forms reflect economic and social to create future societies.

The work *Experience, Caste, and the Everyday Social* by Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai explores the nature of 'everyday social'. This philosophical archaeology offers avenues for a radical critique of caste. More interested in finding appropriate ways to talk about sociality in Asia and Africa as opposed to the West, the authors attempt to address the dilemmas of displacement concepts and contexts in the philosophical thought of postcolonial cultures. Despite the pervasive social discourse on caste – a particularly controversial social category that has done little to examine

¹³ Hugo Gorringe, *Untouchable Citizens Dalit Movements and Democratization in Tamil Nadu; Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge Vol.4*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2005, pp.53-112.

the Indian situation, which has resulted in complex intergenerational violence and societal injustice, this study has made this book a much-awaited philosophical work.¹⁴ At the heart of this social philosophy is the perception that the self is a collective concept whose agency is not as clear as singular conceptions of self-claim.

By articulating the fundamental problem of the difficulty of learning something we are already a part of, Guru and Sarukai study everyday social experiences. They recognize this constructive 'being' of social experiences. A central concern of the book is to understand empirically the nature of spontaneous violence that has enabled the perpetuation of caste through its naturalization over generations. It does so by unveiling the 'metaphysical garb' under which this naturalization is staged, thereby offering to critique the rational object of caste.¹⁵ The authors point out the problems with social science's preoccupation with broad methodological individualism or social work for understanding social processes. Guru and Sarukai's everyday social theory propose a new ethical and relational metaphysics of sociality that does not reduce to a simple binary of individual and collective, thereby eliminating the 'big problem of epistemology'- studying the object as distinct from the subject. Instead, the authors see society as 'expressly understood through experience working with different rational concepts'—the book, through its experience of caste in day-to-day life.

Vinil Paul's book *Manjadikari* is an attempt to trace the social evolution of *Manjadikari*, a Dalit region formed by the hard caste laws of the Travancore princely state. One of its unique features is that the history of *Manjadikari* is a small sample of the history of the social transformation of modern Travancore. In other words, the history of *Manjadikari* is a snapshot of the missionary movement associated with colonial modernity, the life of the Dalits who came to the missionary movement, and

¹⁴ Gopal Guru, Sundar Sarukai, *Experience, Caste, Everyday Social*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2019, p.15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.212.

the history of the lower social movement. *Manjadikari* gives a glimpse into the social experiences of Dalit Christians, especially in Travancore.¹⁶ For this reason, Vinil says that the history of *Manchadikari* is a glimpse of the social life of contemporary Dalit Christians. The author also talks about the new trends of regional historiography and how a closed social structure controlled the lives of people who were slave castes, and how the advent of Dalit missionary movements made the small area of *Manjadikari* habitable. Vinil was a pioneer in Dalit historiography.

Sunny M Kappikkad, 'Dalithar Neridunna Vibhavadhikara Prasnangal' in Saleem Kumar, (edi.) *Bhoomiyude Jaathiyum Rashtriyavum* discusses the prevailing issues of caste and its economic and political existence. Caste is discussed in Kerala as a separate issue outside of property ownership, modern capital, and the market. This dominant mindset has constructed Kerala's economic and political discourses in a particular space.¹⁷ The general public thinks that the investigation of how the economic and political changes in Kerala affect different social groups is sectarian. Instead, they produce casteless maps based on castes and regions. The reality is that wealth and power are still concentrated in the upper classes. Agrarian marginalisation and untouchability kept Dalits out of land ownership and property ownership. The author lays out the facts through the census report of Kerala's population and per capita income.

Sanal Mohan's work *KeezhalaCharithravum Veendeduppinte Padangalum*, analyzes the experiences of the lower-class social movements of the 20th century in Kerala. The history of the subaltern social movements, which have yet to be theoretically analyzed in the modernity of Kerala, is very relevant. The modernization of various caste communities was decisive in Kerala's modern experience. This process influenced the development and evolution of post-imperial Kerala society

¹⁶ Vinil Paul, *Manjadikari; Olichottathinte Daiva Shastram*,(Mal.),SPCS, Kottayam,2022. p.13-25.

¹⁷ Sunny M Kappikkad, 'Dalithar Neridunna Vibhavadhikara Prasnangal' in Saleem Kumar, (edi.) *Bhoomiyude Jaathiyum Rashtriyavum*, Pavithran Smaraka Dalit Padana Kendram, Kottayam,2008, p.29 - 44.

greatly. *Keezhalar* means the people at the bottom of the caste social hierarchy.¹⁸ Anti-colonial struggles and movements focusing on economic issues have received much prominence in the current studies. The studies of movements, ideas and experiences based on non-wealth social relations, movements that grew out of societies at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, formed religious and secular movements to overcome and overthrow the caste-based hierarchical structure. The historical experiences of the Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha and the Ayyankali Movement have been made part of his study. Sanal Mohan says that one of the main factors of modernity was the social formation of the body and the voice, a process which is a hierarchical relation of caste. Along with social reforms, these two movements recognized the practice of sanitizing Dalit bodies as an essential program of action. Sanal Mohan says that this can only be seen as an essential element of becoming a part of modern society.

T.C. Varghese book, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences: Land Tenures in Kerala, 1850 to 1960* explores the agricultural relations of Kerala and its historical background, the exact information of the land reforms that took place in Kerala after independence, the social transformation that took place after the reforms and what its economic results are. He says that agricultural relations in Kerala are still based on caste. Right from the beginning of self-rule, the caste system was based on a hereditary occupation structure.¹⁹ Each caste was associated with a specific profession, delineating economic, social, and authoritative distinctions. The upper castes were the owners of the land and the lower castes were the ones who worked on the land. Caste was a term that indicated economic status, social status and power. Moreover, it also acted as an indicator of living conditions, human conditions, work and obligations. Society is said to be the inner existence of various groups of people living collectively based on certain ideas, institutions and

¹⁸ Sanal Mohan, *Keezhala Charithravum Veendeduppinte Padangalum*, (Mal., Prasakthi Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2021, pp. 19-22.

¹⁹ T.C. Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences; Land Tenures in Kerala, 1850 to 1960*, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1970, pp.xiii-185.

arrangements. Even then, like these relationships, the Dalit community remains in an exploitative relationship.

Contemporary Relevance

The present study is an attempt to focus on the social, economic and cultural life of the Dalit community which was traditionally settled in the colonies and its historical reading. This work focuses particularly on the colonies and their people. The study focuses on early colonies in various regions of Kerala and subsequent colonies formed post-1957 through land reforms. The initial Dalit colonies comprised of small huts situated on the edge of agricultural lands. However, with Kerala's transition into a democratic state post-1957, these slums evolved into caste-based colonies spanning around two and a half cents. While the transformation wasn't lengthy, the lives within these colonies encapsulated a profound historical narrative. To assert that these colonies embody a process aimed at implementing development policies, it's crucial to delve into their formation history.

Specifically, understanding the policies dictating livelihoods and experiencing the freedoms guiding a community becomes pivotal in understanding developmental perspectives. When we examine it, we have to see what kind of ghetto development people who are denied social, economic and cultural capital are standing in. To realize the development vision of the Dalit community, securing rights over resources, notably land, and cultivating social and economic capital from these resources is important. It is through this process that communal justice for inhabitants of Dalit colonies can be attained. Oral histories, legends, past histories, and archives are important sources for investigating the historiography of Dalit colonies in Kerala. All available documents about the colonies were collected and recorded.

The ghetto history of the Dalit community can be recreated through Dalit colonies. They facilitate the development of a localized history within their respective areas. These colonies offer insights into community attitudes regarding land and caste-based settlements, emphasizing their significance within a contextual

framework. Colony is always an empirical experience. It embodies both a historical past and a present existence, yet its future remains distant and uncertain.

Outline of the Study

The thesis is presented in four chapters preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion. The entire work looks at the question of how the history and social formation of Dalit colonies can be placed in a historical perspective that helps to reconstruct the local history of Dalit colonies. Chapter 1, "Processing Caste: Some Concepts and Thoughts; Theory and Practice," examines various theories of caste and their correlation with the impact of caste dynamics on land and colonies. Chapter 2, "Separate Spaces: Conceiving the Social Geography of the Down trodden," historicizes the relationship between Dalits, caste, and land within a specific geographical context, focusing on early colonies and their significance in shaping social geography. Chapter 3 'State Formation and the Land Questions of Dalits,' elucidating the role of land reforms during the state's formation and their impact on the establishment of colonies. Chapter 4, "Interrogating Capital: Perceptions of Development in Dalit Colonies," explores how capital formation concepts and development processes operate for Dalits within Kerala's social context. It highlights the state's perspective on economic and educational empowerment while addressing contemporary challenges faced by these colonies.

CHAPTER - I

Processing Caste: Some Concepts and Thoughts; Theory and Practice

This chapter attempts to examine the concept of caste in general and the views of Gandhi, Ambedkar, Ayyankali, and Poykayil Appachan regarding caste. The role of caste and caste based socio-cultural life is also presented. Caste determines the social and economic capital and power on land and resources. Caste system penetrates its roots in India racially and communally and it dictates the social position and status of people in relation to their occupation. Caste is an important element in the hierarchical system.¹ In this hierarchical system, power and status increases as it ascends and decreases as it descends and slavery is enforced on the lower strata. Caste is not a tangible element instead it is a psychological creation of perceived things.²

The caste system is rooted in the *Chatur varna* based religion and its elements are related to Brahminism. The most important aspect is that caste prevails from birth to death in the life of an individual and the birth of a person to a particular group decides his or her caste.

The Constitution of India envisioned itself to prevent the continued growth of caste and to build a casteless social system.³ But 76 years after India's independence, it has not been able to achieve this and it does not seem likely in the near future. Therefore, no understanding of Indian politics or society is possible without a comprehensive study of the complexities of the caste system. Satish Deshpande looks at how scholars from various disciplines have responded to the caste issue in independent India and also highlights the recent changes in the perspective of the caste system.⁴

¹ Ram Manohar Lohiya, *Jathivyavastha*, (Mal.), Mathrubhumi Books, Calicut 2014, p.118.

² Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*, Manohar Publishers, 1992, New Delhi, pp.290-92.

³ Ganashyam Sha, *Social Movements in India: A Review of Literature*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1990, pp.58-132.

⁴ Sathish Deshpande, *The Problem of Caste, Reading on the Economy, Polity and Society*, Orient Blackswan, 2014, New Delhi, pp.10-69.

Romila Thapar sees caste as a system that is made important and defined in terms of race.⁵ Caste existed as *Varna* system and it's complicated than the prior ages that defined it. The concept of purity and untouchability is also crucial and it distances the caste from one another.⁶ The system of caste works with the awareness that it prohibits the relation between fellow human beings and one is not supposed to meet and walk-in public spheres with another. The same restriction and forbiddance pass through the consumption of food. The flesh of dead animals like cow and goat was a responsibility of the downtrodden and thus eating it was a practice followed by them and the skin of these animals was used by the higher caste people.⁷

In 19th century Kerala, there were wide disparities in the intake of food and here the upper-caste had food twice a day whereas the downtrodden had it for only once and it was made from *Chama* or any other items available nearby.⁸ The disparity continued in the items of intake and the concept of purity and impurity divided the food and humans based on caste alike. The caste-based cultures, rights and identities through food or various cultural modes intends restricting the cultural space and rights of Dalits and it is the establishment of Hindu ideology. It permeates throughout the history and often causes social and cultural conflicts. The official ban on beef is the recent example of a caste/community-based forbiddance of food for tending the Brahminic food hierarchy⁹.

There are numerous interpretations and positioning of caste that are disciplinary and theoretical and they follow certain approaches. Susan Bayly's comprehensive and complex analysis combines the historical and anthropological

⁵ Romila Thapar, 'The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics, ' *Social Scientist*, Vol.24, No.1-3, January-March, 1996, pp.3-29.

⁶ B. R. Ambedkar, ' Caste in India: Their Mechanism Genesis and Development ', *Indian Antiquary*, Vol., XLI, Columbia University, May 1917, pp.7-13.

⁷ C. Sathyamala, 'Meat-eating in India: Whose Food, Whose Politics, and Whose Rights', July 30, 2018, *Journals. sagepub.com*, <https://doi.org>

⁸ P. Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Noottandile Keralam*, (Mal.), Kerala Sahithya Academy, Thrissur 2000, pp.19-35.

⁹ Balamurali Natarajan, 'Cultural Identities and Beef Festivals: Towards a Multiculturalism against Caste', *Journal of Contemporary South Asia*, Vol.26, Issue 3, 2018, pp.287-304.

approaches of ideas and experiences that led to the so-called 'caste society' of the three hundred and fifty years from pre-colonial to the end of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Thus, he interprets caste not as the essence of Indian culture and civilization, but as a coincidence of the drastic changes that took place in the subcontinent's political landscape before and after.

D.D Kosambi points out that no interpretation of our history and culture needs to be heard unless it includes the caste system. His attempt is to unify anthropological inquiry with a critical analysis of historical evolution. By studying the role of caste in Indian history, we will be able to delve into some of the most important insights of Kosambi.¹¹ In *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Kosambi gives the view that castes originated not from any internal division of the colours of the original clerical community, but from an external process: 'The whole course of Indian history shows the tribes. The elements merge into one common community through this phenomenon. One of the most striking features of Indian society is caste based or caste ridden.'¹²

When talking about the origin of caste system, J. H. Hutton opines that caste system is something that prevails only in India and is hardly seen in other countries.¹³ One can often see other similar versions of caste in other countries like race but the complexity, rigidity and untouchability that exist in our country is seen nowhere else. He realizes that in the Indian context, caste hierarchy plays a vital role in determining many aspects and its core concept is purity and impurity.¹⁴ He begins his study by

¹⁰ Susan Bayley, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, pp.89 - 294 .

¹¹ D.D.Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Popular Books, Bombay, 1956, pp.17-104.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.25.

¹³ J.H, Hutton, *Caste in India: its Nature Function and Origins*, Oxford University Press, Bombay 1983, p.78.

¹⁴ Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970, p.68.

framing questions on individual, society, equality and hierarchy. He is also influenced by the studies of Durkheim and Dumont in revealing the hierarchical classification of caste.¹⁵

Hutton examines social realities and hierarchy to have a philosophical comparison and conclusion instead of a historical study of the Indian caste system. Caste is understood as a system that has an official amalgamation of concepts, values, and logic.¹⁶ Most importantly, even though caste divides groups into many, how the relation between caste groups co-exist is understood by the factors like marriage, co-operation, job, tradition, division of occupation and also through the higher or lower hierarchical position. He explains the relation of hierarchy and concept detailing the *jajmani* system. In that system economically efficient caste group had higher agency and the economically less efficient group had less agency.

Channa and John P. Mencher argue that Indian society is being permeated with the concept of hierarchy for the past 1,500-2,000 years. In his view, it is difficult to disagree with Dumont and it is said that hierarchies and hierarchical relationships became important as stratified communities developed in the ancient East.¹⁷ This development is clearly not limited to India, but to the nature of control in stratified societies. He argues that inequalities in the form of diversified access to basic resources, unequal redistribution of producer surplus and lopsided workload and consumption level at each level of society exists. Caste has (and continues to be) a very effective mechanism of exploitation¹⁸ and this system tries to evict the formation of social classes with general aims and interests.

¹⁵ J.H, Hutton, *Op. cit.*, p.46-148.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.149-168.

¹⁷ Subhadra Mitra Channa, Joan. P. Mencher, (eds.) *Life as a Dalit: Views from the Bottom on Caste in India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi 2013, pp. xi-xiii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.3-30.

The political and hegemonic transformation of the caste system acts as a socio-political institution which controls social, cultural and economic spheres and it often turns into a form of social fascism. So, it undertakes the communal and caste riots and killings for vested interest and grabbing power. There have been three major discourses on the caste system in India namely the developed nationalistic interpretations, colonial interpretations and Marxist–socialist interpretation or class-based interpretative studies. The emerging capitalism and the distribution and labour issues led to the third interpretative section, namely the Marxist tradition of caste analysis. It has to be noted that this school literally failed at understanding the caste as an indigenous issue of the state with salient features apart from the class structure.

1:1 Caste, Class and Varna System

There is much difference between *Varna* and Caste. The term ‘caste’ denotes the large-scale kinship groups that are hierarchically organized within a rigid system of stratification. There are four *Varnas* and they formed ranked categories characterized by differential access to spiritual and material privileges. It is also a hierarchical system with Brahmins as the first category and Shudras as the last. They are hereditary classes and it achieved legitimization by the religious beliefs and the theories of dharma and karma. In caste system one’s social position and mobility is ascribed but in class system it is achieved. Class system is another stratified social system, in which resources such as wealth, power and social position are acquired on the basis of achievement or merit. In caste system one’s opportunity and mobility are determined by birth whereas in the class system it is determined by one’s ability or skill.

Literary classics portray and propagate the four *Varnas* but there exist various caste groups and they are about three thousand in number. By the time of *Smritis* caste had received prominence and various caste groups developed in each *Varna*.¹⁹ The *Varna* system is an open structure where as the caste system is a closed one. This

¹⁹ J.H, Hutton, *Op.cit.*, pp.271-274.

reflects that what functions in India is a rigid and dark caste system and there arises the concepts of purity, impurity and untouchability. The caste system is based on community and separates the community one from another. The disparity between economically efficient one and the less efficient demarcates this division to a certain extent. When feudal rule existed in India the ownership of land was entrusted with the Brahmins.²⁰ Thus, they had the upper strata of hierarchy and gained the economic superiority. The villages remained centers to protect the land and caste structure alongside the rituals associated with it. As a result, feudalism dominated the economy, landlord rule dominated politics, and the caste system dominated social spheres.

M. N. Srinivas, in his work *The Remembered Village*, states that the village has a strong role in making caste an important aspect of society.²¹ He also states that, “the growth in villages is comparatively slow than in other areas of India. When the dominant group enjoys their higher position, the downtrodden group is searching for their self despite of the traditional belief system and is trying to place them in the system”. His study focuses on Rampura village in Mysore and he observes that in the Indian aspects of caste, family, and religion, changes have to be brought to caste system. T. N. Madan, writes on the division of occupation in the villages as: each caste group is assigned certain jobs and never allows the outsiders of the village to do it as it raises questions of purity.²² These two studies highlight that there is no difference in caste system after Independence because, it's basic nature, traditional aspects and hierarchical relation still lay without changes.

In Kerala, the Renaissance movement of the downtrodden began by the end of the 19th century as a result of the movements of the downtrodden. By the middle of the 19th century, Kerala society had become dynamic and the caste system of agricultural slavery had ended. When Narayana Guru enshrined Ezhava Shiva at Aruvipuram in 1888, it was another construction that broke with caste Hinduism,

²⁰ K. N Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innelekal*, (Mal.), Kerala Bhasha Institute, Trivandrum, 2011, pp.151.

²¹ M.N. Sreenivas, *The Remembered Village*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1976, pp.85-128.

²² T.N. Madhan, ‘On Understanding Caste,’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.6, No.34, August, 21, 1971, pp.1805-1808.

which had monopolized spirituality and power for centuries.²³ In 1916, Guru clarified that they would leave off the caste based Brahmanical system and proposed the principle of one caste, one religion, one God, for man. Moreover, he asserted that the Ezhavas were not a caste instead a community. For that he gave opportunity to teach underprivileged students in his *Math*. His work was against the denial of access from all social spheres, knowledge and power that mobilizes a man in public spaces.

One should note that all bhakti movement and renaissance movement were initiated by the downtrodden and extended to the upper-caste groups.²⁴ These movements questioned the Brahminic domination and polytheism that existed. But they never questioned the caste discrimination and slavery that was the keystone of Brahminic domination. Kerala renaissance was not a single-faced movement instead it was a historical process that created rejuvenation in all fields and in all levels. One peculiarity of Kerala renaissance is that it was much different from all other states of India because it began from the downtrodden sections.²⁵ They voiced to stop all disparities and atrocities of caste discrimination and submitted a memorandum for it when other dominant caste groups tried to reform the caste system within communities. Thus, Sree Narayana Guru, Poykayil Appachan, Ayyankali and others arrive with the strong downtrodden renaissance.

Fighting against the atrocities of caste became an important aspect of social change, transforming the lives of lower the downtrodden people and changed all customs and norms. It also paved the way for the entry of suppressed women to the public spheres and illuminated the fields of literature and culture. The downtrodden movement democratized the life of all sections of people and made progress. The division between each caste group is more than that which exists

²³ Sathesh Chandra Bose and Shiju Sam Varghese, (eds.), *Kerala Modernity, Ideas, Spaces and Practices in Transitions*, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 2015, p.68.

²⁴ S. Laxmana Murthy, 'Bhakti in Life and Literature,' in M. Rajagopalachari, K. Damaodar Rao, (eds.), *Bhakti Movement and Literature: Re-forming a Tradition*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2016, pp.61-85.

²⁵ P. K. Balakrishnan, *Narayana Guru*, (Mal.), DC Books, Kottayam, 2006, pp.121-128.

between two countries and it often includes colour, social dominance and economic and non-economic capital. The depth of the division is reflected upon the ostracization from public spheres and political exclusion. One has to examine the perceptions of caste and making of the society of M K Gandhi, Dr B R Ambedkar, Mahatma Ayyankali, Poykayil Appachan, in the context of such political and social exclusions.

1:2 M. K. Gandhi: Advocate of Caste and Varna System

Gandhi mentioned himself as a Sanatana Hindu in the pamphlet *Dharmamadhan*.²⁶ He explained that he was not just a Hindu, instead one who had deemed in the chaturvarna system of the eternal dharma which would last until the world exists. His argument on caste is that the caste division is determined on the basis of one's birth and its root lie in one's birth itself. In another reflection he says that caste decided the job that one has to perform. According to him it is the will of God and one is not supposed to deviate from this system. He writes in *Harijan*, one of his publications,²⁷ that there is a fundamental base for the caste system and he asserts that there is no logical reasoning or argument exists over it, even though it has gaining and shortcomings.

Gandhi often argues that caste controls society socially and morally and thus eluding caste system is difficult and its destruction is the destruction of Hindu religion itself and there is no need for going against *chaturvarna*. But he fails to explain the scientific basis of the caste system²⁸ and could only form an abstract concept on this. Gandhi, one who fought against apartheid in South Africa took all means to save the caste system that existed in his own country. Gandhi was sure that living in the swirls of slavery, one cannot escape poverty but he consoled with words that there is nothing to be ashamed of poverty and destitution.

²⁶ Gandhi, *Dharmamadhan*, The *Green Pamphlets*, Rajkot, Kathiawar, 1896, p.4 .

²⁷ Gandhi. K, *Harijan Weekly*, Vol. 3, 4, Gujarath, 1936, p.76.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.28.

From the perceptions of Gandhi, regarding caste system, one can find that there is no existence for Hindu society without caste system. He also deemed that a society based on caste system would be well organized and structured.²⁹ He also believed that eating together and having intercaste marriages is not going to unite Indians. British had tried to ostracize the individuals from their traditional occupations and it would create a disparity in the social structure.

Idealizing Caste and Varna System as Divine

Gandhi opined that existing within a caste system is natural and it is ubiquitous in several forms around the world and in India it is supported by the roots of religion. He strongly stated that he loathed all those that led to the destruction of Indian caste system. The solution he brings up for the caste system to sustain is that several small castes to be joined to form a big one and four such big castes should remain reviving the *chaturvarna* system. He reckoned that birth determines one's varna and thus his/her occupation. Occupation has to be predetermined and one does not have the choice to select one's occupation; it is fixed by tradition.

Gandhi has always tried to maintain the ideal of the caste system that corresponds to the upper crust of society. He never advocates for the abolition of caste, preferring to make it an integral part of mainstream culture. He was a staunch supporter of Hindu upper castes and had a strong prejudice against blacks and Dalits. Gandhi invented the gramswaraj as a means of protecting caste within Indian society.³⁰ Gramaswaraj introduced as a rural economic system that was against colonial modernity and industrialization. Gramaswaraj always protected the system of caste in society. Focusing on the traditional aspects of the past, Gandhi tried to continue the caste system. Through this, the concepts of purity and impurity were reinforced.

²⁹ Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi*, Pan Macmillan India, New Delhi, 2017, pp.45-68.

³⁰ Gandhi, *Op.cit.*, p.75.

The Poona Pact of 1932 and the hunger strike of Gandhi in Yervada jail were the most important and debated incidents.³¹ The Poona Pact was the result of the solution concluded from the discussion regarding the representation of downtrodden in the legislative assembly. The major arguments of the Poona Pact were between Gandhi and Ambedkar, who asked for a constituency for downtrodden and adequate representatives for them. The concept of a constituency for downtrodden sprouted with the thought of improving the social conditions and lifestyle of downtrodden. Gandhi and Congress were not ready to accept this and this eventually leads to the bifurcation of ideals.

The Indian society relates the Communal Award with the Poona Pact, but they aren't the same. The Communal Award is a special proclamation of the then British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald in 1932. It was something that gave special privileges to the downtrodden. But the Poona Pact resulted in the declaration of eluding the privileges obtained by a Communal Award by Ambedkar because of the hunger strike of Gandhi. Gandhi told him that he and his followers will continue the hunger strike until he signed in it. Ambedkar had to sign in it without a choice or else he would be called the assassinator of Gandhi. Gandhi started the hunger strike on 24th September 1932 in Yervada prison.³² It was Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald who agreed to the demands of Ambedkar that is special representation in the constituency and special candidates for downtrodden. But Gandhi was against these needs and in order to avoid these from becoming a law, he had started a hunger strike.

Regarding the intention of Gandhi, Ambedkar says that he didn't have the intention of giving freedom and representation.³³ This was also Gandhi's opinion in the second-round table conference. Eighteen of them signed in the Poona Pact and it was Ambedkar who signed as a representative of the downtrodden. Even though Gandhi was the sole reason for the Poona Pact he never signed in it. Thus, Poona Pact

³¹ Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, Yale University Press, United States, 1991, pp.257-269.

³² *Ibid.*, pp.267-290.

³³ Ravinder Kumar, Gandhi, 'Ambedkar and the Poona Pact, 1932', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol.8, Issue 1-2, pp.87-101, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856408508723068>.

is that historical success that Gandhi made against the Dalits.³⁴ Later in the discussion with Gandhi, Ambedkar said that he formulated another policy wherein the scheduled caste people can elect their representatives from the four candidates and thus they are ensured that their representatives are selected by themselves rather than fixed by someone else. Thus, they can select the one capable of voicing for them in the legislative assembly. Gandhi admitted to it. But the benefit they received lasted only for the election of 1937. In that year's election federation won the election and Gandhi couldn't win any of his candidates.

The most important fact is that Gandhi was only against the special consideration or privileges given to downtrodden but not to Muslims and the Sikhs. Ambedkar asked that if the Muslims and Sikhs who are many times powerful and has political power than Dalits are given adequate representation, then how we can elude the scheduled caste. By this Indian society came to know about the Brahminic notions of Gandhi.³⁵ Gandhi was adamant to have only these three communities in the constitution and he always upheld Hindu religion as the dominant one. He never placed Christians, Anglo-Indians or scheduled caste in the constitution, instead asked them to merge with the society.

The Poona Pact represents a historical response, one that is related to the caste system and the other is focused on nationalism sustained in the Hindu ideology. According to the historian Prabodhan Paul,³⁶ Gandhi's handling of the Dalit issue was not like Ambedkar's. Ambedkar paved the way for seeing the caste not only as a political issue but also as an issue of social equality. The Gandhi-Ambedkar conflict was about how to understand caste. For the first time in India's modern history, Ambedkar asserted that caste was a political issue and could not be resolved through social reforms alone. In his writings and speeches, Ambedkar asserted that political democracy is meaningless if the so-called lower classes are not equal partners in it. For him, the concept of

³⁴ Judith Brown, *Op.cit.*, p.257.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.265-267.

³⁶ The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi- 'Appendix's Vol. 59:13 January- March 1933, From Gujarat, Mahadevbhaini Diary, Vol.III, pp.117-122.

citizenship includes the lower classes who participate in the electoral process with equal voting rights. Most importantly, for Ambedkar, the ability of the lower classes to elect their own representatives is a means to the full potential of democracy.

Gandhi's approach to caste was based on faith and spirituality. Gandhi believed that the lower classes were an integral part of society. He called them Harijans (literally children of God). He sought to integrate them into the Indian National Congress and the freedom struggle. He wanted to change the mindset of the people and change the situation. Gandhi believed that villages were the backbone of a nation. He advocated for their autonomy and self-sufficiency and believed that autonomy would help the villages to have an equal voice. He believed that this system would eventually help to establish Ram Raj, which is believed to be an ideal traditional village community where everyone lives in harmony with the other. Even after seventy years of the formation of independent India, for every half an hour a Dalit- the person from the scheduled tribe is attacked in India.³⁷ It is in such a society one expects to have representation and dignity in social spheres without reservation.

1:3 B. R. Ambedkar: Advocate of Casteless Society

In contemporary Indian society and politics, one cannot elude the theory put forward by Ambedkar. It's a historical fact that a change can happen in India only if it is by social progress and not by political revolution or economic revolution. Ambedkar proved before the world that the basis for the caste system is untouchability. In his *Annihilation of Caste*, he opines that rather than a decorating element it's a political reformation.³⁸ *Annihilation of Caste* by Ambedkar written in 1936 was a crucial criticism against caste system. Anand Teltumbde comments on so: 'Annihilation of Caste has prominence similar to the *Communist Manifesto* for the capitalist. Caste is never a reason for economic self-growth and neither has it nurtured the development of any community. But it divides Hindus and segregates them into

³⁷ B. R. Ambedkar, *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Down trodden*, Bheem Patrika Publications, Jollundur.1943, p.47.

³⁸ Ram Puniyani, *Ambedkar and Hindutva Politics*, Pharos Publishing Media, New Delhi, 2016, pp.23-56.

various sections creating hierarchical power structure. The sense of fellow beings never existed with them and thus it created such a man force.’

Hindu religion exists within the foundation of the caste system. Caste remains unchanged as it is not an object of the reformation in India. The analysis of Ambedkar regarding the functioning of the caste system in India could easily break the existing notions of caste and it was factual. He then explains through his words and writings how the caste system developed in India and which caste group turned to a community different from others and how it bifurcated society and how the barriers of caste protected it and such rituals where there is domination is described well by Ambedkar.³⁹ The colonial readings on caste enlightens that the caste system is based on purity and the traditional occupational structure.⁴⁰ Ambedkar’s fundamental argument is that there is no caste and there are only castes. He upholds a democratic view on social justice and he thinks that the need for the leadership from the members of the downtrodden and marginalized community is inevitable. The unified imagery of a new modern independent state, which pledges itself as the culturally diverse state is questioned and critically examined by him.

Ambedkar’s work *Caste in India* discusses the caste system is not merely a division of labour but a system of stratifying the employees based on caste.⁴¹ It places an individual over others, in a hierarchical manner, forming the graded inequality. In microscopic observation, it can be observed as a system of power rather than a system of division of labour. In this power hierarchy, the employees are separate caste cults which cannot be found anywhere else in the global nations. This division of labour is not on a natural basis rather is an ascribed status of individuals which are allotted merely on the basis of their birth and the occupation done by their father and forefathers are hence carried out to the next generation⁴².

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.58.

⁴⁰ S.V. Ketkar, *The History of Caste in India*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 1979, pp.1-25.

⁴¹ B. R. Ambedkar, *Op.cit.*, p.24.

⁴² S. V. Ketkar, *Op.cit.*, pp..12-18.

The caste structure destroys the dignity of the individuals belonging to the downtrodden and it provides a caste-based dignity to those born in upper castes. Another major observation is that in the social system, caste structures prevail and continue to prevail through sexual atrocities and through the patriarchal structures.⁴³ Ambedkar uses the studies done by Ketkar used to substantiate this argument.⁴⁴ The endogamous marriage system and high restriction over exogamous marriages are the major reasons for the continuation of the caste system. As Ambedkar observes, the major complexity in this is that caste turns to an institution of communities' self-pride which only looks into the self-interests of the caste community. Due to the patriarchal nature of the caste system the upper caste male in the caste system is often living outside the punishments evolved in the caste structure. As he, the upper caste male, is the one who created the caste rules, had placed himself as a superior individual.⁴⁵

The studies on caste by Ambedkar pose four major arguments. A composite society with sufficient systems in India, there is a macro cultural unity and bigger cultural space is being cut into smaller cultural cults in a caste-ridden society.⁴⁶ The formation of caste is through which the caste system was created. This caste system itself boycotts the marginalized castes or the outcastes. Ambedkar followed various Sociologists and Anthropologists including Louis Dumont, G.S.Ghurye and other cultural evolutionist perspectives to critically analyze the system of caste and its structures.

Ambedkar's work *Annihilation of Caste* is a potent example of his stand point as an academician and as a social activist aiming at the eradication of a system of oppression. He argued that inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriage is not sufficient to annihilate the caste system, but that the real method of breaking up the caste system

⁴³ Emile Senart, *Caste in India: The Facts and the System*, (Trans) Sir Denison Ross, C.I.E. Methuen, London, 1930, pp.46-74.

⁴⁴ S. V. Ketkar, *The History of Caste in India*, *Op.cit.*, pp.17-22.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.18-22.

⁴⁶ B. R. Ambedkar, *Op.cit.*, p.31.

was to destroy the religious notions upon which caste is founded. Ambedkar thus was a strong critic of Hindu religiosity and fundamentalism. In every Hindu, the only consciousness that exists is the consciousness of his caste. Each caste is conscious of its existence, each living for itself and for its selfish ideal. There for he argued strongly that “It is not possible to break caste without annihilating the religious notions on which it, the caste system, is founded.

Caste System: A Political Issue

Ambedkar’s ideas of caste were totally different from that of Gandhian ideas of caste. According to Ambedkar, to preach that poverty is good for the Shudras and not for others, to preach that scavenging is good for the Downtrodden and not for others, and to make them accept these onerous impositions as voluntary purposes of life, by appeal to their failings is an outrage and a cruel joke on the helpless classes which none but Gandhi can perpetuate with equanimity and impunity. Ambedkar himself dreamt of an ideal society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. His view of democracy lies in the very fact that of annihilation of caste. The development of such a notion lies in Ambedkar’s dissatisfaction with the Hindu social system based on caste.⁴⁷ For Ambedkar, Caste is evil and he argues that, one cannot build anything on the foundations of caste; no nation, no morality. Whatever is built on the foundations of caste will crack and never be a whole. Ambedkar said that only when the Hindu society becomes a casteless society; it can hope to have strength enough to defend itself. Without such internal strength, Ambedkar says, Swaraj for Hindus may turn out to be only a step towards slavery.

Ambedkar solely deemed that prior to the political revolution, socio-cultural revolution is more vital to the society and he asked for such a revolution to sprout from the socio-cultural movements under the leadership of Dalit nationalism, which is the scapegoat of the caste system. The underprivileged, scapegoats of the caste system

⁴⁷ Manjeet Hundal, ‘Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Downtrodden’, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, Vol.4, Issue11, November, 2015, pp.55-59.

should consider the fact that they are not part of Hindu religion or not its sub caste and based on this they should create the social revolution for a casteless society.⁴⁸ In the social context of India the social revolution designed by Ambedkar stresses upon the creation of a casteless society. He claimed that in order to end caste disparities existing in the Hindu society of India one has to destroy caste itself and if it is not done, he proclaimed to break away from the caste structure and declare to be free.

But in the contemporary age the biggest challenge before the underprivileged is whether they have to continue in the social structure of India suffering the caste discrimination and remaining silent or attain freedom by breaking the restrictions. The foundations of Ambedkar's social and political thoughts were inspired by the understanding that the underprivileged were never a part of Hindu community and in the concept of national life they were considered another minority sect and the Hindu community has suppressed them. The underprivileged has strengthened this viewpoint and since 1919 he gave new face for their liberation movements. The Communal Award of 1932 was the result of the efforts he put forth for regaining the personal and political rights of the underprivileged.

But it was believed that Communal Awards could separate the underprivileged from the Hindu religion and transforms Hindus into minorities. This fear made Hindus and even Gandhi to take a stand against Communal Award and through dramatic political interferences, Communal Award was dropped and thus the political progression of dalit nationalism came to a standstill. Ambedkar was included in the constituent assembly as representative of the underprivileged section and later rose to be the creator of the constitution and initiated a cultural democratic system that negotiated the social and political inequalities that prolonged as per *Manusmriti*. Ambedkar was a political thinker who encompassed his principles and ideals in the three words; equality, liberty and fraternity. He also declared that he had these principles in life from his guru, Sree Buddha and not from the French revolution.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

That democracy which imparts political power to people, that upholds for the people and by the people, does not bring social justice and economic equality was given as a warning by Ambedkar during the first phase of the making of Indian constitution. Ambedkar, the political thinker believed that social democracy is vital for the existence and growth of political democracy. According to him social democracy is the way of living that recognizes the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. Our constitution redefined democracy by stating justice including social, economic and political justice. Thus, the constitution declares that the democratic sovereignty centered on political justice alone is meaningless and it should also inculcate social and economic democracy. Equality, liberty, fraternity are the ones that our constitution upholds as symbols of our ideals.

Ambedkar who defended against the Indian casteist, religious, feudal socio-political and economic system through the national movement of the oppressed was also popular for his practical socialism. He strongly condemned capitalism, Hindu ideology and firmly endorsed for the political union of all marginalized sects like the underprivileged, scheduled castes, minority groups, workers, females and other weakened groups. He dreamt of the rising of the underprivileged and marginalized sect as one strong political group that has the power to encounter the suppression from the Hindu societal system.⁴⁹

1:4 Mahatma Ayyankali: Voice for the Sovereign Life

Ayyankali constantly fought for eluding the caste system and for the fundamental rights and needs of his people. Sharing of public space, owning of land for cultivation, for education, for free walking spaces and the adequate wage for the work are some of the fundamental rights that Ayyankali fought for. His fighting was always against the landlord-tenant system. This was a potential defensive measure for the underprivileged caste against the social, political and economic powers of that time. He challenged the existing social system by uniting many young people of his

⁴⁹ Kerala Pulaya Maha Sabha Rajatha Jubilee Souvenir, 1970-95, Trivandrum, 1996, p.8.

caste group and trained them well. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the under privileged sections had a life of stagnancy and they were born into a place where they lived and died without freedom of movement; there were no public spaces and no public roads for them.

Ayyankali undertook the arduous task of guiding his people from the experiences of slavery, which were based on anxiety and fear, to the path of social life. It was the exact act of achieving a sovereign life and society that was previously alien to slaves. Ayyankali convinced slaves to abandon slave symbols, slave names, slave language and slave beliefs and asked his community to break the cycle of untouchability.⁵⁰ There were several symbols that emphasized the system of slavery and rooted the slave concept within them. Such symbols are staying bent before the upper class and staying aloof in public places by closing their mouth. He insisted that the weight of slavery and untouchability on the underprivileged by the social system has to be eliminated. Ayyankali also transformed dress as an instrument for social change and thus abolish the concept of purity and impurity. Ayyankali's lone struggle against the denial of freedom of movement was a step towards historic freedom of movement and the system of production.

Social Collective for Voicing Right and Justice

It was only after 1860 that a Thiruvithamkur Road Department came into existence. Later they built roads and royal streets and the royal roads became public roads and the village streets were the private roads. It is important to note that the royal streets and village paths were still not allowed to the downtrodden. In 1886 the Thiruvithamkur royal street was opened to everyone but the untouchables were excluded. It was a denial of freedom of movement and social inequality and injustice. The nobles of the time used to travel in bullock carts wearing special clothes. During their journey, the downtrodden had to take a detour or keep themselves away from their vicinity.

⁵⁰ T.H. P, Chentharasserry, *Ayyankali*, (Mal.), Prabath Books, Trivandrum, 1989, pp.21-48.

Ayyankali challenged the existing social conditions and was part of the efforts of the downtrodden to achieve freedom of movement on public roads. In 1898 he bought a bullock cart and wearing a white outfit and turban, set out on an adventurous journey through the public streets. White garb, turban and dress covering the knees were only allowed to the upper caste and the efforts of Ayyankali challenged such customs and practices.⁵¹ The upper castes planned to block his journey but no one had the courage to confront Ayyankali and he continued his journey with enthusiastic followers in his cart without bothering anyone. The landlords considered Ayyankali's actions arrogant. The cart moved through all the public roads like Venganur, Aralummoodu, Balarama Puram, Kazhakoottam and Kaniyapuram during the period 1898-99. In almost all the places there were clashes with the upper caste people.

Along with gaining right for free walk-in public places they also decided to work for other rights. He insisted his people to join hands for the need of education rights for their children and for their social and economic progress. This was not just a strike, instead it was a political decision taken to protest against the suppression. This was the first peasant strike and it also raised voice for justifiable pay, fair treatment and decision in working hours. They proclaimed that if their children were denied educational rights, they wouldn't sprout a grass in the paddy field. They also had other demands like stopping exploitation and punishing them for very trivial crimes and considering them only as slaves. Their organized movements and protest induced the authority to appoint a moderator and he realized that the demand raised by them were justifiable and granted the viable measures.⁵²

The downtrodden were denied access to education and it was followed ardently as a ritual by the Hindu ideology. Ayyankali challenged the ritual created by the upper caste by starting a school in 1905. The upper caste people burnt the school

⁵¹ Rajasekhar Basu ' , A Page from Dalit History in Kerala: The Pulaya Movement in Travancore-Cochin in the Pre-Communist Phase ' , *Studies in People's History*, 3(1), 23, May, 2016, pp.45-58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2348448916636699>

⁵² M, Nissar, Meena Kandasami, (eds.), *Ayyankali: A Dalit Leader of Organic Protests*, Other Books, Calicut, 2007, p.32.

in the night and Ayyankali expressed his firm decision by rebuilding the school in the night and bringing back the teacher. As a result of his endeavor in 1907 school entry was given to children. Ayyankali asked his people to take children to school but the school authorities were not ready to grant permission for the entry. The decree that came later was also held. Ayyankali decided to fight against it and took a girl student and went to school along with his followers. This decision of Ayyankali provoked the upper caste people and they gathered and attacked Ayyankali and his followers but they fought back. The upper caste people were not satisfied by their atrocities against them and they encroached into the house and attacked the women and children.

The peasant strike was able to topple the superior powers by the downtrodden people in caste hierarchy who were leading a life of worms as slaves. This strike was also able to enlighten the landlords that there is no survival without the help of the so-called downtrodden. Ayyankali was also able to make others realize the importance of production relations and life of slaves as instruments of productions and the authority of the upper caste and the oppressed realized that their life is not to stay bent always. Ayyankali realized that to solve their problems, an organization within them have to be formed.⁵³ As a result of this an organization for the sadhus named Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham was initiated and formed in 1905.⁵⁴ The first general secretary of the organization was Ayyankali himself. He established many branches of the organization in different regions. The important decision took in their meetings were to rest work on Sundays and to work for only six days. Thus, they were able to attend the meetings and share their problems and take decisions. So, the condition of seven-day work was removed.

The role played by Sangham in the renaissance process is historical and vital and it functioned effectively in a well-organized manner to solve the problems

⁵³ Kunnukuzhi. S. Mani, *Pulayar Noottandukulil* (Mal.), Mythri Books, Trivandrum, 2014, pp.280-285.

⁵⁴ Kawashima Koji, 'Missionaries and Hindu State and British Pramouncty in Travancore and Cochin, 1858-1936', A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1994, pp.258-259.

of Pulayas and other sub castes. Diwan Rajagopalachari appointed Ayyankali, the leader of Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham as the representative of *Pulayar* in the Sree Moolam Prajasabha, on December 5, 1911. He was the very first downtrodden man in India to gain representation in the law-making agency. This milestone in history brought new aspirations, hopes and induced the vigor of the downtrodden. In the Sree Moolam Prajasabha, Ayyankali voiced for educational rights, land privileges and privileges in employment matters and gained the proposal to a certain extent.⁵⁵

Throwing off the Symbol of Captivity

There were always long chains of restrictions in the matters of attire, food style, the architecture of houses, language and names given to the people who had been branded downtrodden and who faced exploitation and ostracized culturally by the dominant groups. The lower-caste women were not allowed to cover their breasts and they had to wear stone chains. There were symbols to identify the lower-caste. All these restrictions were imposed upon them by the dominant upper-castes. These were means of suppression and symbols of their inferior position. Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham came forward against this brutal insistence.⁵⁶ Sangam called out a public meeting and many women who attended were ready to give up their stone chains. The agitated upper-caste people gathered and attacked the *Pulayars* and *Parayars* and vandalized their dwellings. In Perinadu, more than 600 huts were gutted down and women and children were attacked.

Following the incident, Ayyankali met Diwan Krishnan Nair and asked him to restore the peace in the place and solve the problems that happened in relation to the breaking of stone chains. Ayyankali decided to bring back the people who had left Perinadu because of the agitation and to restore the peace. Thus, he initiated for a compromise meeting of both the caste groups. A meeting of both groups was held in

⁵⁵ Abhimanyu, *Ayyankali*, Department of Cultural Publications, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1990, pp.11-48.

⁵⁶ T. H. P. Chentharasserry, *Ayyankali*, *Op.cit.*, p.41.

the ground of Kollam railway station on December 19, 1915. The lower-caste and the people of the Nair community attended the meeting. There were around four thousand people. The lower-caste people dressed well to attend the meeting. By the end of his speech Ayyankali asked his women to break off the stone chains.⁵⁷ Women folk broke the chains that served the purpose of covering their breasts and thus they asserted their social identity and pride as a human being.

He stood to give training in science, agriculture and industrial fields to teachers and scholarships for students. He also expressed his delight to the government in granting scholarships. He upheld that primary education till standard four should be made compulsory for the lower-caste. He also noted that among the three lakh lower-caste people, only a few go to the schools and among them, only a hundred and thirty six students are in standard five and that only five or six pass the public examination. The main reason for this deterioration is the non-availability of food and the inability to pay the fee. He insisted that this fee be cancelled and education be given free of cost.⁵⁸

The eminent scholar Sanal Mohan observes: ‘Dalit representatives, including in the Sreemoolam People’s assembly and the Kochi Prajasabha, had spoken out for the needs of their community. They had discussed and implemented in the Prajasabha the issues of school admission, book distribution, clothing distribution, financial assistance, fee concession and minimum marks for winning.’⁵⁹ Thus in history, the underprivileged gained land, reservation in employment and fees concession by the efforts of Ayyankali. With the concept of social communications, he initiated a magazine titled ‘Sadhujanaparipalini’. Ayyankali was aware of the power and ability of print media and he made use of this social space to voice the downtrodden.

⁵⁷ C. Abhimanyu, *Op.cit.*, pp.23-45.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.46.

⁵⁹ P. Sanal Mohan, ‘Religion, Social Space and Identity: The Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha and the Making of Cultural Boundaries in Twentieth Century Kerala,’ *South Asia ;Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 28- 1, April 2005, pp.35-63.

The vigor, defense techniques and the organized setup of the lower-caste people induced fear in the upper-caste people.⁶⁰ The peasant strike and Perinadu agitation was a shock and surprise to them. Until becoming a part of the power deciding agency Ayyankali and his organization didn't have any problems. But when they gained representation in the Sreemoolam Prajasabha the Thiruvithamkoor Ruling Authority was able to divide them. The energy that sprouted by the movements organized by Ayyankali had given a rising from the bottom to the top among the lower-casts.

The Dalits gained the freedom to walk in public places without restrictions in the 19th century itself. Among the modernisation that happened in the various caste groups, the fight for freedom to walk in public places was a vital one. In the context of success achieved Ayyankali decided to organize all lower-caste groups into one and this resulted in the formation of the Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham. Ayyankali had organized several movements to gain knowledge through education. He led peasant strikes and strikes to grant freedom to enter public spheres for the Dalits. He conducted strikes for land ownership so that the Dalits will gain the notion of their own citizenship. Ayyankali was aware of the fact that the needs of his people were not just temple entry but also educational rights, rights to cultivate their own land thus have a life of freedom. The golden age in the renaissance that was unwritten was made into a milestone through the activities and movements of Ayyankali and thus one can call him Mahatma Ayyankali and it is socially and historically correct.⁶¹

Kerala Renaissance taking up grassroots issues was never a coincidence but renaissance process itself started from the grassroots. Thus, we need to understand some of the peculiarities of the Kerala renaissance and then evaluate Ayyankali's contributions. When Ayyankali set out on a cart-ride in 1893, what was the position of the Dalit's in the history of Kerala? How were they marked in the public sphere? The system of paying in cash for labour was initiated to a community who until then

⁶⁰ C Abhimanyu, *Op.cit.*, p.48.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.65.

received grains as their wages. The grains as wages had only specific purpose, but using money, anything could be purchased. With the possibility of being able to exchange anything with money was started by the construction of roads.⁶² Ayyankali was instrumental in bringing that cart to the very bottom rung of Kerala society, thus bringing in social democracy that was unknown to the Kerala society at that time. He unveiled the process of democratization through travelling through a public roadway. That is, it was only through such discourses that it became clear that the downtrodden would-be part of the social-democratic process. In this way, it was the grassroots renaissance started by Ayyankali that carried Kerala forward.

1:5 Poykayil Appachan: Platform for Voicing the Voiceless

Poykayil Appachan has contributed massively towards Kerala history through his activities. His contributions extended to all spheres of society. It includes politics, religion, spiritual life and literature. But that is never recorded in history, it can be told in one way as forgotten or as intentionally eluded.⁶³ Poykayil Appachan emerged to the limelight by discarding the oppression and reforming the Dalits and igniting their lives. Appachan always selected songs that brought history to the minds of people. These songs had pain, tears and the protests of the lower-caste people. Appachan utilized modernity, self-realization and spirituality for empowering the downtrodden.⁶⁴

Poykayil Appachan's Prathyaksharaksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) accepted a new way of looking into history. The mission of Poykayil Appachan and PRDS was to break the slave notion that imprisoned the minds of the Dalits and bring them into a new way of seeing life through they can see a value for their existence. The caste system at that time was a complex structure with the power agency. That system had a pyramid structure and land ownership was always that of the Brahmins, leaving the rest landless. Thus, the *Pulayar*, *Parayar* and other out castes who worked in the land were considered slaves. The slave transactions were known as *Janmam*, *Kanam* and

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.71.

⁶³ P. Sanal Mohan, *Op.cit.*, pp.39-40.

⁶⁴ Stephen Fuchs, *Rebellious Prophet's*, Asia Publishing House, London, 1965, p.282.

Pattam.⁶⁵ Francis Buchanan who visited *Malabar* in AD 1880 recorded that one-fifth of the entire population were slaves. In 1847, the census given to the king of Travancore by the missionary stated that 13% of the population were slaves. The PRDS fought against the atrocities towards the downtrodden like slavery imposed upon as a part of their caste which stayed low in the hierarchy.

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the chaos of religious conversion to Christianity. Until 1857, no Missionary reports mentioned the caste conversion. Moreover, the Church Mission Society was not ready to allow the Pulayar community to have the Holy Bath until 1854. But later missionaries rechecked their activities and functions. Thus, they looked into the caste groups like *Pulayar*, *Paravar* and *Kuravar* for religious conversion. In 1854, September 6th, in Mallappalli, Rev. John Hox converted eight of the slave caste by giving them the Holy Bath. But religious conversion was not able to bring any changes in caste relations.

The anti-caste protests in the 20th century were an important part in the modernization and renaissance in Kerala. These protests were able to put an end to the caste hierarchy, status and position of caste groups, caste relations and power agency. These anti-caste protests never followed the same structure. The progress within the privileged group was an observational reformation. The Prayers of Christian missionaries were actively revolving around the people of that age. And the necessity of free and literate employees in the plantations of British domination led to the formation of slave schools by the missionaries.⁶⁶ The admission of the children to these schools was by adopting them by a Christian name, and it sticks on to their school registers. No Holy Bath and membership in church granted them the status of Christians, instead it was an unofficial religious conversion. After the academic life, many changed their Christian names.

⁶⁵ Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Cadell and W Davies, London, 1807, pp.13-14.

⁶⁶ P. Sanal Mohan, 'Imagining Equality: Modernity and Social Transformation of Lower Castes in Colonial Kerala', Ph.D. Thesis, School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, 2005, p.142

During this time there was such a slave school in Eraviperoor and Poykayil Appachan and his followers didn't go there. Poykayil Appachan initiated activities during his adolescent years and he was a slave in the family of Sankaramangalam. Every downtrodden family was the slave of privileged families. Poykayil Appachan and PRDS was harassed mostly as it was mistaken as part of Christianity.⁶⁷ But in the historical texts of Christian Sabha PRDS is represented as a group or organization that was founded by Appachan, a self-styled divine figure, which is against the Christian religious beliefs. In the missionary documents, one can read PRDS as a challenge faced by the missionaries. Appachan was able to build an inner consciousness within the disciples without altering the concept of one who advice holding the Bible. The question on the role of *Pulayars* in the Bible written for Romans underestimates the universality of the Bible.⁶⁸ Appachan found it as a piece of philosophy. Thus, PRDS proclaims that the first sin of Adam family will not affect them and when conquered in terms of written prophecies, one will not be liberated as writing doesn't belong to them. These make us understand that PRDS is not a part of the Christian religion that is not against the caste discrimination. The colonial reading of PRDS says that it is formed as a result of colonial modernity from the inspiration of Christian beliefs and concepts. But it rejects such beliefs and concepts because it focuses mainly on the slave life and the revival of their glorious history.⁶⁹

The activities of Poykayil Appachan were not only engaged with Christianity but other areas also were involved. He began to investigate the lost ancestry, relations and possessions of his people and giving them back to his fellow beings. His life also went through the bitter experience of slave life.⁷⁰ All day he worked in the fields as a slave. The slaves had no time to look after their family or even children during their heavy work. Appachan explained the life of slaves as not just agricultural slaves but

⁶⁷ Punchamannil Mamman Upadesi, (edi.) *Poykayil Yohanante Kathum Marupadiyum*, (Mal.), Suvishesha Deepika, Suvarna Rathna Prabha Press, 1918, p.40.

⁶⁸ Swami V. V, Anil. E. V, (edi.) *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha, Orma Pattu Charithra Rekhakal*, (Mal.), Adiyardeepam Publications, Eraviperoor, 2010, pp. 31-45.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.49-54.

⁷⁰ W.S. Hunt, *Anglican Church in Travancore and Cochin 1816-1916: Operations of the Church Missionary Society in South-West India, Vol.II*, Church Mission Press, Kottayam, 1968, p.235.

as shattered lives.⁷¹ Thus, the specialty of Appachan's journey is that he understands all sects like Vedar, Kuravar, Maravar and other marginalized groups. Appachan's activities crossed the limitations of these racial prejudices. He conducted several meetings in various regions. Each meeting was also the fixation of associations that could save them from slave life and make them realize their glorious history. His entire travel orations were the remembrance of the history and the release of the slave life. He also conducted inter-caste marriages between Pulayar and Paravar who were bifurcated by untouchability.

Wandering through all regions Appachan conducted several meetings and noted the slave experiences and for unearthing the history of his people, he recorded songs and memories. The association formed thus unified the underprivileged and gave new openings. Thus, Appachan liberated the underprivileged from certain tribal customs and unified their beliefs and concepts through these associations. For this, he instructed activities of scavenging and to remove the dirt from their life. He asked his people to wear clean and ironed clothes, to avoid unclean food, to clean house and surroundings, to keep washed utensils upside down, to cook only after taking bath, to cleanse oneself with adequate water and leaves, to give equal importance to both men and women as they have the same divinity.

Thus, he interfered in aspects of customs, attire, food, dwelling, beliefs and addressing structures. These directions rejected the symbols of caste domination and unified the downtrodden and led to social progress. He questioned the domination of Brahmins and western culture in his travelling to all regions. He was able to make others aware of regional resources, knowledge and hard work through his oration and songs. The anti-caste notion in his songs and oration provoked the dominant caste groups. He was attacked in several meetings. At some places, there was chaos as the meetings were not permitted.

⁷¹ Swami. V.V, Anil. E.V, *Op.cit.*, pp.32-44.

Every history has stories of migration and immigration and every slave has a history of migration. Appachan and his followers united and worked together for the liberation of slaves and for their social life. During his travel and oratory, he and his followers were together called *Poykootar*. Thus, they were the strongest group also known as Appachan's *Sabhakootar*.⁷² Their activities created a huge hindrance for the upper caste. They involved in activities that stood against the caste in Christianity and thus against the untouchability and slavery of Kerala. This ended them up in several problems and numerous mutinies broke out.

Religious propagation, religious conversion and colonization were the results of the cultural activities of British colonization. Thus, all activities against the caste system turned to be against the British. The oration of Appachan had high criticism against the British and he was presented before the court in Changanassery. The magistrate was asked whether he knew who probed him. He replied that they were Missionary Christians. Then the question went on as what his organization's name was. He replied after thinking that it was Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha. It was taken as the official declaration of Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabhain 1910. Before 1910 there was the usage of terms like Raksha, Sabha, and Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabhaon several occasions, but the official declaration was inside the courtroom against the colonial atrocities.

By 1914 PRDS gained wide recognition and popularity in Travancore.⁷³ During this period the debates, spiritual meetings and social reformation often took place. It was in the atmosphere of World War I, a group of people under the leadership of Appachan clad in white walked through streets saying 'Peace, Peace, Peace' for the world. Freedom and peace were the prime concern of the speeches of Appachan. The motto of PRDS was freedom of slaves and peace for the world. The world peace parade conducted by Appachan was against the war and colonization. It

⁷² P. Sanal Mohan, *Op.cit.*, p.221.

⁷³ Samuel Nellimukal, *Keralathile Samuhya Parivarthanam*, (Mal.), K S Books, Kottayam, 2003, p.305.

was in 1921. There were thousands of people who took part in the parade and also gathered in the meeting held at the banks of Pamba.

Retrieving Space and Self Esteem

To question the social power and litigation, the interventions related to caste, untouchability and slavery wherever the dominant current of the caste system is formed, in such a society there must be land-based capital formation and social capital must be built from it. (PRDS Circular. 08 / 1955) It is understood from the very early work of Poykayil Appachan that education and land were given importance.⁷⁴ Appachan was also involved in building the intellectual discourse of a people to whom knowledge and literacy had been denied for centuries. Strikes were conducted under the leadership of Ayyankali in government schools in Travancore before granting the permission of admission of students of downtrodden. The PRDS carried out their educational agitations by setting up their own schools in different areas.⁷⁵ These not only represented the fight against the caste system but were the first step in building social capital for abject slavery and landlessness.

Circulars laid the foundation for the history of the Sabha, and following it the 'Adiyar Deepam', an independent magazine came out. "The circulars were born out of the conviction that history should be written with knowledge and the 'Adiyar Deepam' was created for the spiritual awakening and social development of the people through the publication of discourses. Moreover, it prioritized education and envisioned success in the field of education, trade and other fields. The policies and opinions on education developed through these organs were vital.

In the orations of 1921 and 1931 educational needs were highlighted in the *Sreemoolam* Praja Sabha. The demand for granting provision for the lower-caste students was also included in it. An English medium school was established at

⁷⁴ EV Anil, Kumarakom Chellamma, Ammavazhi *Ormayude Pustakam*, (Mal.), PRDS Youth Sabha, 2010, pp.10-18

⁷⁵ Swami.V.V, Anil, E V, (eds.), *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha, Orma Pattu Charithra Rekhakal*, *Op.cit.*, pp.6

Vengalath Hill for the people of PRDS and the people of the surrounding areas. The food required for the school children was delivered in packets from various households. Students from other caste groups also studied there. The lower classes conducted their own educational interventions with the PRDS during the period when the educational activities of Christian missionaries and their slave schools were in operation. That is to say, the educational progress within Kerala was not only due to the intervention of the missionaries. It was also through the precise intervention of Poykayil Appachan and Ayyankali that the downtrodden in Kerala were able to make progress in education.

In all the affairs of the PRDS, power and capital formation made a separate space. Appachan always combined spirituality with social capital, cultural capital, economic capital and symbolic capital through which he tried to make spirituality as an authoritative capital. The history of the Sabha and Appachan's arguments reveal that land, education, money, wisdom, employment, good work and good wages were the component of social capital and power and that the survival of the exiled could only be achieved by entering into such capitalist position of power. The early reformation works of *Sabha* included the submitting of memorandum before the government of Thiruvithamkoor for construction of working sites, educational centres, land for habitat and representation in the *Sabha* in the 1916.⁷⁶ The noted objective of the memorandum was to end the atrocities against the lower-castes and to give representation to the lower-caste women in the Sabha.

In the early period of 1930s, women in the PRDS demanded representation in the Travancore Sreemoolam Prajasabha and submitted memorandum before the government of Travancore. In the days of slavery, women had to go to the market and cross the great barrier of the caste to trade grass. Appachan submitted memorandum before Government of Thiruvananthapuram and the Kottayam *Peshkar* (Court Clerk) to grant place and rights for grass trade for women. In addition, women who were freed from slavery were allowed to stand free, and as part of the production system,

⁷⁶ Swami. V. V, Anil, E .V, (eds.) *Op.cit.*, pp.66-69.

new factories and the cottage industry were started. The sabha was at the forefront for women's education.

Slave Experience and Songs of Protest

The activities of Poykayil Appachan as an adviser within the community and outside the community made him a stark critic of caste prejudices. His revelations on spirituality offered new vistas of knowledge that questioned the authority of Brahmins/ priesthood rather than the theology. Poykayil Appachan recited a song in one meeting which conveyed the idea that the marginalized tribes were the aboriginal inhabitants of the land and the Brahmins were invaders.⁷⁷ This song strongly criticized the domination of Brahmins and high caste Hindu rituals and customs. Appachan clearly exemplified how the Brahmins and their agency suppressed the religious beliefs, practices, customs and rituals of the out castes. In certain songs, he depicted the history of the out castes that had been long under suppression and superstitions. The songs had its own style and appropriated to realize the ill-fate of the out castes. His poems also opened a new way wherein the quest of language and literature intertwines.

He continued his travel orations by repeating the history and songs of the slave people which retold the problems of slaves. He portrayed the loss that the slaves experienced due to the social condition of their life. Appachan criticized the different hierarchical status of caste groups in the religion. In his songs, he even humorized the underprivileged who were left outside the Hindu religion.⁷⁸ He transformed himself into one among them. His songs, in the spiritual level, reflected the sufferings and history of these people. The songs he presented analyzed historical experiences and divine experiences and made them part of history. The language Appachan used was very simple but it also inculcated the history, knowledge, justice and the denial.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.152.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.180-181.

Travel oration or orations did via travelling to various regions was one of the major activities of Appachan. Through all this, he was not just criticizing the religion instead he criticized the fundamental and philosophical base of the religious believers. The act of writing letters for his people was designed as part of the knowledge system. The church of Christians and other religious places expressed the racial apartheid, caste discrimination and other such social evils. The song he chose to criticize the caste discrimination also pointed out the atrocities and the ostracizing nature of the caste system.⁷⁹ For more than thousand years the ancestors of Dalits and tribal people had been sold and bought as an ox in the market. They were tied along with ox to plough the land. The entire family was separated when father, mother and children were placed at different locations. Appachan wrote about that thousand year's history and pathos of his people in a simple and lucid way. Those lines conceived the great expectations also. It reads so:

Adima nukam thakarnnupoyi

Adimayola Azhinjupoyi

Namukku Poorna Swanthandramai

Nammukku Pattum Santhoshavum

The clutches of slavery are broken; the chains of slavery are loosened. We are fully freed and we have songs and happiness.

Kaanunnilloraksharavum

Ente Vamshathe Patti

Kaanunnudaneka Vamshathin Charithrangal

No words written about my race. But all words written about other races. The role played by these songs that were transmitted orally and in written form enhanced the vigil and power of PRDS.⁸⁰ Its democratic interference bound humanity together and annexed them to the universal culture. The PRDS functioned as a social

⁷⁹ Swami.V. V, Anil, E. V, *Op.cit.*, pp.153-156.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.170-173.

institution that produced many promising and prominent figures. The fact that the activities of PRDS reached various parts of the world reflected the success of Poykayil Appachan and his philosophy. The PRDS was the result of the efforts taken by Appachan to unite every Dalit sub-caste under one title with his life and activities.

The following song reflects the Dalit history and plight of those who converted to Christianity evading Dalit religion:

Hindu mathathin puram vazhiye
Bandhamillathe valanju
Kristhumathathin Puram Vazhiye
Anatharepol Sanjarichu
Hindu mathakkaarum cherthillallo namme
Christhu mathakkarum cherthillaalo name
Budhi bodagale tharuvathinaarum
Oruvarumillihathil

This song narrates the way in which the underprivileged and marginalized went through after conversion through to Christianity. That time many people escaped the hurdles and atrocities of casteism and slavery by converting to Christianity. But it only paved the way for them to walk through the outskirts of Christian religion. New churches were built for them. Thus, conversion of religion was only a change from one system of oppression to another. Both religions, Hindu and Christian, denied them knowledge and self-esteem and treated them as inferior.⁸¹

This song is also the realistic presentation of the caste within the Christian Sabha. Appachan presented it mostly through his orations and he expressed the anti-caste and anti-woman attitude of the Christian Sabha. He said that the Church addressed everyone as equal and when the church events ended the converted remained as *Parayan* and *Pulayan* and one of his poems expressed what his people experienced there that read so: ‘There is a church in the north, and in south, one in the east and other

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.169-170.

in west one for the high born and other for the low born, separate for both groups. *Pulayar* has one and *Parayar* has another, Fisherman has one and Marakkar has another. Though there are numerous churches, I don't find any difference.'

Poykayil Appachan's activities created a social awareness among the people of his group through various social interferences. In 1921 and 1931 he conducted activities in Popular Assembly, the Praja Sabha, for the sake of Dalit people. He voiced for granting them the land for cultivation, reservation for the employment of Dalit and for the improvement of educational preferences and he gained them. The PRDS was not just an association of the sub-castes instead it molded a culturally elite group and through ample social interferences,⁸² it had brought notable progress in social and scientific fields. It was also the Christian missionaries who fought for the ending of slavery and requested the same to the king of Travancore. In 1812 Rani Lakshmi made proclamation in Travancore. In 1873, March 19, British missionaries portrayed the desperate condition of the slaves and submitted a memorandum before the king of Travancore. Thus in 1843, April 7 as per the Government of India Act ended the slave trade in Malabar. The abolition of the slave trade and its proclamation and legal rights about it were the result of the prolonged history and hard work. The basic foundation of the theological thought of Poykayil Appachan was freedom from the slavery.

From 1910 onwards through his travelling and oration Appachan was not acting systematically as with a plan like the missionaries. Instead, he conducted movements in regions where caste discrimination and slavery had the supremacy. It was a subaltern strategy. In the renaissance process, the role and contribution of the underprivileged was important and unavoidable. By reimagining and reforming society, these movements attributed new world and realizations. For this, the prominent contributions were made by Poykayil Appachan and Ayyankali. Reformation movements emerged in the Hindu religion and society as a part of India's national and cultural renaissance. The discourses against the caste system were part of it. At the same time came out the criticism of the educated elites against their

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.163-165.

own caste group and the realization of the outcaste about their social value. The efforts of non-Brahminic movements against the agency and domination of power and institution through activism created a new voice against the caste system.

The renaissance progress created a social space for the lower-castes. In modern Kerala, the social and cultural progress made a realization that land is not just an asset. Related to social and political agency, land became an important resource. In such an ambience, the denial of land for the underprivileged is not merely the denial of social space, rather the banishment of natural resources and lively hood. Ayyankali and Poykayil Appachan envisioned it and fought for it by words and deeds and made use of the institutional measures. They gave memorandum for land to live and cultivate and in barren lands, together they retained an ecosystem around them. The land was not mere asset instead it is a symbol of power. Ayyankali, Poykayil Appachan and Ambedkar had this realization. In order to understand the social progress of the society, one should analyze historically the making of geographical spaces and colonies.

CHAPTER II

Separate Spaces: Conceiving the Social Geography of the Downtrodden

When the concept of settlement arises within the human mind, one should analyze the fact that the settlement system of the Dalits includes the occupational groups in each area. In the earlier landlord-tenant system, the hutment dwellings were either a hut (*kudi*) in the land of the landlord or else a hut constructed from mud by the side of a paddy field.¹ The people of the lower strata in the hierarchy were denied entry into all public spheres like temples, fairs, roads and shops. A space can be made or constructed in several ways. If we analyze the social production of space, and if we take the Dalit/tribal colonies as an example, in the early days the colonies were built as Dalit spaces. It was the reason why the cultural growth and development of those who lived in *kudis* were in social isolation.² Later, with the emergence of the nation-state and elected government, the state became the owner of this process and made the space socially, culturally and economically isolated and changed its jurisdiction.

Lefebvre says that the social production in space can take place in many ways. Taking the concept of space and defining it, he explains how the areas within this concept of space are interconnected and the relationships between them are complex and unstable. According to him social space is a social product. This proposition borders on the obvious, though there is reason to scrutinize it and consider its implications and consequences before adopting it. In today's mode of production, it would be difficult for anyone within the society to accept the space, in fact, such a different kind of reality. It is also a means of control rather than production, and power functions as an important factor. The social and political state forces that created this space now seek to completely manipulate it into a forced spatial reality, a kind of uncontrolled autonomy that seeks to bring it down, to chain and enslave it. It is the social reality of the persisting colonies as a generated and controlled social space.

¹ M. T. Reshikumar, 'Adhasthitharum Bhoomiyude Prashnavum', *Adhiyardeepam Weekly*, Eraviperoor, 2007.p.1.

² In the 19th century Dalit settlements were called as *Kudi*, *Maadam*, *Chala* and now they were transformed into Caste Colonies.

Alan Baker argues that to examine the full range of relations between history and geography one must consider location geographies and spatial histories, environmental geographies and environmental histories, landscape geographies and landscape histories, and local geographies and local histories.³ This can be closely related to the study of caste and land history in Kerala, because there is an inextricable connection between caste and land. In the first phase of the 20th century, during the renaissance advancement in Kerala, caste and land underwent a significant crisis. It is in this context that Mahatma Ayyankali and Poykayil Appachan raised the need of land ownership for the Dalits, to dwell and to cultivate. In the 19th Praja Sabha meeting of 1923, Ayyankali himself demanded to provide land and settlements to his people at a reduced rate.⁴ At the same time Poykayil Appachan purchased around two hundred hectares of land in several regions from 1917 to 1920.

Poykayil Appachan and some of his followers who came out of slavery, labored for about a year in Amarapuram, Chittadithottam and Shrampi estates to procure land to live. In 1920 they bought another twelve acres of land in Eraviperur for *Pulayar*, *Aynavar*, *Kuravar* and *Vedar* to have a separate space for living.⁵ They asked for grants to be issued in order to make necessary employment schemes and schools for the colonies. The memorandums were put forth in the Praja Sabha Conference and written transactions were done for it. The general tone of these memorandums was the same and it spoke about Dalit rights. It was a historic intervention and experience. Ayyankali and Poykayil Appachan had realized the potential of land as a social capital that will give them power and position. These land possessions were symbols of transformation for the people from the clutches of slavery to that of self-reliance. Thus, Amarapuram and Eraviperur became the first settlement colonies in Kerala.

The proposal of land for the Dalits by Poykayil Appachan and Ayyankali was not just for a settlement system. Instead, it was an initiative to join the production

³ Alan R. H. Baker, *Geography and History, Bridging the Divide*, Cambridge University, United Kingdom 2003, pp.44-190.

⁴ Cherai Ramdas, *Ayyenkalikku Adharevode*, (Mal.), Uparotham Books, Ernakulam 2006, p.48.

⁵ E.V. Anil, *Prathyaksha Raksha Daivasabha Charithravum Munvidikalum*, (Mal.), Adhiyaardeepam Publication, Eraviperoor, 2010, pp.53-55.

relations in the capital economy and to be part of the capital formation through which they could assert themselves socially and economically to bring forth their social esteem, their self and selfhood. In a particular way, the social and economic assertion enabled them to enter the social contract and its power relations. The relevance of the history of Kerala Renaissance lies in the perceptions of Poykayil Appachan and Ayyankali. It tried to encompass all socio-economic and cultural aspects of capital formation and capital economy of society.

2:1 Caste and Land Relations

In the Princely States of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, land was mainly concentrated in the Brahmin community of the landlord. *Brahmaswom* and *Devaswom* became land that temples claimed authority and thus largely Brahmins retained ownership of the land.⁶ Due to the influence of the caste system on the agricultural production structure, land ownership was held only by the Namboodiris who were the foremost in the caste hierarchy. The Nairs, Ezhavas and Karalar were the ones who followed the practice of taking the land and laboring in it and paying the landlords a fixed remuneration for the rights over the land. The lower castes did not even get any land.

There were also tenants who leased the land from the landlords and subleased it to other tenants. But a section of the tenants became directly involved in agriculture. The main sections of those engaged in agricultural activities were farmers who took the land directly from the landlords for lease. They were called *Paatakudiyar* and they often sublet the land to others for lease.⁷ These subtenants formed another significant group of farmers working on the land. These landless peasants, who were at the bottom of the agrarian society and considered the most agrestic in the caste system, were forced to lead a life of slavery. This is a sketch of the feudal system that leads agricultural lives to insecurity and stunted agricultural production. The situation

⁶ K. N Ganesh, *Keralathinte Ennelekal*, (Mal.), Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2011, p.150.

⁷ P. Radhakrishnan, 'Land Reform and Changes in Land System, Study of Kerala Village' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.17, No.39, September 25, 1982, pp.107-119.

was not good even for the cultivator who was cultivating the land for lease rather than ownership. He would be evicted at any moment from the land leased annually if he was disliked by the landlord.

The feudal character of agrestic labour was a social reality and historically existed in the caste itself. In feudal society, it was entirely upon the feudal lords' authority that the lives of slaves depended on. In the case of Travancore, another kind of forced labor existed and it was known as *Uzhiyavela*. The Travancore Administration Report and many other documents revealed it. Most of them showcased what shift it had made in the history of Travancore. *Uzhiyavela* and its concerned institutions were the cornerstones of its capitalist socio-productive process.⁸ Along with common understandings of the feudal nature of the term, *Uzhiyam* was a labour demanded by the state in Travancore during the feudal monarchy and paid for at no cost. It was to be paid especially by the lower castes, as part of caste and agricultural servitude. There was no regard for the value of the labour or the suffering of those who provided it. In feudal society, there were various forms of exploitation and bonded labour was one of the vilest proofs of this exploitation.⁹ This duty was a compulsory service to be rendered in the public interest of the State for public works.

Slavery existed in Kerala in its rigid caste system. The upper castes retained slaves with absolute right to sell, chain or kill them.¹⁰ They were forced to toil in the soil from dawn to dusk without adequate food or pay. The masters treated them in the most inhuman manner, subjecting them to unspeakable cruelty and suffering. The laws of slavery were inherited because children born to slave parents remained slaves. Slaves were mainly used as farm labourers with mothers, fathers and children as slaves. Slaves were not allowed to enter their masters' homes due to untouchability laws. *Pulaya* slaves were regarded as ancestral property by the *janmis* attached to their *kudis*. A traditional payment is received by them over a fixed period of time in a year. Village

⁸ P. Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatam Noottandile Keralam, (Mal.)*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1988, pp.791-793.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.792.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.41.

service castes like washer men, barbers and artisans were similarly paid traditionally. The lineages of the *Sevaka* castes, whether maternal or paternal, carried both the duty and the right to perform these services in the village where they were born.¹¹ The payment to the slaves was never made in cash instead, and each serf family was given a *kudi* and agricultural land as their labour was identified as an obligation

Slavery, Untouchability and Land Relations

There was much evidence that slavery existed in this geographical territory. One of the earliest inscriptions related to slave money is the 849 inscriptions of the Venad King, Ayyan Adikal Thiruvadikal granting certain privileges to the congregation of the Tarisa Church in Quilon.¹² From this inscription, it is understood that slaves could be bought or sold and that those who kept slaves had to pay a slave levy to the government. Between 1792 and 1823 AD, Abbé J. Dubois was a missionary in India. A well-known foreign account of Dubois's *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* give a detailed account of Malabar slaves whom he called *Parayars*.¹³ In 1819 a deed transferred to the Mundrothurth Church Missionary Society also mentions the exchange of slaves. There were also references to the slave trade in different parts of this territory where members of the slave family were exchanged and separated. Kottayam, Changanassery, Ambalapuzha, Haripad, Kayamkulam, Iraniel etc. were major centers of the slave trade and the price of a slave varied from Rs.3 to Rs.14. European companies established in Kerala were involved in the slave trade within and outside the country.

The slave castes were often employed as agricultural labourers and paid the lowest rates. The work of the *Pulayas* was mostly confined to the paddy fields, drying the paddy, making embankments, fencing, digging, fertilizing, ploughing, weeding, transplanting and harvesting. Even while doing this, the observance of purity and

¹¹ K. Saradmoni, *Emergence of Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala*, People Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, pp.48-50.

¹² K.K. Ramachandran Nair, *Slavery in Kerala*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1986, p.14.

¹³ Abbey J A Dubois, (Trans), Henry K Beauchamp, *Hindu Manners Customs and Ceremonies: The Classic First-Hand Account of India in the Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1906, pp.15-27.

pollution became dormant.¹⁴ The *Parayas* and *Kuravars* were mainly engaged as labourers in the agricultural sector. They were also engaged in the making of mats, baskets, etc. They had no possessions and were often destitute in many ways. Frequent digging and fertilizing, transplanting of young paddy, land repair, and other work in the paddy fields, sometimes standing for hours in the water, they were exposed to rheumatism, fever, cholera, and other diseases. Many died long before reaching old age.

Table 2:1
Range of Caste Untouchability

Community	Distance
Brahmin, Nairs	4 feet
Brahmin, Chogan/Ezhava/Thiyya	36 feet
Brahmin, Pulaya, Paraya, Kurava	96 feet
Brahmin, Nayadi	74 feet
Nair, Pulaya	66 feet
Chogan, Pulaya, Paraya	36 feet

Source: J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India: its Nature Functions and Origin*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1969, pp.79-85

Pre-colonial slavery in here equates to Atlantic world-order slavery that means forcefully enslaving people and transporting them for agricultural work. It is deeply rooted in the caste system, which developed to explain and justify agrarian relations. Slavery existed because caste and untouchability were intertwined in it. Untouchability is an indirect form of slavery.¹⁵ The system of slavery directly deprives one of self-confidence and the rights of the lower castes. In the existing literature on agricultural slavery, caste is regarded as an integral part of colonial and post-colonial society.¹⁶ In ancient and pre-colonial records lower-caste people provided productive labour in agricultural societies and they were referred as slaves.

¹⁴ P. Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatam Noottandile Keralam, Op.cit*, p.452.

¹⁵ J.H. Hutton, *Caste in India: its Nature Functions and Origin*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1969, pp.79-85.

¹⁶ Samuel Matter, *Native Life in Travancore*, W.H. Allen, London 1883, pp.297-299.

In most parts of Kerala, until recently the agricultural labourers were mainly the traditional agricultural slave castes of *Pulayars* and *Parayars*. In some areas, it also includes people from tribal communities. According to anthropological reports of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the slaves consisted mainly of two castes -the *Parayars* and *Pulayars*, the latter being more numerous. In places like Kottayam, Kochi, Alappuzha, Kozhikode, Kayamkulam, Attingal, Chirayankeezh, Thalassery, Kovalam etc., the lower-castes were sold.

The traditional system of bonded slavery existed with a limited set of rights. Lower-castes used to get rice and other products instead of wages. Agrestic slaves had to bear the full financial burden of ritual beliefs during slavery. Slaves were the ones who had to fulfill the tax obligations, which included breast and death tax. Castes were characterized by hereditary occupation and corresponding hereditary differential rights to the produce of village lands.¹⁷ However, the vertical system of rights and duties was not entirely confined to the village. Overlapping, such as hypergamy among upper castes contributed to the unity of the land. Despite central Kerala's inland waterways, heavy rainfall, seasonal floods and mountainous terrain severely limited connectivity beyond the regional level. The horizontal extension of caste geographically was thus limited and communications were largely a function of caste position.

The internal organization of a caste is localized. For example, among the *Ezhavas* and *Pulayas*, the caste group was usually associated with the village. Smaller caste group of village servants usually had assemblies involving four or five nearby villages. The assembly of the retained Nair caste was often confined to one village and at most extended to two or four smaller villages. Apart from participating in war, the area of social interaction of the *Nairs* was the land. Among chiefs and dynasties, such interaction was limited to the kingdom itself.¹⁸ Only the Namboothiris transcended the political element and moved into a sphere of horizontal interaction involving the whole of Kerala, and thus, for the non-Brahmins of Kerala, territorial

¹⁷ Abbey J A Dubois, (Trans.) Henry K Beauchamp, *Op. cit.*, pp.38-44.

¹⁸ Vinil Paul, 'Kerala Charithrathil Undo Adimakal Neritta EeKkrurathakal, *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, May 12-18, pp.36-47.

division trumped the unity and oneness of a caste over a wider area. Territorial division, as suggested by Eric Miller, emphasized the interdependence of all castes at the village level and prevented the development of internal solidarity over large areas.

Table 2:2
Total Population of Slave People

Year	Reporter	Slave No.	Total Population	Place
1800	W J Hamilton	16201	140000	4 Districts of Malabar
1806-07	Warden, Malabar Collector	96,386	700000	Malabar
1815-16	Warden, Malabar Collector	94786	-----	Malabar
1819		100000	-----	Malabar
1827	Sheffield Malabar Collector	95696	1003466	Malabar
1830	Sheffield Malabar Collector	140224	-----	Malabar
1833		140933	-----	Malabar
1834	Josephine CMS Missionary	3000-4000	-----	Thiruvithamkur Kottayam
1835	Thomas	144000		Malabar
1836	Census	164865 Pulaya 90598 Parayar 38626 Kuravar 31891 Pallavar 3750	1280663	Thiruvithamkur
1838	F Clementon Malabar Collector	144371	-----	Malabar
1841		147,000	-----	Malabar
1842	Thomas	159,000	-----	Malabar
1852	George Mathan CMS Missionary	520	-----	Mallappally
1854		56,589	-----	Kochi

Source: Vinil Paul, Kerala Charithrathilundo Adimakal Neritta EeKruvathakal, *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, May 12-18, pp.39

Land Reforms and Land Relations

In the 18th century, in the period of Marthandavarma, the ownership of the land was divided into four categories in Travancore viz., *Devaswom*, *Brahmaswam*, *Pandaravaka* and Cherikkal, *Pandaravaka* means the property of God.¹⁹ Most of the land was *Pandaravaka*. ‘God's Land’ was given to the people for a fixed lease. At the time when the country was experiencing economic distress, Marthandavarma decided to privatize the land.²⁰ To meet liabilities, his kingdom strengthened its exchequer by leasing out agricultural land to farmers and collecting taxes. This privatization of land was a long-term change in the country's economy and society. The trend of this change in land ownership spread through the 19th century.

The Pandara Proclamation of 1865 introduced by Diwan Sir. T. Madhava Rao, was one of the first land laws in Travancore. *Pandaram* is a Sanskrit word that means treasury. If the land is recorded as *Pandaravaka*, it means that it is under the control of the state. At that time there were four types of land: *Devaswam* or *Ambalavaka*, *Brahmaswam* or *Illamvaka*, *Rajaswam* or *Pandaravaka* and *Danam*.²¹ Namboothiri Brahmins had the right to settle in the land of *Devaswam*. That way the land was accessible to them. The first land title transfer registered in Travancore in 1869 outside the categories of *Devaswam*, *Brahmaswam*, and *Rajaswam* and *Danam*²² was land bought by a foreigner to start a tea plantation. The registration took place two years after the land deed transfer law was passed in Travancore at the request of the British. The land which was the birth right of Pandalam Royal family was transferred via the title deed in the name of a plantation company.

In the princely state of Kochi, land reform was initiated to prevent evictions and to secure certain rights of tenants to the land. In 1863 a decree came into force prohibiting the eviction of tenants who had acquired land as a *kanakudiyan*.²³ The

¹⁹ V. Karthikeyan Nair, *Navodhana Moolyangalum Kerala Samuhavum*, (Mal.), SPCS, Kottayam, 2014, pp.26-28.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.33-38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.37.

²² P. Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatam Noottandile Keralam*, *Op.cit.*, p.901.

²³ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Mathrubhumi Publications, Kozhikode, 2014, p.649

eviction was prohibited in terms of the ownership attributable to the keeper of the land within twelve years. Subsequently, two types of tenancy laws were enacted in favour of tenants, *Kanakudiyan* and *Paatakudiyan*, and in 1930 these laws were amended and came to be known as the Kochi Tenancy Act.²⁴ Towards the end of the colonial period, reforms in territorial and inheritance laws had a profound effect on social life. Such analysis gives us an idea of exactly how these land reform measures, which led to capitalism very precisely with the influx of capital into the agricultural sector and that pointed out which classes benefited from these land reform measures.²⁵

None of the land laws introduced at various stages was prepared comprehensively towards the interest of the lower-castes who were working on the land but they were for the interests of the upper castes and affluent classes. The land was made available to the tenant who leased it from the landlords as a possessive farmer, and the real farmer who worked the land was classified as a slave and confined to no right of tenure, and excluded from land ownership.²⁶ In this way, the possibility of social and economic capital accumulation through such lands was eliminated and the history of the formation of a special space for a new filtering process began in the face of communal inequality. The need to address the weaknesses of these laws was strongly raised by the peasantry and some appendices were added in another proclamation in 1867, but this too was not to the satisfaction of the peasants.²⁷ The monarchy was compelled to pass Regulation No. 5 of 1896 and Regulation No. 12 of 1932. Under the 1932 Act, tenants were required to pay land tax only once a year in the name of the landlord and to retain full ownership of the leased land.

In Malabar, Kochi and Travancore, the reforms and laws in the *Daya* system and marriage laws, though indirect, had a great influence on agricultural relations.²⁸ An

²⁴ T. Madhava Rao, Memmo on Kanapattam Renewer, File 15128, Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, p.26, 1867

²⁵ T. C . Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences: Land Tenures in Kerala 1850-1960*, Allied Publications, Calcutta, 1970, pp.13 -18.

²⁶ K. N. Ganesh, 'Agrarian Relations in Kerala: An overview - 1100 to 1600' in E. K. G. Nambiar, (edi.) *Agrarian Problems and Perspective*, Calicut, 1999, p.67.

²⁷ T. C. Varghese, *Op.cit.*, pp.64-65.

²⁸ B. A. Prakash, 'Agricultural Backwardness of Malabar during the Colonial Period 1792-1947: An Analysis of Economic Causes, *Social Scientist*, Vol.16, June 1988, pp.17-18.

examination of the customs and marriage laws that prevailed in various communities in Kerala at that time will give an idea. Towards the latter end of the colonial period, the reforms in the territorial and inheritance laws had a profound effect on the life of the Kerala community. When the land is transferred to communal property ownership, property ownership also shifts from son-in-law (*Marumakan*) to own children or primary kids.²⁹ This can be seen from the customs and rules of marriage that existed in various communities in Kerala at that time. Marriage system existed in many communities including Nair community, Ezhava community, Nanchinad Vellalar and Mappilas based on the high influence and authority of niece or son-in-law (*Marumakan*).

In the joint family system, the children or wives of the lord had no right to money or land.³⁰ This system, which existed in different communities, did nothing to increase agricultural production or involve participation in the production process. This led to the breakdown of the authority of in-laws in the decisions made by the joint families on savings other than land. In Malabar, such an arrangement was initially made to arrange for the inheritance of the inherited property between the wife and children by will.³¹ A movement for the reform of the joint family system was formed by the Nair communities. The Travancore Nair Act of 1912 guaranteed equal rights to children and nieces and nephews. By 1925, all rights of the son-in-law to property was completely abolished and the per capita share of the children had come into effect. At the same time, a favorable situation had arisen for the abolition of polygamy.

The Ezhava Act of 1925 and the Vellala Act of 1926 came into force almost simultaneously. In Kochi, on the other hand, the Kochi *Nair* Regulation was adopted in 1920 and in 1938 the in-law system was completely abolished. The act ensured that wife has inheritance from husband and children has inheritance of property from

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.5-6.

³⁰ M. T. Narayanan, *Agrarian Relations in Late Medieval Malabar*, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 2003, p.31.

³¹ K. K.N. Kurup, *Modern Kerala: Studies in Agrarian Relationships*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1988, p.86.

father. The Madras Act, 1934, allowed the Muslims of Malabar to divide the property between the families.³² It is only in 1949 there was change in ownership and inheritance among the Muslim community. The Madras Nambhoothiri Act of 1933 changed the order of the Namboothiri community.³³ Thus, in Kerala, even during the colonial period, the laws of succession relating directly to the ownership of land had become unified. By the last years of the colonial period, the reforms in land laws and inheritance laws had brought about a social unification of Kerala life. This has been a high influence in the formation of the history of Kerala through the reformation movement and the organized agricultural movements.

2:2 Geographical Foundations of Modern Dalit Colony

Colony is defined as the area/place where a group of people live together with shared ethnicity, interests, or occupations. The word 'colony' derives from Latin *colonia* which means husbandman/farmer or farm/settlement. But the substance and geography of it altered later by the cultural, socio-political and economic changes.³⁴ The urban settlements and Dalit, lower- caste colonies are living evidence of it. They are polarized and stratified on the basis of caste, class, community status and denied access to public space and socially pushed aside. In terms of colonialism, colony is defined as the place overpowered by another country in a nation or as a group of individuals living in a foreign country. This definition is an ideal portrayal of how a group of individuals are marginalized from mainstream society in the name of caste status.³⁵ The Dalit, lower castes' colonies and settlements are the same lot. Due to geographical peculiarities and as a community facing social injustice, the Dalit and *Adivasi* community also felt such ostracization.³⁶

³² B. A. Prakash, *Op.cit.*, pp.19-20.

³³ Robin Jeffrey, *Decline of Nair Dominance: Society & Politics in Travancore 1847-1908*, Penguin House, UK, 1976, p.105.

³⁴ R. K. Bijuraj, 'Dalit Colonial Nooruvashathinte Charithravum Varthamanavum', *Madhyamam Weekly*, June 2020, pp.17-21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.27-29.

³⁶ Maya Pramod, 'As a Dalit Women: My Life in a Caste Ghetto of Kerala', *Caste: A Global Journal of Exclusion*, Vol.1, No1, February, 2020, pp.111-124.

Table 2:3
Total Colonies in 1961 Report

Place	Number
Thiruvananthapuram	28
Kollam	13
Alappuzha	14
Kottayam	17
Ernakulam	43
Thrissur	153
Palakkad	1
Kozhikode	2
Kannur	4
Total	275

Source: Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly,
Third Session, December 20, 1961. pp.1-2

Before the territorial and political unification of Kerala, the provinces of Kochi, Travancore and Malabar did not have owned lands for Dalits to reside.³⁷ The agricultural lands were also not available to them. The direct and indirect influences and activities of slavery confined their existence to a corner. They did not face slavery alone but suffered landlessness also. According to them, land was necessary for survival and it forged ahead Ayyankali, Poykayil Appachan, Kurumban Daivathan and others to raise their voice for land ownership. From the available documents of 1915, it is evident that Poykayil Appachan and others demanded land.³⁸ The term 'Colony' was used for the first time in the 13th session of the *Praja Sabha* on February 1917 by Kurumban Daivathan.³⁹ It was a speech in the form of a petition to provide dwellings, agricultural land and educational facilities for 'agricultural slaves. In it, he

³⁷ A. Balakrishnan ' , Social Evils in Kerala Society: Its Evolution and Practice, *Journal of East West Thought*, California State University, December, 2020.

³⁸ Proceedings, Sreemoolam Praja Sabha, 1912, February, 1920, pp.18-19.

³⁹ Proceedings, SreeMoolam Popular Assembly, 1918.

asserted that by providing land, his community could start to live in groups and work together.

Kurumban Daivathan was quite successful in acquiring land for his community in taluks like Kottarakkara, Chengannur and Pathanamthitta. He set up a colony in Ranni in the Chenganoor taluk, with the survey number of 790/1. He also requested the Praja Sabha to give away the barren land or any other new land to *Parayar, Pulayar, Vedder, Ulladar* to build a colony to settle and cultivate. He consistently insisted on providing 50 acres of land for the *Pulaya* and *Parayar* community that would help them to do agricultural activities and start schools to educate their kids. He also submitted details of such places in various regions. Ayyankali also discussed the land issue in Praja Sabha. On his demand, in Vilappilpakuthi, 500 acres of land was given to Pulayars but no houses were given to them. Poykayil Appachan demanded land for his people in Praja Sabha and got the land allotment. Apart from that he and his peoples' initiative, PRDS, bought land and did *uzhiyavela* for constructing houses to resettle the community including Pulayars and Parayars in Amarapuram and Eraviperur. They were positioned as the first Dalit colonies in Kerala.⁴⁰

At that time an outsider of the Dalit community and a member of Sree Moolam Praja Sabha, P K Govindan Pillai discussed about providing land to the *Pulayars*. He said that the total strength of the *Pulayars* in the state were five lakh. One-third of them were in south Travancore and the rest were in north Travancore. The total availability of land was also presented by him. On 1917 Feb 13, the nominated member Abraham Issac also argued for the converted Christians and other backward castes that they should be given land for agricultural purposes. Following their demand, the land that was attached to *Pandaravaka* was allowed in places like Mangadikarapakuthi in Changanassery taluk, Vadatayarpakuthi, Vaikom taluk, Airavampakuthi of Muvattupuzhapakuthi, Kanjirappillypakuthi of Peerumedu taluk, Kottayam,

⁴⁰ Swami. V.V, Anil, E.V (eds.), *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha, Orma Pattu Charithra Rekha Kal*, (Mal.), Eraviperur, Adiyardeepam Publications, 2010, pp.63-69.

Aiymanam, Aryadu South of Kottayam taluk and Ranni of Chenganoor taluk. Converted Christians and other lower caste people were tabbed for the land.⁴¹ Ayyankali, Daivathan, Poykayil Appachan, John Joseph and others reshaped the living conditions of the Dalits during that time. Those people who struggled as agricultural slaves without land and living scattered lives needed land for survival. Procuring land, the people who were in utter hardship that was caused by a lack of basic necessities started a life of togetherness within the same caste and the same community.

The lives of a group of people in a geographically distinct area influences social, economic and cultural development and also plays a vital role in determining social recognition and authority over resources. Every social structure and institution act in favor of the geographical area as land is an agency of power. Thus, the changes brought into the life of man due to geographical variation have to be noted. Moreover, it is also linked with the availability of resources or the necessities of capital formation. Man started living as separate tribes at a very early stage and he was in conflict to gain ample land with adequate resources on time.⁴² He scrambled for places with water, food, resources and settlements. Those agricultural groups with a better standard of living started invading others with less agency.

The existing social structure influences the social life of humans and was determined by the boundaries of the geographical area. The geographical distinctions and boundaries make it complex in the production of resources and resource formation in regions of India and Kerala where caste has high priority. After the formation of modern India, Indian society was divided between town and villages which brought disparities and instability. Caste based production and distribution of places and resources lead to formation of Laksham Veedu Colonies, Tribal Colonies, 3½ Cent Colonies and other unassisted lands were formed within the villages and

⁴¹ V. V. Swami, Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha: Historical Absence and Other Text, Trans. P. P, Ravindran, in Susie Tharu and K Sathyanarayana, (eds.), *No Alphabet in Sight: New Dalit Writing from South India*, New Delhi, Penguin Books, 2011, pp.594-608.

⁴² Sanal Mohan. P, 'Narrativizing Oppression, Suffering Theorizing Slavery', *South Asian Research*, 26, 1, 2006, pp.5-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728006058760>

were ostracized socially and culturally.⁴³ Scheduled caste moved to 3 ½ cent Dalit Colonies and the tribals moved on to the settlements in the forest and both groups settled on the basis of caste-tribe system in the unassisted land and formed ghettos.

The geographical distinctions in villages, which functions in interior power structure are places where caste relations existed. There is importance of space and its position, value and name are characterized by many different forms on the basis of caste. In the landlord feudal system, the settlements were huts made of mud in the corner of the land of the landlord or by the side of a pond. This suggests that caste has affected the area of settlement. Places where Brahmins resided were called *mana*. The residence of Nair and Ezhavas were commonly called *thara* and the caste groups inferior to Ezhavas called *pura* and Pulayas, Parayar, Kuruvar and others used *kudi*, *chetta*, *chaala*, *padi* and other such terms.⁴⁴ From these kudis the lower caste people shifted to Amarapuram and Chalakudy Dalit colonies in 1917 and 1920's.

Later from 1956 to 1970's there were established 3½ cent colonies and *Laksham Veedu* colonies. They were both-side residence meant for occupying two families, established by M. N. Govindan Nair, minister of transport and electricity under Achutha Menon ministry. The complexity of land reforms was the reason for the formation of *Laksham Veedu* colonies, unassisted colonies in Kerala.⁴⁵ The land reformation act that was intended to place marginalized sect led to the establishment of 3½ cent colonies. As per the land acquisition act of 1964 by the central government, colonies and rehabilitation projects were established. In such projects scheduled caste colonies were intended for rehabilitation and occupation. All these colonies are geographically distinct and organized differently from the mainstream society as *Laksham Veedu* colonies, single room colonies and unassessed land.⁴⁶ These were not of their choice but forced to accept as residence.

⁴³ R. K. Bijuraj, *Dalit Colonial Noorubarshathinte Charithravum Varthamanavum* (Mal.), *Op.cit.*, pp.28-29.

⁴⁴ A.N. Ajith Kumar, *Malayaliyude Naadodi Vazhakkangal Oru Padanam*, (Mal.), Priyatha Books, Calicut, 2008, pp.56-70.

⁴⁵ Proceedings, The Kerala Legislative Assembly, Third Session, December, 1961,

⁴⁶ Jobin . T . Johny, 'Empowerment and Development in the Laksham Veedu Colonies of Kerala: A Case Study of Kottayam Districts', Unpublished Thesis, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, 2015.

Through the local self-government institutions like panchayats, blocks, and municipality identified the homeless and landless in each ward and through the project, adequate amount was distributed in four stages and the need was satisfied. The most important matter was that the selected people of a ward in a municipality had to move to the allotted region that was barren land or unused paddy field and it was blazoned as scheduled caste settlement. Later these occupied regions became *Laksham Veedu* colonies and scheduled-caste settlements and were transformed as caste colonies. Such geographically distinct rehabilitation regions in different sections of the society ostracized themselves from the development and remained as caste colonies and they created a separate ecosystem for their existence in society.

We find caste as unethical practice, faith or as a social institution in a society. When we look into the history of economy, we understand the fact that caste has played a vital role in the formation of asset ownership. This asset ownership is linked with various social institutions, land, authority and culture. Of these the Dalits are always outside the strategy of authority and politics of land. Certain extent settlement colonies enabled them to have authority over land. It was also a symbol of capital gained by the Dalits as land symbolizes authority and power.

2:3 The First Settlement Colonies in Kerala 1917-1950

Amarapuram colony, in the Travancore province, was the first settlement colony.⁴⁷ It was the joined effort of Poykayil Appachan and PRDS. In the same year, Appachan initiated another colony in Eraviperur. But these colonies were not admitted by the Travancore authority and were ignored and suppressed. The counter argument that the authority put forward was that Appachan was running a sabha and the colony was established for them. But the initiation went on and it is noteworthy that the community that existed in agricultural and caste slavery were given the early lessons of financial and social formation and was made part of the mode of production. This happened through the establishment of Amarapuram and Eraviperur

⁴⁷ Swami. V.V, Anil, E.V, (eds), *Prathyaksha Daiva Sabha, Orma, Paattu, Charithram, Op.cit.*, pp.70-73.

colonies. The inhabitants of the colonies were landless lower-caste families who came out of agricultural slavery.

Appachan paved the way to question caste-related social and economic power that helped them to form a sense of self-reliance. The most important thing they did was to procure land and exercise their right over it. According to them, land was a kind of capital. They could exercise control over the productive possessions with its implied ownership and right. Apparently, PRDS had given great importance to capital formations in all their proceedings.⁴⁸ Since 1909, they purchased land and had established schools, colonies and workshops there. It was an activity that gave importance to education and it was also the efforts of the PRDS and Appachan that regained power for the people who were denied knowledge and letters for many centuries.

Amarapuram, Eraviperur Colony

Appachan and the members of the PRDS worked hard and bought more than 200 acres of land. In Amarapuram 55 acres and 36 cents, Eraviperur 12 acres, Kokayar 3 and a half acres, Putupalli 2 and a half acres, Mundakkayam 75 cents and Marankulam half-acre land were bought. In Amarapuram (1917) and Eraviperur (1920) colonies were formed for the *Parayar*, *Pulayar*, *Ainavar*, *Kurvar* and *Vedar* sections to live together.⁴⁹ It was not just a place of residence. Instead, farms and workshops were formed in those colonies so that people could live by farming and working. Training was given to them for making cloth, reed and bamboo produces. Appachan constantly petitioned the government to get grants for these workshops.

After 1910, PRDS was active in many fields such as labour, land and women's representation. Appachan's speeches in Sri Moolam Praja Sabha on March 10, 1921, and March 31, 1931 were based on educational restoration, scholarship, etc. It was about providing free education from eighth standard to university.⁵⁰ Along with establishing

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.72.

⁴⁹ T.H. P. Chentarasery, *Kumaragurudevan*. (Mal.), Navodhanam Publications, Thiruvananthapuram 1914, p.43.

⁵⁰ Swami, V.V, Anil, E.V, *Prathyaksha Daiva Sabha, Orma, Paattu, Charithram, Op.cit.*, p. 67.

colonies, schools were also established in those places. Dalit settlement areas or colonies were established in various places of Travancore by the apparent protectorate. There were places of worship, *kudipallikudams* and crematoriums. By 1939, the PRDS had acquired more than 200 acres of land and there they established colonies.

Chalaky Colony

It was in the Kochin province that another colony came into being in 1919-22 during the tenure of Diwan Sir C. T. Vijayaraghavacharya. It was in Chalaky and it was constructed at a time when the condition of most of the lower castes was in deterioration. Prior to that, the *Department of Upliftment of Depressed Classes in Kochi* worked for the upliftment of the lower castes.⁵¹ The department undertook the task of providing school and educational assistance to them and established hostels and colonies. Rs 1,500 crore was sanctioned for the operation and the *Depressed Classes Development Society* was the overseer of the colony. The Kochi Assembly Council appointed a manager to look after the affairs of the Chalaky *Pulaya* Colony and its residents.⁵² The manager resided in Chalaky. The members of the society live in Kozhikode, Ernakulam and Thripunithura.⁵³ The members visited the colony at regular intervals.

There were 922 families and it was not known how many people were in the colony in total. According to the reply given by the Kochi Assembly Council, on August 2, 1927, there were 155 families living in the Chalaky colony, out of which 81 were *Pulayars* and 74 *Parayars*.⁵⁴ An amount of 3000 per annum was provided for the development of the colony. However, in February 1932, some problems arose in the colony and someone sent letters to the Protector asking him to change the manager of the colony. They wanted to appoint a lower caste person as the manager. The reply given by T S Seshaiyar said that one out of 3 officers in the colony was a *Pulayan*.⁵⁵

⁵¹ T. K. Krishna Menon, *Progress of Cochin*, Cochin Government Press, 1932, pp.61-67.

⁵² T. K. Krishna Menon, *T K Krishnan Menonte Smaranakal* (Mal.), Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 2011, pp.335- 336, 383.

⁵³ Proceedings, Kochi Legislative Council, 1925 July 27.

⁵⁴ Proceedings, Kochi Legislative Council, 1925 February 5.

⁵⁵ Cochin Administrative Report, 1920.

In the book *Progress of Cochin* published in 1932, the Chalakudy *Pulaya* Colony was described as a model of the *Pulaya* Colony run by the Underprivileged Tribal Society.⁵⁶ Before the establishment of the colony, the oppressed people of Chalakudy worked as slaves and they were paid less.⁵⁷ Their status improved with the establishment of the colony, and the settlers became happier with the work of the colony. The government was paying them decent wages for the work they did. With the establishment, even landlords were forced to use their services at increased wages.⁵⁸ There was a free supply of various items and raw materials for the home industry. At the government level, there were schools, workshops, reservoirs, cooperatives and a poultry Centre. The government even had started building a shrine for worship.

Kunnamkulam Nayadi Colony

There were several colonies established in Cochin after 1920. Following the Chalakudy Colony for *Pulayas*, there was established a colony for *Nayadis* at Kunnamkulam. According to the records of the assembly, on July 10, 1922, the YMCA at Kunnamkulam was given the direct responsibility of running the colony.⁵⁹ However, the government gave all the money to the YMCA to conduct the affairs. The work there was done by a sanitary inspector.⁶⁰ The government paid YMCA Rs. 1300 in 1924 and Rs. 950 in 1925, Rs. 351 in 1926 and Rs. 540 in the following year. A manager and an industry trainer looked after everything in the colony.

A study of *Nayadis* led by A. Ayyappan in the late 1930s recommended the government to provide rehabilitation facilities for *Nayadis*.⁶¹ The grass root protector of the country of Kochi, VRM Chohan, also recommended the same for *Nayadis* through a letter. The reason and intention behind it were said that the number of *Nayadis*

⁵⁶ T. K Krishna Menon, *T K Krishnan Menonte Smaranakal* (Mal.), *Op.cit.*, pp. 336, 383.

⁵⁷ Cochin Administrative Report, 1920.

⁵⁸ T. K Krishnan Menon, *Progress of Cochin*, *Op.cit.*, pp-59-67.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁶⁰ Proceedings, Cochin Legislative, *Diwan* Bahadur, T. V. Varghese Submission, 1926 March 11.

⁶¹ A. Aiyappan, 'Social Anthropology of The Nayadis of Malabar', *Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum*, 1937, pp.19-67

increased and they ranged from begging to hunting down civilized humans. There for rehabilitation projects were started and the Nayadis were settled in various parts of the Kochi and Kunnamkulam was one of the places.⁶² There the land was acquired and houses were built. They brought in Nayadis from other places and tried to train them to grow food crops and also gave them training in cloth and mat weaving.

The rehabilitation project was established under the assumption that the *Nayadis* might become a public nuisance. It meant that social sanity was the motto of the government and that it should be assured for the citizens. In a large community, all governments have from time to time followed the same principle of allocating special spaces for those who were supposed to be disturbed.⁶³ After Kunnamkulam Nayadi Colony, Njarakkal Pulaya Colony and Ullada Colony at Netoor were established. According to the records of the Kochi Legislative Council, dated February 5, 1926, 57 plots of land in the colony were leased to private individuals and royalty of six paise per annum imposed on them. Until then, the government had spent Rs 1,000 on the Njarakkal colony.⁶⁴ According to the records dated August 4, 1933, there were ten houses in the Njarakkal colony, all of which were built by the authorities. Nettoor Ullada Colony was started in 1931. KP Vallon, member of the Kochi Legislative Assembly, was the person who constantly raised questions and argued in the Assembly on behalf of the colonies and its facilities and conditions.

The Anandapuram Colony was established in the early 1930s and Ishwarananda Swamy, a native of Chennamangalam, worked as a reconciler. He was also the Honorary Warden. There were five houses. On August 2, 1933, the government stated in the Assembly that there were three houses built at government expense in Nandikara Colony and five huts inhabited by Parayar. According to the records of the assembly in 1933, there were ten houses in the Malayattoor colony and the warden was Kochu Shanthi. 5 houses were built in the Mala Valiyaparambu colony. The secretary of the cooperative group was in charge of the colony.

⁶² T. H. P Chentharasserry, *Poykayil Kumara Gurudevan*, *Op. cit.*, pp., 67.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁴ R K Bijuraj, *Dalit Colonikal Noorubarshathinte Charithravum Varthamanavum*, *Op. cit.*, pp.17-29.

In Irinjalakuda was erected a colony named the *Depressed Class Colony* in 1933. It could be read in the documents of the Kochi Legislative Assembly. An examination of the Assembly records reveals that more than 20 colonies were established in Cochin before 1935.⁶⁵ By that time there opened official colonies near Mulanthuruthi, Aranattukara and Vellikulangara. In the 1950s, two new colonies were opened in Kochi at Varavoor in Chiappa'll taluk and Pathundi in Chittoor taluk.⁶⁶ It is built at the expense of the government and its maintenance is carried out by the government every year. In 1948, 420 houses were repaired. From the 1950s to the 2020s, there were over 2000 Dalit families in about 38 Dalit colonies under Varavoor Grama Panchayat in Chelakkara constituency of Thrissur district.⁶⁷

The lower-caste colonies mentioned above now have at least two hundred families. lower-caste families have more access to land in Malabar than Travancore and have a better standard of living. Land ownership and agricultural land were available to lower castes through the formation of colonies from 1920s to 1950s. But after 1950s colonies established through developmental decentralization projects and policies of succeeding governments. Rather, in a caste-based society, caste colonies were established, creating a ghetto space that separated a community that existed as slave castes from the general public, evicting them from land ownership.

Colonies in Malabar

The British were not interested in establishing colonies in Malabar as in Kochi or Travancore. Therefore, in the years following the formation of United Kerala, there were only a handful of colonies in Malabar. In 1850, Malabar District Collector Kunjali, opened a colony for the *Nayadi* community in Kozhikode town.⁶⁸ It is said that the land was allotted for cultivation but it did not go ahead. Later, the Basel Mission arrived and converted the Dalit people to Christianity. According to a study by Professor A. Ayyappan, a former Madras government superintendent, all converts

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.17-29.

⁶⁶ Administrative Report of Travancore-Cochin for the year 1124 ME, 17-16 August, 1948, 1949

⁶⁷ Vikasana Rekha, Varavoor Panchayath, 2017-20122.

⁶⁸ A. Aiyappan, *Social Anthropology of The Nayadis of Malabar*, *Op.cit.*, pp, 15-20.

became Mappilas and the colonies disappeared.⁶⁹ Later again in the late 1929, the *Nayadi* Colony came into existence in Malabar on the model of Kochi. The *Nayadi* colony was established in Olavakkode. TV Gopalan, a member of the fishing community, was appointed the Honorary District Labor Officer of the Malabar District.

Labor Officer worked with the intention of improving the living standards of the *Nayadis*. So, a colony was opened near the Pattambi Paddy Breeding Station. Later a colony was established in connection with the coconut plantation under the Chaliyath Forest Department. Nearby *Nayadi* community members were also recruited for coconut cultivation. The Labor Officer brought *Nayadis* from two nearby villages and built five huts for them and set up a primary school there.⁷⁰ The colony also hired a teacher to educate children and adults. For cultivation forest was cleared. The warden was responsible for the work on the farm and the distribution of rations. Begging and drinking were strictly forbidden. The warden stated that as a community *Nayadis* were reluctant to work. The colonies were inhabited by *Nayadis* from various places. The government points out that the main reason for providing such a special place of residence was the cries and begging of the *Nayadis*, causing inconvenience to the public and therefore relocating the *Nayadis* to a particular place.⁷¹ On the contrary, it is important to note that this was not the social development of the community. Governments continue to pursue this relocating and sidelining such communities over time.

Colonies in Travancore

It was in 1920 February 24th that Kurumban Daivathan demanded a colony, but it was not until 15 years later that the first government colony was established in Travancore. However, in the 1917s, Poykayil Appachan implemented colonies in Amarapuram and Eraviperur for the oppressed people to lead them to self-sufficiency by owning property. There was functioning at that time a department in Travancore to uplift the backward communities. The lower castes in Travancore were called

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp, 1-28.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp., 22-25.

⁷¹ A. Aiyappan, *Social Anthropology of The Nayadis of Malabar, Op.cit.*, pp.25-29.

Backward Communities. The department of the Backward Communities undertook all the responsibilities of establishing colonies, providing better employment facilities, constructing public buildings for social and religious purposes, allocating educational benefits and running free hostels.

In Travancore, the land was earlier allotted free of cost to the backward community. By the end of the 1930s, each family of the backward community had been given three acres of land and 30 acres of land had been given free to co-operative societies exclusively for backward communities. One could stay in the allotted land for the first two years free of cost. The total amount was to be paid within the next three years. In 1932, CO Damodaran was appointed by the Government as the Protector of the Inferior Class.⁷² Earlier, the Registrar of Co-operative Societies was tasked with safeguarding the interests of the backward communities. The trained officers were appointed and their responsibility was to oversee the allotment of land to the authorities and to address meetings of members from the backward communities in the co-operative movement.

In 1932, 55 acres of land were allotted to backward communities. Of the 735 applicants, 525 were considered. In 1934, there were 1491 applicants and 740 were considered and allotted 80.21 acres.⁷³ Following this the first colony was established in 1935 at Kulathur. According to the 1936 Travancore Administration Report, new colonies were established at Mararikulam and Meenkulam. There were 33 and 17 families living there respectively. The houses were built by the families themselves according to a plan approved by the government. The government subsidized the assistance. Preliminary work was underway to set up two new colonies at Anchamada and Venganur. A public building was constructed at Kunnathoor for the use of the backward community. Two wells were set up for the community in Thiruvalla taluk. In 1936, a peasant colony was started in Konni with 24 inhabitants.⁷⁴

⁷² Administrative Report of Travancore, 1108 ME, 1932-1933.

⁷³ R.K. Bijuraj, *'Dalit Colonial Noorvarshathinte Charithravum Varthamanavum'* (Mal.), *Op.cit.*, pp.17-29.

⁷⁴ Administrative Report Travancore 1112 M E, 1936-1937 A D, 81th Annual Report, pp.155.

According to the Travancore Administrative Report of 1938, Sachivothampuram Colony in Kurichi was established as a model colony. Report of 1943 read that there were colonies at Veliyathunadu, Pakode, Ilantur and Manikyamangalam. Of these colonies, Sachivothampuram Colony was the largest one. The colony operated through acquiring 113 acres of land.⁷⁵ In his reply to the Assembly on August 23, 1948, Mannar Gopalan Nair stated that the supervision of Sachivothampuram Colony was vested in the Agriculture Officer of the Colony. Later it was transferred to T. T Keshavan, Education Officer, Advancement of Backward Communities Department and he received a Convenience Allowance of Rs.75/- per month. According to the Assembly reply dated August 26, 1948, there were forty tenants in Sachivothampuram Colony. Record dated July 4, 1952, showed that there were about 80 houses and one acre of land for each household.⁷⁶

The total land allotted to the backward communities in Travancore till 1950 was 5961 acres 53 cents. The *Ayyanas, Chakkaliyan, Kanikar, Kuravar, Pallar, Pulayar, Vedar, Velan* and *Ulladan* were the communities who got land for free. During 1948-49, the government suspended the allotment of land. But land continued to be leased to backward communities for cultivation. Under the Increased Food Production Scheme, 1482.90 acres of land was allotted to the backward communities for cultivation.⁷⁷ Until the destabilization of the Travancore Princely State, 15 colonies were established including three centers for employment. During the period of 1917-22, Travancore led the downtrodden people out of slavery to self-sufficiency allowing them land for their livelihood and converting them into settlements and establishing employment centers, in order to lead them to property acquisitions and community unity.

Sachivothampuram Settlement Colony

In his maiden speech at Sree Moolam Legislative Assembly⁷⁸ on 26th Feb 1912, Ayyankali raised the issue of landlessness among lower castes and tribes. He said, “since the foremost reason for the adversity among lower castes is

⁷⁵ Administrative Report Travancore, 1119, ME, 1943-1944, AD, 88th Annual Report.

⁷⁶ Thiru-Cochin Legislative Assembly Submission, 1952 April, 2.

⁷⁷ Travancore- Cochin Administration, 1124 ME, 17 August 1948 16 August 1949.

⁷⁸ Proceedings 13th session of the Sri Moolam Popular Assembly, p.9, 1904.

landlessness/homelessness, government must assist them by assigning land". Later this speech was imbibed by the government to execute the concept of Harijan Colonies for lower castes. In olden days lower castes slave castes used to live near their landlord's abode or field.⁷⁹ They usually set up a small hut close to the field where they worked. This was the living condition or dwelling status of lower castes. Ayyankali substantiated that the landlessness was one of the main reasons for the sufferings of his people which made him raise the issue in the assembly. Later Anandan Isaac, a social reformer from Kurichi travelled to Trivandrum on foot to present a petition to Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar with the help of Ayyankali, demanding land for the lower castes. Concurrently Ayyankali's son-in-law Mr. T.T. Kesavan Sastri became a member of Shree Moolam Legislative Assembly. Upliftment of lower castes was his fundamental appeal to the Maharaja of Travancore Sree Chithira Thirunal during assembly. He beseeched to Maharaja for Kurichi's Harijan colony and urged him to decree it as a model Harijan colony. Sastri gave some valuable suggestions too on that matter. Dewan Sir C.P took the initiative to make it possible and even invited suggestions regarding the facilities to be provided in a Harijan colony. Sachivothampuram colony was established under this project. Since it was Sir C.P who constituted this colony, it was named after him who was also known as Sachivothampuram⁸⁰.

At first, forty families from Aranmula of Pathanamthitta district and from different parts of Kuttanaad were rehabilitated in Sachivothampuram colony. They included 34 Pulaya families, 3 Paraya families, 2 Ezhava families and 1 Vishwakarma family. Each family got a house with two rooms and a kitchen in 25 cents of land and also another 50 cents for agricultural purposes. They got wells as well, one each for eight houses. The colony also had a Primary Health Centre, Weaving Mill, Police Out-post, Post Office, School and a Lord Rama temple. A warden was appointed to address and solve various issues among colony residents and to work for their welfare. The first warden appointed was T.T. Kesavan Shastri.

⁷⁹ Travancore Information and Listener, 1947, p.28.

⁸⁰ K. K. Kochu, *Dalit Nerkazhchakal* (Mal.), Trivandrum Publishers, 2013, pp-16-23.

In 1950, forty more families were rehabilitated with 75 cents of land for each. They included thirty-five Pulaya families, four Ezhava families, two Paraya families, one Vishwakarma family and one Vilakkithalanair family. In 1957, an eight-roomed buffalo stall was demolished to make space for eight more families which included six Pulaya families and two Nayadi families. In 1960, twenty-five more families were added which included twenty-two Pulaya families, two Paraya families and one Nayadi family. In this way the colony was evolved in four stages having a hundred and thirteen families in 112 acres of land.⁸¹

Present Scenario of Sachivothamapuram Colony

In a case study, the numbers of families were a hundred and thirteen in 1960, which eventually increased to a whopping number of three hundred and eighty-four in 1996 in the same 112 acres of land.⁸² There were two hundred and sixteen Pulaya families, hundred Ezhava families, twenty seven Syrian Christian families, fourteen Vishwakarma families, eleven *Paraya* families and two Vilakkithala Nairfamilies residing there in which *Pulayas* got 90 acres, *Parayas* 2 acres, Vilakkithala Nairs 2 acres, Vishwakarma 5 acres and Syrian Christians 2 acres of land. 39.4 % of colony residents were labourers. 29.6% were handicraftsmen, 12.2% were lower grade government employees. Only three persons had job outside India. 93% men and 88% women of colony are literate. 73% were below matriculation and only 13 persons had Graduation/Post Graduation level education. There are no engineers or doctors yet in the colony. There is one Ph.D. holder in the colony. This is the brief history of land and castes in Sachivothampuram colony.

Most of the early residents were Dalit Christians. This was done by sir C.P himself chiefly to restrict the religious conversion among Dalits. Eventually most of them (Dalit Christians) were converted back to Hindu religion by T.T. Keshavan Sasthri through his organization Travancore Pulaya Mahasabha.⁸³ Meanwhile Pambadi John

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁸² M.R. Renu Kumar, 'Rehabilitation and Development: Experience of Dalit Landless Labourers in Kerala- A Case Study' M.Phil. Dissertation, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p.62

⁸³ Ramakrishna Pillai, Travancore Information Listener, Sachivothamapuram, Central Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, September, 1947.

Joseph's organization Kerala Cheramar Sangham too has put down roots in the colony. This indeed gave the colony a Dalit image but not much to the outsiders as the land continued to merchandise which allowed the ingress of other communities into the colony. *Ezhava* was the prominent community to enter in this manner. The continued process of ingress and the multiplied families led to the fragmentation of land and forced more than 4500 families to over brim in 112 acres of land.

Over population and lack of reformation destroyed the small-scale industries like poultry farm, weaving mill and agricultural department in the colony. The post of warden was also discontinued with the end of Dewan governance. Holdings of the first and last warden, T.T. Kesava Sasthri was bought by M.S. Soman who used to be the panchayat president of CPI(M). In course of time the colony became a center of physical labour power. Before the introduction of rubber plantations, the colony residents engaged in working at paddy fields of Kuttanad, inland fishing, oyster shell catching for their livelihood. When adults managed living by daily-wage labour, the children became alienated from the world of education. Marriages were conducted within the community. These newly formed families were denied additional land by the government. The image of the colony in the outside world made it difficult for marriage proposals to come to the colony which eventually forced inter-inhabitant marriages. Since the colony residents were from different places and shared no blood relation, the easiest way was to marry among themselves.⁸⁴ The propagation that the inhabitants of the colony were illiterate, poverty-stricken and anti-social were significant reasons for the inhibition of marriage proposals.

Socio-Political Organisations in Sachivothampuram Colony

Almost all Dalit organizations in Kerala found their followers in Sachivothampuram colony. After the inactiveness of T.T. Sasthri's Travancore Pulaya Mahasabha, organizations like Kerala Pulayar Mahasabha, Kerala Cheramar Mahasabha, PRDS, Sambava Mahasabha, Akhila Kerala Cheramar Mahasabha,

⁸⁴ Personal Interview with K.K. Kochu, writer, Vaikom, 17/09/2016.

Deshiya Dalit Vimochana Munnani, Rashtreeya Mahasabha actively worked among the residents. The presence of many organizations and their ideological and pragmatic competitions divided the Dalits. These organizations prioritized primarily and limited themselves to caste pertaining and personal related matters such as marriage and death ceremony than on fundamental issues like social rights and economic backwardness. As a result, the colony never had any socio-economic reformations. On the other hand, all mainstream political parties like Congress, Communist and BJP always maintained a tactful approach and avoided ideological debates with the Dalit organizations.

Most of the residents followed communist ideology. Despite being the major constituents, Dalits never gained any key positions in the Party leadership. Those were possessed by Ezhavas. Thus, Dalits became mere vote bank for CPI(M). The dependence of various Dalit leaderships to the political parties makes a Dalit leader helpless even if he/she gains a power position in the party. K.C Soman was a Dalit leader in CPI(M) and has served as Panchayat Member for 14 years. His contribution was merely an upgradation of an L.P. School during his tenure.⁸⁵ This hegemonic discourse led to a conflict between Dalits and Ezhavas in 1993. Title Deeds of 54 Residents of Ambedkar colony near to Sachivothamapuram colony was allegedly impeded by the influence of Panchayat President M.S. Soman. This led to the formation of Ambedkar Grama Samithi under the leadership of Lukose K. Neelamperoor and protested against it. Title deed was then achieved eventually and was handed over to the colony residents on 13th May 1993 by then Minister of Law and revenue K.M. Mani in the presence of C.F. Thomas, Changanassery MLA. Discrepancy between Dalits and CPI(M) began to build up after this event.

In 1995, incidents of thrashing three Dalit men by Panchayat member M.S.Soman and caste abuse by an *Ezhava* contractor upon Dalit workers at a quarry outside the colony led to another conflict with Ezhavas.⁸⁶ Influenced by the contractor, many of the Dalit men from the colony were brutally beaten and arrested. *SNDP Yogam*

⁸⁵ Personal Interview with Remya, WardMember, Kurichi Grama Panchayath, Sachivothamapuram, 12/06/2016.

⁸⁶ K. K. Kochu, *Dalithan*(Mal.), Kottayam.D.C. Books, 2019, pp, 68-69.

lent their support to the contractor and even protested against Dalits. The Dalits in reply organized a Defense Convention and formed Dalit Prathirodha Samithi (Dalit Defensive Council) under the leadership of Lukose Neelamperoor. The formation and conventions of Dalit Prathirodha Samithi provoked Ezhava men and slowly the conflict changed into a Dalit-Ezhava feud. On 25th December a mob of Ezhavas lead by Sudarshan Raju thrashed every dark-skinned man (including Ezhavas) present at Kurichi Junction. More than 15 got injured in that mob attack. Furthermore, Ambedkar Prathirodha Samrakshana Samithi (Ambedkar Defensive Protection Council) leader Lukose Neelamperoor was brutally beaten and the Police charged into the colony and attacked the Dalits mercilessly. As a result of these conflicts, a group of Dalits other than from CPI(M) were formulated, irrespective of their organizations. This Communal unity was later transformed into the ‘11KV Line’ struggle at Kurichi.⁸⁷

On 2nd February 1998, Kurichi Panchayat committee granted license to Sunitha Jose for establishing a plywood factory in the 7th ward of Kurichi Panchayat which was outside the colony. After the completion of construction works, the factory owner applied for electricity from the Electricity Board. Along with Panchayat, District Collector, A.D.M., Green Channel Officials, KSEB decided to lay the electricity line overhead of the three-meter-wide small plots of the colony when they could have laid it overhead of the eleven-meter-wide public road which passes through Village Office and Panchayat Office for about 1500 meter in length. They acquired the consent of people outside the colony but avoided the Dalits in the colony which was a clear violation of Government order which implies that development of SC/ST dwelling areas must be done with the knowledge and consent of its residents. Furthermore, the electricity board misrepresented the colony residents that they were replacing old posts with new ones which were actually for 11 KV line. Deceived and disregarded by the authorities, Dalits of the colony started protesting against the laying of 11KV line by forming 11KV Line Virudha Samara Samithi in 1999.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.70.

⁸⁸ Anees. M. Muhammad, ‘Exclusion; Driven Segregation and Dalits: Evidence from Selected Colonies in Kerala, www.Inianjournasl.com, ISSN2231-4555, PP.34-44.

When the complaints, requests, memorandums given to the State Government and KSEB officials became mere pieces of paper, a 28-day long Satyagraha was formulated in front of Kurichi Panchayat office. Later the Satyagraha spread to the Collectorate and KSEB office. As a result, on 14th Sep 1999, the Kottayam District Collector issued a stay order on the laying of 11 KV line overhead of the colony. Thereafter, the factory owner approached High Court and gained permission to lay the line. All Political parties except CPI(M) and Dalit Organisations united and protested against the laying of 11 KV line. KSEB officials along with Police force came to charge 11 KV line on 02nd Feb 2000 when the resistance was at its peak. Thousands including women poured kerosene and threatened to set ablaze themselves to resist Police force. But Police lathi-charged towards them. Krishnamma, daughter in law of Kurichi Sreedharan threatened to set ablaze herself and her daughter. Simultaneously Kurichi Sreedharan ran into fire and this made the police to step back. Sreedharan was immediately taken to Kottayam Medical College Hospital but succumbed to the injuries and died.

Dalit organizations outside the colony intervened after that incident. A meeting of 29 Dalit Organizations was held and Samsthana Dalit Aikya Samara Samithi (State Dalit Union Agitation Council) was formed with KCS President Suseelan Bhagavathar as Chairman, Mr. Sunny M. Kappikad as working Chairman and M.D. Thomas as General Convenor. *Aikya* Samara Samithi officials Mr. Suseelan Bhagavathar, Mr. Sunny M. Kappikad and Mr. Geethanandan put forward their demands in front of the then SC/ST/OBC Welfare Minister Mr.K. Radhakrishnan. Some of the major demands were to close all cases related to the protest against the colony residents, to punish Police officers who were responsible for the violence and rampage appropriately, to always comply with the Government order implying on the consent of the residents/consumer for any welfare/development programs to be established at SC/ST dwelling areas, to provide rightful compensation to the family of Kurichi Sreedharan. The Government accepted these demands and appointed Retd. Justice. K. Thankappan as the Commission of Investigation.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ K.K. Kochu, *Dalithan, Op.cit.*, pp, 60-68.

CPI(M) divided the colony into four different wards i.e., ward no. 6, ward no.7, ward no.13 and ward no.14 to disrupt the Dalit unanimity which was formed as a result of the agitation. This resulted in the division of the same house into different wards as kitchen might be in one ward and bedroom in another. Consequently, it became impossible to elect a common Dalit ward member to represent the colony. The issue of Sachivothamapuram colony was not an isolated case but was the prime example of the intolerable state of life of each Dalit colony across Kerala. The prime issue has always been the issue of landlessness due to the increase of inhabitants. Lack of potable water, unemployment, inability to complete education were enough to make the life of a Dalit in the colonies miserable. Most of the colony inhabitants are engaged in road and construction works. On the historical present of Sachivothamapuram colony Mr. Sunny M. Kappikkad emphasize that, “Dalits need a unified communal organization to determine their own destiny, which should be formed by ideas not by agitations. Agitations are mere reason for that.”⁹⁰

Movement from the hut (Special habitat) to the colonies liberated the Dalits from the innate productive ties. A large section of the Dalits, who were agricultural slaves, were given the opportunity to take up employment in the productive system and to take up free labour. Even before the implementation of land reforms, there were more than 350 colonies in Kerala. An important issue to consider here is whether the colonies on such lands were one of the reasons why Dalits did not get land during land reforms. Land reform was not comprehensive in Kerala but in 1970 only land related to agriculture other than plantation was considered for land reform, or the special caste colony schemes of the State for the rehabilitation of the most backward slave caste, the Dalits who were expelled from the land reforms.

⁹⁰ Personal Interview with Sunny. M. Kappikkad, Writer, Kottayam, 18/10/2021.

CHAPTER III

State Formation and the Land Question of the Dalits

This chapter analyses the problem of Dalit ghettos in Kerala and the social exclusion faced by Dalits from the socio-economic development of Kerala. The failure of the Kerala model of development and land reform to address Dalit issues is also included. The enquiry into how modern Dalit colonies became caste colonies is detailed.

Kerala is one of the few states which implemented land reforms. Before the land reforms, Dalits lived in the slave-caste system as rented farmers or mere workers of landlords. Land reform shifted the lives of Dalits from the landless to the inhabitants of colonies. These colonies are dwelling places with two and a half cents to five cents premises like ghettos. The Dalits in these dwellings live with their communities as the marginalized and receive cultural elements like social backwardness, caste inequalities and the cultural segregation that make the colonies monolithic.¹ Positive characteristics of such colonies include the tolerance that residents share and the similarities that occur on a social and economic level. However, the social, cultural, caste and economic capital outside the colonies and within the society caused the colonies to be marginalized. In such a situation, the colony dwellers experienced social and economic disadvantages.

The Dalits experienced hardships and economic and social segregation as a result of these separate colonies.² According to the population census of 2011, the SC population constitutes 9.10% of the total population which equals 33406061 Lakh. According to a survey conducted by KILA in 2009-10 out of 26,198 colonies, the Scheduled Castes are living in intolerable segregated conditions and 4.55% are completely destitute. The study also revealed that 64.77% had education below the

¹ K.M. Pramod, 'Dalit Colonial Keezhalathathinte Mukhangal', *Adhiyardeepam Weekly*, Eraviperoor, 2008, p. 45-47.

² M.R. Renukumar, 'Bhoomi, Colony, Chengara,' *Keeraliyam Magazine*, Vol. 5, Thrissur, 2008, pp.36-37.

10th standard and only 0.09% had professional education.³ The survey shows that the life of Dalits in Kerala is not very different from other states in India. It excludes Dalits from the field of development and underscores the need for comprehensive development programs to ensure social justice.

The development of the world-renowned Kerala model has shown its limitations in addressing the problems and development concerns of the Dalits.⁴ Without considering the social justice for Dalits, the colonies came from a space where they were historically, politically and economically formed.

The colonies became infamous places where Dalits were humiliated and helpless. While speaking, they expressed their desire to leave the colony for a better life and at least a generation of their children wants to live a good life.⁵ When an inhabitant of a colony receives a reasonable education, employment, and income, they seek to free themselves from the confines of the colony and connect themselves with the community beyond the colony.⁶ The standard of work in the colonies was the same as in the case of the majority of Dalits working in the paddy fields and they range from domestic workers to construction workers, sweepers and salesmen/girls, but in every way Dalits were unsafe and unorganized workers. As a caste-based geographical area, the Dalit colonies are maintained for the purpose of generating the source of wage labourers. When the land or region develops as an unorganised workspace, gradually that region transforms into Dalit colonies. In the history of the long working culture of the Dalits, in the past, they were farmers, cultivators, crematorium keepers, butchers, scavengers etc. There has been no revolutionary change in these occupations in the Dalit colonies.⁷

Dalits always had a social life based on work and work is an intense production force and economic activity. But Dalits are not visible in this production process. This

³ Report of SC/ST Survey, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Thrissur, 2009-10, pp. 1-2.

⁴ H. D. Malaviya, et.al. (eds.), *Keralam; Rashtrathinulla oru Report* (Mal.), Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, Thrissur, 2007, p.115.

⁵ K. M. Pramod, *Op.cit.*, p.46-47.

⁶ M. A. Ommen, *Land Reforms and Socio –Economic Changes in Kerala: An Introductory Study*, Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, 1971, p.12.

⁷ K. M. . Pramod, *Op.cit.*, p.46.

production process is the act of changing and fixing the existing material conditions conducive to human life and progress. The scientific awareness of collective labour and the coordination of labour is developed in this way. But the governments manage to sustain the employment structure by forcing the Dalits to continue their job in the mean areas for the rest of their life.⁸ Dalits today lost their traditional occupations and are becoming more and more anxious and dependent. Crop production and allied industrialization become important components of the welfare of the masses but Dalits continue to be oppressed and marginalized in modern society.⁹

It is important to examine how the draft of the land reform bill was created and how the landlessness of Dalits has persisted. The social injustice of establishing caste-colonies and its impact on Dalit life and society is also to be cross-checked. Land is a political aspect and at the same time an economic asset for any society to move forward socially. Colonies serve as an indicator of substandard social privilege. This has led to more ghettoization than empowerment. All this has made the lives of the Dalit people miserable and led to political marginalization. At the same time, it is a continuation of the history of caste discrimination that keeps them away from mainstream society while devoting their labour to the general development of society.¹⁰

In Kerala, 79 % of the Dalit community live in ‘two and a half cents’ and ‘three cents’ colonies. The government has set up special colonies, outposts and community kitchens for the Dalit-Adivasi community.¹¹ Most of the discrimination, invasion and marginalisation happening in the agricultural sect and other social scenario affect the Dalits in the colonies. Based on this, we need a proper outline of Dalit tribal lands and development policies. The Dalit-Adivasis were alienated and evicted from their land and brought to the colonies. From there, the government and the forms of power shifted their lives into social exclusion. The Paniyars, Kurumbar, Irulars, Adiyars and Mala Pandaras did not have any documents to prove their ownership of the land, so their

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.46.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.47.

¹⁰ Pramod Maya, ‘As a Dalit Woman, My Life in a Caste- Ghetto of Kerala,’ *Caste: A Global Journal on Social Exclusion*, Vol.1, No.1, 2020, pp.111-124.

¹¹ Scheduled Caste Census Report, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, 2009-2010, Thrissur, 2011, p.i.

lands were encroached upon. In doing so, they were eliminated from the possibility of social, economic and cultural capital formation and so to social exclusion.¹²

The Kerala Model Development and Land Reforms Act pushed the Dalits, Adivasis and other backward classes into the caste colonies and outposts. Caste colonies and flats are the last steps in the political process of excluding the Dalit-Adivasi community from the capitalist discourse they are gaining¹³ It is an egalitarian imagination that the society perceives to have grown as part of colonial modernity. The development projects brought by the first government, including the land reform shunted the socio-economic life of the Dalits into inequality.¹⁴ The government assured that the land reform can reduce social inequalities and provide socio-cultural and economic resources to the Dalits. The age and labour regulation laws can help and influence a more equitable distribution of resources even in a poor economy. But the land reform law has transformed Dalits and Adivasis into a process called ghettoization, a framework of social injustice and denial of equality and all these are precisely related to the caste and caste system.

Modern Kerala officially emerged as a constituent state of the Indian Union on 1st November 1956 comprising the three territories of Travancore, Kochi and Malabar. The Language Reorganization Committee recommended the reorganization of states in India based on the majority common language, and modern-day Kerala came into existence as a state with Malayalam as a single language. On April 5, 1957, EMS Namboothiripad became the Chief Minister of Kerala, winning the first elections to the Kerala Legislative Assembly and a communist cabinet came to power. It was the Dalit communities who played an important role to form the government's assent into power.¹⁵

¹² Scheduled Caste Development Department Guide, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2018, p.108-109.

¹³ Santhosh Kumar, 'Life Parppida Padhathi Adhava Aadunika Laksham Veedu Colonikal,' *Keeraliyam Weekly*, Thrissur, 2020, p.12-15.

¹⁴ J. Devika, 'Egalitarian Developmentalism, Communist Mobilization, and the Question of Caste in Kerala State, India', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.69, No. 3 August 2010, pp.799-820.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.8-9.

Table 3:1
Percentage of Vote in 1957 Elections

Political Parties	Percentage
Congress	37.85
Communist Party	35.28
PSP	10.76
RSP	3.23
Independents	12.88

Source: Mathrubhumi Weekly, 2009, January, 25.

The period from 1956 to 1970 was a very important period for the Dalits when the communist government came to power. Eventually it developed land reform bills and new educational policies. The government which was intended to be a part of the development programmes and provided land and housing to the Dalits became the cause of the community's eventual ghettoization. The implementation of the Agrarian Relations Act and the Education Act, the Prohibition of Eviction Act, which were first enacted by the authorities, freed lakhs of leasehold tenants from the threat of eviction by the landlord, while a section that did not own land or lease was struggling to continue their lives in a one-room house in the same landlord's agricultural land and paddy field.¹⁶

Table 3:2
Details of Ownership and Control of Land

Details of Land	Caste and Communities
Janmam	Rajas, Brahamins, Temples and Naduvazhis
Kanam	Nairs and Sub groups of Nair
Verumpattam	Nairs, Muslims, Syrian Christians and Ezhavas
Agrestic Slaves	Pulayas, Cherumars, Parayas and others

Source: B.A. Prakash, 'Changes in Agrarian Structure and Land Tenures in Kerala: A Historical Review'. State and Society, 5(1), January-March, 1984, 1-13.

¹⁶B.A. Prakash, 'Changes in Agrarian Structure and Land Tenures in Kerala: A Historical Review'. *State and Society*, .5(1), January-March, 1984, 1-13.

Under the Land Reforms Act, a limit was set for land holdings, and the land beyond that limit was acquired as surplus land and distributed to the landless and this was the foundation of the land reform act. But after delimiting the land in Kerala, the government distributed only a few paddy fields in Kuttanad and the barren lands in the hands of various kings were actually distributed after excluding the plantation area as the land that should not be delimited.¹⁷ According to the Government Planning Board, seven lakh acres of land had been acquired at that time, but the amount of this land was reduced, the plantation sector was excluded, and the trusts began to emerge, as the landowners were registered on the basis of preference.¹⁸ Besides, there were acres of land under these trusts. After the liberation struggle the Communist government resigned, and the Congress government took over. But the Congress government was not ready to distribute the surplus land. Thus, the surplus land movement which started in the early 70s, due to the non-distribution of surplus land, the Dalits, who are the majority of the farmers, became landless.¹⁹

Along with this, a strong caste society was emerging in Kerala after the Land Reforms Act through social capital formation. The middlemen, the lessees, who got ownership of the land, were economically empowered and thus socially, educationally and culturally this social group became part of the power. At the same time, with all the sufferings and demerits of the Land Reforms Act, Dalits without land and house were building special habitat areas with two or three-cent Dalit colonies in every corner of Kerala.²⁰ Thus, a new community was formed in Kerala and the cultural capital was built by creating a social economy from the Malabar immigrants and Gulf immigrants, including the upper caste communities which started a new social system.²¹ But due to the lack of adaptive factors for the same community formation,

¹⁷ Sunny. M. Kappikkad, 'Kerala Modelinte Dalit Vimarshanagal', *Adhiyardeepam Weekly*, Eraviperoor, 2008, p.16.

¹⁸ Radhakrishnan, Land Reforms in Theory and Practice: The Kerala Experience, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.16, No.52, December 6, 1981, p.129-137.

¹⁹ Mukundan Peruvattur, *Kerala Bhooparishkarana Niyamam; Marxistukal Thozhilali Vargathe Vanchicha Charithram*, (Mal.), Bahujan Sahitya Academy, Calicut, 1995. p.42-48.

²⁰ V. Karthikeyan Nair, *Navodhana Moolyangalum Kerala Samoohavum*, (Mal.), SPCS, Kottayam, 2014, pp.32-36.

²¹ P. Radhakrishnan, 'Land Reform and Changes in Land System: Study of A Kerala Village', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.17, No.39, September 1982, p.107-119.

the Dalit-Adivasi communities were excluded from industrial production, immigration and Gulf migration and they were transformed into a marginalized community.²²

It is important to study how feudal lands shifted from agrarian production relations to the grip of plantation monopolies and real estate lobbies, the role of land reform measures implemented here, as well as those that were excluded from this land distribution. The important thing is that none of the land laws introduced here at various stages have become a law that can comprehensively cover the land and the underprivileged people who work on the land. The tenant who leases the land from the landlords is treated as a land-owning farmer and the land is made available to him; the real peasants who have worked on the land are subjected to slavery and are deprived of the right of tenure and excluded from the ownership of the land.²³ Sections 81 and 82 of the Land Reforms Act divided the area between plantation land and agricultural land into two sections and demarcated the plantation land from the land limit. Plantation land accounts for 65% of the arable land in Kerala.²⁴ The land reform, which allowed landowners to convert their land into plantations with retrospective effect, has helped plantation monopolies, which own thousands of acres of unlimited land.

Land reform further increased the extent of land centralization by excluding temple trusts and family trusts from the land boundary. The Land Reforms Act served the landowners extensively by expanding the list of plantation crops. Initially introducing the Agriculture Relations Bill, K.R. Gowri Amma had predicted that an additional twelve lakh acres of land would have to be acquired if the Land Limitation Act was implemented. This was limited to eight lakh acres in the early years alone. With the passage of several amendments to the Land Reform Act, including the

²² Sunny .M. Kappikkad, Pattikajathi Communistkual, *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, Kozhikode, 2008, pp.37-41.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.37-41.

²⁴ Mukundan Peruvattur, *Kerala Bhooparishkarana Niyamam; Marxistkual Thozhilali Vargathe Vanchicha Charithram*, (Mal.), Bahujan Sahitya Academy, Calicut, 1995. p.42-48.

Concession Acts, it would again be reduced to three and a half hectares from now.²⁵ What is the amount of surplus land after fifty years of land reform? The latest revelation is that the government has taken over one and a half lakh acres of surplus land and distributed 80,000 acres to the landless.

A few plantation companies like Harrisons Kannan Devan Travancore Rubbers and Tea Limited and their benefactors are still illegally subverting five lakh and twenty-five thousand acres of land (more than half of the revenue land) in this small state of Kerala. Even after seven decades of independence, fifty years after the land reforms, Queen Elizabeth is paying taxes on 59,000 acres of land in Kerala. Harrisons Malayalam Company has one lakh acres of land in illegal possession.²⁶ Tata has acquired eighty thousand acres of land. This is a shocking revelation of the dilapidated and undemocratic land relations in present-day Kerala after the heralded land reforms.

About 56 per cent of the agricultural population in the State of Kerala, including the Dalit-Adivasi community, plantation workers, landless farmers and a large number of agricultural labourers are still landless. They live in four cents and two cents of land, slums, river outcrops, railway outcrops and suburban slums. Starting with ten cents of housing to one Lakh Houses, four cents and two cents of colonies reach a Life Flat Housing Scheme.²⁷ While more than eleven lakh houses in the cities alone have been left unoccupied by the affluent sections twelve lakh people from two lakh and forty thousand families are landless. Millions of acres of plantation land could not even be touched by this proclaimed land reform as the plantation area, which accounts for 65 per cent of the arable land, was excluded from the Land Reforms Act due to aristocratic pressure. Not only that, it has secured lakhs of acres of land available to the people in the hands of foreign plantation monopolies and their benefactors. Those who are supposed to lead the process of democratization by eliminating anti-people from land, instead, have become its protectors.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.45-47.

²⁶ T. C. Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences: Land Tenures in Kerala 1850-1960*, Allied Publications, Calcutta, 1970, pp.13-65.

²⁷ K. Santhosh Kumar, *Op.cit.*, p.13.

3:1 Land Reforms: Purported Aims

Man's conquest of the earth is as old as mankind itself. Therefore, the land is part of a production system and power rather than part of ownership. It is an important means of the overall progress of the human race, and the most important thing is the reform and distribution of the land justly. The history of land reform and ownership of land in Kerala reveals that it was confined to the hands of a few communities. This is the opposite of social justice. It is through the distribution of land in a more widespread way that social justice, community justice and economic security can be achieved in society. Through this, the production system can reach all the communities. But if we take the history of land in Kerala, it is said that in the state manual, four types of land systems existed in Travancore in 1904 and is found that no land or land ownership belonged to lower-class people.²⁸ In other words, the reality is that the right to land was not among the lower-class Dalit people. Therefore, we see that the history of Kerala was based on caste and agricultural relations. It is from such a system of land authority that changes in the land laws were made after 1956, land reforms could be implemented and there are questions about who was given the land.

There followed the landlord-tenant relationship and the workers never became the landowners. The Land Reforms Act section 96 had stipulated how surplus land should be distributed. If we look at Sections 81 and 82 of the Reform Act, we know that Dalits have not benefited from the Land Reform Act. But under Sections 85, 86 and 87, there was no guarantee that if the land was returned to the government, it would be distributed to the Dalit communities. 50% of the surplus land given to the government was reserved for the landless laborers under the second sub-section A of section 96. Only 25% was transferred to the Scheduled Castes. But there was no provision that this 25% of land should be given to the Dalits in full. But the government could have given and acquired land to build government schools, colleges and hospitals from this land. Out of this, the remaining 50% of the surplus land should be distributed to the small holders and natives according to sub-section B of section

²⁸ T. K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, V.V. Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1940, p.127.

96/2. The remaining 25 percent should be distributed to farmers who do not have more than five acres of land under Section 2C of Section 96. In other words, the ongoing process was to return 50 percent of the land to whoever took the land from them. Through this, the landless Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe groups remained landless and without social capital. Being denied communal justice, they became caste colonies by becoming marginalized by the society itself.

3:2 The Distribution of Land

When the Land Reforms Act came into force on January 1, 1970, the limits of the land that could be held by a family were set out in the provisions of the Land Act. The basic condition was to take over the remaining land as surplus land and distribute it to the landless. The plantation area was exempted from the scope of the land law.²⁹ This is because most of the land was in the plantation area. The land acquisition in Kerala was the reason that made Dalits homeless and landless. The majority of the land was vested in the upper caste communities and the law was never about turning them landless.³⁰

The first Communist government was forced to begin discussions on land reforms. The bill was passed on June 11, 1959. But the cabinet could not grant permission to the bill and was dissolved. In 1964, the Congress cabinet that came to power introduced another land reform bill but it was not implemented. The land reform of 1967 was more comprehensive and more modified than the law of 1959. In 1970, when C Achutha Menon was the Chief Minister, the Centre Government approved the Land Reforms Amendment Bill of 1967. This is the Kerala Land Reforms Act as it is known today.³¹

The land was divided into two sections, plantation land and agricultural land, under sections 81 and 82 of the Kerala Land Reforms Act, which has about 132 sections and more sub-sections.³² The landlord can own up to 15 acres of agricultural

²⁹ Mukundan Peruvattur, *Op.cit.*, pp.53-72.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.73-78.

³¹ T. C. Varghese, *Op.cit.*, pp.64-65.

³² Mukundan Peruvattur, *Op.cit.*, p.42.

land. That is, a landlord with 100 acres of agricultural land is allowed to own 15 acres of land under Section 82. He has to give 85 acres to the government. However, there is no limit under section 81 for plantation land and private forest land. Trusts could be registered instead. Thus, the history of the trusts in Kerala also began.³³ Also, in order to avoid giving up his land, the landlord could plant pepper, ginger, cardamom, nutmeg, rubber, sugarcane or large trees i.e., garden crops such as spearmint and teak to protect the plantation land. The landlords were also able to own the land despite giving it to the people (Sections 81, 82). The sub-sections of it suggest solutions to all the problems of land reform.

The lands originally acquired at that time were a few paddy fields in the western region, some in the midlands and the barren lands held by the Nilambur king. Today, the plantation area, which occupies most of the land, has been abandoned and converted into other large tracts of land and trusts. It was a denial of justice that the mainstream politics of the state did towards the Dalits and Adivasis while maintaining caste-power relations. That is to say, the land itself was creating caste colonies out of fear of communal inequality. Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad checked out the per capita land holdings in Kerala and released it.³⁴ According to it the per capita land holdings of the upper castes are 105 cents per capita while the per capita holdings of Dalits are only 2.7 cents (Per capita land holding of other communities- Backward Caste 63 cents, Christians 126 cents, Muslims 77 cents). Another survey report published by the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad reads the upper castes and Christians hold 231 cents per capita while the Dalit land is only 2.7 cents.³⁵

³³ Proceedings of the Land Boards, Kerala, Trivandrum B (A) A3-37678/81.

³⁴ Mukundan Peruvattur, *Op.cit.*, pp.73-80.

³⁵ K. P. Aravindan, *Varavum Chilavum Aasthikalum, KeralaPadanam*, Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, 2017, p.54.

Table 3:3
Average Land Holdings

Economic Group	Cents in Land
I	38.2
II	55.5
III	93.9
IV	189.1
Total	82.8
Religion	Percentage
Hindu	69.1
Muslim	77.1
Christian	126.4
Caste	Percentage
Backward	62.6
Forward	105.2
Scheduled Caste	27.0
Scheduled Tribe	138.7

Source. Aravindan, Varavum Chilavum Asthikalum, Kerala Padanam, Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad,2017, p.54.

When those who have land and those who do not have land raise the question of where the land is, the question arises not only of the land but also of the present state of power relations and resources holding.³⁶ The colonies created after the Land Reforms Act, the Lakh Houses, the coastal settlements, the plantation area settlements and the outcrops, call to mind how the mainstream community here marked a Dalit, an Adivasi and a backward minority in the public spaces of Kerala's culture. This is reflected in the 30,000 Dalit-Adivasi colonies that exist in Kerala.

³⁶ Luisa Steur, 'Indegenist Mobilization, Identity Versus Class after the Kerala Model of Development', Ph.D.Thesis, Central European University, 2011, pp.26-32.

The *Pulayans, Parayans, Adivasis, Kuravans and Ulladans* who lived in the feudal system, were uprooted into the three and four cents we see today through some hollow promises made after the land law. *Pulayan* and *Parayan*, who were working on the land, did not get the land and under Section 75 of the Land Act, it was stipulated that if the Dalit or Adivasi owns more than 3 cents of land, the land should not be given under tenure. The purpose of Article 75 was to prevent the lower strata of society from accumulating resources for their livelihood in a caste-based society. The justice of equal distribution of land and other resources was hindered and the power was vested with only a few of the mainstream society. Reservation ensures that the Dalit and Adivasi who suffer the burden of the caste system shall be made part of this fair distribution of public capital and wealth to marginalized lives. That it is only a constitutional mechanism for the sharing of power denied to the people who have been oppressed for centuries.

3:3 The Formation of Dalit Colonies

It was during the time of British imperialism that huge plantations and farms were established in Kerala. Europeans were able to lease the land at a low price whereas the in-land farmers were asked to pay 12 rupees for a hectare. The elite European owners of the plantation were paying one rupee per hectare.³⁷ In the initial days, colonies were established by the British for the plantation workers and for the people who were propagating religious conversion. The formation of caste colonies is a prolonged process that began in the second decade of the 20th century and after 1957 agricultural it intensified and took different forms and still they exist and retain in different forms in different regions.

The government formed under the EMS ministry in 1957 created a new beginning. Karikattoor colony and Mukkada Dalit colony were formed in 1959.³⁸ The second stage of the colonies started in 1970 when M K Krishnan was the minister of backward castes. Colonies were formed and retained under various ministries till

³⁷ P. Sivanandan, 'Caste and Economic Opportunity; A Study of the Effect of Educational Development and Land Reforms on the Employment and Income Earning Opportunities of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of Kerala', Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Kerala, 1992.

³⁸ Samagra Vikasana Rekha, Grama Panchayath, Varavoor, 2018-2019.

2010. These were model colonies and actually caste colonies.³⁹ Each of these colonies had houses that were in a 6000 square feet area. These colonies were side-lined to rural areas, hilly areas and other such landscapes that were away from the existence of mainstream society. Later these places undergo ghettoization as a result of the accumulation of the common capital from the social system.

a) Cooperative Colonies: The formation of colonies took place in numerous ways: the colonies were created by the British and those formed as part of the existing feudal land-lord system. One such important colony was the co-operative colony formed in the Cochin State. This was an attempt by the princely state to run the colonies by entrusting supervision to the co-operative societies. Through the cooperative organization, the landless and homeless people were provided colonies to reside under the guidance of the cooperative society.⁴⁰ But these colonies were never based on the interest of the landless. Thus, they never moved forward; instead, the co-operative groups were dispersed.⁴¹ There were various experiments with colonies before and after the formation of the Union of Kerala.

In 1965, there was appointed the Mathew Manianganadan Committee to study forest land encroachment of the above-mentioned cooperative colonies.⁴² The committee examined the need for the eviction of nine or ten colonies in Kollamoola of Pathanamthitta taluk. But the finding of the Committee reads so: ‘almost 450 acres comprising these colonies were allotted to cooperative societies 16 years ago. The intention was to establish a colony for the landless people, but the government did not provide any facility of the colony to those who actually lived there. So, they sold their land to others. The officers of the society also left the place. Now there are 250 families and no co-operative society is functioning. Those who stay here

³⁹ Proceedings, Kerala Legislative Assembly, July 23, 1980.

⁴⁰ Mathew Manikandan, Committee Report, Government of Kerala Agriculture & Rural Development, Department, Library Archives, Kerala Legislative Assembly, 1965, p.18.

⁴¹ R. K. Bijuraj, ‘Dalit Colonial Noorvarshathinte Charithravum Varthamanavum’ *Madyamam Weekly*, June 22, 2020, p.28.

⁴² Mathew Manikandan, Committee Report, *Op.cit.*, p.18.

are treated like encroachers. They own a small piece of land ranging from fifty cents to two acres, where they build a stone wall and grow coconuts, gourds, rubber, pepper, etc. and improve the place. Current residents should not be evicted and by this way they can improve their lives.’ This shows the condition of the colony under the supervision of the Co-operative Societies. Its inhabitants became extremely deplorable and the government failed to carry out its obligations and responsibilities towards them.

b) Laksham Veedu Colonies: During the C. Achutha Menon government, minister M. N Govindan Nair was in charge of the housing department. Then the Lakh House project started as a relief to the poor and the homeless. Financial assistance was received from the central government to purchase land for houses and arrange it suitably for house construction. A house cost between Rs 1250 to Rs 1500. It has been decided to provide 250 square feet of a house with two rooms and a kitchen for free of cost to each family.⁴³ Colonies sprung up across the state in 1972 as part of the Lakh House Scheme, which is nothing more than overpopulated ghettos for many reasons. Most of the families there belonged to Scheduled Castes and were forced to live in poor conditions. Though these projects and development activities were launched by the state government, eventually it would become the nominal panchayat-level projects and all these turned into isolated caste spaces.⁴⁴

⁴³ Proceedings of Kerala Legislative Assembly, Third Session, December 20, 1961, pp.1-2

⁴⁴ M. Muhammad Anees, ‘Segregated Spaces and Well-being: Evidence from Selected Dalit Colonies in Kerala,’ *Artha Vijnana Journal of The Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics*, Vol.62, No.2, 2020, pp.179-187.

Table 3:4**District wise Number of Scheduled Caste Colony Families, 1999**

No	District	Colony Families
1	Thiruvananthapuram	31414
2	Kollam	16408
3	Pathanamthitta	19666
4	Alappuzha	14103
5	Kottayam	6255
6	Idukki	4328
7	Ernakulam	24018
8	Thrissur	16147
9	Palakkad	18455
10	Malappuram	29155
11	Kozhikode	14293
12	Wayanad	1189
13	Kannur	7729
14	Kasargod	7586
	Total	210746

Source: Proceedings, Kerala Legislative Assembly, June 22,1999, pp.1-3

Twenty-seven years later, on July 16, 1999, the Local Self-Government Minister, Paloli Muhammad Kutty, in the question-and-answer session, said that there were 56,677 houses under the Lakh House scheme in the state.⁴⁵ That is, if we consider an average of five people per house, 2.8 lakh people (283,385 people) live in Lakh House colonies.⁴⁶ On the same day, the revenue minister attended a meeting and distributed *pattayam* to those living in Lakh House colonies. According to the list 36,295 people were given *pattayam* in 13 districts except Kozhikode.⁴⁷ By 2005, the government

⁴⁵ R. K. Bijuraj, *Op.cit.*, pp.28-29.

⁴⁶ Proceedings of Kerala Legislative Assembly, June 22, 1999, pp.1-3

⁴⁷ Proceeding of Kerala Legislative Assembly, June 7, 1990, p.1

launched The Lakh House Rehabilitation Project to rebuild the Lakh Houses. This is because the houses in Lakh House colonies were in a dilapidated condition and its bottom line is that the houses were not built with proper quality assurance.

Table 3:5
List of Lakh Houses

Districts	Single House	Duplex House	Total No. of House
Thiruvananthapuram	9845	4256	14101
Kollam	1629	1994	3623
Pathanamthitta	3812	2348	6160
Alappuzha	1485	650	2135
Kottayam	2268	2232	4500
Idukki	1830	795	2625
Ernakulam	9614	3358	12972
Thrissur	4725	4368	9093
Palakkad	2211	1379	3590
Malappuram	1287	1538	2825
Kozhikode	3160	2920	6080
Wayanad	5875	1763	7638
Kannur	3110	2688	5798
Kasargod	6739	2329	9068
Total	57590	32618	90208

Source: Kerala State Housing Board 2010, <https://kshb.kerala.gov.in/>

The project was designed to convert dilapidated houses into single houses. Construction of a house was estimated to cost Rs 40,000 and the government subsidized 50 per cent or a maximum of Rs 20,000.⁴⁸ It was decided to find the remaining amount from the share of voluntary organizations and local self-government bodies. There was

⁴⁸ Jobin T Johny, 'Empowerment and Development in the Lakshamveedu Colonies of Kerala A Case Study of Kottayam District', Unpublished Ph.D.Thesis, Research and Postgraduate Department of Political Science, Mahatma Gandhi University, 2015.

sanctioned five crores for the reconstruction of 2500 houses in 2006-2007. With this, 1543 houses were reconstructed in various districts. In effect, the contractors and middlemen gained'.⁴⁹ This paved the way for the marginalization of Dalits from mainstream society and they were deprived of a voice in the developmental aspects of society. The Lakshamveedu of Kuttanad and Kavalam are examples.

Transformation of Lakh House Colony to Contemporary Villas in Kizhakkambalam

The panchayat has undergone a makeover under the initiative of Twenty 20, an organization formed by the Anna-Kitex Group and the Kizhakkambalam Panchayat. In Najarallur, 37 Lakh Houses were converted into contemporary villas as found in urban enclaves. The houses were converted into a housing cluster and renamed God's Villa. The houses were equipped with all modern amenities including water, electricity, cable connectivity and security cameras. Sabu Thomas, the Chief Coordinator of Kitex Garments and Twenty20 Party, said in a Panchayat meeting that the work of the Twenty20 project started 18 months ago and all the houses in Najarallur Colony (37) already completed and he added that 25 houses in Velangu, eight houses in Kanampuram and four houses in Makkenikara colonies would be completed by December.⁵⁰

Contemporary houses of 750 square feet sprung up on four-cent lots. They have two bedrooms each, a hall, a kitchen and car parking facilities. The total cost of the project is Rs 6 crore, of which Twenty20 has spent Rs 5.26 crore. The remaining amount was received from the government scheme 'Laksham Veedu Ottveedu'.⁵¹ Apart from that, in some other areas a corporate organization renovated houses as part of the SC development project to bring them to better living conditions, but the question on the other side is why a corporate organization has an interest in improving the materialistic conditions of the marginalized people in the area.⁵²

⁴⁹ R.K. Bijuraj, *Dalit Colonial Nooruvarshathinte Charithravum Varthamanavum*, *Op.cit.*, p.29-30.

⁵⁰ *The Times of India* 'Laksham Veedu Colonies Undergo Image Makeover', 1/12/2018.

⁵¹ Jobin T Johny, *Op.cit.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.28.

c) Ambedkar Villages: The Integrated Habitual Development Project (IHDP):

Although the government took the initiative of providing houses in the colonies from the beginning, it was only in the late 1980s that the approach of developing the colonies as a whole was adopted. The Ambedkar Village Scheme is the first of such State-wide schemes. As part of Dr BR Ambedkar's birth centenary celebrations, the government declared selected *Harijan* (Dalit) colonies as Ambedkar villages.⁵³ Habitats with at least 25 Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families which were lacking basic facilities were selected as Ambedkar villages. 175 Scheduled Caste habitats and 37 Scheduled Tribe habitats have been declared as Ambedkar villages. The government claimed that in the Ambedkar Village, it would carry out housing, transport, electrification, clean water supply, primary education, health care, agricultural development, irrigation, soil conservation, animal husbandry and self-employment programs. Ambedkar villages were selected only in the year 1990-91. From 1991-92, IHDP (Integrated Habitual Development Project) was implemented in selected colonies for the comprehensive development of SC habitat instead of Ambedkar villages.⁵⁴

According to the reply given by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Minister on January 28, 1999, the development work of 185 colonies as IHDP colonies is planned to be carried out on that financial year.⁵⁵ So far, the work undertaken in 888 colonies has been completed. It has been decided not to select new IHDP colonies but targeting the colonies acquired in 1999 to complete the projects. It was also said that the entire amount allocated in the budget for this project for the years 1997-98 and 1998-99 will be utilized for completing the unfinished projects. On March 17, 1998, in the Legislative Assembly, Scheduled Community Welfare Minister K Radhakrishnan said that for the current fiscal year, 1000 Lakh rupees were allocated for development work of colonies. If we look at the annual figures, it is said that crores were spent for the renovation of the colonies. If we consider the sums

⁵³ *The Hindu*, 10/03/2024.

⁵⁴ R.K. Bijuraj, *Dalit Colonial Nooruvashathinte Charithravum Varthamanavum*, *Op.cit.*, p.29-30

⁵⁵ Dr .M. A. Kuttappan, Kerala Legislative Assembly Question and Answer,, 23/10/2001.

spent for development activities carried out by the government, inhabitants of the colonies would get the best habitat. However, neither the colonies nor their residents have benefited from the funds and schemes even partially. It will be clarified that middlemen, contractors and officials are the beneficiaries of many projects.⁵⁶

A study on Dalit colonies and living conditions in the state was conducted by the Kerala Institute of Local Administration in 2009-2010. It was decided on 31 December 2008 to conduct the Scheduled Caste Survey as a joint initiative of the Local Self-Government Department, Scheduled Caste Development Department and KILA. On July 26, 2010, the government also decided to conduct data collection of Scheduled Caste families living in isolation. A 'Habitat' is defined as a place where five or more Scheduled Caste families live in close proximity. The survey revealed that there are 2,198 Scheduled Caste colonies in Kerala. Based on this, it is understood in many studies and articles that Dalits live in so many Scheduled Caste colonies.

The information as per the survey brought out the reality of 60 years of Dalit house and land which the general society and the authorities are still not ready to accept and acknowledge. 3,41,964 families are living in SC colonies in wetlands. That is, 2,16,267 Scheduled Caste families which consist of 7,06,776 males and 7,38,684 females, have a total of 14,45,460 people who are not in shelters. The total population of Dalit communities with and without colonies is 23,52,087 (5,58,231 families - 11,49,013 males and 12,03,074 females).⁵⁷ Among them here are more than 50,000 families landless and homeless. There are 45,959 uninhabitable houses in colonies. Repairable houses are 26,458. The number of one-room houses in colonies is 123871. It means that landless people live in small ghettos with no infrastructure.

d) Slums and Slum Clearance: It is believed that the slums belong to the Dalits and the colonies belong to the minorities as well as other backward castes.⁵⁸ Colonies and

⁵⁶ Proceeding of Kerala Legislative Assembly, 17/03/1998.

⁵⁷ State Census Report of Scheduled Caste Colonies, Kerala State of Local Administration, *Op.cit.*, p.7.

⁵⁸ Proceedings of Kerala Legislative Assembly, 31/07/1967.

slums have different meanings and social characteristics. However, they are often referred to in official systems interchangeably, leading to confusion. One reason may be that many colonies have the characteristics of slums and slums the characteristics of colonies. Dalits make up a good proportion of the people living in the colonies, while the slums in Kerala mostly belong to minority communities. Exact records are not available as to when slums came into existence in Kerala. According to official records, it is clear that there were slums in Cochin State in the mid-1930s. In the proceedings of the Cochin Legislative Council [CLC] on 14 December 1943, the representative from Chalakudy, A.V. Muthetan was seen investigating if there is a plan to eliminate slums in Ernakulam and Mattanchery. Many discussions and proceedings followed in the legislative house at different times on the condition and elimination of those slums.

As per the 1998 report, there are 1198 slums in Kerala. The government repeatedly claims that Kerala does not have any slums. It appears to be a fairy tale as that of the Kerala Model Development. In 1956, the slum clearance scheme was started in Kerala as a Central Government sponsored scheme. Slum clearance, an item in the Five Year Plans, was transferred to the state sector in 1969. Later the project was included in the state plan and implemented. On December 8, 1961, the government replied that the slum clearance project was being implemented in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation and in the municipalities of Kollam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Mattancherry, Fort Kochi, Palakkad, Kozhikode, Thalassery and Kannur. After the Kozhikode acquisition process, the land has not come under the control of the municipality. The minister of the department also said that it is expected that the land will be handed over to the municipality soon.⁵⁹

On March 20, 1969, the Kerala Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Bill 1969 was introduced in the Legislative Assembly.⁶⁰ According to Local Self-Government Minister RS Unni, 'During the period 1961-62 to 1979-80, a total of 31

⁵⁹ Proceedings of Kerala Legislative Assembly, 13/03/2007.

⁶⁰ Proceedings of Kerala Legislative Assembly, 20/03/1969.

slum clearance projects were undertaken and implemented by the various Municipal Corporations with a total financial assistance of Rs. 41.41 lakhs." It was estimated that a total of Rs 20 crores would be spent on clearing the slums located in 25 towns of the state and improving the environment etc.⁶¹ During that financial year, programs were formulated for the eradication of one major slum in 9 towns and the improvement of basic facilities in 3 towns. It was also said that the government wants to complete the slum clearance and reform works in the next 10 years. In the same session of the Legislative Assembly RS Unni declared that in Kerala, there were 100 slums and more than 12,000 families living in it. The reality is that 84,000 people lived in slums with an average of 7 people per family.

In the 1980-81 budget for slum clearance, the government allocated Rs.15 lakhs and in the revised plan scheme submitted to the Central Government, Rs.50 lakhs was also included for the project. 65 lakhs each in 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1982-83 and 75 lakhs each in 1983-84 and 1984-85 were spent on slum reform. In 1981, the Kerala Slum Area and Clearance Act 1981 came into force in relation to slum clearance. It is a fact that while slum clearance was taking place on one hand, slums/colonies were being created on the other hand. Slum colonies like Tammanam Shantipuram were thus created. On November 25, 1986, when asked by Stephen Padua about the number of the slums in the state, Law Minister K.M. Mani replied that there are 79 slums located in town centres. Earlier on July 24, 1986, in the Legislative Assembly, the Law and Irrigation Minister replied to Stephen Padua's question about the number of colonies in Kochi city as 18. The names of the slums and the number of people living in them are as follows:

⁶¹ Proceedings of Kerala Legislative Assembly 13/03/2007.

Table 3:6
Cochin Slum Report

No	Names of Slums	Number
1	Saudi Colony	110
2	Cheliparam	564
3	Military Slum	223
4	Kanalambilipadam Slum	319
5	Ponoth	135
6	Manattara Pulaya Colony	220
7	Puthyavittil Slum	114
8	Panaka Slum	66
9	East of St. Agnes Church	90
10	VadayarParambu	45
11	Pulimootil Slum	617
12	Panampilly Nagar West	190
13	Vellaparambu	268
14	Panakassery Parambu	268
15	Adhikari Valapu	835
16	Fishermen Colony Elamakara	410
17	Arakattuparambu	60
18	Tundiparam	200

Source: Proceedings of Kerala Legislative Assembly, July 24,1986, pp.1-2

A survey conducted by the State Municipal Planning Department in 1995-96 revealed that there was a total of 169 slum areas in the urban areas of the state. At that time, the government decided to improve the quality of life of the slum dwellers by reforming the slums in the urban areas through the Slum Reform Scheme included in the State Plan, the National Slum Development Scheme which is a 100% Centralized Scheme and the Public Planning Scheme.⁶² In the year 1997-98, the government allocated 115.05 lakh rupees under the state-initiated slum reform scheme and 160

⁶²'Urban Slums in Kerala- 1995-1996', Town Planning Department, 1997, pp. v

lakh rupees under the centrally-initiated slum development scheme to the municipalities for slum clearance. In the mid-1990s, the money was allocated under the state-initiated slum reform scheme based on the chief town planner giving technical approval to the projects prepared and submitted by the respective municipalities. 50% of the project cost was financed by a loan and 50% by a grant. The amount was allocated to the Municipal Corporations under the National Slum Development Plan, based on the number of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the number of slum dwellers, and the number of people below the poverty line as per the Community Development Survey, based on the 1991 census, assistance was given in the form of loans and grants in the ratio of 70:30. On February 26, 1999, the Local Self-Government Minister in the Legislative Assembly stipulated that 5-10 per cent of the plan funds allocated to the Municipal Corporations in 1997-98 should be allocated for slum reform as part of the Public Planning Scheme.

In 2012 the government received approval of 71.86 crores from the center for the Mathipuram slum eradication pilot project in Vizhinjam ward of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation under the *Jeev Awas Yojana*, which has been formulated with the aim of becoming a slum-free city. Under this scheme, 1032 families have been provided houses, other basic facilities and social infrastructure. Preparations for the pilot project were underway in four other corporations.⁶³ Also, the Socio-Economic Survey for preparation of the Slum Free City Plan of Action has been progressing in selected slums in 5 Corporations. 8841.68 lakh rupees as central assistance was available to the state from 1996 to 2005 under the national slum clearance programme. 5493.59 lakhs as central assistance was received from 2001-02 under the Vambay scheme. The slum eradication project was implemented through Kudumbashree, State Poverty Alleviation Mission and State Urban Development Agency (SUDA). In December 2005, the National Slum Development Program (NSDP) launched the Integrated Housing Slum Development (IHSDP) program

⁶³ M. Muhammed Anees, 'Segregated Spaces and Well-being: Evidence from Selected Dalit Colonies in Kerala', *Op.cit.*, p.180.

aimed at a comprehensive slum development. According to the government, there are no slums in the state now. But slums still exist.

Table 3:7
General Findings and Summary of Slums

Slums	Numbers
Total number of slums	1169
Total number of Households	65953
Total Population in slums	358012

Source: 'Urban Slums in Kerala 1995-1996, Town Planning Department,1997, pp.v

Table 3:8

Town	Average Household	Average Population
Kochi	61	304
Kozhikode	142	973
Thiruvananthapuram	176	802

Source: 'Urban Slums in Kerala 1995-1996, Town Planning Department,1997, pp.v

Table 3:9

Social Group	Household	Percentage	Population	Percentage
Scheduled Caste	13678	20.74	65741	18.36
Scheduled Tribe	938	1.42	4206	1.18
Others	51337	77.84	288065	80.46
Total	65953	100.00	385012	100.00

Source: 'Urban Slums in Kerala 1995-1996', Town Planning Department,1997, pp. v

f. Life Flat Project: LIFE Mission (Livelihood Inclusion Financial Empowerment) envisages a comprehensive housing scheme for the landless and homeless in the state. LIFE Mission focuses on four key areas: Affordable Housing, Improving Public Infrastructure, Strengthening Agriculture and Improving Natural Resource Management. The aim is to build 500 square feet of houses spending Rs 4 lakh for

each. For this, the amount will be taken from the central government's housing scheme, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).⁶⁴ PMAY envisages spending Rs 3 lakh per house. The state government, local government and the user will be added 50,000 each. But the state government removed the user's fee portion and raised the local government's share to Rs 2 lakh. The objective of the mission is to provide safe housing to 4.30 lakh homeless people in the state within 5 years.

The objective of the LIFE scheme is to provide a safe and decent housing system within the next five years to all the landless, landless-homeless, uncompleted houses and those whose existing housing is uninhabitable in Kerala. Mentally challenged/ blind/ physically impaired, the needy, persons with disabilities, those with critical/terminal illness, single mothers, those unable to earn an income due to illness/accident and widows are given priority in the life plan. The list of landless/homeless persons was prepared on the bases of Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) conducted by the Central Government in 2011 and the local self-government bodies. The agencies like *Kudumbashree* and Scheduled Tribe promoters also directly identify the eligible families.⁶⁵

The first phase of the LIFE Mission project, which was started to find a comprehensive solution to the problems of the homeless in Kerala was completed and the second phase is progressing successfully.⁶⁶ 52,455 (96.92%) houses out of 54,122 was completed in the first phase. 680.72 crore has been provided as financial assistance for the construction of houses to the beneficiaries. In the second phase, out of 1,77,972 beneficiaries identified and approved through the *Gram Sabha* survey, 1,03,124 beneficiaries were eligible through document verification. Of these, 87,495 (88.98%) beneficiaries have completed the construction of houses. In the third phase, a housing complex has been completed in Adimali and handed over to 163 deserving landless homeless beneficiaries of Adimali Gram Panchayat. 101 housing complexes

⁶⁴ Naseera Neelothu, "Lifemission Padhathiyum Keralathile Bhavanarahitharum, March2020, *Doolnews.com*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁶ www.lifemission.kerala.gov.in

are targeted for construction. 14 housing complexes are being constructed by Care Homes. Construction of 10 pilot housing complexes is in progress. Also, the construction of 26 housing complexes has started.⁶⁷

Table 3:10
Life Mission Funding Details

Sl. No.	Details of Life Mission Funding (Rs. 1,43,077)	Amount
1	PMAY Life Urban	63,449
2	PMAY Life Rural	17,134
3	Scheduled Caste	19,987
4	Scheduled Tribes	2,095
5	Fisheries Community	4389

Source: Lifemission.Kerala.gov.in

The problem with LIFE Mission scheme is that there are currently 15,962 wards in 941-gram panchayats in the state. If it is decided to build flats that can accommodate at least 50 families in each ward, then 7,98,100 families can be provided shelter in the state. Even if it is said to solve the problem of homelessness for years to come, there is no doubt that the flat projects will make the socio-economic security of a family or a particular group difficult in the future life. At the same time, there are complaints that one can get a house only if one has a ration card and one can get a ration card only if one has a house. There are complaints about ration cards. The government considers only those whose name is on a ration card as a family. If any of the card bearers owns a house, no other member in the ration card is treated as a beneficiary. At the same time, the government says that families without cards cannot be considered under the current guidelines. Such terms have raised challenges among the beneficiaries belonging to the tribal and fishermen communities. Following this, on August 5, 2019 the government had to announce a small relaxation in the above two criteria. According to the documents, it was decided in the meeting that LIFE Mission beneficiaries belonging to Scheduled Castes and

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Fishermen communities can be given a concessional amount on the criteria of 'not having more than 25 cents of land and one house per family belonging to a ration card'. But the norms do not appear to have been relaxed in the case of tribal families in the same situation.⁶⁸

The apartments in construction in the model of LIFE project have an area of 350 square feet with one small hall, one room, a toilet and a kitchen. For 12 years the family could not own the flat. After fifteen years the flat cannot be sold or rented to others. Thus, one can live in the home without acquiring any ownership rights. All these flats that have so far been constructed have turned into colonies. Even after 10 years, some have not yet received ownership or charter of the flat.⁶⁹ There is no proper space for family members to settle in as the hall and room are narrow spaces. The limit in space forces the newlywed of the family to move out to rent a house. In 2014, the government decided to make flats for 4,72,000 families in 5 years. As part of the initial stage, fund for the construction of flats for one lakh families has been set aside. The flat of 350 square feet might get extended to 400 square feet as discussions and proceedings are prioritised for landless. Thus, the landless Dalits will not be privileged to receive even the 3 cents of land offered to them because of the flats. The people who fought for land ownership rights for more than 30 years are left in the void through the modern concept of the colony through a flat setup. Thus, they are excluded historically from acquiring any form of capital and resources.

g) Ambedkar Colony, Palakkad: The Ambedkar Colony at Govindapuram in Palakkad district located on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border was settled in 1982 after the Congress government of K Karunakaran allotted 0.03 acres of land to 50 Chakliya families. The colony developed over the years as more Scheduled Caste families got the *patayam*. At present 450 families and about 1500 people live here. There are also 133 Chakliya families, the rest belonging to the Ervallen community.⁷⁰ The Chakliyas are considered untouchable by the upper caste Hindus, mainly the affluent Gounder

⁶⁸ www.lifemission.kerala.gov.in

⁶⁹ Naseera Neelothu, *Op.cit.*

⁷⁰ *Times of India*, 21/07/2017.

community and they follow it as a social practice. To put an end to this discrimination, the Chakliyas refuse to bury the dead of the upper caste Hindus. It is a social custom that the burial of the dead who belonged to upper caste Hindus is made by Chakliyas.

Senthil Kumar, the secretary of the Ambedkar Dalit Samrakshana Sangham, an organization formed by the colony members to empower Dalits, explained their decision thus: “we decided not to bury the bodies of the upper caste Gounders in the colony. They say they wanted their bodies to be cremated by us, but we are untouchable to them. So, we do not want this to continue.” Senthil Kumar added that Chakliyas are denied to use the public water tap for a long time. We could only draw water from a tap in a public tank near the colony. Another tap is unofficially reserved for the use of the upper caste gounder community, and if we touch their vessels, they will pour out all the water and refill the tank.⁷¹

“There were two sets of glasses kept in the tea stalls here, one for the Gounders, the Ezhavas and the other for the lower castes,” said S Shivarajan, a group leader. They abandoned the practice 10 days after the issue came to the attention of the national media. Before 2004, Chakliyar's hair was not cut. Barber shop owners do not say anything clearly, Shivarajan said. “Instead, they will give weak reasons such as their scissors not being sharp, or someone else standing in the queue. People did not have the courage to speak out against these practices,” he said.⁷² “It simply came to our notice then. But the situation changed when Chakliyan was forced into barber shops and forced to cut his hair.” Shivarajan said his community was not allowed in the village temple either. “In 2012, we built our own Madurai Veeran temple inside the colony and found a solution” he said.

h) Vadayampady Colony: Development cannot be attained by marginalizing and segregating the social life and cultural existence of a group of people. This is the case with every colony and land struggle in Kerala starting with Vanampadi in Ernakulam district that has the highest number of backward castes in terms of population. The

⁷¹ *The Hindu*, 14/06/2017

⁷² Personal Interview with Sivarajan, Govindapuram Colony, Palakkad, 16/06/2017.

local economy is controlled by the upper-caste Christians and Nairs. The land and resources belong to them as they belong to the upper class and it is natural for the Dalit people to be the hirelings of the productive system in such areas. One cannot deny the contribution of this section of the people to the economy and manufacturing sector of Vadayampadi. Most of the Dalit communities in the area are either company workers, labourers or domestic workers. Dalit communities and other backward communities have pivotal role in the mode of production and in the capital and social formation by eventually contributing to the economy.

Vadayampadi colony was sanctioned during the EMS ministry in 1967. For the arts, sports, culture and social development of the people, one-acre of land was allotted at Survey No. 3124, which is surrounded by three colonies. It is a public ground where they made a sanctum and kept there the sword and the sceptre. Makotha Pappu, a member of the Paraya community, used to perform pooja inside it.⁷³ Just as much as they gave cultural importance to the public ground, it is as important to them emotionally and spiritually.⁷⁴ Later the NSS Karayogam took possession of it and turned it into a temple called Bhajan Math. In March 2017, a 10-foot-high wall was erected around it with the help of the police. It is learned that in 1981 by order of G.O.M.S No 230/81/ RD, this Revenue Exit Ground was allotted to the NSS Karayogam Vadayampadi for the needs of the temple. Dalit people formed a Dalit Land Authority Front and started a strike demanding the abolition of fake leases and public outflow of revenue.⁷⁵ As no decision was taken on this, on April 14, 2017, on Ambedkar Jayanti Day, the illegally constructed wall was demolished under the leadership of the Samara Samithi. In a meeting convened by the Ernakulam Collector to resolve the issue arising out of this, it was suggested that the situation in the disputed area should remain the same till a decision is taken in the court.

The strike intensified and those on the front lines of the strike spread the word about the stand-up strike on social media. It was inaugurated by TT Sreekumar, a

⁷³ Vikasanarekaha, Puthrukka, Aikkaranaadu, Grama Panchayath, 1999.

⁷⁴ *Times of India*, 5/02/2018.

⁷⁵ Personal Interview with Shanmukhan Idayatheril, Social Activist, Ernakulam,, 20/02/2018

renowned academician, social observer and the most controversial question was how the wall of Vadayambadi became a caste wall.⁷⁶ It is clear that the wall was erected so that not even their eyes could see the colonists or come in contact with them. For those who aspire to the privilege of caste, caste is only an opportunity to achieve things in their privilege. The *Vadayampadi* issue is an example not only of the existence of caste in post-renaissance Kerala but also of the existence of untouchability. It is shocking that even after so many years of independence, a nation has not been able to sit on its own land with peace of mind and still needs stand-up struggles. Though there takes place police intervention, arrests, manhandling and allegations, Dalit families in *Vadayampadi* village are still struggling to regain their right and justice.

i) Nedyiruppu Harijan Colony: A Historical Background: Nedyiruppu and Kotassery were colonies between two mountains without even basic road facilities until 1985. It spreads over a total area of 740 acres and 21 cents. Probably no Dalit colonies in Kerala have such land availability.⁷⁷ Around 350 Dalit families are living in these colonies for their livelihood through farming and other occupations. The houses were rough shacks in the early days, then became log houses and later progressed to concrete houses. While a family got four acres of land in the colony part of Nedyiruppu village, a family in Kotassery was allotted only one acre of land. In any case, the inhabitants of the two colonies are cultivating pepper, banana, coconut, vegetables etc. as a part of their sweat. That is where Nedyiruppu Colony makes a difference.

It was in April 1953 that Nedyiruppu, known as Harijan Colony was established. Malabar was then a part of the Madras state.⁷⁸ Nedyiruppu was an outlying hilly land, under government hold which was about to be auctioned for a pittance. Along with Harijan Seva Sangh office-bearers, Vinobawa's disciple Shri Shyamji Sundardas approached the then Chief Minister C Rajagopalachari with the proposal of buying land for Harijans and the sale to be made accordingly. Harijan Seva Sangh officials and Shyamji Sundardas have had to suffer to make these

⁷⁶ *The Wire*, 15/02/2018.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁸ Charithram Samuhyacharithram, Nedyiruppu Grama Panchayath, August, 2018.

mountain hills habitable and resettle the Harijans. The reason for the existence of the colony was the work of Shri PR Nambisan who was the secretary of the Seva Sangh and Shri KM Raman Shyamji. Spread over six and eight wards of Nediyruppu panchayat, 24 families were initially settled in this colony. Later Harijans (Dalit) were settled in many parts of Ernadu. Shyamji's initiative provided direct financial assistance to them to build a hut and start farming to begin everything they needed in life.⁷⁹

The 50-year-old Colony Road was built in 1953 under the LD scheme, block by block. The Colony Land Committee was under the control of the Tehsildar, Police, *Harijan Seva Sangam* officials, Village Officer etc. It was this committee that supervised the process of finding and settling the landless and allotment of land. But the work of the committee alone was not enough to fulfil the needs of the new settlers.⁸⁰ Therefore, as per the later conviction of the government, with the aim of land development, the paddy field was handed over to the Farmers Coordination Society subject to certain conditions under the control of the colony land in order to provide implements, fertilizers, seeds etc. for agriculture and land development. As per Order No. 12 26 issued on 20/12/1958 all the development activities of the colony were done by the Society.⁸¹

There are about 15 wells in the two colonies which in summer could yield no water. The works of the water development project was passed under the 2004 Central Government Swa jatara scheme. There was an LP school for the two colonies under Harijan Welfare Department but later it was turned into a Government School. The old school is being renovated. The children are mostly Dalits. Many people do not like to become teachers here due to other problems including transportation.⁸² Due to the lack of teachers, the school is becoming a one-teacher school. Apart from it there are two Anganwadis functioning under the Social Welfare Department. Nediyruppu

⁷⁹ Samagra Vikasanarekha, Kerala Local Administration, Thrissur, December, 1996, pp.10-89.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.12-16.

⁸² Vikasanarekha, Nediyruppu Grama Panchayath, 1996, p.85.

and Kottassery colonies have a total Dalit population of around 5000 out of which more than 1000 are children. According to 1985 census, there were 95 people in the colonies who reached the school final, 21 of them went to college and 17 went on to earn government jobs.⁸³ There are people working in various fields like Thumba Rocket Launch Center, Bank, Co-operative Institution, Postal Department, Police, and Panchayat Block. The residents of the colony belong to the Scheduled Caste groups called Mathan and Cheruman. As there is no market facility to sell the goods made in the colony, they have to sell at a meagre price. There are no commercial establishments in the colony and no educational institutions except primary school.⁸⁴ Nediyruppu is supposed to be the largest Dalit colony in Kerala. All the Dalit colonies that exist in Kerala today were made available through meagre land. A few primitive model patterns still exist. Breaking down all this, we can take many models that existed in Nediyruppu and Kotassery.

Table 3:11
Details of Colonies: Nediyruppu Grama Panchayath

No	Ward No	Name of Colonies	Family	Population	Homeless Family
1	1	Kunnathupotta SC Colony	15	140	3
2	2	Cholakkal	45	267	22
3	2	Kottaparambu	45	-267	15
4	3	Nottanapaara	43	267	-12
5	3	Kambalapara	43	-	23
6	4	Vellatupurai	29	150	12
7	5	Vattiyarkunnu	13	90	4
8	7	Nediyruppu SC Colony	250	1353	165
9	8	Kottasseery	125	700	15
10	8	Thumbbeeripara	10	75	8
11	10	Palakkaparambu	20	140	8

Source: Smaranika, 'Charithram, Samoohika Charithram', Nediyruppu Grama Panchayath, 1996

⁸³ Personal Interview with Ravindran, Kondotty, Nediyruppu, Malappuram, 18/11/2018.

⁸⁴ Personal Interview with Subran, Kondotty, Nediyruppu, 20/04/2023.

3:4 Questions of Identity and Marginalization

All the land struggles in Kerala are Dalit movements for land redistribution and democratization of land relations. Through this democratization of land relations, a new social order is being created. Despite taking it as progressive or as a call for justice (that means the equal right to share the land and resources) the community represented by those who speak for such land rights is being questioned on the basis of their caste identity and being sidelined as a separate category. All their moves for land were suppressed by state intervention. All these colonies exist as caste colonies through the many questions of society and the interference of power. They will constantly become a question mark, as a solution to the right to land and equal distribution in the community. They will also carry out a variety of interventions ranging from land struggles. Each colony exists as a ghetto, which is a non-standard indicator of social and economic inequality.⁸⁵

No land struggle brought any ultimate solution to the social problem it dealt with. Instead, each land struggle creates a set of landless, irregular lives. The struggle for the right of land of Dalit people in Kerala has been going on for decades. But still, they stand in the outlying lands. Six and a half lakh families are living without a piece of land to lay or to bury their dead officially. Seventy nine percent of Dalits live in 26,342 colonies.⁸⁶ There are 14,000 settlements and 6742 colonies inhabited by tribals, ten thousand of plantation workers and 522 fishermen. At the same time, 58 per cent of Kerala's revenue land is being acquired by about 200 monopolies illegally. The landless have been fighting in front of governments for years to get their land back.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ William K Tab, *The Political Economy of the Black Ghetto*, W Norton Company, New York, 1970, pp. 1-21.

⁸⁶ Census Report SC /ST, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, 2009-2010, p.1.-9.

⁸⁷ Rajamanikyam Report, No.GLR – (LR) – 1/2016/BRT/Co, 4/06/2016. pp.1-20.

Table: 3:12**SC Population 2010, Kerala Institute of Local Administration**

No.	Districts	No of Habitats	Families Living Alone	Total Population	
				Counting No	Percentage
1	Palakkad	4310	71515	311376	13.10
2	Thrissur	3117	70133	295574	12.44
3	Malappuram	3087	58027	276708	11.64
4	Kollam	2844	59469	242119	10.19
5	Thiruvananthapuram	2978	58340	233325	9.82
6	Ernakulam	1999	49708	197506	8.31
7	Alappuzha	1465	42292	176900	7.44
8	Kozhikode	1527	38708	163064	6.86
9	Pathanamthitta	1706	29996	123527	5.20
10	Kottayam	1044	29133	118217	4.97
11	Idukki	887	22438	86382	3.63
12	Kannur	612	17490	77534	3.26
13	Kasargod	540	10087	46109	1.94
14	Wayanad	226	6993	28148	1.18
	Total	26,342	5,64329	23,76489	100

Source: Scheduled Caste Families and Habitat in Kerala, Department of Local Self Government, Scheduled Caste Development Department, 2010.

Kerala is a place where agricultural and land struggles took place and surplus land and rights were established by the government. But the struggles alone are not over yet as many are still landless. Even after the implementation of land reform, the landless and landless labours who have been left out of it.⁸⁸ The political parties approach such struggles based on caste-class ideologies. The Adivasipeople were

⁸⁸ Sunny. M. Kappikkad, 'Dalither Neridunna Vibhavadhikara Prasnangal in K. M. Salim Kumar, (edi.), *Bhoomiyude Jathiyum Rashtriyavum*, (Mal.) Kottayam, Pavithran Smaraka Dalit Padana Kendram, 2008, pp.29-62.

organized and shifting from land struggles that based on class politics to other kind of agitation, Muthanga is the example. When Muthanga was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1960, the government evicted thousands of tribals from there in the 1980s for eucalyptus plantations. Those who were expelled from the land later lived in very bad conditions. The Adivasis started the agitation in 2001 when the starvation deaths of the Adivasis repeated. In front of the house of Chief Minister AK Antony, people started a strike by building a hut on his doorstep demanding five acres of agricultural land for 45,000 tribal families. At the end of the 48-day strike, the government promised rehabilitation and land distribution to the *Adivasis*. The strike is over. But the assurances did not materialize.⁸⁹

When the promises were not kept, the Adivasi Gotra Mahasabhaled by CK Janu and M Geethanandan entered the Muthanga forest. They established their claim to the Muthanga forest land by declaring autonomy. They started farming there. But in 2003, the government suppressed the movement. Police arrived with all possible means to evict about 200 tribals and gutted down the huts and ordered gunfire.⁹⁰ Tribals hiding in the forest were also shot at and extensive arrests also took place. Tribals including 37 children were lodged in Kannur Central Jail. Janu and Geethanandan were arrested and beaten up. It clearly indicated the inhuman way in which the government had dealt with the agitation. The tribal movement, which was brutally suppressed by the police and the government, was discussed through many channels.⁹¹

The promises made by the government to the Muthanga activists were lagged for years and implemented only to a very limited extent. When the VS Achuthanandan government came to power, on September 27, 2006, it was promised that land would be given to the landless before May 31, 2006. But that did not materialize on time. Sadhujana Vimochana Samyuktha Vedhi, led by Laha Gopalan

⁸⁹ *Keralashabdham*, 9/03/2003.

⁹⁰ *India Today*, 12/03/2003.

⁹¹ K. Raviraman, C.R.Bijoy, 'Muthanga: The Real Story: Adivasi Movement to Recover Land', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38(20), 17 May 2003, pp.1975, 1977, 1979, 1982.

started a strike at Harrison Malayalam Estate in January 2007. But the strike was called off after the government assured them that it would do what it needed to do. But months later, when it was realized that there was no move to distribute land, 300 landless families led by *Sadhujana Vimochana Samyuktha Vedi* entered the Kumbazha estate of Harrison Malayalam Limited in Chengara.⁹²

The Chengara land struggle later became the struggle that brought the politics of land tenure to the public sphere of Kerala. About 7,500 landless families from various communities, including Dalits and Adivasis, came to Chengara. The police, revenue authorities and the government tried to evacuate them through various pressure tactics but to no avail. The United Democratic Front came to support the protesters in Chengara who had committed atrocities in Muthanga. Those who built huts on the land in Chengara started farming and cut down the rubber on the estate to make a living. The protesters mainly demanded that the government take over the land held by Harrison illegally and distribute it to the landless.⁹³ 790 days later, on October 5, 2009, the strike officially ended, with the government promising to provide land to 1,432 families. When more than 7,000 families arrived in Chengara, the government considered only 1738 people.⁹⁴ The government said that it could not give land to the rest of them because they had property. Despite disagreements with the government, the leaders accepted the proposal. Those who approved the package got land in Wayanad, Kasaragod, Idukki and Malappuram districts. But many left the land in protest of being given uninhabitable land. Many of these lands were uninhabitable or arable. Some got one acre of land while others got 25 cents of land. *Chengara* is still home to more than 3,000 people. It can be seen that they are finding it difficult to live without basic facilities and without even getting the right to vote or a ration card.⁹⁵

⁹² *Countercurrents*, 19/02/2017.

⁹³ K. T. Rammohan, 'Caste and Landlessness in Kerala: Signals from Chengara', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(37), 13-19, 2008, pp.14-16.

⁹⁴ Kenneth Bo Nielsen, Siddharth Sareen, Patrik Oskarsson, The Politics of Caste, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, pp. ,684-695.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.693-698.

Later, there were many small and big land struggles in Kerala and some continue to this day. In 2012, landless Dalits, Adivasis and other communities arrived at the Arippa land in Kulathupuzha, Kollam. Their only demand was to be provided agricultural land. "We do not want three cents of land. We need land to cultivate," was their slogan. The land struggle remains unresolved. The government has also instructed the Arippa strikers, who used to cultivate their own food, do not cultivate anymore. The government took over 90 acres of land leased to a private individual (Harrison Plantation) as government surplus land.⁹⁶ Out of this 21.54 acres of land was distributed and leased as part of the Chengara package.

The last land struggle that came to the attention of the Kerala public was at Tovarimala. Thousands of landless people, including Adivasis, reached Tovarimalain Wayanad on the evening of April 21st 2022 and started a strike by building huts.⁹⁷ The demand of strikers was to distribute to the landless the reserved forest area which was taken over by the Achutha Menon government in 1970 from Harrison in Tovarimala. The government, which had not taken any action on Election Day and the day before Election Day, reached the ground at 8 am on the 24th, arrested the protesters and evacuated them. Then the protesters started the strike in front of the Collectorate. The solution by the Government was to give 70 acres of land to 600 families. But the protesters did not accept it. "If we accept the land proposal which the government puts forth, we will get 10 cents and 11 cents. That is not what we are fighting for."⁹⁸ The landless are the basic peasantry. They want the land to cultivate and the strike committee leaders said in response to this, "If the government tries to placate us by giving three cents, five cents and ten cents, the struggle will not end without getting land to cultivate."

Let us see the action taken by the government towards the reserved forest land and the land owned by the corporates. It took a pro-plantation stance instead of legislating to take over the land. It has been widely criticized that this is a position to

⁹⁶ Patrik Oskarsson, Siddarth Sareen, 'Adivasiness as Caste Expression and Land Rights Claim-making in Central-Eastern India', *Journal of Contemporary South Asia*, pp.831-847.

⁹⁷ *The Hindu*, 10/06/2022.

⁹⁸ *Frontier Weekly*, 23/03/2019.

protect the monopolies and the corporates. The decision made to allow trees to be cut down from the plantations of those including Harrison is to accept taxes that had not been remitted for the past eight years. The crucial decision was taken at a meeting attended by the Chief Minister, Ministers of Revenue, Industry, Labour and Forests and corporate management.⁹⁹ The court forbade the felling of the ageing trees but later the seniority implied and ordered the felling. The government suggested that the tax be levied under the control of the court. Accordingly, an application has been filed in the High Court seeking permission to tax 12 companies. Various commissions, including the Rajamanikyam report, have found that these corporates have illegally occupied the lands and with the acceptance of the land tax, the government is colluding with the plantation owners and corporates.¹⁰⁰ Thus, by making the land itself a political asset, those who benefit from it become a dominant section of society while the other sections, the Dalits remain side-lined.

3:5 Early Development Program Policies of Upliftment

According to the 2011 census, population of the Scheduled Castes in Kerala is 3039573. This is 9.10% of the total population of Kerala and there has been a decrease of 0.7% in the Scheduled Caste population since the last census of 2009-10. This is mainly because some of the communities which were on the Scheduled Caste list were shifted to the Scheduled Tribe list during the new census period.¹⁰¹ What we need to examine are the detailed descriptions of the programs and policies of such developmental activities implemented. It includes the experience of Dalit communities in the development processes. Studies related to the impact of growth-oriented development strategies and resettlement programs on indigenous social groups have been specifically selected to highlight this issue. Moreover, the developmental experiences and living conditions of Dalit communities in Kerala are discussed and studied.

Fifty years after independence, development projects are still being planned but this does not reduce rather than adds to all the factors influencing their poverty

⁹⁹ R. Sunil, *Harrisons Rekhayillatha Jenmi*, (Mal.), Keeraliyam Books, Thrissur, 2019, pp.10-11.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.159-162

¹⁰¹ Census Report, SC /ST, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, 2009-2010, pp.1-6

and marginalization. The Dalit tribal communities are not only at the bottom of the social hierarchy but also at the bottom of the economic order. They lost social and economic mobility under the influence of the caste system. But in a certain extent, colonialism, modernity and democratic government (after independence) changed their traditional ways of life and its social and economic spheres. While most of the marginalized groups in other parts of the world are poor due to economic reasons, here the situation is unique in that caste-based inequality is faced by Dalit groups due to economic and social reasons. Such matters are clear if you check the SCSP schemes with government records.¹⁰²

Table 3:13
State Census, 2009-10

No.	District	Total Population	Scheduled Population	Caste	State Population Including SC Community
			Number	Percentage	
1	Thiruvananthapuram	3301427	372977	12.27	11.3
2	Kollam	2635375	328263	10.80	12.46
3	Pathanamthitta	1197412	164465	5.41	13.74
4	Alappuzha	2127789	201211	6.62	9.46
5	Kottayam	1974551	153909	5.06	7.79
6	Idukki	1108974	145486	4.79	13.12
7	Ernakulam	3282388	268411	8.83	8.18
8	Thrissur	3121200	324350	10.67	10.39
9	Palakkad	2809934	403833	13.29	14.37
10	Malappuram	4112920	308266	10.14	7.5
11	Kozhikode	3086293	199191	6.55	6.45
12	Wayanad	817420	32578	1.07	3.99
13	Kannur	2353003	83350	2.74	3.3
14	Kasargod	1307375	53283	1.75	4.08
	Total	33406061	3039573	100	9.10

Source: CensusReport, Kerala Institute of Local Administration.

¹⁰² State Budget 2015-16, 'Dalitharum Adhivaasikalum', Rights Research Team Trivandrum, 2015. p-5

According to government records, there are 53 Scheduled Caste communities in Kerala. Five districts namely Palakkad, Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Thrissur and Malappuram have 57.17% of scheduled castes living there and Palakkad district has the largest Scheduled Caste population (13.29%).¹⁰³ As an excluded group in the land reform process in Kerala, most of the Dalits live in the 26,000 scheduled caste habitat and colonies.

Table 3:14
2015-16 State Budget

Project Approach	State	Central Government	Total
2015-16	20,000	7686.32	27686.32
SCP	19.685	447.32	2415.82
SCP Percentage	9.84	5.82	8.73

Source: Rights Research Team, Trivandrum, 2015,

In the 2015-16 state budget, the state annual plan is Rs 20,000 crores and the central annual plan is Rs 7686.32 crores. The total annual plan of the state is Rs.27989.32 crores. In the state scheme, 9.84% has been allocated to the Scheduled Caste population proportionately, but when looking at the total scheme participation in the state, 8.73% has been allocated to S.C.P. It is slightly less when compared to the population.¹⁰⁴ Out of the S.C.P allocation, Rs.1488.24 crore has been earmarked for the Scheduled Caste Development Department and Rs.927.58 crore for Local Self-Government Bodies.196 crore out of 1488.24 crores is under the control of the Scheduled Castes Development Department. The 26 schemes of the Scheduled Castes Development Department can be broadly classified into four categories namely education, infrastructure development, development programmes, entrepreneurship and other welfare activities and administration and management.

Out of this, 40.21% is for education, 35.74% for infrastructural development such as housing construction, land purchase and 9.29% for entrepreneurship etc. An

¹⁰³ State Budget, 2015-16, 'Dalitharum Adhivaasikalum', *Op.cit.*, p.6.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.07.

amount of 14.76% has been allocated for corpus funds and administration.¹⁰⁵ The table gives the details of education which has the highest allocation (598.39 crores) in S.C.P. 161 crores (26.91%) of the allocation is for education for S.C.P. Rs 3.8 crore (0.64%) is spent on projects implemented through local self-government bodies and the remaining Rs 433.59 crore is spent on projects directly implemented by the department.¹⁰⁶ 81.5% of Scheduled Caste students in Kerala are below the 10th and 10th standards. 18.16% are studying in other categories of +2 and degree. In the context of these figures, if we look at the allocation of education in S.C.P, 18 per cent of the students studying in the upper classes get 92 per cent of the budget and 82 per cent of the students studying in the lower class get 8% of the budget. This does not mean that upper-classes children have access to more than they need. It is only that the allotted amount is divided as follows.¹⁰⁷ There is no doubt that this nominal budget has a significant impact on the quality of primary education.

A major problem in the SCSP fund usage is that the amount allocated for the housing project is not being spent. In the four financial years from 2009-10 to 2012-13, 28274 houses were planned to be completed in the respective year plan, but only 12278 houses were completed. That means only 43.46% of the target was achieved. 38.4% of SCSP's annual plan allocation is earmarked as allocation to Local Self-Government Bodies. 19.32% of SCSP funds of the total allocation are earmarked for Panchayats by the Government as part of the decentralized planning process in the state. Gram Panchayats account for 51.59% of the allocation for Local Self-Government Bodies and Block and District Panchayats for 17.19%. 7.96% each for Municipalities and 6.3% each for Corporations.¹⁰⁸ The method of disbursement of this amount earmarked for Local Self-Government Bodies is currently adopted on the basis of population. Rs. 478.63 crores are distributed to the 1000 Gram Panchayats of Kerala in proportion to the population of the respective Panchayats. The fact is that the allocation of this amount does not benefit the Scheduled Castes.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.7.

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix

¹⁰⁷ State Budget 2015-16, DaliItharum Adhivaasikalum, *Op.cit.*, p.10.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1.A3.

In the financial year (2014-15), only 51% of the Scheduled Caste Special Component Scheme and 40% of the development activities through local self-government bodies could be spent in the period up to March 20.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, as of November 2014, only 28% of the SCSP has been spent. That means most of the allocated amount is spent in the months of January, February and March. This affects the quality of projects being implemented. It also leads to large-scale corruption and unwanted interferences. The appraisal of development initiatives from the perspective of the state is crucial, even 66 years after Kerala was founded. The state's role in development efforts must be seen in such a light. It is necessary to analyse several case studies in order to determine what development activities have taken place in colonies, who has benefited from them, and how.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

CHAPTER IV

Interrogating Capital: Perceptions of Development in Dalit Colonies

It is important to understand that capital formation and distribution are crucial in the discussion of the socio-economic and political issues of Dalits in Kerala. Capital formation signifies resource mobilization, enabling the dominant society to consolidate power through social, economic, cultural, and embodied resources. However, for Dalits, acquiring such capital involve continuous struggle within the societal framework. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social capital emphasizes the diverse forms of capital-both economic and non-economic.¹ He highlights that in societies with imbalanced capital distribution, inequality and injustice prevail. Bourdieu's insights on resource distribution form the foundation of this chapter's perspective, shedding light on the academic and professional discourse surrounding this issue.

Development policies are intricately tied to resource management, yet their formulation often sidelines the needs of the advocates who should ideally shape these policies based on their requirements. The core lies in assessing how state-provided developments benefit those living in marginalized communities. In colonies, land ownership translates to control over production means and resource rights, cementing the significance of land in this context. However, this capital formation system is under scrutiny. The Land Reforms Bill and the Education Bill serve as key focal points. Interestingly, the Education Bill encountered stronger opposition compared to the Land Reforms. The Nair communities, facing comparatively lesser losses in land reforms, vehemently protested against the 11th section of the liberation struggle, which pertained to education reform. This fervor stems from the realization that cultural capital gained through education wields immense power, surpassing that derived from land ownership. Consequently, there exists an education policy that subverts Dalit educational aspirations and accomplishments by dictating the kind of

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital' in J. Richardson (eds.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York, 1986, pp, 241-258.

education they receive and their subsequent opportunities, undermining their autonomy from the outset.

Let us see what is the relationship between the Dalit issue and the privilege of power. Power is the ability of a society or individual to make decisions, pursue goals, and control the course of social formation processes. It depends on the resources under their control. According to this, there are three types of resources or capital. One – economic capital such as property, assets and money; Two – cultural capital such as knowledge, skills, educational qualifications etc. Third – Social capital which includes name, reputation, influence and recognition related to social status and any one of these resources can be converted into any of the other two resources subject to certain social constraints. For example, the family property can be used for children to get higher education and thus higher employment. Family wealth and prestige can also be enhanced by high office and status. In other words, it is the position in the chain of storage and distribution of the above resources that gives an individual/group social representation. In the caste system, caste operates as the primary capital for the forward castes, facilitating their communal representation and consolidating their social power. However, for Dalits, their caste serves as a profoundly negative capital. Caste functions as a determinant of economic status, social standing and authority, at the same time signifying living conditions, human dignity, occupations and social obligations. Its pervasive influence extends across all facets of social life. Historically, land ownership stood as the paramount form of power within the caste system.

This chapter focuses on the distribution of land by the government and how the perception of development uplifts caste and Dalit colonies. The state has created colonies by providing land and home to Dalits. The colonies are underdeveloped and inside the colony there are differences in terms of caste, employment and socio-cultural status. It could be viewed in respect of democracy and its norms. The intervention of the public to a certain extent has made the colonies a systematic settlement but they stand as singled out spaces. In this context, the mainstream society considers it as a designed settlement and a group of people who settle in this separate

area that is under state control.² Actually this creates a ghetto space for Dalits as the land is segregated.³ It contrasts with the democratic norms and recommendations. As a result of this, from the panchayat to the cabinet level, various developmental projects for settlements lost its essential grounds of justice and rights. However, the settlers of the colony realize that there are certain differences that the colonies create in their social role. The people outside the colonies including Dalits generate the thought that the colonies are marginalized from mainstream society.

Colonies are devised as geographical spaces of segregation in society.⁴ The majority of the residents in the colonies belong to lower-castes. Some colonies include other backward sects like Ezhavar and Muslims. Colony dwellers are figured out from the mainstream society and positioned as socially and economically backward due to their caste and wealth. By caste they are in the lower strata of society. The wealth that they hold in the form of land and money is very low and their status quo is correlated to it. It ascertains their socio-cultural position as inferior and sets limits to their social mobility and bars them from using the social and cultural capital as a currency. The people from the colonies act as a production force but it is found that their social and economic roles are less accountable and hence, they are completely depleted of power. It generates an environment of isolation and the colony dwellers experience discrimination. Through this, the egalitarian norms of a civil society that recommends the belief that all people are equal and should enjoy equal social, political and economic right and opportunities is breached.

In the period of princely rule, the first Dalit colony was formed in Chalakudy in 1919-1920 by the Cochin Divan T Vijayaragavacharya.⁵ In 1929 *Nayadi* colony

² K.M. Pramod, 'Dalit Colonikal Keezhalathathinte Mukhangal', *Adhiyardeepam Weekly*, Eraviperoor, 2008, p. 45-47.

³ U.P. Anil Kumar, Unpublished Report on SC ColoniesDraft, Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation, Thiruvananthapuram, 2020.

⁴ M. Muhammad Anees, 'Segregated Spaces and well-being: Evidence from Selected Dalit Colonies in Kerala', *Artha Vijana Journal of The Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics*, Vol.62, No.2, 2020, pp.179-187.

⁵ T. K. Krishnan Menon(eds.) *Progress of Cochin*, Cochin Government Press , 1932, pp-1-14

was established in Palakkad by the British Government.⁶ In Travancore under the leadership of Sir C P Ramaswami Iyer was established the settlement colony in Sachivothamapuram in 1937.⁷ All of these are settlement systems that were formed for Dalits by different ruling institutions. Their interests were various; the social and economic upliftment, providing shelter and livings, check the social nuisance and so on. In 1917, the self-reliant individuals and the people who escaped from slavery formed a social platform named Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha and established colony in Amarapuram. This was a unique ecosystem that accommodated people of the heterogeneous community to reside together.⁸ Such a colony aimed to create a blend of all sections of society despite their social status and agrarian roles. It provided own land and working space for agricultural and industrial purposes that were meant to make the people self-sufficient.

From 1919 to 1940 in a certain extent the colonies exhibited huge possibilities for capital formation. But when Kerala transformed into a state, the colonies became the home projects of the state and were constructed with minimum price. These colonies were much ghettoized from the geographical and social capital formation. Here the term 'ghetto' is taken from the American sociologist William K Tabb. He uses this term in his study to substantiate the political economy of the black ghetto.⁹ His study is comprehensive and deals with the financial structure of the black ghetto that never appeared before in such studies. It unveils the colonial relationship between the ghetto and mainstream society. He opines that ghetto is civilized by the Americans as a black ghetto. These places are formed to incorporate people who work in an area to reside together. They belong to the last stage of production and they are linked to the cores of various basic employments. They also eventually become the pivotal

⁶ A. Aiyappan, *Social Anthropology of The Nayadis of Malabar*, Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, 1937, pp.19-67.

⁷ Travancore Administrative Report, 1937-1938, pp.142-143.

⁸ Travancore Administrative Report, 1938-39, pp. 146, 157.

⁹ William. K. Tabb, *The Political Economy of Black Ghetto; Why the Mass of Black Americans has been Forced to Accept Economic Deprivation in an Age of Prosperity*, W.W. Norton Company, New York, 1970, pp.21-34.

aspect of production but are never part of social and economic roles. He uses the term 'ghettoization' to demarcate this production relation and its status that exists in the society.

The same social system exists in the Dalit colonies of Kerala and it represents the same social and economic situation. The people who live in colonies have vital roles in production process but their representation is not evaluated. The government refuses to notice their stake in social formation and prosperity. They are marginalized from mainstream society and it showcases a social disparity. The establishment of colonies was meant to make Dalits the owners of the land but the democratic government that came later had a different agenda that functioned in the colonies. The land reform laws of 1970 are the perfect example of it. The social relations of Travancore when taken into consideration, the *Parayar*, *Pulayar* and *Nayadi* might have shown interest in residing in the same place due to the prevailing social conditions. The popular assemblies of Travancore and Kochi approved colonies for Dalits. Kurumban Daivathan, who represented the *Pulayar* in the Sreemoolam Praja Sabha, raised the demand for land and dwelling for lower castes.¹⁰ It took place in a society where elites were placed high and the approval of land and dwelling might have provoked them. The 500 hectares of land set aside for the *Pulayar* helped them to live peacefully, fulfilling their roles. Daivathan also pointed out to the revenue division where colonies could be set up.¹¹ By 1950, there were 187 Dalit colonies formed in Thiru-Kochi.¹² When the nation state merged the idea of an 'expanded colony', it was confined to 'two and a half cents' of caste colonies.¹³ Self-reliant development sectors for lower castes were uprooted and confined them in such run-down rigid plots.

The first Lakshamveedu colony scheme was established in 1970. The developmental prospect mentioned through Lakshamveedu colonies reveals the

¹⁰ T.H.P. Chentharasserry, *Kurumban Daivathan*, (Mal.), Mythri Publication. Thiruvananthapuram, 2017, p.17.

¹¹ Proceedings of Sree Mulam Popular Assembly, Travancore, 1919.

¹² Administrative Report, Travancore-Cochin Administration, 1953-1954:215-216.

¹³ T.H.P. Chentharasserry, *Kurumban Daivathan*, *Op.cit.*, p.18.

sarcastic attitude of the government to the underprivileged.¹⁴ The government never tried to find the best space for these houses. Two families under one roof were the idea behind the project which hailed injustice. It symbolized the history of injustice. The families under these roofs challenged the existing privileged society. As a result of this, the Dalits of the contemporary era were side-lined to two and a half cents of land. Dalit colonies were their own spaces where they could reside. It became a geographical space for them. The government settled colonies in two different manners; one through external pressure and the other through the internalizing process. These two procedures influenced and reflected the development policies and aspects of government. The barring of development in the settlement colonies was done vehemently and it stunted their life. The marginalized history of development is reflected in various ways in society. These also led to the creation of the notion that colonies are spaces for criminalization.

Whether it is a slum or colony, it is the prime source of labour power and society needs it. Labour market requires low-wage workers and it meets its requirements through ghetto dwellers. The people who live in such ghettos are not only the constructive means of society but also the agents of social development. No society can move forward without joining the lower links in the production system. So, the governments and social institutions always try to make policies to attach and absorb these lower links.

4:1 Development Policies: From the View of State

Dalits have historically experienced social marginalization and educational, economic and cultural deprivation that put them at a disadvantage in all areas of development. Recognizing that these socially and economically backward sections needed special care, the first government of independent India formulated schemes for their upliftment to raise them at par with the rest of society.¹⁵ First was the

¹⁴ Jobin T Johny, 'Empowerment and Development in the Lakshamveedu Colonies of Kerala; A Case Study of Kottayam District', Unpublished Ph.D.Thesis, Research and Postgraduate Department of Political Science, Mahatma Gandhi University, 2015.

¹⁵ K. Sreedharan, 'Anpathu Varshathe Keralathile Vikasananubhavangal Tharunnathenthu,' *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, December 17, 2006, pp.74-77.

constitutional and legal safeguard to protect their interests and protect them against exploitation, and the other was to include specific component plans in the five-year plans to supplement their developmental needs. Apart from the regular schemes implemented for this purpose, the central and state governments have also launched special packages for the eco-system through schemes implemented, keeping in view the upliftment of Scheduled Castes.¹⁶ These measures have not improved their status. The residents were separated from other categories of habitats (Colonies). In many ways, the colonies became ghettos within one another.¹⁷ However, even when the government tries to bring them into society through special welfare schemes, they end up in separate colonies. According to the population density, the development policies of the area are shaped.

1. Infrastructure – access to public services such as roads.
2. Water - the water supply in the area and sewage flows.
3. Income - Income and occupation of people living in that area.
4. Social status - social status of its inhabitants, region.
5. Building Materials for Houses - Costs.
6. Legal aspect – Ownership of land in that area.
7. Health and Sanitation–Health and sanitation status in households in the area.

The authorities formulated the development policies in the outlying areas on a long-term basis and established a core committee comprising the colonists to monitor it. There they accessed affordable land, reasonably priced goods, employment opportunities, infrastructure, and social services and invested in housing, water, sanitation, energy, and services such as waste disposal.¹⁸ The central and state governments implemented the upliftment projects of Scheduled Castes also. Special

¹⁶ Lives of the Scattered Margins: Scheduled Castes, in 25 Years of Decentralization in Kerala: Impact on Scheduled Castes, Kerala Institute of local Administrations, March 2023, pp.22-25.

¹⁷ U.P. Anil Kumar, Unpublished Report on SC Colonies Draft, *Gulati* Institute of Finance and Taxation, *Op.cit.*, 2020.

¹⁸ SC Development Guide, Government of Kerala, 2018, pp.56-85.

eco-friendly packages were launched for it through local self-government bodies and other departments. These measures had not improved their status but only separated the residents from other categories of habitats. In the social formation of a society, the role of various resources is most important as seen in the history of developed countries. It also gives power to the possession and production of the land. Thus, power is reinforced by resources such as land, education, finance, scientific knowledge, modern technologies etc., and should be improved and made available so that they can rise to the mainstream level.

There are special schemes for the Habitat Development of Scheduled Castes. An area having more than 50% of the total Scheduled Caste population is designated as a habitat, subject to a minimum of five Scheduled Caste families. Several studies had already conducted investigation of Scheduled Caste Welfare Measures in India as a whole and at the State level. But it left out many aspects and dimensions, which need comprehensive investigation. Habitats and its facilities like special convenience and access require special scrutiny. In the social formation of a society, the role of various resources is most important as seen in the history of developed countries; division and production of land give power. The surplus income is usually diverted to sectors such as industry, education etc., strengthening the cultural geography and thus power.

The caste-based social system of the past excluded the ‘untouchables’ from mainstream social life and politics. The Scheduled Castes, called ‘untouchables’ now known as Dalits, were excluded from social life. The consequence is that they are forced into a marginal life, separated from the mainstream of society. Since the colonial period, the governments have been providing them with a special habitat. It is in this context that the origin of the special Scheduled Caste Habitat known as Scheduled Caste Colonies has to be understood.¹⁹ Let us look at some policy issues of development projects. There are certain social infrastructures that an individual or a

¹⁹ Personal Interview with Ajay Kumar, Rights Organization, Thiruvananthapuram, on 19/08/2022.

society must acquire justly. A community's access to safe drinking water, toilets, and electricity are three key household amenities that closely influence human productivity, performance, efficiency, and overall quality of life and are closely related to health outcomes.²⁰ Let us go to some of the developmental activities implemented by the state which these services.

- I. Land
- II. House
- III. Drinking water
- IV. Electricity
- V. Road connectivity
- VI. Sewage Management
- VII. Cleanliness

Slums, informal settlements, colonies and outlying areas are heavily affected by planning and management deficiencies. The city slum and informal settlement related problems are its non-live ability and poor environmental quality. It is not something that can be solved by doing development work.²¹ The complex environmental impact issue also poses social, economic and spatial challenges. Currently, the environmental quality, especially within any colony, is difficult to even provide basic facilities.²² Poor environmental conditions in colony areas lead to poor health. Children who suffer mental and physical trauma inside the colonies do not have proper treatment systems and ways to lead their lives. It may also deplete household savings for such families, financially for health care and thus transitioned into poverty. The problems arise from the urban areas due to the disadvantage of the unsafe conditions. It includes inadequate water supply, proper sanitation facilities and indoor pollutions. Poor people living in urban colonies are often affected. They are

²⁰ Sukhadeo Thorat, *Dalits in India: Search for Common Destiny*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2009, p.122.

²¹ U. P. Anilkumar, Unpublished Report, Op. cit, 2020.

²² Caste Development Department Guide, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2018, pp.108-109.

forced to live in ecologically unsafe areas, steep hillsides, flood plains or polluted areas near solid waste. To prevent such situations effectively, it is necessary to implement development policies with proper planning.

Colonies are spread across urban and rural local government areas. Most of the colonies are in Gram Panchayats, Municipalities and Corporations. Accordingly, one-half of the total Scheduled Caste colonies are located in rural and the other half in urban local government areas. But this does not show the true picture of the urban-rural distribution of scheduled caste colonies in Kerala as most of the colonies are in rural areas. Some colonies in different gram panchayats of Ernakulam district are following the same urban-rural pattern. For example, Karimukal Colony is located in Vadavukode Puthankurisu Gram Panchayat and there are many industries, factories, and other establishments around the colony. Vadayambadi Colony in Aikaranad Gram Panchayat is another example. Such colonies can enjoy some of the infrastructure benefits that are part of urban development. Unlike the colonies mentioned above, all other rural colonies are located in villages with no urban infrastructure, in two and a half cents and four cents land.

Scheduled caste population and number of families in colonies depend on many factors. As already seen, most of the families in most colonies have only 2-3 cents worth of land. Therefore, such colonies consist of small plots with minimal infrastructure, where families are often concentrated in a small area. Many colonies are not isolated Scheduled Caste colonies or Scheduled Tribe colonies only. Non-Scheduled Caste people also live there, but they are known as Scheduled Caste Colonies as most of the inhabitants belong to Scheduled Castes. In general, in such colonies where non-Scheduled communities live with Scheduled communities, the numerical strength of non-Scheduled castes is less. Examples of such colonies are Kizhakkambalam Scheduled Caste Colony and Karimukal Colony in Ernakulam District.²³ Geographically the colonies are established in outlying areas, hills, and

²³ Vikasana Rekha, Nediyruppu Grama Panchayath, p.4, 1996.

barren areas. It is therefore relevant to understand the socio-economic conditions of the people living there. Mobility of colonies, availability of infrastructure road accessibility, and proximity to town are considered.

Looking at the caste status of the colonies, Kerala has many Scheduled Caste colonies established at various times. Colonies were first established in Kerala at the end of the colonial period. But there was a beginning of the history of the colonies. The largest Scheduled Caste colonies in Kerala are Nediyrup Colony in Malappuram Kondotti and Karikatoor and Sachivothampuram Model Dalit Colony in Kottayam district.²⁴ After independence, many colonies were established. Many of these settlements were not originally newly built as colonies but were traditional Scheduled Caste settlements, which were later renamed and converted into colonies.²⁵

Therefore, based on their origin, there are two types of SC colonies in Kerala: traditional SC settlements and SC colonies established by the government.²⁶ An ecosystem of the first type is often a small area or area where Scheduled Caste communities are traditionally concentrated, later declared by the government as a Scheduled Caste colony. In the second type, Scheduled Caste people are taken to a fixed place identified by the government for the purpose. The caste structure in the colonies is: *Pulaya, Paraya, Cheruma, Sambava, Kurava, Sindhanar, Vedar, Thandan, Vettua, Dhivara, Cherumar, Pallan, Nayadi, Kanakkan, Chakalan, Dalit Christian, Muslims, etc.*²⁷ There are colonies where Dalits who came from Tamil Nadu and other communities are mixed. As mentioned earlier there is also a type of segregation of gathering of SC colonies and then it ghettoizes the society as a whole.²⁸

²⁴ Travancore Administrative Report, 1937-1938, pp.142-143.

²⁵ Travancore Information and Listener, Uplift of Backward Communities Successful Working of Colonies, 1941.

²⁶ Travancore Administrative Report, 1938-1939, p. 146.

²⁷ Scheduled Caste Development Guide, Government of Kerala, pp.108-110.

²⁸ Scheduled Caste Census Report-2008, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Data Processing Centre, Thrissur, 2011, p.11.

4:2 Economic and Educational Ghettoization of Colonies

Efforts to bring socially, economically, and educationally backward sections into the mainstream of society is a complex thing. Even during the formation of the constitution of India, it was discussed in detail on how to mainstream the marginalized people. Seventy-three years of development is not enough to heal the wounds of thousands of years of subjugation. Many schemes have been planned for the welfare of Scheduled Castes under Article 41 of the Constitution.²⁹ As a result of many years of effort by the Central and State Governments, the condition of the Scheduled Tribes has improved a lot, but do not yet reach the target when compared to the mainstream society. Projects are being implemented and often saturate at the grassroots level. It is not just about the technical, infrastructural and monetary deficiency but the ignorance and laxity of awareness of the beneficiaries. The development activities can work properly only through the knowledge dissemination activities.³⁰ The state government intends to make this outreach process more robust and faster.

The Scheduled Castes Development Department implements many welfare and development programs. The main objective of the department is to make the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, other backward communities, and other economically backward communities the beneficiaries of educational schemes. This is often misunderstood by the general public.³¹ The vision of development policies is meant to provide welfare and freedom for the needy. But welfare and freedom flourish in fair and impartial distribution of resources. Looking at it in this way, the development policies for the people who are deprived of social, economic, and cultural capital are unfavorable and have a bad outcome. If the development vision of the Dalit community is fulfilled, they will get the right over resources including land,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

³⁰ Pattikajathi Upapadhathi, Panthrandam Panchavalsara Padhathi 2012-17, Kerala Institute of Local Administration .2012, p.1-2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

social and economic capital. A community justice for Dalits and Tribals should be set up so that the development policies become real and sensible.

The Kerala model is beginning to be recognized as a hollow reality when it comes to Dalit/Adivasi development perspectives. These development perspectives can be diverse. The growth of a state is not based on the growth of its public sphere and welfare. Rather, it is based on the socio-economic and cultural growth of the people at the grass root level of that society. Then, if the Kerala model of development is taken for study, it will have to be checked as to which areas of such development the Dalits are included. Most of the people of the Dalit community in Kerala live in the colonies. The number of illiterates is 224909- in terms of education and age of the unemployed in the age group of 05 to 60 years. The number of SSLC passers is 35174 and 26440 graduates with postgraduate degrees 2718 and 212 when it comes to medical professional degrees (MBBS).³² It is a question of what kind of productive system such a society would become economically part of. Occupations for the age group between 15 and 59 range from housework to sweeper work, labor work, sales work etc. They are unable to reach the socio-economic conditions created by the general society due to the financial capital they build. It is not only a problem of education but of social denial of wealth and property. They have been living as slaves for ages and they have no right on the land where land is always a social and economic capital.

³² Scheduled Caste Colonies Census Report 2009-2010, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Data Processing Centre, Thrissur, 2011, p.1-5.

Table 4:1**Education Status of Colonies**

No	Age	Illiterate	Literate	Primary Level	Secondary Level	S S L C	P D C Pass	Graduation	Post Graduation	Engineering graduation	Engineering Diploma	Medicine Graduation	Other medical professional graduation	Other Professional Diploma	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
1	0-09	27355	61	122258	256	15	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	149953
2	10 --14	454	6	121300	56480	224	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	178490
3	15-21	2045	37	15434	90021	74674	52148	6352	143	69	449	19	300	2503	244194
4	22-29	4973	325	36950	158185	72029	43017	26127	4699	722	1113	129	2080	5665	356014
5	30-44	23918	4511	147293	247376	103800	34791	13952	3131	410	769	123	1404	3696	585174
6	45-59	60925	8916	182366	102797	31054	7340	3650	504	92	213	63	278	1145	399343
7	60 above	105239	7012	85817	21737	6620	1183	1008	164	13	69	19	109	584	229574
	Total	224909	20868	711418	676852	288416	138513	51089	8641	1306	2613	353	4171	13593	2142742

Source: Scheduled Caste Colonies Census Report 2009-2010, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Thrissur, 2011.

Now let us examine what are the developmental realities of educational backwardness. According to the government figures, there are about 26198 Dalit colonies in Kerala. If we take the figures of the standard of study and education of the students here, the percentage of those who complete graduation and post-graduation is only 6.30 percent. If MBBS is considered it will be 0.42%. These are the figures for the education standard in a Dalit community in Kerala. There are 4377 out-of-school and unenrolled children in the age group of 5 to 15 years.³³ Pre-Matric Hostels (PMH) is an educational scheme conceived by the Schedule Caste Department in 1967 for boys and girls from class 5 to 10 with the aim of better education for economically backward Scheduled Caste children. This is an important educational project that will directly benefit 3,000 poor children belonging to Scheduled Castes. The management of PMHs is entrusted to the local self-governing bodies, while the administrative affairs are handled by the Scheduled Caste Development Department.³⁴

Table 4:2
Educational Percentage of Colonies

No	Class /Course	Students Percentage	Total Percentage
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1	7 th Standard	2.63	55.25
2	High School	1.12	23.53
3	Higher Secondary	0.50	10.50
4	Graduation/Post Graduation	0.30	6.30
5	Diploma/Certificate/ ITC/ITI	0.19	3.99
6	BTech/MBBS/BAMS	0.02	0.42
7	BHMS		

Source: Scheduled Caste Colonies Census Report 2009-2010, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Thrissur, 2011.

The places where the PMH's are located are not easily accessible. They are far away from the main road and have no bus services. They are meant for Scheduled Caste children who are living in the economically backward hinterlands. But the non-accessibility causes the side-lining and damaging the interest of the beneficiaries.³⁵ If

³³ *Ibid.*, p.5.

³⁴ Report of Pre-Matric Hostel, Study Rights, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2013, p .2-3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2-3.

the intention behind setting up the hostel was good in the purest sense, the hostels should have been placed in places that were easily accessible to both the children and their parents.³⁶ 78% of the children walk from the hostel to school and 15% walk more than two kilometers. In Kerala, the children who walk a distance of two kilometers are probably only some PMH children.³⁷

Table 4: 3
Pre-Metric Hostel Children Percentage

Children in PMH go to school	Percentage
Walk	78 %
Bus	8 %
School Bus	14 %

Source: Report of Pre-Metric Hostel, Study Rights, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2013, p .2-3.

In 2017, during a visit to PMH in Agali, Attapadi, 27 children were found to be suffering from a specific skin disease. The illness is said to be due to the unhygienic environment in the hostel. Even basic need like water was not available.³⁸ The condition of the buildings was even more deplorable. There was no environment for children to learn. Rooms for 3 people have 10people. Even the bathrooms for basic amenities are dilapidated beyond use.³⁹ Many of the switchboards are cracked. It even faces security issues. Even in the matter of food, there is no exact menu suggested by health experts for the growth of children. PMHs have part-timers from wardens to cleaners. When the officers were asked about this, their responses showed how pitiful it was, “What is given is better than the food they get at home?” For the good functioning of PMHs, long-term plans are needed. To plan them, appoint a hostel ombudsman, form committees, and meetings every month.

4:3 From Empowered to Ghettoized Space

It is seen that the housing scheme for the homeless has created more colonies. In addition to the Kerala model development in the 1970s, many colonies spurted up

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3-4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4-5.

³⁸ Fieldwork at Pre – Matric Hostel, Agaly, Attapady, 18/11/2017.

³⁹ M.K. K Nair, Aarodum *Paribhavamillathe* (Mal.), Poorna Publishers, Muttappalam, Varkala, 2011, pp.443-445.

all over the state. A good example of that is the colony in Karimukal near Tripunithura (Fact Colony 1, 2).⁴⁰ This colony comes up with the setting up of FACT Company's second production unit, Cochin Division, at Ambalamed. The first phase of the FACT unit was commissioned in 1973 and the second phase in 1976. FACT's Managing Director (1959-1971) M.K.K. Nair says that story in his autobiography. "The area adjacent to the Cochin Refinery was selected for the second production unit."⁴¹ It was hoped that there would be continuous development programs for the next ten years. So, considering a cement factory capable of producing thousand tons per day, various stages of development of a chemical plant and petrochemical industries, 1400 acres were taken at the price of gold. There was a largely uninhabited area. It was an area full of hills, pits, fields, and bushes."⁴²

MKK said that when the initial measures were taken for gold prices, local people organized and protested. Nair then writes: "Three years ago, Union Minister Malaviya came there and gave certain assurances to the residents of the Cochin Refinery when the site was being acquired. They were assured that all those who have passed the 10th standard in the families of the residents there will be given a job in the refinery and resettlement facilities for the landless. "The jobs were not given. MKK Nair continues: "I have decided to address the residents of the area along with the district officer. All the residents of that place gathered under the leadership of Nambiar [respectable Krishnan Nambiar]."⁴³

Again, they were given certain assurances: All the youth who have passed 10th standard or studied up to 10th standard will be given special training and jobs in the refinery. A resettlement colony will be made in the nearby Karimukal area for 10 cents of land each for tenants and those who become landless after land acquisition.⁴⁴ Facilities like roads, water, and electricity will be provided in the colony. Tenants and Harijans can demolish their houses free of cost. The company will bear the cost of transporting the goods. Along with it MKK and Nambiar informed the gathering that such a chemical fertilizer plant was allowed in Kochi only because of unbelievable

⁴⁰ Personal Interview with Shanmukan Edayatheril, Karimukal, 22 /05/2017.

⁴¹ R.K Bijuraj, *Op.cit.*, p.25.

⁴² Vikasana Rekha, Vadavukode Puthenkurishu Grama Panchayath, 1996.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁴⁴ Personal Interview with Anu Shanmukan, Karimukal, 22 /05/2017.

luck and if people obstruct its construction, they will take the factory to Tamil Nadu or Karnataka where they can get land and other facilities.⁴⁵

Ordinary rehabilitation was not to be paid more than three cents under existing titles. So everyone was very happy when they were told they would be given 10 cents. When asked if they need any other benefits, the answer was that there were already many for them. When asked whether these assurances would be given in writing, their response was 'No, we have faith.' At the same time, the Dalits are appeased, threatened, and dragged to the colony in Karimukal. Now there are three colonies in Karimukal. This is not just a FACT story. Kalamassery Ogla Glass Factory and H. A. T Company were also contacted and colonies were raised at nearby places. Those who had left the land for the company or were working in the company had to live in these colonies. Many of the colonies in the state were the colonies behind large industrial establishments.⁴⁶ 90 percent of the total households surveyed belong to Dalit communities such as *Pulaya, Velan, Kollen, Parayan, and Mathar* and converted *Christians*. Also, there are non-Dalit families, *Muslims*, and *Ezhavas*. This is the caste status of each and every colony in Kottayam, Ernakulam, Changanassery, Arippa, Kollam, Pathanamthitta Chengara, Malappuram Kondotti, Nedyiruppu, Ramankari, Alappuzha, Palakkad, Govindapuram and Karikotkariin Kannur.

Dalits are marginalized in all socio-economic and cultural fields. Due to many historical reasons, their misery continues even today. According to the 2001 census, the Scheduled Caste population in Kerala is 31.24 lakh. This is 9.81 percent of the total population. According to the Gazette of India Scheduled Caste, there are 69 communities in Kerala. The Scheduled Caste population is 3, 34, 06, 061 and the Scheduled Caste colony families are 310, 132.⁴⁷ For the comprehensive development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes a development policy called Special Component Plan was formulated during the Fifth Five Year Plan. During the Sixth Five Year Plan, the planning and implementation of the Special Component Plan were decentralized to the district level.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Vikasana Rekha, Vadavukodu Puthenkurishu, Grama Panchayath, 1996, p.3

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.27

⁴⁷ Scheduled Caste Census Report 2008, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Data Processing Centre, 2009-2010.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.11.

Table 4:4
SC Family Population

SC Families and Population in the Colonies across the State 2009-2010										
District	Rural Areas			Urban Areas			Total			
	No. of Colonies	No. of Families	Population	No. of Colonies	No. of Families	Population	No. of Colonies	No. of Families	Population	
1	TVM	2, 281	32, 278	129, 157	697	8, 651	34, 805	2, 978	40, 929	163, 962
2	KLM	2, 582	35, 043	142, 081	262	3, 539	14, 855	2, 844	38, 582	156, 936
3	ALP	1, 584	20, 248	83, 218	122	1, 364	5, 700	1, 706	21, 612	88, 918
4	PTA	1, 352	17, 056	71, 645	113	1, 020	4, 411	1, 465	18, 076	76, 056
5	KTM	927	11, 592	47, 208	95	1, 123	4, 656	1, 022	12, 715	51, 864
6	IDK	872	14, 426	56, 617	15	111	419	887	14, 537	57, 036
7	EKM	1, 690	22, 073	87, 513	309	4, 143	16, 667	1, 999	26, 216	104, 180
8	TSR	2, 781	35, 699	148, 947	336	4, 072	17, 584	3, 117	39, 771	166, 531
9	PKD	4, 064	53, 730	234, 856	246	3, 306	13, 882	4, 310	57, 036	248, 738
10	MLP	2, 874	34, 755	165, 461	213	2, 861	13, 587	3, 087	37, 616	179, 048
11	KKD	1, 366	17, 442	72, 811	161	1, 970	8, 659	1, 527	19, 412	81, 470
12	WND	216	2, 488	10, 161	10	66	282	226	2, 554	10, 443
13	KNR	533	6, 945	31, 117	79	1, 114	5, 393	612	8, 059	36, 510
14	KGD	501	6, 357	29, 508	39	582	2, 848	540	6, 939	32, 356
	TOTAL	23, 623	310, 132	1, 310, 300	2697	33, 922	143, 748	26, 320	344, 054	1, 454, 048
	Percentage	90	90	90	10	10	10	100	100	100

Source: SC Habitat and Families Basic Information 2009-2010, Kerala Institute of Local Administration.

We should think about how much the welfare and development projects brought by the government have empowered the Dalits and taken them forward for a society that lives only by selling its labor. On the contrary, they were exploited and an abode was created for them only out of the general social order, thereby excluding them from public life.⁴⁹ What are the development schemes provided by the governments directly and through the local self-government bodies? Are those welfare and development schemes reaching the right hands? We should also be aware of whether the funds coming to this scheme are lost when they are not utilized, or whether the funds are diverted and spent.⁵⁰ Moreover, we have to think about how these welfare development schemes can be delivered to the right hands.

For the process of poverty alleviation, the central government allocates ten thousand crores of rupees a year (Poverty alleviation is brought about various development projects). But it also means that it costs the government between two to seven rupees to get one rupee into the hands of the Dalits (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes) through each project. 3, 000 crores are lost every year in public distribution system projects alone to provide goods at low cost to the poor. There arises a vital question how these crores are lost while it is passing through the hands of the decentralized power structure like Panchayats, Municipalities, Blocks and its various institutions.

Let's see what are the schemes provided by the government to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes families.

1. Finance to build a house.
2. Finance for house and land.
3. Finance for construction of latrines
4. Funding for good drilling.
5. Self-Employment Loan.

⁴⁹ Lives of the Scattered Margins: Scheduled Castes , 25 Years of Decentralization in Kerala: Impact on Scheduled Castes, Research Study, *Op.cit.*, p.22.

⁵⁰ Personal Interview with Remya, Ward Member, Kottayam, Kurichi Grama Panchayath , 25/09/2017.

6. Two-Wheeler Loan (For Government officials only).

7. Auto rickshaw loan.

Out of this, the first three are provided through Panchayats, Municipalities, and Blocks. The remaining at the district level. It is also conducted through the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation. Let us share some experiences of those who got houses and land through financial assistance to build a house:⁵¹

Santhamma G: In 2006 she got a loan for a house and land. 20, 000 rupees was granted by the municipality. Santhamma bought a plot that was in a wetland area where there were five or six houses that had been built a little further and were half-finished. She levelled up the land and belted it to make it fit for a house. By that time, Santhamma was in a position where half of this amount was in debt. Later Santhamma was given 40, 000 rupees under the VAMBAY scheme to build a house, but she could not complete the house and only the walls were built until 2009. Later she got a foreclosure notice saying that if the construction is not completed within seven days, the house and land will be forfeited and have to pay back whatever amount the government has sanctioned with interest. So, Santhamma and her daughters went to the municipality again, met the concerned people, got a month, and again came down to finish the house with the borrowed money. So, to avoid foreclosure, she tied up the entire wall of the house and put sheets on it. By that time Santhamma's debt was more than one lakh.

Ratnamma and Babu: Ratnamma and Babu who lives in the same area were provided rupees 75, 000 in the welfare scheme as a housing finance. Their places were also in the same area as mentioned earlier. Ratnamma had to stop the dream of a house only on a foundation. Her family's income was her and her husband's. His death left them behind financially.⁵² They had attempted to sell the place. But as it is government land and project, they got an order that the transfer should not be done

⁵¹ Fieldwork at Changanacherry Municipality, Wards, 1, 3, 6, 12 /04/2016.

⁵² Personal Interview with Ratnamma and Babu, Manjadikkara, Chenganassery, 11/04/2016.

until after 12 years. Babu was living with his family with all the walls of the house covered with sheets and without electricity to carry out basic facilities. Until now, it has remained unchanged.⁵³ The conditions of those who received financial assistance for house and land, (now the financial assistance has been increased to 2 lakhs) but if we look at the costs and estimates of building materials, the dream of a house will have to be postponed for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Moreover, through such house and land schemes, Dalits and Scheduled Caste people are being colonized under a special housing system. Colonization thus solves the problem of housing for the landless Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but it also relocates these people to special places that are incompatible with the lifestyle of the general society. In a situation where other caste groups have achieved political and economic empowerment by coordinating with the other communities, this has also caused a geographical division among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who have been separated into sub-castes without social coordination, and through this, their caste distinction has prevailed at a special level. By giving land and houses to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the government is trying to maintain these colonies as "ghettos" by creating a special habitat.⁵⁴

Now when it comes to other welfare schemes including self-employment loans, the loan terms are beyond the reach of the unemployed Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The unemployed Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are living on two or three cents of land obtained through a development scheme if they want to take it. Then how can they produce the land above 5 cents required for a self-employment loan or government official guarantee? This is the case with development schemes, especially welfare and development schemes earmarked for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The following incidents that occurred in different parts of Kerala showcased the discrimination and sequestering faced by the students who were from Dalit colonies:

⁵³ Personal Interview with Manchadikara Colony, Changanacherry, 11/04/2016.

⁵⁴ Personal Interview with Appukuttan Fathimapuram, Changanacherry Municipality, 11/08/2017.

A few children from Changanassery Ambedkar Colony who were studying in class 10th, one day when they could not answer the questions of their lesson, the teacher raised voice against them and asked, "Aren't you all from those communities?". The question is loaded with hidden implications that they are uncultured, unruly, unintelligent and good for nothing and so on. This clearly illustrates that Dalit children are subjected to discrimination and sequestering in their form and being.⁵⁵ Krishna Kutty, a member of a cultural organization who conducted many classes for children in Dalit colonies in Varaoor and nearby areas of Thrissur district said that they were all excellent students and came from much poorer families. But in school the teachers say that they come to school only to get the scholarship given by the government. Children also say that there is mental isolation here. The trauma and wounds such omissions inflict on tender minds are very serious. The situation worsens when the child comes home after school. An alcoholic father will cause more trouble at home. All this leads to a mental imbalance in the conscience of the child. Another important fact is that a child living in a Dalit colony may be backward in many respects compared to his peers, he may not be well dressed like his peers, and not even have good shoes, bags, or books. The turmoil in such a teenage mind could not be explained.

The often-cited remark by the general public is that Dalit colonies are hotbeds of alcoholism and violence. But at the same time, it is very clear from the news, etc that other communities spend a lot on alcohol and drugs as compared to Dalits. We have to wonder if it is only the Dalit colonies that consume more alcohol. Alcohol is the biggest capitalist business today and it is expensive for consumers. Low-wage Dalits could never afford such high-priced liquor. Now if we take into account the special status, power, and wealth that exist in our society, there are various colonies. Like Doctors Colony, VIP Colony, Government Employees and Officers Colony. But the point to be noted here is that the colony status of Dalits is very segregated and gets its grade lowered as ghettos.

⁵⁵ Personal Interview with Remya Suresh, Ward Member, Kurichi Grama Panchayath, Kottayam, 25/09/2017.

When a low-wage Dalit tries to consume alcohol, it ultimately results in total poverty in the family. It becomes a matter of social concern. Regardless of these truths, Dalits are generally degraded, condemned and humiliated and end up with alienation. Those who are involved in jobs that involve a lot of physical work like digging soil, construction sites, and cleaning drainage, due to their nature of work, alcoholism becomes their habit. But the common perception is that the people of the colonies are, on the whole, alcoholics. The lack of education and the dismal education a Dalit received from the government school, and the discrimination and isolation he experienced in that environment may contribute to his drinking habit. Thus, the colony life of Dalits plunges deeper into darkness.

Both the Scheduled tribe and Scheduled caste people transferred or sold their land to certain capitalists, politicians or their agents .Due to poverty and economic crisis, Dalits reach the point to sell or mortgage their land. A low-wage Dalit cannot afford a piece of land to live on. A landless Dalit's search for a place of residence always fails, after which he rents a house from the money left over from his gross savings. Sometimes they are pushed into the streets and shop verandas to take up various struggles and thereby occupy the outside land. The people of colonies are often forced to leave the colonies and seek settlements elsewhere for many reasons. Outsiders, by and large, consider the colony dwellers as social outcasts and inferior and the colonies themselves as trouble spots.⁵⁶ In the internal development of the colonies, the condition of the Dalit is very pitiable with a lost self-perception. They see themselves as the lowest beings living their lives in the social and economic hierarchy.

The positive aspects of life inside these colonies are that the colony Dalits at least live with the people of their community. Thus, colonies have a monolithically reinforcing cultural component.⁵⁷ When these positive aspects of the colonies go beyond the colony space, the monolithic thinking within them is lost. At this stage, they tend to feel socially and economically inferior and shy. Outsiders consider the

⁵⁶ Personal Interview with People in Kurichi Grama Panchayath, 4/10/2017.

⁵⁷ Pramod. K.M, 'Subordinated Inclusion: The Development State and Dalit Colonies of Southern Kerala' in Scott Nicholas Romaniuk, Marguerite Marlin, (eds.), *Development and the Politics of Human Rights*, CRC Press, London, 2016, p.45-60.

colony a labor pool, a hotspot for criminals, gangsters, and a site for the supply and distribution of drugs and narcotics. Outsiders consider the youth of the colonies to be wasting their lives and see them as more difficult. The lack of adequate social networks weakens the Dalits more. Although it is a problem faced by Dalits in general, the problems are acute in the case of Colony Dalits. The lack of social networks limits their socio-economic opportunities, resulting in their inability to break free from the colonies.

Similarly, Dalits are confined to their immediate surroundings and are often trapped within colonies for long periods or even their entire lives. For improving their socio-economic and political positions within society, lack of networks/social connection denies them access to various opportunities and facilities provided by the state. In contrast, a Nair, Ezhava, or Christian can exploit socio-economic opportunities and resources through the large social networks available to them. They can exert pressure and influence on political parties through their strong community organizations. While community organizations of upper caste social groups, including upper caste Hindus, Syrian Christians, Muslims, and lower caste Ezhavas, own and manage land, property, schools, and colleges, community organizations of Dalits rarely enjoy their own office space.

The educational profiles of respondents in the surveyed colonies bring out the reality that Dalits are not properly educated. Only 23.53 percent of the students who have completed primary education have passed the high school level in the 2009-2010 base line data collection of Scheduled Caste families. There were only 6.30% of graduates and post-graduates⁵⁸. The number of dropouts is high. For education, the people in the colony choose the nearest government schools. In 2016, the following news came from Perampra in Kozhikode district that there were some people who did not want to send their children to Perampra Government Lower Primary School to learn. The reason was understood that most of the children from the nearby colony

⁵⁸ Scheduled Caste Census Report 2008, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Data Processing Centre, Thrissur, 2011, p.11.

study in this school.⁵⁹ Here is a society that is marginalized based on caste even though it provides good infrastructure, education, and everything.⁶⁰ It is important to note here that non-government schools are often seen as imparting quality education and they are quite expensive. Access to better educational opportunities is therefore beyond the means of the Dalit children. Curriculum produced by the government and curriculum produced by the private bodies exist here. What is happening here is the coercion of a group rich in social capital.

For a Dalit student, when he or she plans to join a government school, getting state financial aid can be relatively easy. Good private schools are often located in large cities rather than rural areas. However, schools located within cities are often seen as offering few opportunities to Dalits, who admitted to their schools have relatively lower initial academic performance than others which ultimately affects the school's overall prestige and status, school officials say.⁶¹ Therefore, to make such children pass during the 10th class examination, the certificate is taken under the guise of an intellectual disability and a scribe is placed. The goal of the schools is 100% success. Many factors directly discriminate against a Dalit child in daily life at school. From stipend to dress and the skin colour is a factor for discrimination. Once inside the college, language and social conditions also prevail and alienate a Dalit student.⁶²

4:5 Contemporary Challenges of Dalit Colonies in Kerala

Life in the colonies faces many challenges and crisis. K.K.Koch writes about Dalit life from his experiences: “Dalit life in most houses was very pathetic. There were many houses on 10 cents of land received from the Panchayat. The situation in Lakh homes was even worse. In this situation, many families have settled on the roadsides and ditches. Before the rubber forests flourished, the plantations were inter-

⁵⁹ Deccan Chronicle, on- Dalits still shun Perambra L. P .School, June 22, 2016.

⁶⁰ Personal Interview with People in Perambra, Kozhikode , 4/06/2017.

⁶¹ K.M. Pramod, *Op.cit.*, p.45-60.

⁶² Personal Interview with People in Perambra Colony, Kozhikode, 4/06/017.

cropped so there was labor available. But with the lack of employment in the agricultural sector, road construction and building construction became the means of livelihood for the majority of people.”⁶³ He also describes the conditions in the colonies in his autobiography. “Social relations in Harijan Lakh households have led to strife within families and between families. This helps assess such settlements as habitats for criminals.⁶⁴ Because no one was willing to marry girls from the colonies, love, romance, marriage, and divorce were confined there. As a result, women were perceived as immoral.

A study on Dalit tribal groups was conducted by Kerala Institute of Local Administration. Its study (2009-2010) provides more details about the conditions of 341964 families living in such habitat. The number of uninhabitable houses in the habitat is 45, 959. Out of that only 58 percent of houses (26, 458) can be repaired and used. Out of 5, 58, 231 Scheduled Caste families in the state, the number of households without toilets is 68, 685. The number of houses without space to construct toilets is 1253. 46 percent of Scheduled Caste families have sufficient drinking water and the rest lacks it. 2262 of them have no electricity. There are 38, 143 dropouts after studying up to S S L C. 1135 children have stopped studying after joining the school.⁶⁵ The number of people facing physical and mental challenges is 18, 808. Neither the government nor the social welfare department has given much importance to the facts found in the study or taken any action so far.

135 children stopped their education in the Sambava colony at Pulaprakunnu in Mepayyur, Kozhikode. The number of people facing physical and mental challenges there is 100. The Welfare Department did not give much importance to the facts found in the study or taken any action.⁶⁶ In 2019, caste discrimination was faced by 11 families in Pulaprakunnu colony, Mepayyur. Since 1974, four cents of land

⁶³ Personal Interview with KK Kochu, Writer, Vaikom on 17/09/2016. `

⁶⁴ Personal Interview with People in Perambra colony, Kozhikode, 16/09/2017.

⁶⁵ Scheduled Caste Census Report 2008, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Data Processing Centre, Thrissur, 2011, p.11.

⁶⁶ Personal Interview with People in Perambra Colony, Kozhikode, 16/09/2017.

were given to the people living on Pulaprakunnu only after the distressed condition of the place came to the news. The condition of habitats like the 'manhole' colony in Kollam town is deplorable.⁶⁷ Descendants of erstwhile scavengers live in this colony just off Link Road. In the 1930s, Chakeelians who came from Chenkota taluk and other places in Tamil Nadu to do cleaning work were moved to a place adjacent to the crematorium. Later, the municipality gave houses to them. If it rains, all the sewage from Link Road will reach the colony. Every colony has its tale of such woes to tell. Lack of basic facilities like houses, roads, electricity, drinking water, and toilets, as lack of land to cultivate or conduct ceremonies like marriage and death, etc. are important issues. Recently, the kitchen of a hut was demolished in a colony to cremate dead body for lack of space to bury it.⁶⁸

The biggest problem faced by the colonies is the denial of rights and land. A society that does not participate in the creation of capital that is built and taken through the land cannot grow with development projects. Moreover, poverty, unemployment, diseases, mental and physical challenges, the inadequacy of better educational institutions and health systems, caste divisions between the public and the non-accommodation in the digital age corners the colony people. It widens the gap that exists in the social and economic life of the colony people. Stereotyping the people who live in colonies with derogatory words and phrases is fashionable and often appears in medias and as floating piece. Recently appeared phrase the 'colony Vanam' is formed like this. Through this, directly and indirectly, only discrimination and injustice take place. A person is not able to cope with the social ostracism that occurs through this. And so, they live a life of social death, as Gopal Guru says.⁶⁹

The claim of The Kerala Model Development which has attracted the world's attention and that has been constantly talked about is being questioned in a big way by the colonies and colony systems. There is no point in moving forward without seeing

⁶⁸Personal Interview with People in Perambra Colony, 16/09/2017.

⁶⁹'Caste onCampus: Have Higher Educational Spaces Become Death Traps for Dalit Students', *Outlook Magazine*, 20 March 2023.

the underdevelopment and crises in terms of land, health, education and social justice. Education and health systems should go through a proper monitoring system and the status of colonies needs to be improved through scientific and comprehensive schemes. By maintaining the caste colonies like this it will never be possible to make an anti-caste movement, because of land and caste. Power is a grid system where everything is intertwined. When the colonies completed 100 years of existence, except for a few, most of the colonies were subsisting on 2 ½ cent land tenure. Proper distribution of land to landless Dalits and Adivasis and a Second Land Reforms Act should be enacted to acquire land owned by plantation owners and ensure proper distribution of land to the landless and homeless.

There is a need to bring Dalits and Adivasis to the process of social formation by providing land for cultivation and land for industrial needs with appropriate financial assistance. Agricultural land to Dalits is to be provided in order to eliminate caste colonies and SCP /TSP funds to be utilised to give employment to at least one person in a family.⁷⁰ The amendment of the law to provide fields for housing is to be abandoned and agricultural land is to be used only for agriculture. Plantation labor laws need to be reformed and human right is to be protected. Action is to be taken to protect and make effective the SC/ST separate component scheme in the context of implementation by NITI Aayog. Life Mission flats that will exclude Dalits from land rights have to be abolished. All land struggles in Kerala have to be completely settled and rehabilitated the landless. The Dalit communities have to become a part of the social life of the general society. This could be done by preparing the terms of a new development policy within the colonies by recognizing the right to work in the organized sector and strictly implementing child rights laws.

⁷⁰ Lives of the Scattered Margins: Scheduled Castes , 25 Years of Decentralization in Kerala: Impact on Scheduled Castes, Kerala Institute of local Administrations, *Op.cit.*, pp.35-41.

Conclusion

The study was attempted to address the overlooked history of Dalit colonies, examining its formation and the multifaceted challenges within its social, cultural, and economic landscapes. The main focus of the study is the isolated social situation of Dalit colonies, landlessness, and the formation of new colonies, ghettoizing them from the general society and thus making them special to the state. Consequently, these colonies perpetuate marginalization, hindering their integration into developmental processes. Daily life in these colonies is subjected to public scrutiny, contributing to their stigmatization as hubs of criminal activity, thereby transforming them into caste-specific enclaves.

The study delves into the multifaceted issues surrounding caste, drawing insights from the perspectives of prominent figures such as Ambedkar, Ayyankali, and Poykayil Appachan. Their analyses are very valuable to survey the practices concerning caste, particularly about the marginalization experienced by Dalits due to the entrenched caste system's impact on land, ecosystems, and communities within Dalit colonies. By exploring the historical development of these colonies and their unique spatial contexts, the study highlights the creation of specialized spaces for Dalits within a broader geographical framework. It also scrutinized the effects of land reforms and other state-driven development initiatives on Dalits' land-related issues and their interactions with the state. Finally, the perceptions of capital and development within Dalit colonies, including capital formation, economic empowerment, educational progress, and ongoing challenges faced by these communities are verified. Moreover, it sheds light on the social implications of marginalization of Dalit daily life and makes a comprehensive understanding of the role of the state in addressing these complex issues.

Specifically, the study attempted to reveal the unmarked history of Dalit colonies, their formation and the problems in the social, cultural and economic background of life in such colonies. They have been experiencing marginalization

from the entire developmental programme for long years. The everyday life in the colony became public and closely monitored. In the general perception, the colonies are considered the places of criminalization and thus the Dalit colonies were transformed into caste colonies. Early Dalit colonies typically exhibited enduring characteristics rooted in historical marginalization. They were often inhabited by vagrants, agricultural labourers, landless and homeless individuals, as well as those who were considered the most socially and economically disadvantaged, including former agrestic slaves. Within the broader society, they were commonly perceived as individuals grappling with issues such as land scarcity and social exclusion.

Between the 1917s and the 1950s, the government allocated substantial parcels of land for agricultural purposes. Initially, these lands were distributed to Dalits in varying sizes, ranging from acres to smaller plots, depending on factors such as existing landownership and residential status. Over the years, the allocation process evolved to accommodate Dalits relocating from other regions, with an emphasis on providing land and housing opportunities. Later those lands started to be given away from 25 to 50 cents to the Dalits who have land and houses in their respective places and to those who migrate from other places. However, despite these efforts, many of the early colonies designated for Dalits eventually became entrenched as caste-specific or exclusively Dalit settlements.

The first crisis that Dalits encountered when they came to democratic Kerala especially after the 1950s was a lack of social representation, land ownership, basic amenities, and educational opportunities. This led to increasing marginalization and ghettoization within the early colonies, as the State initiated development projects under the guise of Dalit-specific settlements. As a result, a significant state dependency emerged, leading to the colonies effectively becoming a creation of the state apparatus. Barren lands were acquired and transformed into settlements where Dalits were resettled, thereby fostering a reliance on the state for essential services such as drinking water and basic developmental infrastructure within these colonies.

Dalits need affirmative development projects for the growth of their community. Often, even the political movements that arise in the colonies are hampered by various interventions of the state and cannot move forward. Dalits in these colonies often depend on local political leaders to access government schemes, engaging with local self-government bodies through these intermediaries. But their lives turn out to be nothing more than meeting their day-to-day needs. Despite these efforts, their focus tends to revolve around meeting immediate needs, as these colonies increasingly serve as employment hubs on the margins of mainstream society.

Life in these communities continues through the accumulation of communal resources facilitated by shared cultural markers. However, achieving sustainable development without robust social support systems proves challenging. Therefore, the basic human rights and security of the Dalits are denied here, due to the inherent reasons of their social backwardness, colour, caste, dress, living location etc. These factors deny Dalits the justice they rightfully deserve.

This study analysed the history of the colonies and their people and the development activities provided by the government. The study concentrates on the evolution of colonies in Kerala from early agricultural habitats to caste-based settlements. The survey of the study covered the earlier formed colonies and the colonies formed after the land reforms programmes since 1957. In the early stage, *kudis* (colonies) were a habitat related to agricultural land. After 1957 when Kerala became a democratic state, *kudis* became caste colonies and were transformed into caste colonies of two and a half cents. Although it was not a long process, the lives in it were a long history. Caste works where the State establishes that such colonies are established as a convenient process to implement development policies.

The State's involvement in designating these colonies as specific caste-based areas was instrumental in implementing developmental policies. Consequently, these areas became marginalized, lacking access to essential socio-economic and cultural

resources. People who are deprived of socio-economic and cultural capital live in a ghetto development and their social life proceeds from such. If the development vision of the Dalit community is to be fulfilled, there should be rights over the resources, particularly land and socio-economic capital should be built out of it and thus become part of the production system. It is then only that the communal justice of the people in the Dalit colonies becomes the social justice promised by the Constitution.

This research contends that ghettoizing Dalits from mainstream society is a direct result of Dalit colonies. Hillocks, fields, and other arid locations away from the wider society are used as the locations for Dalit colonies. Currently, the significance of this study is the limitation of academic writing on the history of Dalit colonies and their social, economic, cultural, and political aspects. The core argument of the study is the importance of land. It is possible to change the social conditions of the existing Dalit colonies only through the formation of a capital called land. The shift from ownership of just two cents of land to a property ownership structure is significant. To achieve developmental progress within the Dalit community, it is crucial to grant them rights over resources, especially land. Access to these resources can empower them to build social and economic capital, allowing them to integrate into the production system. Fulfilling the development vision of Dalit communities aligns with the constitutional promise of social justice.

All the main rules of the caste system were based on untouchability. Ayyankali and Poykayil Appachan constantly worked against such injustice and denial of justice. Ayyankali's work focused on social justice denied by caste practices, uneducation and non-land representation. The then Dalit representatives in the Sri Moolam Praja Sabha strongly advocated for this. Thus, Ayyankali was the first person to buy land from the government for the people in the lowest rung of the social ladder. Petitions were submitted to the Praja Sabha for the release of new lands regularly. Looking at the historical reality of Kerala, Ayyankali understood that only the people who had rights over land were able to achieve social transformation. This should be

seen as a sign of a very important political change. One of the most important land-related events in the history of the Renaissance takes place after this event in the early years of the second decade of the 20th century. That is the land acquisition in 1917 by Appachan and his followers at *Amara*. The important feature of this event is that for the first time, the lower classes bought their own land with their own money. Appachan himself declared the event as a step that transformed his people from a state of immobility to socially mobile people.

The Dalits and Adivasis, who were agrestic slaves, were most closely associated with the traditional nomadic production relations that existed in Kerala between caste and land. The shift from special habitats to colonies freed Dalits and tribals from feudal production relations. But what needs to be examined is that the social system of landlord relations in Kerala consisted of the slavery of Dalits and Adivasis, the tenant farming of other castes, and the land ownership of the upper castes, along with an economy based and organized Dalit groups, who were the agrestic slaves most closely related to the traditional rural production relations between caste and land, freed from the natal production relations. This kind of social system did not come naturally. Rather, they were formed over a continuous period of years. It was from such social conditions that social advancements were made under the leadership of Ambedkar, Ayyankali and Poykayil Appachan and these advancements helped a large part of the Dalits who were agrestic slaves to take employment in the production system and accept free wage labour. Ayyankali, Poykayil Appachan, and Ambedkar were convinced that the right to land would lead to the formation of the social and economic capital of a people.

Ayyankali and Appachan said that the revolutionary work that can change the very foundation of Kerala society will be to acquire government land and distribute it to the landless. But those who came out of slavery became mere workers at the bottom of the production system and the land became a habitation. In the early days, Ayyankali and Appachan raised an idea of a colony because they saw the growth that would occur when people who were isolated by the caste social system lived together

culturally. In the early days, the colonies included factories and land for farming. But later with the formation of Kerala as a state, the Land Reform Act was implemented, which changed the land rights of that community into caste colonies (Ghetto) with only two and a half cents, and denied them social and communal justice. But all the land struggles were either settled when they reached a certain stage, or the resulting system included the giving of land in the form of hills or barren lands. None of these lands was suitable for cultivation or habitation.

Various land reform changes were introduced by the first government, but Dalits were confined to the colonies without benefitting from any of them. Governments also created labour groups for society by implementing colonies. All the development policies implemented were denied community justice. Social justice was not equalized. The educational standard of the colonies was below average. All the development policies were not meant to empower the people. The SCP / TCP funds were either not properly disbursed or they got lapsed. In the colonies there were no programs of any kind for those with physical and mental challenges. Colony lives were side-lined.

Dalits have historically experienced social marginalization and educational, economic, and cultural deprivation that has left them behind in all spheres of development. Recognizing that these socially and economically backward sections needed special care, the first government of independent India formulated schemes for their upliftment to raise them at par with the rest of society. The first one was a constitutional and legal safeguard to safeguard their interests and protects them against exploitation and the other was to include special component schemes in five-year plans to complement their developmental needs. That is how land plays a role as an important capital formation process in the Dalit colonies of Kerala through social-economic aspects as a resource. Such were the inequalities in the social location of the Dalits in Kerala and the welfare schemes were implemented by the government impacts them socially, economically, and culturally.

The right to land acts as the first important thing of power, status, freedom, and social security of human beings in India. The right to this land exists as a social capital beyond mere economic capital. The 'right to land' therefore confers social, economic, and cultural recognition and dignity as well as economic freedom and mobility. It must be understood that within the highly complex Indian society, this status of land helped to construct a regionalism according to the *Varna* system. Thus the land-entitled people easily excluded others from social justice and colonized them by turning them into untouchables with no social mobility.

Caste which becomes capital turns into graded inequality here as mentioned by Ambedkar. The Dalit tribal groups are ghettoized. This ghettoization is not only of land but also socially, economically, and culturally. Therefore, the standard of education in the colonies was very low. The biggest problem of contemporary Dalit colonies was land and education. To empower the people in Dalit colonies, the requirements are land, education and employment through it. While the land is a political asset for the general society of Kerala, for the Dalits, land is a mere two-and-a-half cents worth of living accommodation. The challenges faced by the Dalits in these colonies are the scarcity of land and the flat system of the new colony introduced in the name of the LIFE scheme – it shows that the landless Dalits are not entitled to even two and a half cents of land. Today's land struggles such as Muthanga, Aralam, Chengara, Arippa, Vadyambadi, and Thovari Mala all indicate that the struggles are not only for land but also for the rights of agriculture and livelihood. The major challenge is to rehabilitate around 5 lakh people who are currently landless and houseless.

The nature of the prevailing social structure greatly influences human life and determines the distribution of land. It is here that the social structure of Kerala, which embodies caste relations, and the capitalist system that produces it, becomes very important and property takes a communal form. But this form of property remained confined to certain communities. As the existing houses in many colonies are very inadequate, a special scheme should be in place. From drinking water availability to

electricity should be made available. Habitat, Roads, irrigation facilities, and health systems for the habitations should be ensured and special component plans and classes should be started for vocational education and vocational skills (special component plan) and it should be ensured that the principles of reservation are strictly followed in the field of education. Funds should be assessed in each colony in proportion to the population and plans should be formulated accurately. Moreover, there should be conditions to ensure that all the land that has been acquired by the government can be acquired and distributed with proper legislation.

Also by classifying the colonies, the developing city can be categorized into high-density and low-density in a way that can be aligned with other state and central schemes. Ensure basic minimum needs and ensure peace and security in the colonies. Provide the best services of water supply, underground drainage, and sanitation to the residential areas. Various agencies and institutions have to work in collaboration with the government to identify and improve the lives of the people in the colonies and to deal with the colony and other issues related to the respective areas and cities. Major issues in the colonies range from clean water supply to electricity, proper roads, accurate land records, land titles, demarcation, Anganwadi, and community health centres. These are the primary rights of the people in the colonies. It is only through such rights that the Dalit-Tribal community can build social progress towards wealth formation and culturally based education.

This shows the failure of the state because the participation of the ideals of the state is a very fundamental right offered by the constitution. Dalit community can become a part of social progress only through the formation of social and cultural capital including land and education. Addressing the issue of land tenure by reclaiming leased lands and redistributing them to homeless Dalits is crucial to mitigating the deficiency in social capital. Through this, the lack of social capital can be solved to some extent. Plan the development projects implemented in the colonies and bring in a system consisting of Dalits including Collector, District and ward-level representatives of the respective districts to monitor them. This approach aims to

address the deficiencies in basic facilities, particularly housing, which are integral to daily life in these communities. The total educational attainment percentage in the colonies is less than 25 per cent'. To increase the quality of education, from the high school level, special attention should be given, and long-term development plans should be drawn up with a monitoring system, through independent organization, with intensive programs on matters including language.

Mainstream political parties often view Dalits and Dalit colonies merely as a vote bank, while other community organizations leverage their representation for ideological power and social progress. As a result, Dalits are frequently coerced into casting their votes based on promises of developmental activities within their colonies. However, what Dalits truly require is a unified political and communal movement that transcends mere electoral considerations. Given the impracticality of resettling the inhabitants of the existing 26,000 Dalit colonies, the focus must shift towards enhancing the socio-economic and cultural well-being within these communities. This entails implementing initiatives aimed at improving the health system through comprehensive health awareness programs, designing special schemes tailored to the needs of differently-abled individuals, and transforming Dalit colonies into catalysts for land ownership and community development. By empowering Dalit communities in these ways, genuine progress towards socio-economic and cultural advancement can be achieved.

Glossary

<i>Adivasis</i>	: original inhabitants.
<i>Avarnas</i>	: lower castes.
<i>Adiyar</i>	: slaves of feudal lords.
<i>Aaladiyar</i>	: slave castes who worked directly on the land.
<i>Aattungal Swarupam</i>	: old princely state in Kerala.
<i>Brahmaswom</i>	: land under the control of Brahmins.
<i>Chaala/Paadi</i>	: residence of Dalits.
<i>Charvaka</i>	: an ancient school of Indian Materialism.
<i>Chakliya</i>	: a sub-caste of the Scheduled Castes.
<i>Chathurvarna</i>	: social class within a hierarchical caste system.
<i>Daanam</i>	: distribution of anything.
<i>Daayam</i>	: symbolic gift given by kings and others during the reign of the king.
<i>Dewaswom</i>	: land under the control of God.
<i>Ghetto</i>	: A part of town where many people of same religion, race etc. live in poor conditions to closely together
<i>Irular</i>	: Scheduled Tribe community inhabiting the Indian state of Kerala, TamilNadu, Karnataka.
<i>Jathi</i>	: The term derived from Sanskrit traditionally used to describe a group of people in India like tribe, clan, sub clan religious group
<i>Jajmani</i>	: economic system functioned in Indian lower caste.
<i>Jenmi</i>	: Jenmi is the term used to refer the land owners in Kerala
<i>Janam/Sarkar Pandara</i>	: it refers to Sarkar Land
<i>Kanikaar</i>	: Kanikaaris a tribal community found in Southern part of Kerala.
<i>Karalar</i>	: those who cultivated as middlemen
<i>Kanakan</i>	: a sub caste of Scheduled Caste
<i>Kanakudiyar</i>	: person who takes over the leased land and works

<i>Kurumbras</i>	: Indian tribe
<i>Kuravans</i>	: native community in Tamil Nadu
<i>Lifemission</i>	: project giving home to homeless People
<i>Mappilas</i>	: Muslim community
<i>Malapandarams</i>	: scheduled tribe in Kerala
<i>NaachinaaduVellalar</i>	: a Tamil community
<i>Naaduvazhi</i>	: a Feudal elite
<i>Pura /Thara</i>	: residence of Nair/Ezhava
<i>Pallar</i>	: agricultural community in Tamil Nadu
<i>Pattakudiyar</i>	: those who initially lived in leased land
<i>Pandarappatta</i>	: the nature of lease by the royal proclamation
<i>Pandibhojanam</i>	: feeding of the people belonging to different castes together
<i>Paniyars</i>	: tribal Community
<i>Pulayar</i>	: agricultural slave community in Kerala
<i>Paattam</i>	: lease
<i>Parayar</i>	: scheduled caste Community

Sketch and Photographs



(1) Source: **Kitex Website, Laksham Veedu Colony, Najareloor, Kizhakkambalam.**

(2) **Details of Kizhakkambalam Gods Villa Project, New Indian Express, 9th March 2019.**



(1) **Community Social Responsibility Fund (CSR), Collaborated with Kizhakkambalam. Panchayath, New Houses, Njaralloor, The New Indian Express. (Photo Courtesy).**



Meppayur Panchayath, Pulaprakunnu Colony, Kozhikode, Old Colony Pics
Photo Courtesy: The News Minute.



New Houses, Pulaprakunnu, Meppayur Panchayath,
Photo Courtesy: Vineetha Vijayan, Researcher, Writer, Social Activist.



Old & New Houses, Pulaprakunnu

Pics Courtesy: Vineetha Vijayan, Researcher, Writer, Social Activist.



Weaving Work Place, Pulaprakunnu.

Photo Courtesy: Vineetha Vijayan, Researcher, Writer, Social Activist



Vadayampaady Bajana Madam (Photo Courtesy: Shanmugan, Social Activist)



Vadayampaady Colony,

Photo Courtesy : Shanmugan, Social Activist, Ernakulam.



Sachivothampuram Colony, New Houses

Pics Courtesy Ajeesh.



Kottayayam, Sachivothamapuram Colony, New Houses (Pics Courtsey: Ajeesh)



Sachivothamapuram Colony, New Houses (Pics Courtsey: Ajeesh)



**The Water Tank in Govindapuram Colony caused the Caste Problem,
Photo Courtesy: Shanmugan**



Govindapuram Colony
 Photo Courtesy : Shanmugan



നായാടി കോളനിയിലെ കമ്മ്യൂണിറ്റി ഹാൾ നിർമ്മിക്കാൻ നീക്കി
 സ്ഥലം

Nayady Colony, Kollamkodu Colony Palakkad 06-04-2022,
 Photo Courtesy : Manorama Online News



പുനയൂർ പഞ്ചായത്ത് നായാടി കോളനിയിൽ വെള്ള,
 നീല റേഷൻ കാർഡ് ലഭിച്ചവർ

Punnayurkulam Nayady Colony, 16-05-2020, Kunnamkulam,
 Thrissur : Manorama Online News



Nediyruppu, N H Colony, Kondotty
(Pics Courtesy: Maya K S)



Nediyruppu, NH Colony, Kondotty
(Pics Courtesy Maya K S.)



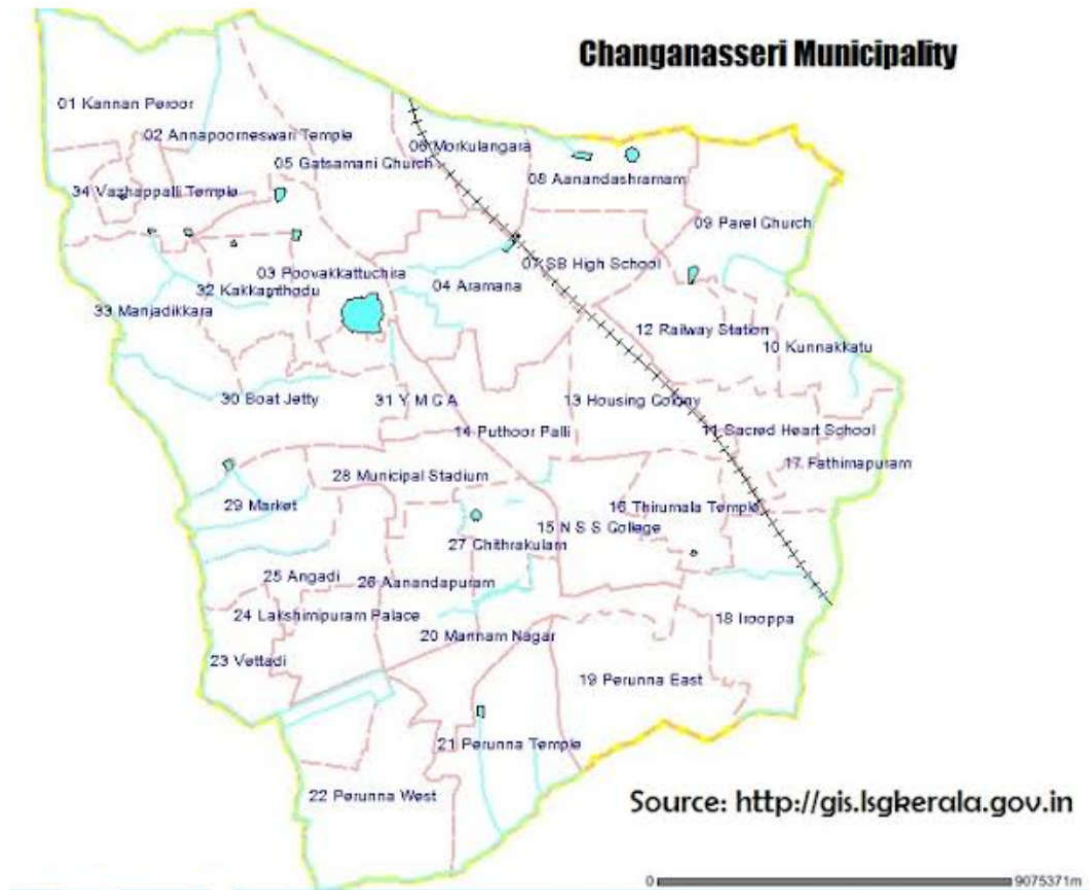
Nediyruppu, Muchikundu Colony, Malappuram, Kondotty
(Pics Courtesy : Pramod P S.)



Dalit Student from Malappuram Commit Suicide allegedly Missing Online Class (Covid Pandemic Period), Thirunillam Dalit Colony, June, 2020

Pics Courtesy : Mathrubhoomi News.

Maps



Changanacherry Municipality



Govindapuram Village

Abbreviation

<i>ADSS</i>	: Ambedkar Dalit Samrakshana Sangam, A small Ambedkarite Local group in Palakkad
<i>KLR</i>	: Kerala Land Reformation
<i>KILA</i>	: Kerala Institute of Local Administration
<i>NSDP</i>	: The National Slum Development Programme
<i>PMAY</i>	: Pradhan Mantri Avas Yojana
<i>SUDA</i>	: State Urban Development Agency
<i>SJVSU</i>	: Sadhu Jana Vimochana Samyuktha Vedi
<i>SJPS</i>	: Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam
<i>H S S</i>	: Harijan Seva Sangh
<i>T P S</i>	: Thiruvithamkoor Pulaya Samajam
<i>P R D S</i>	: Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha
<i>S J P S</i>	: Sadhu jana Paripalana Sangam
<i>S J P</i>	: Sadhu Jana Paripaalini
<i>C L C</i>	: Cochin Legislative Assembly
<i>U D A</i>	: Depressed Class Development Society
<i>CPIM</i>	: Communist Party of India Marxist
<i>T P M S</i>	: Travancore Pulaya Maha Sabha
<i>P M S</i>	: Pulaya Maha Sabha
<i>K P M S</i>	: Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha
<i>KCMS</i>	: Kerala Cheramar Maha Sabha
<i>S M S</i>	: Samabhava Maha Sabha
<i>AKCMS</i>	: Akhila Kerala Cheramar Maha Sabha
<i>D D V M</i>	: Desiya Dalit Vimochana Munnani
<i>R M S</i>	: Rashtriya Maha Sabha
<i>SNDP</i>	: Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam

APPENDIX-I

1941]

TRAVANCORE INFORMATION

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A TOWN WITHOUT BEGGARS

KOTTAYAM'S UNIQUE ACHIEVEMENT

By Mr. K. K. Kuruvilla, M. A. B. D., (Member, Sri Chitra State Council).

The municipal town of Kottayam makes a bold claim to-day. It claims that it is free from the beggar nuisance. Beggar nuisance has become a thing of the past in Kottayam. One does not meet with beggars on the roads; one does not hear their piteable wails. The story of this unique achievement is told below by Mr. K. K. Kuruvilla, Secretary of the Beggar Relief Committee of Kottayam.

The problem of the beggar and the vagrant is one of the most pressing problems in every town. Scarcity of money, unemployment, and its consequent evils of starvation and ill-health—all work in a vicious circle and the result is that the number of beggars is increasing with amazing rapidity and has become an acute problem.

Kottayam has been alive to this situation for the last fifteen years but it is only recently that it has been possible to tackle this question efficiently.

On September 29, 1939, at the initiative of the Municipality, a meeting was called at which a committee was appointed to prepare a scheme of work for immediate action.

The following were the Committee's proposals:—

(1) The formation of an Association which should work in close co-operation with the Municipality but at the same time independent of it.

(2) The taking of a census of beggars.



A group of the beggars cared for at the Beggar Relief Centre, Kottayam.

Kuruvilla, K.K, 'A Town without Beggars; Kottayam's Unique Achievement'

Travancore Information aiund Listener, September, 1941.

Sachivottampuram Colony

by K. Ramakrishna Pillay, L. Ag.,
Agricultural Inspector, Mixed Farming Scheme

A Great charter of emancipation for the backward communities, long borne down by the curse of untouchability, the Temple Entry Reform is as epoch-making and significant as the abolition of slavery. Many ameliorative measures have followed in the wake of the Great Reform.

An outstanding feature of such measures is the establishment of colonies in different parts of the State, where the landless among the backward communities are settled in convenient homes with lauds assigned to them and their varied needs looked after, under the charge of the Protector of Backward Communities. Of the twelve colonies which have thus come into being, the Sachivottampuram colony at Kurichi, fittingly named after its benign originator, Sachivottama Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the Dewan, is the largest and serves as a model for others.

An Interesting Legend

Located on a hill which is reached by a detour from the 89th mile on the Trivandrum-Kottayam road, the colony enjoys all the advantages of rural retirement, if not entirely of a hill station. The seclusion of the place, undisturbed by the bustle of traffic, the broad open spaces which render it breezy and healthy, and the row of the homesteads suggesting a refreshing contrast to the closely packed quarters in barracks or the congested rows in many villages, not to speak of towns, must impress even a casual visitor.

In a corner of the place are a huge pestle and mortar with which a hoary legend is associated. They are the ones said to have been used by Panchaly, wife of the Pandavas, for pounding paddy during their *Vanavasa*.

Assignments of Land

About forty families consisting of two hundred members in all, including women and children, are settled in the colony. The families are provided free of rent with snug little cottages of uniform size, each fitted with two rooms and a kitchen, and surrounded by a plot of land of an area of 50 cents, so that the cottages, though forming a row, are isolated from each other. The plots are assigned to the families free of tax and the colonists are encouraged to raise on them not only food crops, but money crops like cocoanut and areca, so as to provide themselves with the means of livelihood. Ample facilities for their agricultural operations are afforded in the shape of free supply of seeds and agricultural implements and grant of agricultural loans. Cloth is distributed free twice a year and regular free supply of milk and biscuits is arranged from the Travancore Milk Canteen. The Agricultural Inspector, stationed at the place, is in immediate charge of the activities concerning their economic welfare.

Educational Facilities

The educational and spiritual development of the colonists is not neglected. A school large enough to accommodate

Ramakrishna Pillai, K, 'Sachivottampuram Colony',
Travancore Information and Listener, September, 1941.

THE RIGHT APPROACH TO THE BEGGAR PROBLEM

Dewan's speech at Kottayam

Declaring open the Beggar Relief Centre at Kottayam on February 6, Sachivottama Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Dewan emphasized the need of approaching the problem of beggar relief not in a spirit of patronizing superiority but that of comradely help. The following is the full text of the Dewan's speech :—

My Lords, Rev. Fathers, ladies and gentlemen.—I shall begin with my remarks on what I was enabled to see through the kindness of my friend Mr. Kuruvilla. I went to the place where the aged and the diseased old men and women are being cared for in a modest manner, but sufficiently adequately for their daily needs. After visiting the centre, I came here and inspected a number of these waifs playing happily, their play being supervised by volunteers, who have made it their business to devote themselves to the uplift of their minds. I then saw other rooms and have here, been greatly impressed by two things. Firstly, I was impressed by the quiet and the unassuming manner in which the work is done. There was no attempt to window-dress those places which I visited. I was shown the beggars in their quarters under ordinary surroundings and with no special preparations for the day. I was struck by that feature and I was also struck, not so much by what I actually saw, but what I felt was the atmosphere of these precincts, namely, that there has been a kind of sincere effort at mutual understanding between workers and those for whom the work is done.

The Proper Approach

One of the many reasons why in the West, what are called 'poor homes',

workhouses and other allied organisations fell into great disrepute and evoked fierce indignation and reproaches from great authors and missionary institutions and workers, was the mechanical, soulless, deadening, enervating spirit of patronage and of patronising. The moment all these beggar homes and relief centres use paid agencies who dole out food in a spirit merely of a daily task being done, that moment you begin the ruin of the institution. The distressed or humble folk, indigent as they may be, nevertheless resent that patronising, that superiority, that kind of patting on the back, that feeling as though one is throwing the remains to a dog. They feel that they would prefer to be out of that picture. If I were a beggar who came to such a home and was given my food or clothing by a person who threw it at me with the spirit of scorn or of superiority, I would escape from that home and seek my living by begging on the streets. And, therefore, I trust that those who are in charge of this institution will bear in mind that, what is important, essential and indispensable, is the spirit that accompanies the offering and not the dole or the offering itself. I felt in my two visits to this home that those responsible for this organisation were of the right spirit, right outlook and of the right atmosphere, and it is because I

Dewan's Sir C.P Ramaswami Aiyer Speech, 'The Right Approach to the Beggar Problem', Travancore Information and Listener, September, 1941.

conducive to the prosperity of the community and of the State as well. It is also hoped that the night schools would prove competent to dispel crude ideas and superstitions from their midst and the darkness that now holds sway over them. The words of Lord Hugh Cecil bear repetition here. "Uniformity is the essence of any and every system; whereas infinite variety and infinite irregularities are the characteristics of people. The only education, therefore, that deserves the name is really beneficial, is that which ministers to individual capacity and personality. When that connection and response are lacking, teaching and being taught are a funeral waste of time."

9. The department has acquired plots in several of the Depressed Class villages and centres and sunk a number of wells and tanks for them. Water Supply. Water for drinking and bathing has been thus brought within their easy reach. This is an important factor in the process of their elevation.

10. Most of the Depressed Classes are landless and living in huts on the lands of others. Acquisition and leasing of lands. of lands have now been freely leased to them. The sites thus granted, though uncultivated at present, are capable of cultivation and expected in the near future to develop into fertile rice-fields and beautiful cocoanut gardens. The Diwan Peishkar is sympathetically viewing their situation and is keenly interested in leasing out poramboke lands to them wherever possible.

11. The Pulaya Colony at Chalakkudi, conducted by the Depressed Class Development Society Model Colony, has been the model after which several others have been subsequently started. Prior to the foundation of the colony, the Depressed Classes of Chalakkudi were over-worked and low paid. When they settled in the colony, they found themselves happily occupied in the work of the colony itself, for which the Government paid them decent wages. When this noble example was set by the Government, the rich landlords too were forced to employ their services on increased rates of wages. There is a free supply of

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Information about Chalakudy Colony, The Progress of Cochin, T K Krishnan Menon, 1932.

seeds of many descriptions and raw materials for home industries. As there are schools, work sheds, tanks, wells, co-operative societies and poultry farms in the colony, the colonists are now well on the road to prosperity. The Government have already begun to build a house for conducting their daily worship of God.

Besides Chalakkudi, Kunnankulam and Narakkal too have colonies for the Pulayas. The one at Palayannur has been established for the Nayadis. The Nayadis who are found in the southern Taluks are known as Ullatans,—a set of professional beggars infesting the streets and highways. The favourite occupation of the males among them is the construction of boats. The Government contemplates the establishment of a new colony for them at Nettar in the Cochin-Kanayannur Taluk. A suitable site has already been purchased for the purpose at a cost of about Rs. 6,000, and all the preliminary arrangements too have been made to start it.

12. The net work of Co-operative Societies among the Depressed classes of the villages endeavour to teach them the methods of husbanding their meagre resources in an economic way and to train them up in habits of self-reliance and mutual trust. Village associations functioning hand in hand with these co-operative organs devote themselves to their social regeneration.

13. The department intends to start Labour-unions among them with a view to inculcate into their minds the true value and dignity of labour. The vast tract of coastal lands is almost wholly occupied by the Depressed Classes. The union that is about to be started for the people inhabiting this area, will bear the name of the Narakkal Mandalam. It would be composed of at least thirty constituent societies, each represented by two delegates and there would be sixty members on the whole. Its management would be vested in an Executive Committee elected from among the members of the union itself. The Depressed families will be allowed to invest their earnings in the union in the name of the particular society to which they belong and be at liberty to draw back the amount thus deposited, and utilise it

9.

T K Krishnan Menon ,Information about Chalakudy Colony,The Progress of
Cochin ,1932.

officiated over by a priest chosen from themselves.¹⁰² In addition to the colony system, co-operative societies were organized among these people, which taught them 'the methods of husbanding their meager resources' and trained them in 'habits of self-reliance and mutual trust'.¹⁰³

Moreover, wells and tanks were constructed for them, and 'plots of lands' were freely leased to these people. Also, one Pulaya called P.C. Chanchan was nominated to represent the caste in the Legislative Council of Cochin,¹⁰⁴ and a Protector of the Depressed Classes was appointed in 1927. His work was, for example, visiting villages inducing the depressed classes to send their children to school; advising them to be clean; and arranging meetings to explain the value of education and the facilities provided by the government.¹⁰⁵ These government efforts certainly contributed to the uplift of the lower castes, especially in the area of education. By 1931, for example, three Pulayas including a girl reached the college classes.¹⁰⁶

However, there was also criticism regarding the colony system because it was based on the idea of segregation. In 1941, an 'educated Harijan lady' stated that 'colony system

¹⁰² *Ibid.*; Krishna Menon, *Progress*, p.66.

¹⁰³ *Census of India, 1931, Cochin*, p.293.

¹⁰⁴ Krishna Menon, *Progress*, p.67.

¹⁰⁵ Krishna Menon, *Progress*, pp.198-9. As the Director of Public Instruction became an *ex-officio* Protector, this work was practically conducted by the Assistant Protector.

¹⁰⁶ *Census of India 1931, Cochin*, p.292.

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